HOLOCAUST CENTRE OF NEW ZEALAND

Te Pūtahi Urupatu o Aotearoa

WITNESS REMEMBER EDUCATE ACT

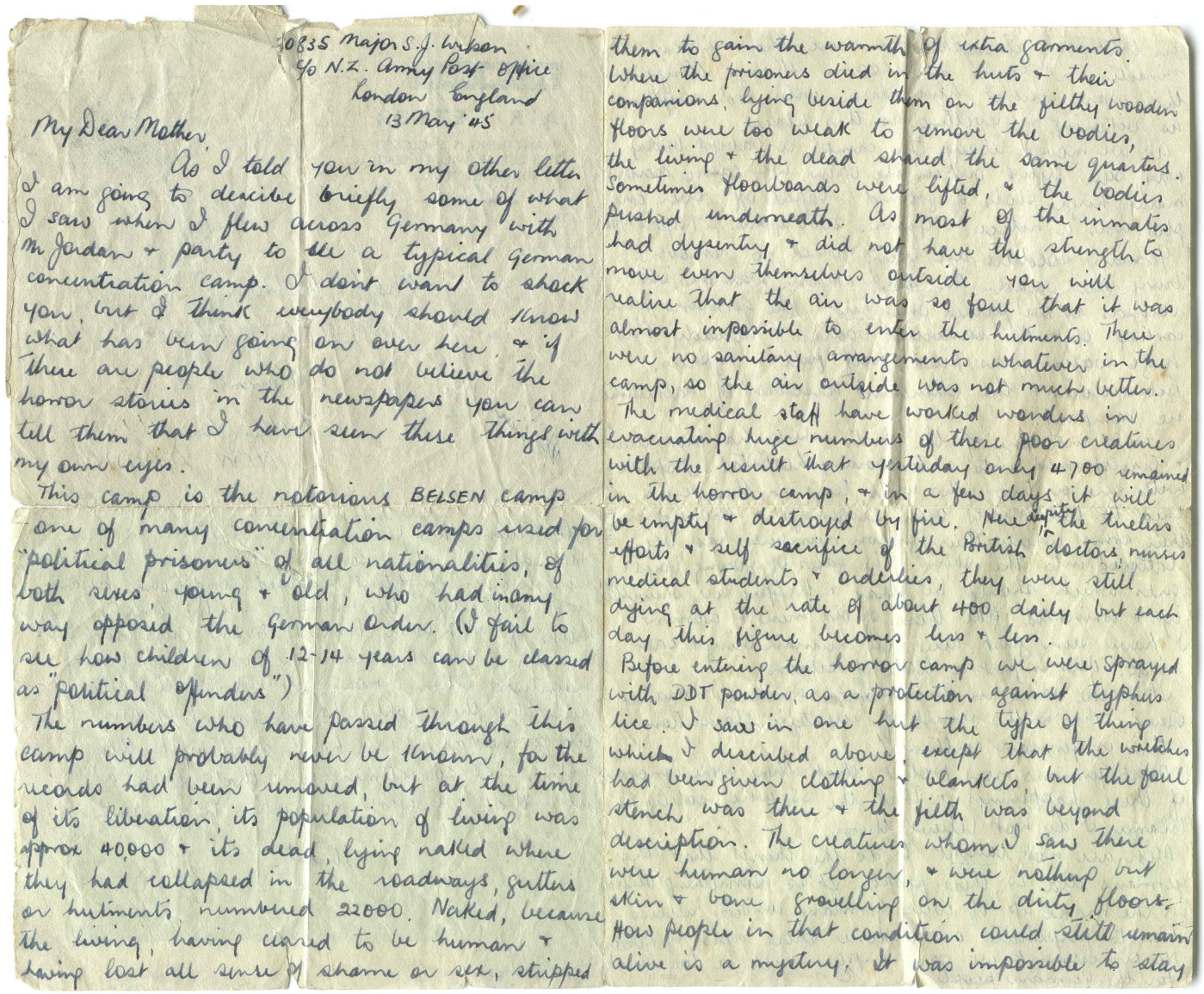
Resource Booklet to support NCEA History 1.2

The Holocaust's Significance to Aotearoa New Zealand

SOURCE A: Major Stuart Wilson – Letter

Major Stuart Wilson was one of the allied troops to enter the Bergen Belsen concentration camp with Mr. Jordan, the New Zealand High Commissioner in London. He wrote to his mother of what he saw and experienced. The letter is dated one week after the end of the war.

The original letter is held at the New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru.



10835 Major S.J. Wilson
C/o N.Z. Army Post Office
London England
13 May '45

My Dear Mother,

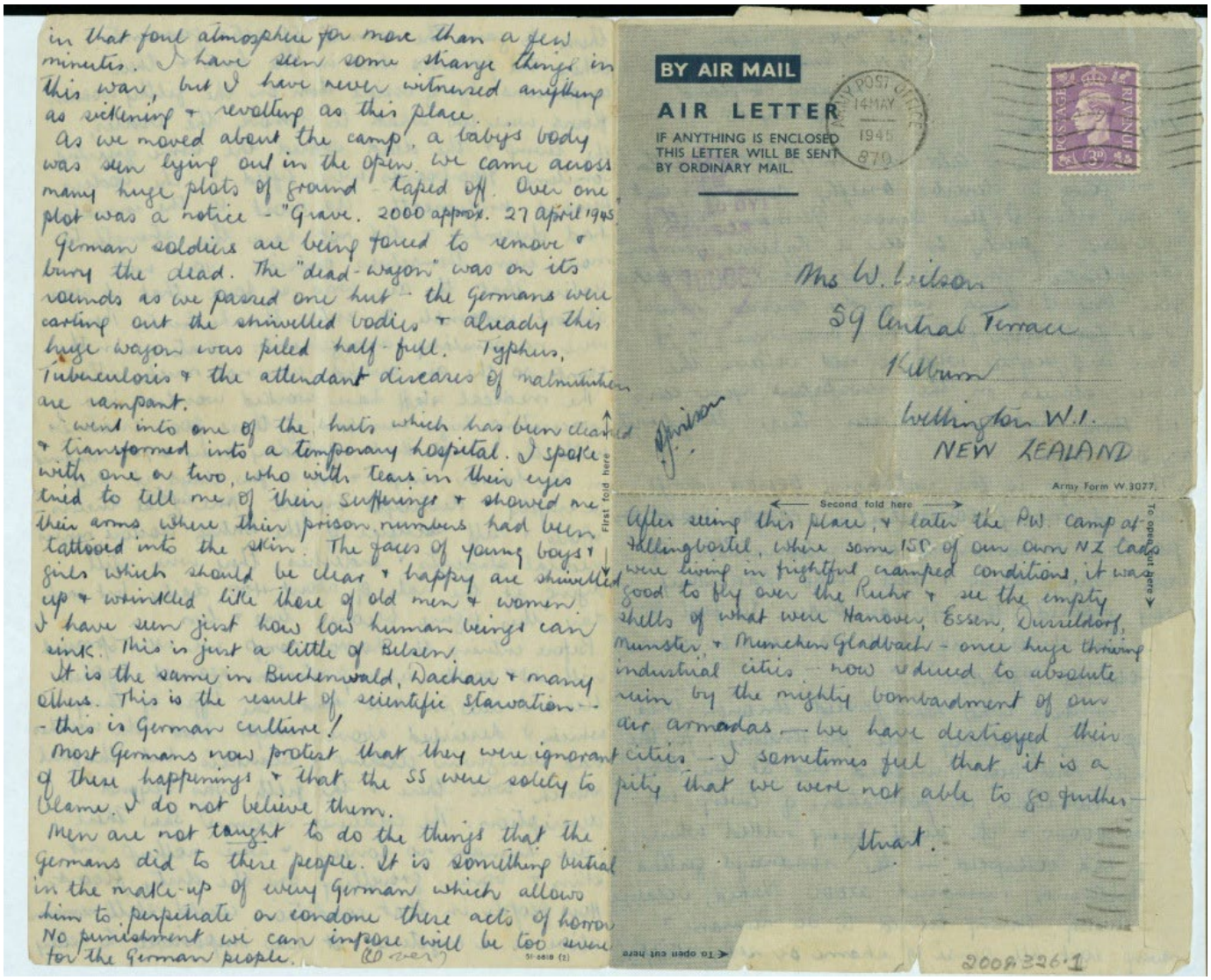
As I told you in my other letter I am going to describe briefly some of what I saw when I flew across Germany with Mr Jordan & party to see a typical German concentration camp. I don't want to shock you, but I think everybody should know what has been going on over here, & if there are people who do not believe the horror stories in the newspapers you can tell them that I have seen these things with my own eyes.

This camp is the notorious BELSEN camp one of many concentration camps used for "political prisoners" of all nationalities, of both sexes, young & old, who had in any way opposed the German Order. (I fail to see how children of 12-14 years can be classed as "political offenders")

The numbers who have passed through this camp will probably never be known, for the records had been removed, but at the time of its liberation, its population of living was approx 40,000 & its dead, lying naked where they had collapsed in the roadways, gutters or huts numbered 22000. Naked, because the living, having ceased to be human & having lost all sense of shame or sex, stripped them to gain the warmth of extra garments. Where the prisoners died in the huts & their companions, lying beside them on the filthy wooden floors were too weak to remove the bodies, the living & the dead shared the same quarters. Sometimes floorboards were lifted, & the bodies pushed underneath. As most of the inmates had dysentry & did not have the strength to move even themselves outside you will realise that the air was so foul that it was almost impossible to enter the huts. There were no sanitary arrangements whatever in the camp, so the air outside was not much better.

The medical staff have worked wonders in evacuating huge numbers of these poor creatures with the result that yesterday only 4700 remained in the horror camp, & in a few days it will be empty & destroyed by fire. Despite the tireless efforts & self sacrifice of the British doctors, nurses medical students & orderlies, they were still dying at the rate of about 400 daily but each day this figure becomes less & less.

Before entering the horror camp we were sprayed with DDT powder, as a protection against typhus lice. I saw in one hut the type of thing which I described above, except that the wretches had been given clothing & blankets, but the foul stench was there & the filth was beyond description. The creatures whom I saw there were human no longer, & were nothing but skin & bone, grovelling on the dirty floors. How people in that condition could still remain alive is a mystery. It was impossible to stay



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As we moved about the camp, a baby's body was seen lying out in the open. We came across many huge plots of ground - taped off. Even one plot was a notice – "Grave. 2000 approx. 27 April 1945". German soldiers are being forced to remove & bury the dead. The "dead-wagon" was on its rounds as we passed one hut – the Germans were carting out the shrivelled bodies & already this huge wagon was piled half-full. Typhus, Tuberculosis & the attendant diseases of malnutrition were rampant.

I went into one of the huts which has been cleaned and transformed into a temporary hospital. I spoke with one or two, who with tears in their eyes tried to tell me of their sufferings & showed me their arms where their prison numbers had been tattooed into the skin. The faces of young boys & girls which should be clear & happy are shrivelled up & wrinkled like those of old men & women. I have seen just how low human beings can sink. This is just a little of Belsen.

It is the same in Buchenwald, Dachau & many others. This is the result of a scientific starvation – this is German culture!

Most Germans now protest that they were ignorant of these happenings & that the SS were solely to blame. I do not believe them.

Men are not <u>taught</u> to do the things that Germans did to these people. It is something brutal in the make-up of every German which allows him to perpetrate or condone these acts of horror. No punishment we can impose will be too severe for the German people.

After seeing this place, & later the P.W. camp of fallingbostel, where some 150 of our own NZ lads were living in frightful cramped conditions, it was good to fly over the Ruhr & see the empty shells of what were Hanover, Essen, Dusseldorf, Munster, & Munchen Gladbach – once huge thriving industrial cities – now reduced to absolute ruin by the mighty bombardment of our air comrades – we have destroyed their cities – I sometimes feel that it is a pity that we were not able to go further –

Stuart.

Source: Wilson, Stuart. "A Letter from Major Stuart Wilson: A New Zealand Soldier's Eye-Witness Account." Sent to his mother, 13 May 1945.

SOURCE B: Vera Egermayer – Testimony

Vera Egermayer (1940 -) was born in Prague. When Auschwitz was liberated, Egermayer was in a children's home in Prague, because her parents had been interned. Though the war was turning against Germany, systems to round up and exterminate Jews still operated. She was four years old when she was transported by train to Terezin, without her parents. Egermayer's parents survived the war and the family immigrated to Wellington in 1949. As a child survivor of the Holocaust, she has given talks around the world. She was the New Zealand consul in Prague for 18 years. In recognition of this service, Vera was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM). For much of her life, Vera has worked both nationally and internationally to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive through research, education and commemoration. She is a founding member and former Board Member of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand and has played a leading role in many HCNZ projects notably the Children's Holocaust Memorial.

This is a personal account of how I came to assume my Jewish identity. I was a child survivor , of mixed-marriage origin, who immigrated to New Zealand in the aftermath of World War 2, then moved back to Europe as a young adult. Through learning about my heritage by becoming actively involved in the remembrance of the Holocaust, first in the city of my birth and then in the city where I grew up, I gradually, in my later years, arrived at the point of identifying myself as a Jew.

We arrived in New Zealand as a family on 22 March 1949 when I was 8 years old. I came with my mother, Palva, my father, Vaclav and my little brother Paul, who was born just after the war. New Zealand was a natural destination for us because we already had relatives there on my mother's side - the Jewish side. One of these relatives had settled in New Zealand as early as 1914, having followed her Jewish husband-to-be. In the 1920s she brought out two of my uncles and an aunt, Matylda, (who returned to Europe to look after my ailing grandmother and subsequently perished in Auschwitz) and later, in 1939, a nephew, who managed to get out just in time. They all came from a village called Klikov in Southern Bohemia, where they are remembered to this day as the local Jews who ran the pub and owned a ceramic workshop.

By the time we arrived in Wellington, our relatives prided themselves on being (almost like) real New Zealanders, and they appeared distinctly uncomfortable with having us there to remind them of where they had come from, and of all those whom they had not managed to save. My aunt squirmed whenever my mother addressed her in their native language - Czechin public. Although their own parents lay in the Jewish cemetery of their birthplace - with one exception possibly, they did not lead Jewish lives- they had married out and were raising their families as Kiwis/Christians. So there was no model of Jewish life for us from the family in New Zealand.

As a small child in Prague, all I knew about being Jewish was that you had to hide it and were punished for it if "they" found out. My non-Jewish father, an idealist, who married my mother on 13 March 1939, two days before Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Nazis, thereby saving her life as well as mine, disappeared one day. He was interned in a hard labour camp because he had the courage to resist pressure on him to divorce. My mother said goodbye to me soon after, having placed me in a Jewish children's home for safety, since my father's relatives, whose help she had solicited, were not willing to take me into their home. She left in the first of the mixed-marriage transports from Prague to Terezin – where I followed her in the last of these transports, AE9, on 16 March 1945 at the age of four years and seven months.

Whilst my internment in a concentration camp was brief, I lived the first five years of my life in an atmosphere of terror and fear - fear of being Jewish - and I saw my parents terrorized and helpless for years on end. I still remember the star on my mother's coat.

Continued…

One of our neighbours denounced my mother for failing to wear her star and the Czech police came around to investigate. The story goes that, aged around 3, I stood up in my cradle to defend my mother proclaiming that she had been wearing the star but she was carrying me in her arms so the star was hidden and could not be seen. The stigma of the star and the danger it represented was implanted in my young mind at a very early age. After the war our main preoccupation was to get out of Czechoslovakia - not in order to escape communism (my father was a pre-war communist and we obtained our exit visas under the Communist regime, a month after it was imposed on 25 February 1948) but rather to escape the memories and the empty spaces left by lost family - and to find a distant haven.

We had already tried to get out before the war but our relatives had not managed to get the necessary permits for us - although, as I later found out at the National Archives in Wellington, they succeeded in getting permits for four of my young male cousins – sadly, only one of them acted in time.

…

Our relatives sponsored us to come to New Zealand and helped to pay for the trip. We left from Genoa on the Toscana which took us to Sydney in a 6-week voyage through the Suez Canal, and there we duly boarded the Monawai for Wellington. We would never have met any of the current immigration criteria - we could not speak English, and we had neither money nor possessions … just a few meagre personal effects which were mercilessly and meticulously itemized by the Czech authorities who issued our exit visas - down to the last set of underwear and pocket handkerchief. My father did take two pairs of scissors, with the stamp “Sheffield Steel”, to use in his profession. He was a bespoke tailor and my mother was a housewife and former shop attendant - with an apprenticeship for this trade to her credit – she kept the certificate to the end of her life although it served no purpose in New Zealand.

My parents immediately gravitated towards the Czech community of Wellington where they could speak their own language and, on festive occasions like parties, listen to their music, eat their food and reminisce about the old days when there was life on the streets on Sunday and you could get a real cup of coffee – the lack of which was a small price to pay for being in a safe country. We continued to speak Czech and eat Czech at home - I certainly did not feel this as a positive manifestation of healthy cultural diversity- and neither did the people we came into contact with. New Zealand in the 1950s was not a place where anyone, least of all newcomers, wanted to be different. The people in our street looked upon us kindly, as a curiosity, with no concept whatsoever of where we came from and what we had been through.

And what about being Jewish during this period? As I have mentioned, our relatives in New Zealand had already distanced themselves from a Jewish identity. We knew some Jewish people who had come from Europe either before the war or as survivors like us, but we were hardly aware of any established, influential and affluent Jewish community in Wellington. They certainly did not approach us. In fact it would have been unlikely for a mixed-marriage family to be made welcome in the Jewish community at that time. My brother and I were not initiated into any of the traditions or festivals - the only Jewish holiday my mother never forgot was Yom Kippur. My brother and I both went to Sunday school and my brother and I were both baptized in an effort to conceal any trace of being Jewish.

I confided to one or two special friends in college that I had been in a concentration camp but did not dwell on the reason for that – namely, that I was Jewish. I did not go out of the assembly during prayers along with the Jewish girls and to this day I am far more familiar with the Christian ritual of hymns and prayers than Jewish practice. My mother never forgot the sisters she had lost in the Holocaust- Matylda, Olga, Gusta - and she talked about them frequently and with great sadness and bewilderment- she could never understand how it could all have happened. Was it all a bad dream?

Continued…

During my New Zealand years the Holocaust and its trauma were present but being Jewish was never a preoccupation. Expatriation was a way of escaping – from the weight of the past and from the tentacles of a family which had become dysfunctional. It provided a liberating opportunity for reinvention, on many intersecting and shifting levels, through my work, the people in my life, my interests - and the language I was speaking at the time. My dull English name itself - Vera- had quite a glamorous resonance in Paris. My Jewish side remained dormant.

…

I believe that time, place and the people we encounter can help us to recognize who we are. When I went back to live in Prague, the place of my birth, some 15 years ago, in my mid-50s my time had come - I was ready to make some sense of my life. My return triggered my search for Jewish identity. My Jewish heritage was all around me. It was particularly powerful in the buildings and the streets of the Jewish quarter where my mother must have taken me when I was a very small child. The spirit of the place claimed me and would not let me escape. Memories came back. I walked the streets of my childhood and visited all the addresses where my aunts had lived before being taken off to concentration camps. I must have been in these places before, perhaps a baby in my mother's arms, witnessing events which I could not remember but which were buried in my subconscious. I started looking into records at the Jewish Community about their fate and found the index cards showing the date of their transport to Terezin and then to Auschwitz which was also taken to be the date of their death. Finding such a card for myself and for my mother was a chilling experience even though there was no second date - no Auschwitz date. I made several visits to the village from where my mother and her family originated, saw the sites of their businesses, read the names of my grandparents on their gravestones in the Jewish cemetery and poured over the photos salvaged by my cousin (a child survivor) who is still living in the village - the last Jew.

…

I believe that we are not only what we say we are, but more importantly what we do - where we give of our time and energy. In other words, to me identity emerges from practice. The child-survivor work proved satisfying and strengthened my Jewish identity but I always felt an element of danger in the Prague context and it was not until I came back to Wellington - where I now spend half of my time - and became involved in the Wellington Holocaust Research and Education Centre (WHREC) - in activities at the local level- and saw people who take a pride in being Jewish- that I felt most committed to my Jewish roots. This feeling of belonging is particularly strong when I talk to school groups which visit the Centre or when I speak on public occasions such as the United Nations International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January.

My journey has not been one of recovering a lost Jewish identity because I did not really have one to start with. The Jewish roots I had through my mother, diluted by assimilation and inter-marriage and stifled by fear of persecution, were never nourished by the practice of Jewish life. Hitler called me a Jew and made me frightened and even ashamed of that label. I could never have called myself a Jew - which is what I do now- had I not felt safe and learned something about what that identity was. All identity is complex and composed of differences. My Jewish identity is not derived from religion - the Jewish religion is still a mystery to me. The Holocaust is of course an intrinsic part of being Jewish for me, but it does not end there. I appreciate and share many of the Jewish values such as empathy for suffering, endless enquiry, the importance of the law and of the word - the uniqueness of every life and the responsibility to use it to add something to the world. I am deeply responsive to Jewish sounds - the sound of Yiddish - the cry of the Shofar and the rhythm of Klezmer music. And quite simply, I feel comfortable with Jewish people. There is an unspoken bond that stretches back to a time beyond memory. That is where my journey has taken me – so far.

Source: *NZ Survivors*. (n.d.-b). Holocaust Centre of New Zealand. https://www.holocaustcentre.org.nz/nz-survivors.html

SOURCE C: 'Anti-Jewish Pogrom Protest Meeting' – Newspaper Article

The discrimination by the Nazis towards Germany's Jewish population were widely reported on in New Zealand. This article reported on a meeting held by the New Zealand Communist Party in response to Kristallnacht.

ANTI-JEWISH POGROM
PROTEST MEETING

On Sunday night a public meeting called by the Communist Party to voice a public protest against the recent anti-Jewish pogrom in Germany was held in the Trades Hall.

A resolution of protest to be forwarded to the Prime Minister, the German Consul, and the Press was moved by Mr. C. Brooks and seconded by Mrs. C. Birchfield, and carried in the following form:—

"That this meeting of Wellington citizens assembled in the Trades Hall views with horror and indignation the barbarous and inhuman treatment meted out to the Jewish people by the Nazi regime of Germany. We consider such organised bestial conduct on the part of the leaders of German Fascism calls for the economic and financial isolation of such a Government from the comity of democratic nations. We are of the opinion that such inhumanity, which belongs to the dark ages, does not receive the endorsement of the great mass of the German people, for whom we have the greatest admiration, and whom we consider are desirous of living in peace with the peoples of the whole world, irrespective of race or religious beliefs.

"We call upon the Government on behalf of New Zealand democracy to lodge a strong protest to the German Government through the usual diplomatic channels.

"We also suggest to the German Consul that he acquaint Herr Hitler of the feelings of indignation aroused throughout New Zealand democracy by this latest outburst of Nazi brutality."

A further resolution urging the Government to explore all channels whereby the victims of German Fascism might find a refuge in New Zealand was carried unanimously.

Source: 'Anti-Jewish Pogrom'. (1938, November 22). Evening Post, Volume CXXVI, Issue 124, page 4. https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/EP19381122.2.12

SOURCE D: The Belsen Camp: Mr. Holland's Report – newspaper article

Sidney Holland was Leader of the Opposition from 1940-49. He visited Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after the war in Europe ended at the request of Prime Minister Peter Fraser and reported back at a reception held in the Town Hall.

THE BELSEN CAMP

MR. HOLLAND'S REPORT

Some arresting facts concerning the atrocities committed by the Germans at the notorious Belsen concentration camp were given by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Holland) at the civic reception in his honour in the Town Hall last night. Mr. Holland visited the camp with Mr. F. W. Doidge, M.P. for Tauranga.

It was wrong to suppose, he said, that "this horror camp" had anything to do with the war; it was part and parcel of the peacetime Nazi system. The Nazi method was to club people into submission. Some asked why the Germans if they wished to harm these people did not shoot them. The answer was that that was not the Nazi way. That was not cruel enough. Mr. Holland said that when they visited the camp there were 40,000 inmates, of whom 23,000 were women and 500 were children. In the first 18 days after the camp was overrun the British buried 22,000 bodies. The only crime these people had committed was that they differed from the German Government. But the children could not have differed from the Government.

Mr. Holland described some of the pitiful scenes he had seen at the camp and said there were some things which he could not tell them. "Everything that has been said about Belsen," he added, "is true, and a great many other things are true, but they are unthinkable and unprintable." It was part of the Nazi system that the Nazis were determined, if they had had their way, to impose on the rest of the world for daring to disagree with their Government.

Mr. Holland said that he and Mr. Doidge had gone to Belsen at the request of the Prime Minister (Mr. Fraser), who was in San Francisco and was unable to visit the camp. Mr. Fraser had asked him to go there so that on his return to New Zealand he would be able to tell the people the truth about the camp. He had never had an experience like it in his life. "I mention these things," he added, "in order that we may organise in the future so that these things can never happen again."

Source: 'The Belsen Camp'. (1945, June 15). Evening Post, Volume CXXXIX, Issue 140, page 6. https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/EP19450615.2.86

SOURCE E: RSA resolution

Resolution by the Returned Servicemen's Association (RSA) made in July 1945.

Any person or persons who arrived in New Zealand from Germany, Austria, Hungary or Italy since 1939 must return to their own countries within two years after hostilities with Germany have ceased and they should be allowed to take out of New Zealand the same amount of money or property or both that they declared to the Customs Department on entering New Zealand; any further money or property that they possess to be realised and the proceeds handed to the New Zealand Government for distribution among needy wives and dependents of those who fought while the enemy aliens enjoyed peace and plenty in New Zealand.

Source: The New Zealand Jewish Chronicle. (1945, August). p. 234

SOURCE F: Prime Minister Peter Fraser - speech

Prime Minister Peter Fraser gave a speech at a civic reception in Auckland on his return from the San Francisco Conference, on 5 July, 1945.

'If in this country, a spirit of animosity and hatred against any race raised its head, that would be a triumph of Nazism or fascism, though they have been stamped out in Germany. I say that because it is easy to stir the feelings which ended in cruelties and concentration camps in Germany. I speak that as a word of warning. I hope that nowhere will any section of the community or any individual make any attack upon any of our people and particularly on strangers in our midst to whom we have given refuge.'

Source: Beaglehole, A. (2015). A Small Price to Pay: Refugees from Hitler in New Zealand 1936-46. Bridget Williams Books.

SOURCE G: Director of Employment – statement

In 1946, the Director of Employment informed the Acting Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department what they believed should be the immigration policy on post-war refugees.

It is considered that New Zealanders and British immigrants should obtain preference in filling the more attractive jobs in the community. If we are obliged to accept a number of refugees, these people would be more easily assimilated if the selection is largely restricted to the unskilled types who are prepared to accept employment in heavy industries. It is felt that professionals and highly skilled technical personnel are more likely to prove difficult to assimilate in that before long they would desire to embark on their own account as employers of labour.

Archives New Zealand, LI 22/1/27, Part 1, Director of Employment to Acting Permanent Head, Prime Minister's Department, 25 October 1946

SOURCE H: Māori Battalion soldier remembered after liberating concentration camp in Northern Italy – website article

Māori Battalion soldier remembered after liberating concentration camp in northern Italy

Sunday, 30 January 2022 • By Mārena Mane

The Holocaust saw more than 11 million lives lost at the hands of German forces in World War II.

To honour those who passed, those who survived and New Zealand's contribution to the war effort, a remembrance day was held at the Auckland War Memorial Museum on Thursday - which was also the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Among people gathered at the museum, was a survivor of the holocaust, and a daughter of a late 28th Māori Battalion soldier.

Born in Budapest, Hungary, Vera Krukziener, a survivor of the holocaust, managed to escape the German forces with her parents. “I was 6-years-old when German forces entered and occupied my hometown. Today, I’d like to tell you about the people in my life whose acts, bravery and resistance saved my life against the Nazis,” she recalls.

Private Tahu Pōtiki Hopkinson

Risiera di San Sabba was a concentration camp in Trieste in northern Italy. Gaye Stanley’s late father, Private Tahu Pōtiki Hopkinson, was a member of the 28th Māori Battalion and served in D Company’s 18 Platoon. In 1994 he gave a heartbreaking account of what he found.

Stanley, of Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mutunga and Ngāti Toa, says her father, who died in 2013, was very proud to fight in the Māori Battalion but rarely spoke about his personal experience of war. “My father and his fellow Ngāi Tahu comrades in arms from 18 platoon were part of the contingent who liberated Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste in May 1945.”

“Not being able to let people in weighed heavily on my father and the other soldiers because he realised that the Jewish customs were similar to Māori. They wished they could have done more to help. To go out and be with the whānau pani (bereaved families).”

Chief of Army, Major General Boswell, spoke about New Zealand's commitment as an allied force and the impact of war on soldiers. “There are some quite horrific descriptions of our soldiers as they closed with the concentration camps, and some of the experiences they had and the horrors they’ve witnessed. And we can only imagine how traumatic that would have been at that time and the challenges they’ve had in dealing with that in the years after the war,” Major General Boswell says.

After returning home from the war, Private Hopkinson married his wife Joy and became a devoted father. Stanley recalls one of her fondest memories of her father. “He insisted on coming to my first day of high school at St Margaret’s College, that he wanted to be with us. He was incredibly proud of his children, of his family and that’s my proudest memory of him,” she says.

Source: *Māori Battalion soldier remembered after liberating concentration camp in northern Italy*. (2022, January 30). Te Ao Māori News. https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2022/01/30/maori-battalion-soldier-remembered-after-liberating-concentration-camp-in-northern-italy/

SOURCE I: Various

New Zealand's Jewish communities were actively seeking the entry of refugees and Holocaust survivors, before and after the war. Their efforts were tempered by considerations of what was acceptable to the New Zealand government.

Rabbi S. Katz, Chairman Wellington Jewish Refugee Committee, 1938

> Mass migration is not sought and the life history and capabilities of every immigrant will be known and vouched for.

(*New Zealand Jewish Review*, October 1938, statement by Rabbi S. Katz, Chairman Wellington Jewish Refugee Committee, p.17)

Vera Ziman, Auckland Jewish Welfare Society, 1930s

> We were bombarded by people in distress, but still we tried to obtain and check their credentials. Yet it was so difficult for us living in security to judge; it wasn't easy to get the true credentials of desperate people. But we tried, and we tried to get people who would be of value to New Zealand. We were very good New Zealanders.

(Recollections of Vera Ziman, interviewed by Ann Beaglehole, 6 November 1984)

Mrs O.E. Heymann, member of deputation to Prime Minister, Peter Fraser; Minister of Justice, H. G. R. Mason; and Minister of Internal Affairs, W. E. Perry, on the strong desire of refugees to become New Zealand citizens

> They wanted to feel that they belonged somewhere. In allowing them to come to New Zealand they have been given freedom, but now they asked for equality, to allow those who have proved themselves worthy to become citizens of the country.

(Archives New Zealand, PM 89/2/4, part 2, deputation on the future status of refugees in New Zealand, statement by Mrs O. E. Heymann, a refugee)

Continued…

Jewish Communities of New Zealand, 'Memorandum to the Select Committee on Dominion Population', April 1946, on Jewish immigration

After the war, a parliamentary select committee was set up 'to consider the ways and means of increasing the population of the Dominion'. Immigration was one of the issues considered by the committee. The four New Zealand Jewish communities submitted a memorandum to the committee. Among the reasons offered in support of the migration of the relatives of Jews living in New Zealand were: 'the saving of the remnants of European Jewry' and 'the stabilising effect' that the reunion of families would have on the lives of those already here.

> The Jew who has suffered agonies about the fate of his nearest and dearest in Hitler-dominated Europe, has never been able to enjoy wholeheartedly the freedom and the plenty which were denied to those he loved.
>
> We fully realise that New Zealand must consider the question of immigration solely from the viewpoint of her own requirements of people who will help her solve population problems such as defence, labour and the establishment of secondary industries.

The memorandum emphasised that the prospective migrants would be carefully selected to make good New Zealand citizens. If elderly, they would be supported by their New Zealand families and would not become a burden on the state. All the newcomers would 'bring a wealth of cultural knowledge or industrial experience from which New Zealand is bound to benefit'. Detailed information was provided by the Jewish communities regarding the applicants they wished to bring to New Zealand: 340 of the applicants were close relatives of New Zealand Jews. The majority were young, youngish or middle-aged. They included tradesmen, engineers, mechanics, applicants with horticultural-type skills, office workers, dressmakers or milliners, domestic workers and nurses. Importantly, in view of the housing shortage, the Jewish community offered to take responsibility for housing any newcomers.

(Jewish Communities of New Zealand, Memorandum to the Select Committee on Dominion Population, April 1946)

Conclusions of the Select Committee, 1946

> No person who has followed the trials of the Jewish race over the past decade can but feel considerable sympathy for them ... [but] in view of the fact that matters of high government policy are involved and that the Government has, over the years, particularly prior to the war, accepted a number of such Jewish refugees, we think that we will have fulfilled our responsibilities in this regard if we bring this matter to the notice of the Government. In view of the housing situation and the demand at the present time for special types of workers, we doubt whether it is advisable to recommend preferential treatment to any particular type of immigrant.

(*Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, Vol. 5, 1946, 'Report of the Select Committee on Dominion Population', pp.100-117)

SOURCE J: Various - testimony

Dora Suuring, Steven Sedley, Meike van der Schaaf, Bob and Freda Narev are all New Zealand Holocaust survivors. Here they each tell their stories of surviving the Holocaust.

Source: *NZ Survivors*. (n.d.). Holocaust Centre of New Zealand. https://www.holocaustcentre.org.nz/nz-survivors.html

SOURCE K: Contributions to New Zealand life – webpage

Countries of origin of refugees who entered New Zealand 1933-1942

Country	Number
Austria	27
Czechoslovakia	126
Germany	874
Hungary	85
Poland	142
Romania	9
Stateless	15
Total	1278
After the war	300
Total 1933-1948	1578

…

Contributions to New Zealand life

In the 20th century the children and grandchildren of Jews who had succeeded in business flourished in other fields. New Zealand's first woman doctor, Emily Siedeberg, was Jewish; so was the first woman lawyer, Ethel Benjamin. Michael Myers became chief justice in 1929. One 20th-century arrival, Fred Turnovky, is better known as a supporter of the arts than for the success of his leather business. He was one of many Jewish refugees from Nazism who did much to enrich the cultural life of Wellington during and after the Second World War.

….

Esther arrived in New Zealand as a child in 1971. She has found that her Jewish background not only complements the New Zealand part of her identity; it has helped her to understand the country's different cultures:
'I have found quite a few similarities between Maori and Jewish culture … the whole family thing, the whole thing when someone dies, the family gets together for a length of time. The importance of the land, that was a big thing in Israel.'

Source: Levine, S. (n.d.) 'Jews – 20th and 21st-century immigration.' Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/jews/page-2

SOURCE L: Inge Woolf: a life dedicated to tolerance and diversity – website article (excerpts)

The Holocaust Centre of New Zealand was established in 2007 to remember and honour those killed in the Holocaust - in particular, the families of survivors in New Zealand. Founded by a small group of Holocaust survivors, children of survivors and refugees, their purpose was inspired by Hanka and George Pressburg, the pioneers of Holocaust education in New Zealand. The Centre was officially opened by the Governor General of New Zealand (Hon. Sir Anand Satyanand) on 15 April, 2007.
In his speech, the Governor-General noted: "*The Centre will enhance the New Zealand understanding of the Holocaust"*. From the beginning, Holocaust education has been the Centre's central focus. Every year, hundreds of students visit from around the country - many study an aspect of the Holocaust within the context of the New Zealand school curriculum.

Inge Woolf: a life dedicated to tolerance and diversity

Nicholas Boyack 06:00, Mar 06 2021

Inge Woolf was surrounded by tragedy, but her life was a case study in tolerance, and support for humanity and all its diversity. A child survivor of the Holocaust, she dedicated her later life to making sure the lessons learned from World War II, and the Nazi genocide of six million Jews, is never forgotten. Daughter Deborah Hart noted with pride that Inge had co-founded the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand in her 70s, an age at which most people are putting their feet up. "She was determined, a grateful Kiwi, a leader, and she knew how to live life to the full, whatever adversity was thrown at her." Adversity was something Inge knew a lot about.

Married to Ron Woolf, she had to deal with his sudden death in 1987, when he was photographing Wellington from a helicopter.

SIMON WOOLF

Holocaust survivor Inge Woolf, left, and her daughter Deborah Hart, who is the board chairwoman of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand.

It was the adversity she faced as a youngster, however, that would forever define her. Ingeborg Ponger was born in Vienna to parents Evzen and Grete. In later years she would joke that her "timing was all off" as anti-semitism and the Nazis swept through Europe. The family business was looted by the Nazis, and overnight the family were destitute. They converted to Christianity to try to save themselves and moved to Prague, as Hitler had not yet reached there and they had Czech citizenship.
Then in an audacious move, they boarded a train to the heart of Nazi Germany – Berlin – and from there caught a plane to England, pretending they were going on holiday. Living in England as a refugee, Inge had a happy upbringing and did not know she was Jewish until the war was over. Her parents believed she was safer not knowing her true identity.

The family moved to Auckland in 1957 to be nearer to relatives Paul Stanton and Teddy Stiassny. In 1958, Inge moved to Wellington to take a job as a buyer for the DIC department store.

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It is impossible to tell the story of Inge without emphasising the importance of her relationship with Wellington-born Ron Woolf. Theirs was a true love story. They met on Ron's birthday, and years later he would joke that she was his birthday present.

In 2004, Ron's gravestone was vandalised in the Makara Jewish cemetery in an attack where swastikas were sprayed on damaged headstones. Typically, Inge reacted not with anger but instead with a determination to create something positive from what had happened. The result was the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, which opened in Wellington in 2007, with a simple message: "Today the lessons of the Holocaust are poignant to combat increasing intolerance and racism, to teach the value of human rights and the celebration of diversity."

In 2008, she said the sight of Nazis waving swastikas had instilled a fear that remained with her all her life, but also instilled the need to foster tolerance at every opportunity. She said she was on a personal mission to combat racism, intolerance and anti-semitism. "When you get bullying in the classroom, or people getting ostracised because of their race, then you have to realise what can happen if that's taken to the extreme."

As founding director of the centre, Inge established it with a dedicated group of survivors, refugees, and descendants. She served as a board member, fundraiser, and educator. She was often called on by the media to comment about anti-semitism and would speak freely about the need to remember the lessons learned from the Nazi genocide. She also served on the advisory board of the Anne Frank Travelling Exhibition.

Since 2004, Inge has shared her testimony about her and her family's experiences with thousands of students and members of the public. Her message was about "remembrance and education" and, without her, the Holocaust Centre would not have been the success it has been.

"Despite being in the Holocaust, she was determined not to let that define her, but she could make the world a better place, which she achieved," Devoy said. She was a 2019 finalist in the Women of Influence Awards – Community Hero category, and more recently was a finalist for the Welly Awards for community service.

Source: Boyack, N. (2021, March 5). *Inge Woolf: a life dedicated to tolerance and diversity*. Stuff. https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/124375157/inge-woolf-a-life-dedicated-to-tolerance-and-diversity