On 29 September 1941, a riot broke out in Internment Camp 3 Tatura. In order to quell it, Australian soldiers fired three shots into the air. The effect was instantaneous, with men and women running from the shots. In the subsequent Australian Army investigation, the riot was consistently referred to as a ‘disturbance’, but it was somewhat more than that. As internees themselves noted, it involved people fighting each other with brooms, spades, pieces of wood, and stones. In histories of internment this incident has received little attention. It is worth examining in itself, as it

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*From the outset, it must be noted that I am building on Paul Birtrop’s previous excellent work on the riot in D Compound: Paul Birtrop, ‘Incompatible with Security: Enemy Alien Internnees from Singapore in Australia, 1940-45’, The Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society 12 (1993): 149-169. Birtrop describes the event in detail (159-162), and relies on the Australian Army reports contained in file 36/102/45, series MP70/1, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Melbourne. Most of the references I use from this record also appear in Birtrop. I am expanding on his research by using previously unexamined materials that include reports from the internees themselves on the riot, contained in NAA file 253/715/292, series MP508/1, Melbourne. Throughout, references will be cited as: NAA [File# Series#].

1 The shots were fired by Private Sharpe and Captain Sharpe. Captain Sharpe fired one shot to stop three men who were attacking another internee, and Private Sharpe fired two shots to stop an internee climbing a dividing fence between compounds: Reports, Disturbance ‘D’ Compound, Major J. Birtrop, 29 September 1941, No. 3 Camp Disturbances, 14 October 1941; Disorders at No. 3 Camp, 18 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne. Birtrop’s initial report stated that the sentry had fired the first shot, and the Captain the latter two, but later reports indicate that it was the other way around.

2 Letter, Regnato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.

3 See particularly Report, Disturbance ‘D’ Compound, Major J. Birtrop, 29 September 1941; and Confidential Report, Disturbance in ‘D’ Compound (No. 3 Camp), Lieutenant-Colonel WT. Tackaberry, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne. Throughout this paper, I will use the terms ‘Australian Army’ and ‘army’ interchangeably.

4 Letters, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941; Regnato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941; Official Visitors’ Report, 7 October 1941, in NAA 253/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.

contributes to our understanding of wartime internment in Australia, but the riot also gives further weight to a historiographical argument established by Paul Sauer and Christine Winter, as to how the Australian Army acted in controlling internees during World War II. As Sauer succinctly put it, with regards to Camp 3 Tatura: 'At times, the Australian Camp Command hardly took any notice of the National Socialist activities engaged in by the internees, but insisted that such activities should not disturb law and order'.

This has been argued in greater depth by Winter, who sees in such behaviour on the part of the military a 'live and let live' system of operation, whereby so long as 'everything was under control', camp rules would not be strictly enforced. Hence, part of the argument of this paper is that the Australian Army's response demonstrates that Camp Command's main concern was to keep control in the camp — without any regard for the internees' differing political views. The riot demonstrates that this policy did not always work.

Both Winter and Sauer have focused to a large extent on the operational level of internment — that is, on the decisions made by the officers directly responsible for the camps, and their views of how the camps should be run. However, in the wider history of military organisation, a discrepancy often exists between the operational and strategic levels for army operations. Indeed, as complex organisations, armies often contain divergent views, whilst simultaneously operating on the assumption that there is a clear and unified vision throughout the chain of command. Following the riot in Camp 3, the Australian Army established a Board of Inquiry to examine the incident, and it is the argument of this study that the review indicates that a disjunction existed between Army policy and its application; specifically, that camp rules were not being applied as they should. Thus, an analysis of this 'Disturbance in D Compound' helps to extend existing historiographical argument by providing further insight into the complexity of Army views on internment during World War II.

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6 Sauer, Holy Land, 243-244. Throughout, I intend 'Camp Command' to refer to the Australian Army officers at the operational level.

7 Christine Winter, 'New Guinea Germans', 99. In this instance, Winter was discussing Camp 1 Tatura. Both Sauer and Winter have made their arguments based on the intermittent application of camp rules, and (in Winter's case) on statements from officers in charge of the camps. Thus, Sauer examines the attempts to stop the Hitler salute in Camp 3, and the circuitous prohibition of Nazi insignia in the camp, which the army confiscated, returned to internees, then attempted to confiscate again: Sauer, Holy Land, 243-246. Similarly, Winter examines the uncertain application of camp rules, which she argues were only applied when necessary 'to restore good relationships within the camp' (98): 'New Guinea Germans', 97-99, 103.

8 Their disregard for the tense situation created by interned Jews and Nazis together is indicative of this. Christine Winter notes that Camp Command was aware that 'a certain amount of friction' would exist from interned Nazis and Jews together, but that this was not taken very seriously by the military: Winter, 'New Guinea Germans', 89.

9 I intend the term 'operational' to denote the administration of the internment camps by the Australian Army officers directly in charge of the internees. As such, the term includes these officers' policies regarding the application of rules and regulations. The term 'strategic' denotes the overall strategy of the Australian Army higher command for internment. It includes administrative measures, but those decided at a higher level in the chain of command.
Camp 3 Tatura

Camp 3 Tatura was located around twelve kilometres north of Rushworth, in the north of Victoria. The camp was built roughly in the shape of a diamond, and quartered into compounds A–D. Avenues ran between these compounds, and each was surrounded by a barbed wire fence. The Australian Army divided all of the internment camps roughly by nationality, but Camp 3 D Compound was the only ‘family’ compound in the Australian system of internment and, as a result, Jewish, Italian and German families were interned there.\(^{10}\) The majority of these internees were Jewish, and their compound leader, Seefeld, consistently complained to the Official Visitors that many of the Germans and Italians with whom they were imprisoned were Nazis or fascists.\(^{11}\) The letters noted increasing tensions within the compound: ‘I am afraid that … feelings on both sides will run so high that serious consequences may arise for which I as the compound leader cannot take further responsibility’.\(^{12}\) In particular, the Jewish internees would not tolerate any further Nazis or fascists being interned with them, and Seefeld noted that the strain might well lead to ‘acts of actually [sic] violence’.\(^{13}\) The Official Visitors recommended to the Australian Army that the Nazis and fascists be moved, but the Army countered with the fact that D Compound was the only family compound available.\(^{14}\)

In August of 1941, family groups of German and Italian nationals who had been living in Palestine and Iran were deported to Australia.\(^{15}\) The Army made a decision that all of Camp 3 should be a ‘family camp’.\(^{16}\) The

\(^{10}\) See NAA A5954-675/8, Melbourne. On the divisions of camps along national lines, see Inspection of Prisoner of War and Internment Camps, 2 October 1942, NAA 36/101/346–MP385/7. Bartrop states that the camp had been a ‘closed community of anti-Nazi Jewish refugees’ before 1941 (160), but letters (see n. 11) indicate that German and Italian internees were interned in D Compound prior to this.

\(^{11}\) For instance, Waldemar Weber, listed as a Nazi Party Ortsgruppenleiter (Group Leader) in Intelligence Reports, was interned in D Compound: Appendix I, Intelligence Report Tatura (hereafter IRT), 15 February 1944, NAA 37/101/185–MP70/1, Melbourne. The Jews in D Compound complained about the fascists and Nazis, but to no avail: see Letters, G. Seefeld, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 5 November 1940, 17 June 1941, 27 June 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. On the Jewish internees in Camp 3, most of whom came from Singapore, see Bartrop, ‘Enemy Alien Internes.’ See also Konrad Kwiet, ‘Be Patient and Reasonable’. The Official Visitors were Australian appointed representatives who acted as an impartial review board. Their role was to ensure that the camps were being run correctly, and that no abuses occurred. As such, they were allowed to inspect the camps, and to hear the complaints of internees. The Official Visitor for Camp 3 was Justice Gavan Duffy, of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

\(^{12}\) Letter, G. Seefeld, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 5 November 1940, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. Winter states that the camp was subdivided due to conflicts between the Templers and the Jewish families, but Camp 3 appears to have always been subdivided, though initially to separate the ‘men’s camp’ (Compounds A–C) from the ‘family camp’ (D): see Winter, ‘New Guinea Germans’, 100.

\(^{13}\) Letter, G. Seefeld, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 27 June 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. This is similar to the ‘technical and fundamental problems’ cited in New Zealand as reason for not separating Nazis and Jews: Winter, ‘New Guinea Germans’, 89.


\(^{15}\) Australia had earlier agreed to accept enemy subjects from Great Britain and the ‘Straits Settlements’ for internment, and the Jewish internees in D Compound had fallen under this agreement: War Cabinet Agendum 157/1940, 3 July 1940, NAA 258/1/5–A445, Canberra. A later amendment allowed civilian internees from Palestine to be transported to Australia: Supplement 7 War Cabinet Agendum 157/1940, 2 October 1940, NAA 258/1/5–A445, Canberra.

\(^{16}\) On reaching eighteen, single men had to leave Camp 3 for Camp 1 Tatura or Camp 14 Loveday, both of which were primarily prisoner of war camps. This move was vigorously protested by the internees: See IRT, 7 October 1942, 11 October 1942, 22 October 1942, 5 November 1942, and 10 February 1943, NAA 37/101/185–MP70/1, Melbourne.
'single men' previously interned in Compounds A–C were moved to other camps, and the families from Palestine and Iran replaced them.17 The vast majority of these internees were German, and a request to amalgamate Compounds A–C into one camp was granted, with free access being allowed between these compounds during the day.18 However, curiously, the Germans and Italians were not moved out of D Compound into what became known as the 'German Internment Camp' (Compounds A–C).19 Instead, D was kept separate, locked off from the others.20

Australian Army Perceptions: The Operational Level

While the internment camps were delineated along lines of nationality, the Australian Army Camp Command appears to have also viewed the different groups as possessing particular characteristics based upon their 'race'. There were undeniably such prejudices regarding Italian internees, and illustrations of these can be found in reports from Camp 3. For instance, a 1942 Australian Army report noted: 'Order loving Germans resent the shiftless natures of the Italians, who are really a mongrel mixed breed in many cases'.21 Moreover, a later report stated that the Germans are far more reliable in fulfilling their duties than the Italians, and that the Jewish internees were 'unsatisfactory' in this regard.22 There are concerns to identify those internees who were 'dangerous' within Camp 3, but for the officers in charge of the camps the major issue was that of control.23 They were ordered to guard those interned, and that was what they did.24 The fact that Intelligence Reports were regularly issued regarding events in the camp indicate that Camp Command was carefully observing the internees.

18 The majority of the internees were members of the *Templergesellschaft* (Temple Society) a German ethno-religious group that had been established in Palestine since 1868. The major history of the Temple Society is Paul Sauer's *Holy Land*, although a history of their involvement with the Nazi Party *Aussenorganisation* can be found in Ralf Balke, *Hakenkreuz im Heiligen Land: die NSDAP-Landesgruppe Palästina* (Erfurt: Sutton, 2001). The 'open camp' request was made on 13 September: Report, Official Visitors, 16 September 1941, NAA 255/715/304–MP508/1, Melbourne. A week later, open access was allowed: Sauer, *Holy Land*, 239.
19 A Christmas programme from 1943 referred to the *Deutches Internierungslager: Helmut Ruff, Transports to the End of the World* (Melbourne: H. Ruff, 1997). 20 Internees later suggested making Compound A an Italian camp, B and C the 'German Camp' and D a Jewish camp: Declaration to Official Visitors, 7 October 1941, NAA 255/715/304–MP508/1, Melbourne. A home-made map of Camp 3 is included with this declaration. It seems that internees only began to be moved after the riot in Camp 3, and twenty-seven 'local Germans' had moved into the 'German Camp' by 13 November 1941: Letter, Allbrecht Aderle to Swiss Consul, 13 November 1941, Temple Society Australia Archives (hereafter TSAA), Melbourne. There were some 'mixed Jewish' families in the German Camp, such as the Auer and Ducker families, where one partner in a couple was Jewish. My thanks to Helmut Glenk for this information.
22 Australian Army comment, IRT, 7 October 1942, NAA 37/101/185–MP70/1, Melbourne.
23 IRT, 9 December 1942, NAA 37/101/185–MP70/1, Melbourne. Both Kwiet and Bartrop have argued that there were similarly prejudiced views of the Jewish internees, see 'Be Patient and Reasonable' and 'Enemy Alien Internees'.
24 Winter notes that Camp 1 Tatura was viewed entirely as a camp for 'dangerous internees': Winter, *'New Guinea Germans*', 89. Certainly some internees were moved from Camp 3 to Camp 1 Tatura, although this tended to be because they were single men, and Camp 1 was a 'men's camp.' It was also due to overcrowding in Camp 3 Compounds A–C, see Letter, Swiss Consul to Gottlieb Ruff, 3 May 1943, TSAA, Melbourne.
25 Their authority to do so was established under the provisions of the National Security Act 1939, which provided for the internment of civilian internees and prisoners of war in internment camps.
However, such observation remained essentially passive, and breaches of the camp rules did not necessarily result in any form of disciplinary measures. If the internees remained orderly, they were left to their own devices as to how the camp was run.

**The ‘German Internment Camp’**

At the operational level the Army’s lack of interest in the internees, except in so far as they remained controlled, can be seen in the ‘German Internment Camp’. It is a settled point that this camp was ‘run along National Socialist lines’. The most public expression of this was the Hitler Youth group established in the camp, which organized morning sport (*frühlsport*), evening lectures, and solstice celebrations. These activities were cause for comment by the Jewish internees. As Dr Koch (a Jewish compound leader) noted in a letter, Compounds A–C had:

800 Nazis and Fascists from Palestine who in compliance with their usual habit immediately after their arrival started with so-called physical exercises, such exercises however being only too well-known to us as the usual marching of Hitler-formations.

Moreover, as Compounds A–C were opened up, he wrote that Jewish internees constantly saw the Germans ‘exchanging the Nazi-salute’. This was also noted by Werner Heimann, who accused the Camp Command of being biased, ‘prohibiting us [Jewish internees] the use of the sign ‘V’ for Victory’ without ‘taking any steps to prevent Nazis or Fascists of expressing their feeling by singing their songs and using their salutes’. The Australian Army compiled intelligence reports that noted public displays by the Hitler Youth, but they did not attempt to stop any such activities. Indeed, occasions like the winter solstice had to be approved by Camp Command,

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26 Interview with former internee, 11 June, 2003. See also Sauer, *Holy Land*, 244ff; Winter, ‘New Guinea Germans’, 100-101. There was also a BDM or *Bund deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls) established in Camp.


30 IRT, 26 December 1942, 3 October 1943, NAA 37/101/185–MP 70/1, Melbourne. Both reports note the use of the “Heil Hitler” salute.
as it involved the Hitler Youth marching in procession with burning torches to a central bonfire.\textsuperscript{31} It was just such a public event that sparked off the riot.

As remembered by a former internee, the situation was this:

Well, there were Jews in there [D Compound], together with some Germans, and, ah, some of our young fellas, they started to march up and down the compound, and of course, when they passed the compound the Jews were in, they started to sing some Nazi songs, and then the Jews started to shout across at them, have a go at them, of course, and then one of the Germans in the D Compound, he then, he said ‘Good on you, boys! Keep it up!’\textsuperscript{32}

The army records indicate that this is correct, and that Waldemar Weber was the internee in D Compound who called ‘across the lane to the singers in C Compound, “BRAVO, BRAVO”, raising his hand in the Nazi salute, and calling “Heil Hitler”’.\textsuperscript{33} As a result of demonstrations by the Jewish internees against both the singers and Weber, all internees were ordered to their huts. As recorded by Major Sproat, the Camp Commandant, the Jews went in ‘slowly and very grudgingly’, while those in C did so ‘very willingly and effectively’.\textsuperscript{34} The next day the incident was investigated by Major Sproat and his Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Tackaberry, both from 17\textsuperscript{th} Garrison Battalion (in charge of the camp). The two men received assurances from Gottlieb Ruff, the German Camp leader, ‘who … offered his co-operation in maintaining order and promised that he would take steps to prevent the young people singing Nazi songs near the Jewish compound’.\textsuperscript{35} Interestingly, as the reports piled up in the Army investigation no further reference was made to the fact that Ruff here agreed that the songs were ‘Nazi songs’.

On visiting D Compound, Sproat records that Weber freely admitted his actions, justifying them by saying that ‘the Jews had called the singers “Nazi Swine”’.\textsuperscript{36} Yet, no action was taken against Waldemar Weber and instead Tackaberry ordered a Jewish internee, Tilly Heimann, be placed in the cells, as she was part of a large crowd in D Compound, ‘talking loudly, waving her arms and pointing to [Waldemar’s wife] Mrs Weber, obviously using insulting terms towards her’.\textsuperscript{37} Although Sproat wrote as though he and Tackaberry witnessed this occurrence, other reports from internees all

\textsuperscript{31} A remembrance of one of these solstice celebrations can be found in Helmut Ruff, ‘Christmas 50 Years Ago’, \textit{Templer Record} 547 (December 1993, January 1994): 5
\textsuperscript{32} Interview with former internee, 3 June 2003.
\textsuperscript{33} Report, Disturbance ‘D’ Compound, Major J. Sproat, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne. This incident is also recorded in Bartrop, 160-162, although at the time Bartrop was writing Weber’s name had been excised from the records.
\textsuperscript{34} Report, Disturbance ‘D’ Compound, Major J. Sproat, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. Gottlieb Ruff was the overall leader for Compounds A–C: IRT, 24 February 1945, in Haslinger, F.J., NAA A367. Series A367 is a series of intelligence dossiers, accessible by name.
\textsuperscript{36} Report, Disturbance ‘D’ Compound, Major J. Sproat, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
agree that he imprisoned Tilly Heimann solely on Mrs Weber's word. An hour later a riot broke out in D Compound. Three of the Jewish internees attacked Weber, and a young man from C Compound started climbing the fence to get into D Compound. This was when the guards fired three warning shots, to stop the riot and the attack on Weber, and to dissuade the man climbing the fence. In the end, Tilly Heimann was released from the Camp 3 prison, and Weber was moved to Camp 1 Tatura.

Camp Command and the Board of Inquiry

The language used by Major Sproat and the actions he took indicate that what he demanded from the internees was the maintenance of order. Outside of this concern, he did not seem to care about the cause of the incident. His superior officer agreed. Lieutenant-Colonel Tackaberry's report deserves quotation in full, as it clearly demonstrates the negative attitude towards 'trouble makers':

The compound concerned [D] has given a great deal of trouble during a period of several months, and the Jews therein are continually asking for the removal of the Nazis and fascists who are interned with them. I am of the opinion that the disturbance of last night and today was a planned demonstration in order to advance their case for the removal of the Nazis and Fascists. None of the Jews, including the compound leader, evinced any desire to help the Camp Commandant to restore order. On the other hand, the Internees in the other Compounds dispersed quickly when ordered to do so, and the compound Leaders were very helpful. From my inquiry, I am of the opinion that the people in 'C' Compound singing the German songs were doing so merely in relaxation and not with any intent to 'bait' the Jews.

A military Board of Inquiry was convened to examine the riot in the camp, and, more specifically, to review the actions taken by the camp officers and guards in dealing with the incident. In contrast to Tackaberry and Sproat, this Board seems to have accepted the point that 'whether the singing in 'C' Compound was motivated by levity or not, it was the primary

38 Letters, W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941; R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941; and Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941; NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid. There is some question as to how long Heimann was imprisoned. Sproat states it was an hour, but most internees stated that it was forty-eight hours: Letters, W. Heimann to Official Visitors, 29 September 1941; W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941; and R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. Waldemar did not stay in Camp 1 for long, as a letter indicates he was moved back to Camp 3 (Compound B) by November: Letter, Alfred Koch to the Swiss Consul, 26 November 1941, in TAA, Melbourne.
42 Confidential Report, Disturbance in 'D' Compound (No. 3 Camp), Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Tackaberry, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne. The General Officer Commanding (GOC) disagreed that the demonstration was 'planned', but did note that the Jewish internees were disgruntled, and that Weber only further aggravated the situation. The GOC blamed the singers, as the starting point for the whole debacle: Confidential Note, GOC, Southern Command, No. 3 Camp Tatura Disorders, 2 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.
cause of the resultant bad feelings and displays'.43 In the reports and
telegrams sent to this review about the riot, a remarkable process of
minimisation occurs, particularly in Major Sproat’s reports, where the event
changes from the ‘young people singing Nazi songs’ to ‘singing German
songs’ to children ‘of 10 years and under in playful mood’, who were
moving ‘around the compound arm in arm singing nursery rhymes’.44 There
are a number of possible reasons why this may have occurred. One
explanation is that there was a bias against the Jewish internees, such that
Sproat was willing to accept the German Camp leaders’ version of events at
face value.45 A more likely explanation, though, is that accepting the
German internees’ statement of events was in the best interests of Sproat
and Tackaberry, particularly as the actions of Camp Command were the
major point of investigation.

The Board of Inquiry was attempting to find out why a riot had
occurred in camp, and what Camp Command had or had not done to
prevent it. It is probable, then, that Sproat was primarily attempting to
justify the actions taken by himself and his men. If the initial provocation
could be seen as facile, the measures taken against the Jews in Compound D
– as well as the inaction of the Camp Command – might be seen as
appropriate. This explanation is also the most likely because Sproat’s
reports only took on this tack after the Board had agreed the singing was the
‘primary cause’ of the whole debacle. It was much harder for a Board of
Inquiry to decide that action should have been taken against children
‘singing nursery rhymes’ than Hitler Youth marching and singing Nazi songs.
This is particularly the case because the latter situation was specifically
covered by camp rules.

The rules in camp stated that ‘[d]rilling or marching in military
formation shall not be allowed, for any purpose other than physical training
and fatigues and movements from place to place’.46 Even more pertinent to
the situation in Camp 3 was that: ‘The holding of political meetings at which
any political propaganda is used or Nazi or Fascist principles recommended,
advanced or urged, is strictly forbidden. The Nazi and Fascist salute will not
be permitted’.47 Weber had been in direct disobedience of camp rules in
giving the Nazi salute and shouting ‘Heil Hitler’, and the Board of Inquiry
requested a reason why no action was taken against him, ‘in view of his
admission regarding his provocative actions in contravention of camp rules
and having regard to the general atmosphere within the Compound’.48 No
adequate explanation was ever given, though in the end it was decided that

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43 Ibid.
44 The quotes are from: Major Sproat, 29 September 1941; Lieutenant-Colonel Tackaberry, 29 September
1941; and Major Sproat, 8 October 1941 and 14 October 1941, reporting to the Board of Inquiry, NAA
36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne.
45 Sproat does seem to have received his information from the German leaders, who later claimed there
was no marching, and that the songs were ‘German children’s songs’ or ‘harmless folk songs’: see
respectively Reports, Official Visitors, 7 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1; and GOC, 18
October 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne.
46 Paragraph 27, Camp Rules issued by 1 March 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. On this
point, it was later noted in an Intelligence Report that the Hitler Youth activities were suspected to be
‘political’ in nature, and not religious or sports-oriented, as apparently had been argued by the German
internees: IRT, 26 December 1942, NAA file 37/101/185, series MP70/1, Melbourne. On the problems
with non-application of camp rules in Tatura 1, see Winter, ‘New Guinea Germans’, 98.
47 Paragraph 27, 1 a), Camp Rules issued by 1 March 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1.
48 Board of Inquiry, 7 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.
Weber’s return to Camp 1 was sufficient punishment, ‘in view of the fact that Weber’s provocation was caused by the Jews calling [the singers] “Nazi swine”’.49

The final decision of the Board of Inquiry with regards to Camp Command was that the soldiers were to be reprimanded for firing the shots and the procedures regarding use of firearms in Camp 3 should be reviewed, but the Commanders were not reprimanded, despite the Board’s pointed comments regarding their lack of action.50 It was clear, however, that the Board believed that Camp 3 should have been run more strictly in accordance with the camp rules. What is even more interesting is that the reports of Sproat and Tackaberry indicate that they too realised that the Camp Command policy of internee ‘self regulation’ was at variance with their superiors, as they adjusted their reports to fit the perceived views of the Board. The extent of this becomes clearer through the internees’ own records of the riot.

**Internees’ Perceptions**51

In reports and letters to the Official Visitor, Justice Gavan Duffy, the internees in D Compound provided their own views on the ‘disturbance’. With some agreement, these fall into two stories: that of the German and Italian internees, and that of the Jewish internees. Internees on both sides attempted to portray the other side in as bad a light as possible, as indicated in the series of telegrams sent from, respectively, Jewish, German and Italian internees following the riot:

- Our personal security gravely endangered anti-Jewish riots – shooting broken out inside our Compound – your immediate presence required.52

- Following violent assault by Jews against my wife and myself Military Authority sending me back to Camp 1 today, leaving wife here please visit us immediately.53

- [F]ollowing violent assault by Jews against one of our section Military Authorities transferred victim to another camp separated him from wife please come immediately for Investigation.54

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49 Board of Inquiry, 14 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne. In this, they accepted Sproat’s reply to their initial query, as to what had been done to punish Weber: see Major Sproat to the Board of Inquiry, 8 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne. This is in spite of the fact that the move appears to have been made in the first instance to protect Weber. Weber was welcomed into Camp 1 by Haslinger, who ‘made the declaration as National Socialist camp leader’. See Haslinger, F.J., NAA A367, Canberra.

50 Board of Inquiry, 14 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.

51 Of interest generally in this field is Kay Saunders’ work. See particularly “Discovering” the Subversive and the Saboteur.

52 Telegram, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.

53 Telegram, W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 30 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.

54 Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.
In fact, one of the Jewish internees argued Weber was responsible for the singing, having ‘organised [it] by shouting over the fence’.\(^{55}\) The Australian Army Camp Command, on the other hand, accused the Jewish internees of a ‘planned demonstration’.\(^{56}\)

This Army perspective was partly based on the earlier letters from Seefeld, but it is not clear that anyone in the compound intended that a riot break out.\(^{57}\) Both sides appear to have been willing to fight, and Justice Duffy gave perhaps the most accurate assessment: ‘whoever gave the first provocation it was most willingly accepted and ... substantially both sides are to blame for what happened’.\(^{58}\) The point that Duffy missed out was the blame that should have been allocated to the Camp Command. Ultimately, it was the action of Tackaberry in jailing Tilly Heimann that caused the riot to break out, by providing a point of conflict in an already tense situation.

In their reports, the Jewish internees claimed that the initial provocation came from the singers, and that the songs included lyrics such as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{When Jewish blood drips from the knives ...} \\
\text{Put the Jews against the wall whilst we are marching against} \\
\text{England ...} \\
\text{We march on until everything falls to pieces, today we are masters of Germany, tomorrow of all the world.}\(^{59}\)
\end{align*}
\]

As there were no independent witnesses who could understand German, we cannot be certain what all the songs actually were.\(^{60}\) The last song, though, was sung by the German youth on the transport ship on the way to Australia. Father Walter Stenner, a Catholic priest who was one of the internees from Palestine, noted in his diary that the German youth had sung German folksongs and Hitler Youth songs during the journey to Australia, including one with the lyrics:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{We shall go on marching} \\
\text{Even though everything shatters and falls}
\end{align*}
\]

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\(^{55}\) Letter, W. Heimann to Official Visitors, 29 September 1941; NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.

\(^{56}\) Confidential Report, Disturbance in ‘D’ Compound (No. 3 Camp), Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Tackaberry, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne.

\(^{57}\) Letters, G. Seefeld, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 5 November 1940, 17 June 1941, 27 June 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.

\(^{58}\) Report, Official Visitors, 7 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.

\(^{59}\) Letter, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. As noted earlier, some army reports also placed the blame on the singers: Confidential Note to Board of Inquiry, GOC, Southern Command, No.3 Camp Tatura Disorders, 2 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne. The line ‘When Jewish blood drips from the knives’ is popularly believed to be from the Horst Wessel song. The Horst Wessel song had been sung at various celebrations in the Templar communities in Palestine (Sauer, Holy Land, 199, 215), but the song itself does not, in fact, contain these lyrics: on Horst Wessel, see Richard J. Evans, The Coming of the Third Reich, (London: Penguin, 2004), 266-269 (the song’s lyrics are on 268).

\(^{60}\) On this point, see Bartrop, ‘Enemy Alien Internees’, 160.
For today it is Germany who hears us
And tomorrow it will be the whole world.  

A Jewish guard on the ship complained that the lyrics were ‘today Germany belongs to us, and tomorrow it will be the whole world’.  

The translator of Stenner’s diary, Erhard Gohl, argues the German word hör (hears) was misheard as gehört (belongs to).  

The song itself is Hans Baumann’s ‘Es zittern die morschen Knochen’, which has the chorus:

Wir werden weiter marschieren
Wenn alles in Scherben fällt,
Denn heute da hört uns Deutschland
Und morgen die ganze Welt.

Gohl’s translation matches this perfectly.

The other songs, which Weber noted were ‘popular and marching songs’, might have been any of the Hitler Youth songs, as it seems likely there were Hitler Youth songbooks in the camp. Indeed, a 1939 Hitler Youth songbook that was used in researching this paper appears to have been a copy from Camp 3 Tatura. The edition is now stored in the main library collection of the University of Melbourne, but a previous library stamp – Der Landesjugendführer, HJ, Wilhelm, Palästina (see image) – indicates that this copy belonged to the Hitler Youth in Wilhelma, Palestine. Internees from Wilhelma had certainly been able to bring some of their brass instruments with them into Camp 3, and the likelihood is that this songbook was brought into camp with them.

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid. As shown in the German verse, it may have been da hört misheard as gehört.
64 Ibid. Gohl notes the song on the ship was ‘Rotten Bones a-shaking’, and the first stanza (which he translates) is identical to the first stanza of Baumann’s song.
65 Letter, W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MPS08/1, Melbourne.
67 The HJ signifies Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth). Wilhelma was one of the Temple Society settlements in Palestine, established in 1902, and was named both in honour of an 1898 visit by Emperor Wilhelm II to Palestine, and in honour of King Wilhelm II of Württemberg (the home state of the Templers). See The Temple Society: An Overview (Melbourne: Temple Society Australia, 1986), Appendix ii, 1-6; Templar Handbook (Melbourne: Temple Society Australia, 1992), 119-122; Sauer, Holy Land, 100.
68 In an interview with former internees, 20 May 2003, it was mentioned that a brass band was formed in camp using instruments brought from Wilhelma. Internees had also brought swastika badges and images of Hitler with them into internment, and one of the first requests of the German Camp leaders was that these be returned: Report, Official Visitors, 16 September 1941, NAA 255/715/304-MPS08/1, Melbourne. These items were returned in November 1941: Letter, Swiss Consul to Albrecht Aberle, 12 November 1941, TSAA, Melbourne. According to Sauer, this was along with ‘books that were obviously National Socialist literature’: Sauer, Holy Land, 244. Songbooks used by the Templar youth group, Jugendgruppe (established after the war) contain some of the soldiers’ and sailors’ songs from the Hitler Youth songbook: see TSAA file A34:004, Melbourne. It is of interest that in 1942 the camp leaders
All internees agreed that the Jewish compound leaders re-established order by stopping the altercation with Weber in D Compound, and that after a ‘lengthy palaver’ Sproat agreed to investigate the following morning. These reports directly contradict Tackaberry’s assertion that ‘None of the Jews, including the compound leader, evinced any desire to help the Camp Commandant to restore order’. The internees’ letters also provide more information than the military reports as to what was said in the meeting held in D Compound between Tackaberry, Sproat, and the D Compound leaders. What comes out of the proceedings is that the Camp Command supported the Germans and Italians over the Jews in D Compound, mostly because the Jewish internees were seen as disruptive and uncontrolled.

Tackaberry and Sproat had the Italian and Jewish compound leaders present when they questioned Weber, and Weber freely admitted his actions. In Weber’s version of events, the ‘young people in Compound C ... marched round their compound singing German soldiers’ songs’, and it was on their second circuit that the Jewish internees started shouting at them to stop singing, to which Weber (in D Compound) retaliated, and ended by shouting ‘Heil Hitler’. Tackaberry’s response was to advise Weber that in future Weber should inform the guards if he was ‘insulted or molested’, and Tackaberry would ‘punish the offenders’. This is curious, considering that Tackaberry gave no commensurate assurance to the Jewish leaders that he would punish Weber or the German internees should they breach camp rules again. Instead, Tackaberry advised the Jewish compound leaders that Jewish internees should not react to the singing of National Socialist songs, saying ‘all [you] need do is not listen’. Koch pointed out that the situation in D Compound was extraordinarily tense, arguing that he ‘could not guarantee peace inside this compound any longer ... Under these circumstances, you can’t expect me to bear any responsibility’. Tackaberry advised him that he had to keep control, without providing any advice on how Koch was to do so.

requested six copies of Unter Liederbcuch for the ‘Comradeship Orchestra’ in the German Camp: Letter, Samuel Hoffmann, Albrecht Aberle to German Red Cross, 24 August 1942, in TSAA, Melbourne.

69 Letters, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941; W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/I, Melbourne. It is possible that this ‘palaver’ is what Sproat refers to as the unwillingness of the Jewish internees to return to their huts: Report, Disturbance ‘D’ Compound, Major J. Sproat, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/I, Melbourne.

70 Confidential Report, Disturbance in ‘D’ Compound (No. 3 Camp), Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Tackaberry, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/I, Melbourne (my emphasis).

71 Those present were Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), Berlowitz, D Compound deputy leader (Jews), Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians) and Weber: Letter, R. Koch to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/I, Melbourne.

72 The very fact that Tackaberry allocated blame for the disturbance on the Jewish internees is illustrative of this perception: Confidential Report, Disturbance in ‘D’ Compound (No. 3 Camp), Lieutenant-Colonel W.T. Tackaberry, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/I, Melbourne.


Tackaberry literally saw it as none of his business as the superior officer in charge of Camp 3 Tatura, and left saying 'I have no further sympathy for your people'.78 He saw the stated inability of Koch to maintain control as an unwillingness to do so.

The other interesting aspect of the meeting was that Tackaberry appears to have supported the Hitler Youth based on ideas of democracy. Werner Heimann noted Tackaberry as having expressed the opinion that he regarded the singing of Nazi-songs and the use of the Hitler salute on part [sic] of our political antagonists as absolutely justified as the Empire was fighting for freedom of opinion and that therefore he definitely declined of taking any steps to prevent Nazis or Fascists of expressing their feeling by singing their songs and using their salutes'.79 This is also supported by a report from Koch: 'We are, he said, fighting for freedom and for this reason the internees of Compound “C” must not be prevented from singing the songs they like'.80

Intriguingly, then, in the name of democracy, the Camp Commandant supported the National Socialist Germans over the ‘pro-British’ Jews.81 It seems this was partly based on ideas of race similar to those expressed in the Intelligence Reports, but it was also because Tackaberry did not wish to have to deal with any trouble. His attitude demonstrates an antipathy to those he saw as trouble makers (the Jewish internees), which can be seen in his unwillingness to enforce the camp rules against Weber, as well as in his jailing of Tilly Heimann.

In this regard, a comment of Justice Duffy’s is worth analyzing further. Remark ing on the imprisonment of Tilly Heimann, he stated: ‘It is of course obvious that if Mrs Heimann was really put into the cells without evidence, ocular or otherwise, to justify it, she has a very real cause of complaint’.82 Neither Major Sproat nor Lieutenant-Colonel Tackaberry had actually witnessed Tilly Heimann insult Mrs Weber. All internees agreed that Mrs Weber simply told the camp commanders that Heimann had insulted her, and this was sufficient for Tackaberry to order her locked away:

A woman passed close to my wife spitting in front of her and using again dirty language ... My wife reported the new incident to the Colonel when we came out of the Orderly Room.83

[T]he Colonel was accosted by Mrs Weber who accused Mrs Tilly Heimann of having insulted her.84

78 Ibid. To Koch’s question of how he could keep order in the present situation, Tackaberry apparently replied ‘That is your business.’
79 W. Heimann to Official Visitors, 29 September 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
80 Letter, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
81 Reginato referred to the Jewish internees disparagingly as ‘pro-British’: Letter, Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
82 Report, Official Visitors, 7 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
84 Letter, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne. Reginato also confirmed that Tackaberry acted solely on Mrs Weber’s complaint: Letter, Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
Tackaberry's action was based in a desire to regain control of Camp 3, and the fact that he had assured Waldemar Weber only moments before that he would punish anyone who 'insulted or molested' Weber seems to be his motivation for this swift decision. 85 Tackaberry wished to be in control, and perceived as being in control. This action, though, was the final straw for the Jewish internees, particularly as no action had been taken against Weber. 86

Weber seems to have been fairly bombastic, and in a report to the Swiss Consul stated that when the singing occurred, 'I had to publicly confirm my faith. I raised my right arm and exclaimed repeatedly as loud as I could: Heil Hitler!' 87 He also portrayed himself as heroic and the Jews as cowardly. His version of the attack was that: 'Three Jews tried to beat me with their fists whereby, however, they only succeeded in getting bleeding noses from my counterblows.' 88 Further, after the firing of the shots, he claimed that the Italians and Germans held the field: 'Jews and Jewesses ran screaming for their lives, and dispersed very quickly. We faced the Officer of the Guard and his men and were ordered to go to our hut compartment'. 89 Probably more accurate are the reports that the riot involved brief and intense 'street-battle' fighting, before the shots sent everyone running for cover. 90

While willing to take control of D Compound, there appears to have been an unwillingness on the part of Camp Command to take responsibility for placing Nazis and fascists with the Jewish internees in the first place. Paul Bartrop notes that the British High Commissioner's Office had written in December 1940 explaining that Nazis should not be interned with 'Anti-Nazis', and reports in 1941 and 1942 reiterated this. 91 The Army had also received warnings much closer to home. Letters had been sent to the Camp Command by the Jewish leader for D Compound, outlining the difficulties of being interned with Nazis and fascists, and requesting (on occasion, demanding) that they be removed from D compound. 92 It seems that these letters are what Tackaberry was referring to when he complained that the 'Camp has been of great difficulty'. 93

86 Letter, W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292, series MP508/1, Melbourne. In fact, on 28 September, Major Sproat had declined to remove Weber from D Compound, arguing there needed to be an investigation before such an action: Letter, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
88 Ibid. The three men were later identified as Beer, Liebrecht and Bratspies, but the man who tried to climb into D Compound was not identified: Report, Disturbance 'D' Compound, Major J. Sproat, 29 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45-MP70/1, Melbourne.
90 Letters, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941; and Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne.
91 Bartrop, 'Enemy Alien Internees', 162. He notes that the report was issued on 17 December 1940. See also Minute Paper, Home Office Liaison Officer, 19 December 1941, NAA 255/715/292-MP508/1, Melbourne; and Report, Official Visitors, 6 October 1942, NAA 255/715/680-MP508/1, Melbourne.
93 In another army report, letters of complaint were referred to as a 'form of subtle sabotage': IRT, 11 October 1942, NAA 37/101/185-MP70/1.
At the meeting on 29 September the Jewish leaders had requested that the Italians and Germans be moved out of D Compound, but were refused.94 The Italians and Germans interned in D Compound also requested that they be shifted into either other compounds or that the Jews be moved into another camp, but were also refused.95 Tackaberry's comment to the Germans and Italians in D was that they had to remain where they were, and the army 'would protect [them] from encroachments'.96 The army officers in charge appear to have viewed it as none of their concern that both parties involved in the riot wished to be separated from each other, whilst also expecting them to maintain a cohesion and level of order in that Compound. Tackaberry emphasized this last point to the D Compound leaders.97 His sympathies, though, lay with the co-operative and ordered German internees. However, as a result of the military review, and of complaints to the Swiss Consul, twenty-seven Germans were moved out of D Compound, and orders were issued to remove all Nazis and fascists, leaving 'Jewish internees exclusively'.98

Conclusion: A Fractured View

The Australian Army Camp Command was aware of the politics of internees, but as long as order existed, they were unconcerned about these politics, or the ways in which they were manifested. Even reports which specifically noted breaches of camp rules were ignored.99 The Camp Command viewed internees benevolently so long as they were controlled. However, the military commanders in charge of the camps also appear to have held prejudices that influenced their views of which groups of internees were orderly, and applied rules accordingly. The riot in Camp 3 is an example of just such an occasion. Caused in the first instance by a breach of camp rules – Hitler Youth marching in formation singing National Socialist songs – and in the second instance by a further breach of camp rules by Waldemar.

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95 Reported in Letters, W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941; Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 2 October 1941 and 4 October 1941; various German-Australian internees, D Compound, to Official Visitors, 2 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.
96 W. Weber to Swiss Consul, 2 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.
97 Reported in Letters, R. Koch, D Compound leader (Jews), to Official Visitors, 3 October 1941; Reginato, D Compound leader (Italians), to Official Visitors, 4 October 1941; NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne.
98 After the riot, thirteen internees wrote to the Consul advising they must be moved 'on account of there being a majority of Jewish internees with whom ... it would be unbearable to live together for any prolonged period': Letter, Swiss Consul to Major T.K. Malthy, 30 September 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne. Curiously, the letter initially had fourteen internees listed, including Waldemar Weber, and was sent on 26 September, two days before the incidents in Camp 3. These internees reiterated their request (without Waldemar) to the Official Visitors on 2 October: Letter, various German-Australian internees, D Compound, to Official Visitors, 2 October 1941, NAA 255/715/292–MP508/1, Melbourne. The GOC recorded in his report to the Military Board that orders would be given to remove 'the incomplete elements' of D Compound into Camps A–C: Confidential Note, GOC, Southern Command, No. 3 Camp Tatura Disorders, 2 October 1941, NAA 36/101/45–MP70/1, Melbourne. All of the twenty-seven 'local Germans' moved to A–C on 3 October 1941, see Letter, Albrecht Aberle to Swiss Consul, 13 November 1941, TSSA (Melbourne). Compound D still seems to have had Jewish, Italian and German internees in 1942: Letter, Samuel Hoffmann to Swiss Consul, 26 November 1942, TSSA, Melbourne.
99 As was the case with an Intelligence Report that noted 'youth have been observed carrying out marching movements of a military nature while the girls quite openly indulge in the "Heil Hitler" salute.' See IRT, 26 December 1942, NAA 37/101/185–MP70/1, Melbourne.
Weber shouting Nazi slogans and giving the Hitler salute, the blame for the ensuing riot was placed on the Jewish internees, who were seen by both Tackaberry and Sproat as disorderly, by contrast to the ‘order loving Germans’.100

Thus, the riot in the camp can be partly traced to a bias based on ethnicity, but mostly to the concern of the Camp Command to maintain order. Unfortunately, the Camp Command took sides, based in part on ideas of which internees were able to remain orderly. As emphasised in their reports, Sproat and Tackaberry viewed the German internees as ‘helpful’, efficient, co-operative, and willing to help maintain order. By contrast, the Jewish internees were described as excitable, un-cooperative, and disorderly.101 These same Jewish internees were avowedly anti-Nazi and pro-British. As such, they believed they had been unjustly interned and complained, particularly because they were interned with Nazis or fascists. At the operational level, the army appeared to be relatively unconcerned with the justice or injustice of internment, or whether there were breaches of camp rules by internees, so long as they remained disciplined.

However, the Board of Inquiry indicates that the Camp Command policy cannot necessarily be ascribed to the Australian Army High Command. Although not actually punishing the officers in charge of the camps for their actions, the Board indicated that the camp should have been run strictly in accordance with stated camp rules. The review makes it clear that a gap existed between the views of the officers in charge of the camp, and those of their superiors. Further, the various letters and reports from internees themselves demonstrate that the information given by the Camp 3 officers to the Board was skewed to fit the anticipated views of their superiors. This, in turn, offers us the insight that the camp officers were aware that they were not operating strictly in accordance with the wishes of their superiors. It appears, though, that at the operational level, it was far simpler to allow internees to control their own activities, rather than attempt to run the camps through military means. Unfortunately, on this occasion such a policy meant that what began with words ended with sticks and stones.

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100 Though Tackaberry was very unsympathetic towards the Jewish internees, he did later show some appreciation for their plight. As recorded in Pearl, he wrote a letter to the magazine Maroo in 1945, arguing that most of the internees were ‘Refugee Aliens’ rather than ‘Enemy Aliens’, and should not be viewed as ‘suspect’ if released into Australia: Cyril Pearl, The Dunera Scandal (London: Angus & Robertson, 1983), 208–9. By this stage, he had already relinquished his command.