

FACING THE PAST

Looking Back at Refugee Childhood in New Zealand

Ann Beaglehole

Submitted for the degree of PhD in History
Victoria University of Wellington
1990

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
Review of Literature	
Methodology	
Omissions	
Other Methodological Considerations	
My Perspective	
2 DIFFERENT WORLDS	34
Refugee Worlds	
New Zealand Worlds	
3 THE CHILDREN	79
Being Different	
Stresses	
Religion	
4 REFUGEE CHILDREN AT SCHOOL	112
Teachers' Views	
The Children's Experiences at School	
5 ADOLESCENCE: THE GAP WIDENS	160
Strains and Stresses	
Not Knowing the Rules	
Connecting	

6 LANGUAGE: TO RENOUNCE OR TO REMEMBER	179
Attitudes	
'Forgetting' First Languages	
Learning English	
Barriers	
7 FACING THE PAST	198
Talking About the Past	
Legacies	
Connecting Past and Present	
8 THE AMBIGUITIES OF ASSIMILATION: THE SECOND GENERATION AS ADULTS	230
Jewish Identity	
'Not Quite New Zealanders'	
The Third Generation	
CONCLUSION	281
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES	286
LIST OF APPENDICES	307
APPENDICES	308
SOURCES	313
BIBLIOGRAPHY	315

ABSTRACT

The experiences of child refugees and children of refugees from Hitler growing up in New Zealand in the period from the late 1930s to the end of the 1960s are the subject of this study. By means of tape-recorded conversations with the former children, now men and women in their thirties, forties and fifties, the study focuses, in particular, on two issues. First, the lingering legacy of Nazi persecution, whether it was experienced directly or indirectly by the children or their parents; second, the effects of growing up, often isolated from others of a similar background, in a monocultural country by and large free from overt anti-Semitism but intolerant of cultural differences.

The first chapter is concerned with the aims of the study, with methodology and with a survey of relevant literature. Some aspects of recent Jewish history and the Central and Eastern European refugee world are examined in Chapter 2. The features of New Zealand society most closely interwoven with the interviewees' experiences are also considered in that chapter. The third chapter turns to the memories, interpretations and explanations of the former refugees and children of refugees. It introduces the people in the study and some of the main concerns and preoccupations of their childhood. Chapter 4 is about refugee children and children of refugees at school, Chapter 5 about some aspects of a refugee adolescence and Chapter 6 about language, culture and identity. Chapter 7 looks specifically at the impact of a traumatic history on the people in the study. Chapter 8 is concerned with adult issues in the lives of the interviewees. It examines ethnic identity, cultural transmission and assimilation. The study concludes with biographical information about the interviewees which fill in some of the details not covered in the text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the many people who in various ways helped to make this study possible. Most of all, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the people I interviewed - first and second generation refugees - who shared with me their thoughts and experiences about the war, life in New Zealand and having a Jewish background. I would like to thank all these people most sincerely.

I would also like to offer my thanks to the teachers who spoke to me about their refugee pupils. Their insights and comments were of great assistance. I am grateful too for the editorial work of Margot Schwass and Jane Parkin on the book version of this thesis. Their comments about the book have been very helpful for the thesis too.

Without David Beaglehole's assistance with word processing, this thesis would not have been completed. I am very grateful for his help and for his patience. Ben Beaglehole proof-read the manuscript. I am very grateful for his help too.

Finally, I would like to thank the people who read the various drafts of this study and gave very helpful suggestions - especially Malcolm McKinnon - but also Lucie Halberstam, Jim Urry and Judy Sedley.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

And the children are a triumph: passing through New Zealand schools, completely accepted by their schoolmates, happy and successful, they are already New Zealanders, but New Zealanders who have blended something of great European traditions of culture with the British tradition.

The words are from R. A. Lochore's (1951) book *From Europe to New Zealand: An Account of our Continental European Settlers*.¹ The children whose successful integration is described as a 'triumph' are the children of the pre-war Jewish refugees from Hitler. In his book, which was the only study available about this group of refugees for many years, Lochore, who shared many of the notions of the superiority of British people and Northern Europeans over other 'races', expressed considerable doubts about the 'success' as immigrants of the first generation of refugees. However, he seemed to have few such concerns about the second generation. 'They are', he wrote, 'the real success of this migration of people who were wholly unsuited to our conditions'.

In my (1988) book about refugees from Hitler in New Zealand, *A Small Price to Pay*,² I too looked at some aspects of the early years of this group of refugees in New Zealand. Although the majority of people interviewed in that book were adults when they reached New Zealand, some who were children or adolescents were also included. In this sequel to that study, I decided to focus on the experiences of that younger generation of refugees as well as on the New Zealand-born children of refugees. How did these children fare in New Zealand? What were their lives like? What kind of New Zealanders did they become?

Conversations with the former children, now in their thirties, forties and fifties, form the basis of this study of a group of people linked by shared memories of a mainly

¹R. A. Lochore, *From Europe to New Zealand: An Account of our Continental European Settlers*, Wellington 1951, page 88.

²A. Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay: Refugees from Hitler in New Zealand, 1936-1946*, Wellington 1988.

Jewish, Continental European-refugee background³ who grew up in New Zealand in the decades between the 1930s and the 1960s. Included are not only those born in New Zealand to parents who came as refugees from Nazi persecution in the 1930s but also those born in Europe before and during the war, some of whom were old enough to have vivid recollections of the lives they led before emigration. Children who were older (in their teens) when they arrived in New Zealand, before or after the war, and completed their education in New Zealand form a subgroup. For the purposes of this study, the members of these different groups are all termed 'second generation'. The third generation, who are briefly discussed at the end of the study, consists of any children born to the second generation group.

This study has both a general and a specific intention. The general aim is to examine some aspects of the life of refugee children and children of refugees. A number of them either stood out as different in the very monocultural society that New Zealand was, especially during the thirties, forties and fifties, or perceived themselves as different, although this difference was not always obvious to their New Zealand peers. The diverse ways of reacting to feeling 'out on a limb' or to being considered 'strange', the struggles to belong and to be accepted, the choice to remain outsiders and most important, the costs of assimilation and other issues concerning the identity and cultural adjustment of second generation immigrants are examined.

While the focus of this study is on how individuals experience and interpret historical events and influences, it is also about the interaction between them and the country and people they encountered. A particular view of New Zealand society emerges, the perspective of outsiders. This dual focus means that the changing life history of the respondents (as they grow from childhood to adulthood) reflects some aspects of the social history of New Zealand during those years.

The specific purpose of the study is to attempt to isolate and examine what was particular to growing up with a Jewish refugee background. What were some of the lingering effects of the recent past - of the uprooting, the persecution, the killing of millions of Jews, including family members of the majority of the people in this study?

³There is some difficulty with terminology. The refugees thought of themselves as Europeans not as Continental Europeans, a term some of them disliked. But because Pakeha New Zealanders also often define themselves as Europeans, the terms 'Continental' or 'Central' or 'Eastern' European are used to denote the background of the people in this study.

The accounts of those interviewed reveal a number of common threads which this thesis develops. In particular, two connecting themes are important. The first of these concerns the impact of the lack of continuity between the world of their parents or of their own childhood and their New Zealand upbringing. Many other immigrant, refugee or exile communities derive an identity by maintaining links with the people and the places from where they or their families originated. This was not and is still not possible for many of the people in this study. Their roots and connections with their past were utterly obliterated. An East European Jew in a study by Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*, spoke of this loss and its implications for old people:

It is not the worst thing that can happen for a man to grow old and die. But here is the hard part. When my mind goes back there now, there are no roads going in or out. No way back remains, because nothing is there, no continuation ... and when I ... remember the way they lived is gone forever, wiped out like you would erase a line of writing, then it means another thing altogether for me to accept leaving this life.⁴

Discontinuity has significant implications for the young as well as for the old and some of these are explored in this study.

The break with the past in many of the families was all the more pronounced because of the first generation's conviction that the calamities of the past had to be put behind them. The adults saw their task and that of their children as rapidly becoming New Zealanders. The former world of security had been shattered. A new world had to be created. But the refugees were ambivalent. The second generation very often received conflicting messages about remembering or forgetting the past. The adults' reaction to New Zealand was also mixed. The country was a haven, but it was also alien and in many ways deficient. The responses of the second generation to such attitudes were complicated. These too are explored in this study.

The second theme, linked to the first, which emerges from the interviews, concerns belonging or not belonging in New Zealand. This is not to say that the majority of the second generation regarded themselves as outsiders in the country in which they grew up,

⁴Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*, New York 1978, pages 73-74.

but to suggest that for many of them an identity as a New Zealander like any other was not to be taken for granted. When considering this theme of second generation marginality, the age of the people concerned has some relevance. The age they were when they came to New Zealand and the fact of being born in New Zealand needs to be taken into account. Just as significant is the time of their upbringing. Those who came to New Zealand in the late 1930s, whose most acute experiences of cultural adjustment were in the forties and fifties, had to adapt to a very different New Zealand from the one in which those growing up later found themselves.

The predominant impression conveyed by those who were children during the thirties, forties and fifties was that in various ways cultural differences were not welcomed by the New Zealanders with whom they came into contact. A child of refugees from Germany who spent his childhood in a small New Zealand town during the late thirties and early forties spoke of the 'putting down of difference'. His words were echoed by a number of the people in this study. Interviewees who grew up in the 1960s were less likely to encounter such negative attitudes towards cultural differences.

However, the strong urge of children and adolescents to conform to their peers regardless of the degree to which cultural differences are scorned or accepted by them emerges from the interviews. A pervasive impression is of interviewees' struggle to make sense of the New Zealand world outside their homes in order to be able to fit in with it. Some children were overwhelmed by a sense of all the big and small things which they did not know about this New Zealand world. They could not ask their parents about them because the adults knew less than the children. Nor could they ask New Zealanders because the foreign children did not, in fact, know what it was that they did not know and needed to know. They were only aware that important aspects of daily living did not make sense, and that 'fitting in' sometimes continued to elude them in spite of their best efforts.

What were the consequences for second generation refugees of a background of persecution, of the discontinuity and of the struggles for acceptance and belonging? The recollections of interviewees convey the stresses and conflicts of life in refugee families struggling to make a new life in New Zealand, as well as the many adjustments and accommodations, major and minor, made by refugee families. The efforts, usually successful, of refugees and their children, haunted by the past, to adapt to the present and to recreate a lost world of security are indicative of the strength and recuperative power of

the refugees. Security was, to some extent, achieved through assimilation. But there were cultural losses.

The questions raised in this study are complex and its findings evade neat categorizations. Clear patterns, unambiguous connections and firm conclusions about second generation refugees in New Zealand do not leap out from the material gathered. For example, there is nothing much to distinguish those children or their families who seemed to adjust with more ease in New Zealand from those who adjusted with more difficulty; nor were those children who reacted more positively to being different in a homogeneous society markedly different in their background from those who were overwhelmed by shame and embarrassment. The findings of this study do not permit such distinctions and generalizations. What is most striking is the individuality and hence the diversity of individual experiences.

The diversity is evident in relation to the two separate but related aspects of this study - the shared history of Jewish persecution and the experience of growing up in New Zealand with a different cultural background. For example, one woman spoke of finding in the records of *Yad Vashem* (the museum of the Holocaust in Israel) information not revealed to her by her refugee mother about the many members of her family killed by the Nazis. For this interviewee, her mother's attempt to protect her from damaging knowledge notwithstanding, the Holocaust is not buried history but a current preoccupation. This was true for many of the people in the study. But there were also a small number of interviewees for whom the Nazi past was a distant shadow throughout their childhood and has remained far removed from and unrelated to their life in New Zealand.

Interviewees' experiences of growing up in New Zealand with a foreign/Jewish background differed widely too. One interviewee spoke of being very grateful her children did not have to go through 'the hell' she herself had undergone as a child of refugees. While the memories of several in the study were equally unhappy, such feelings were entirely absent in others who echoed the words of the man who observed: 'This has been a good country to grow up in'.

Review of Literature

The concerns of this study - the generational effects of refugee experiences and of the Holocaust, notions of assimilation, identity and belonging as they affect second generation immigrants - have received attention from writers and scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Consequently, material drawn from diverse bodies of literature in different countries has some relevance to this study.

Ethnicity and Assimilation

Current studies about the plight of refugee children in various parts of the world challenge the assumption, previously held by the writer and others (including first generation refugees) that children usually adjust more easily than adults to the trauma of war, migration and settlement in a new country. Young children are by no means 'clean slates' who necessarily assimilate without difficulty, and older children and adolescents may be particularly vulnerable because, unlike adults, they lack a solid past as a point of reference.⁵ It is evident that 'most children learn to smile and to speak a foreign language ...'⁶ Certainly, children learn the language of host countries quicker than adults but apart from that fact, very little is known about the adjustment of children as refugees. The mainly psychologically or psychosocially oriented studies found by the writer show the stresses and difficulties of refugee children and make observations about the paucity of research in the field of migration, ethnicity and language acquisition as it relates to children.

Studies of different ethnic groups and about ethnic relations in New Zealand, Australia and the United States are particularly relevant to this study when they discuss the situation of second generation immigrants. A number of these studies contain observations about the marginality of the second generation and about intergenerational conflicts. The

⁵On this subject, see for example, Maurice Eisenbruch, 'Can Homesickness Kill?', Max Abbott ed., *Refugee Resettlement and Wellbeing*, proceedings of the First National Conference on Refugee Mental Health held at Wellington, Mental Health Foundation, Auckland 1989, pages 101-117.

⁶Margaret McCallin, 'Trauma Amongst Refugee Children: The Work of the International Catholic Child Bureau', Diana Miserek ed., *The Trauma of Exile*, Dordrecht 1988, page 247. In Leo Eitinger, David Schwartz eds., *Strangers in the World*, Bern 1981, immigrant parents and their children are also discussed in terms of the mental health issues related to dislocation and immigration.

notion of people 'torn between two cultures'⁷ is a much discussed phenomenon. '... the children have to find a modus vivendi between their parents' possible unassimilative tendencies and their own assimilative inclinations'.⁸ The findings of some of the studies show that the second generation eventually resolve this conflict and emerge with a satisfactory dual identity. Other studies note that the second generation fail to participate in or belong fully to either their parents' culture or to the dominant society.⁹

Two New Zealand studies - of the Gujarati and Chinese communities - focus on assimilation and dual identity and include an analysis of the second generation members of these communities. Of the Gujaratis in Wellington, Lalita Vanmali Kasanji writes: 'Many of the second generation feel they do not fully belong to their Indian community nor to the New Zealand European society, therefore they begin to feel like "marginal men"'.¹⁰ Kwen Fee Lian in 'A Study of Identity within the Chinese Community in Wellington' writes of 'the conflicts and tensions generated in second generation Chinese as a result of competing realities' deriving from their 'bicultural socialization'.¹¹ One of the key difference between the subjects in these studies and second generation refugees from Europe resides in the visibility of their respective ethnicities. As Kasanji comments: 'The Gujaratis cannot avoid their ethnicity and identity with their ethnic group because of their distinct physical and cultural differences from the New Zealand European population'.¹² However, Kwen Fee Lian's observation about the 'siege mentality'¹³ of the Chinese community as a consequence of anti-Chinese sentiments does to some extent apply to the people in the present study.

Studies of second generation Pacific Island immigrants in New Zealand reveal similar patterns. In 1966, approximately fifty percent of the Samoan population of New

⁷Ruth Johnston, *Future Australians: Immigrant Children in Perth, Western Australia*, Canberra, 1972, page xxiii.

⁸ibid.

⁹For example, a study by Willie Mae Gillis, *The Poles in Wellington, New Zealand*, Victoria University College Publication in Psychology, no. 5, 1954, shows the latter and a study by Lalita Vanmali Kasanji: 'The Gujaratis in Wellington: the Study of an Ethnic Group', Victoria University of Wellington, M.A. thesis in Sociology, 1982, the former (although only after considerable struggle).

¹⁰Kasanji, 'The Gujaratis in Wellington', page ii.

¹¹Kwen Fee Lian, 'A Study of Identity within the Chinese Community in Wellington', Victoria University M.A. thesis in Sociology, 1980, page 124.

¹²Kasanji, 'The Gujaratis in Wellington', page iii.

¹³Kwen Fee Lian, 'A Study of Identity within the Chinese Community in Wellington', page 59.

Zealand was under the age of sixteen and the great majority of these children had been born in New Zealand.¹⁴ A member of the Samoan community interviewed in David Pitt and Cluny Macpherson's study of that community in New Zealand, *Emerging Pluralism*, spoke of some of the problems of the children: '... the people who were born and brought up in Samoa are well grounded in the Samoan culture and the Samoan way of life, whereas our children who were born here in New Zealand are in the air. They don't really know what to do; they're living in a grey world, a different world ...'¹⁵ The authors of *Emerging Pluralism* conclude that young Samoans who get into trouble in New Zealand are those who have become separated from *fa'a Samoa* and the two core institutions of Samoan society, the 'aiga and the church.¹⁶ In their view, serious communication blocks between the generations also contribute to the problems of Samoan youth.¹⁷ In his later study of the Samoan family in New Zealand, Cluny MacPherson pursued this issue further, making observations about intergenerational difficulties deriving from the different expectations of migrant parents and their New Zealand-born children. He also discusses the various conflicts in the lives of the second generation who have grown up exposed to two cultural models.¹⁸

Other research about Pacific Island people in New Zealand highlights similar conflicts. A number of studies consider the part played by the lack of knowledge of their familial language in the second generation's feelings of marginality. G. A. L. Hunkin observes on the basis of his 1985 study of New Zealand-born Samoan students that: 'they regard the Samoan language as very crucial to their identity and self-esteem. Yet only one of them could speak Samoan fluently, a situation that can only be described as tragic'.¹⁹

By contrast, there was little concern about language shift among the first and second generation Dutch immigrants interviewed by Alberdina P. M. Kroef.²⁰ The attitudes in that study are closer to those of Continental European Jewish refugees and their

¹⁴David Pitt, Cluny Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in New Zealand*, Auckland 1974, page 54.

¹⁵Pitt, Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism*, pages 54-55.

¹⁶*ibid.*, page 111.

¹⁷*ibid.*, page 112.

¹⁸Cluny Macpherson, 'The Polynesian Migrant Family: A Samoan Case Study', Peggy G. Koopman Boyden ed., *Families in New Zealand Society*, Wellington 1978.

¹⁹G. A. L. Hunkin, 'Being Samoan Means Knowing my Language', Department of Education, *New Settlers and Multicultural Education Issues*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1987, pages 28-34.

²⁰Alberdina P. M. Kroef, 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants in New Zealand', University of Auckland M.A. thesis, 1977.

children, many of whom had reservations (though often for different reasons) about retaining German, Czech, Hungarian or Polish.

A shared language and culture is only one of the manifestations of ethnicity. Some others are descent, religion, nationality and separateness due to disadvantage or discrimination.²¹ The ethnic consciousness of the people in this study is based on one or other or a combinations of these elements.

There is a vast and bewildering literature about the meaning of ethnicity. The problem for the researcher is too much material. Although some of this literature is a useful point of reference for this study, there will be no attempt to do a comprehensive survey of it as ethnicity is not its primary focus. One book of particular interest is Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1970 study of ethnicity in New York City *Beyond the Melting Pot*. The idea of the melting pot derives from the very successful play by Israel Zangwill, which was first performed (on Broadway) in 1908. In that play, a Russian Jewish immigrant who had escaped to New York City from the pogroms of his homeland expresses exultation of his new country with the following words:

... America is God's crucible, the great melting pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! ... here you stand in your fifty groups with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries, but you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to - these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! German and Frenchman, Jews and Russians - into the crucible with you all! God is making the American.²²

However, as the writers of *Beyond the Melting Pot* observe, the point about the melting pot is that it did not happen. 'It is true that language and culture are very largely lost in the first and second generation', yet in all the different ethnic groups can be observed 'the

²¹Jean Martin, 'The Ethnic Dimension: Papers on Ethnicity and Pluralism', S. Encel ed., *Studies in Society*, no. 9, Sydney 1981, page 16, writes of ethnicity in these terms.

²²Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot*, quoted in Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City*, second edition, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1970, page 289.

disinclination of [even] the third and fourth generation of newcomers to blend into a standard, uniform national type'.

The principal ethnic groups of New York city will be seen maintaining a distinct identity, albeit a changing one, from one generation to the next. One group is not as another and, notably where religious and cultural values are involved, these differences are a matter of choice as well as of heritage, of new creation in a new country, as well as of the maintenance of old values and forms.²³

The findings of a study by Marion Berghahn of German-Jewish refugees in England are, despite the very different setting and subject, similar. Berghahn's three generation study of assimilation and integration of refugees from Nazism who emigrated to England in the 1930s shows that a specific German-Jewish identity survived in England 'against great odds'. Berghahn's main conclusion is that 'a new ethnicity develops which integrates various elements of both (the German-Jewish and the English) cultures in a unique way; in other words, the emergent ethnic culture is not identical with either'.²⁴

The New Zealand situation was in significant ways entirely different for the refugees from Hitler who settled in this country. There was no cohesive refugee community and many refugee families did not belong to the Jewish community. Generally, the second generation of Central and Eastern European refugees did not grow up within an ethnic community in the way that many of Berghahn's interviewees did, or, for example, second generation Chinese, Indian, or Samoan children usually do in New Zealand.²⁵ Some individuals and families knew and socialized with each other, others maintained sporadic contact, but often the second generation grew up isolated from others of a similar background because the number of refugees in total was not large or concentrated enough to permit the groupings which make social relationships as a community possible. The children, the second generation, interacted mainly with New

²³ibid., pages xcvii-xcviii.

²⁴Marion Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England: The Ambiguities of Assimilation*, London 1984, page 251.

²⁵In a recent book by David Pearson, the development of the community associations of New Zealand's larger ethnic groups (Chinese, Indian and Pacific Island) is examined; David Pearson, *A Dream Deferred: The Origins of Ethnic Conflict in New Zealand*, Wellington 1990, pages 199-206.

Zealanders throughout their growing up years. The forces of assimilation were consequently more powerful in New Zealand than elsewhere. Nonetheless, even in New Zealand, complete assimilation has by no means taken place. This study looks at the nature of the cultural retention that has occurred.

Jews in New Zealand

Information about Jews in New Zealand is scarce. Of the studies that are available none, apart from the writer's book *A Small Price to Pay* (referred to earlier), focus on Jewish refugees in general or on refugees from Hitler in particular. While *A Small Price to Pay* touches on the experiences of refugees who were children or adolescents when they arrived in New Zealand, its main concern is with immigration policy and with the experiences of adult refugees. Nonetheless, in spite of its different focus, *A Small Price to Pay* is important background for this study. A number of other works are also of interest.

The major work about Jews in New Zealand remains L. M. Goldman's 1957 book *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*²⁶ which provides a general overview. M. S. Pitt's 'Early History of the Wellington Jewish Community'²⁷ is an interesting early study of the Wellington Jewish community. A more recent sociological picture is obtained from Ann Gluckman and David Pitt's 1985 article 'The Judaic Contribution: the Jewish Community in New Zealand'.²⁸ This paper looks at assimilation and conflict in the community and the writers suggest that the situation of Jews in New Zealand is in many ways quite exceptional, in part because Jews form such a small proportion of the population. (In the 1981 census, 0.1 percent of the total population recorded themselves as Jewish.)²⁹ The writers conclude 'that the Jewish community is really neither assimilated nor separate, neither harmonious nor conflict-ridden' and that 'the community awaits the detailed, intimate and understanding interpretation that the deterministic sociologists so rarely attempt ...'³⁰

²⁶L. M. Goldman, *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*, Wellington 1958.

²⁷M. S. Pitt, 'Early History of the Wellington Jewish Community, 1840-1900', University of New Zealand (Victoria) M.A. thesis in History, 1946.

²⁸Ann Gluckman, David Pitt, 'The Judaic Contribution: the Jewish Community in New Zealand', Brian Colless, Peter Donovan, second edition, *Religion in New Zealand Society*, Palmerston North 1985.

²⁹*ibid.*, pages 143-144.

³⁰*ibid.*, page 152.

The Gluckman/Pitt paper also discusses 'generational conflict', observing that 'many young people are disillusioned with what they take to be the hypocritical attitude of their parents to Judaism and either proceed outside the community or adopt a lifestyle based on a firmer commitment to Jewish values, either in religious or Zionist activities'.³¹

J. M. Jaffe's thesis 'Social Conflicts and Changes in the Auckland Jewish Community' covers similar ground. It looks particularly at the conflicts and problems of identity of younger members of the community and at issues of assimilation and community survival.³² Jaffe's informants were 'thirty young community members' and the study's intention was to probe deeply into the issues referred to. However, because the background of the respondents is not stated and it is not known if any among them had a refugee-immigrant background, it is difficult to relate its conclusions to this study.

One of the most interesting findings of a 1983 survey of 329 members of the Jewish community in the Wellington area concerned the origins of the respondents. It was found that nearly half of those surveyed (forty-seven percent) had been born outside New Zealand 'giving the community a very strong migrant presence'. Sixteen percent were found to have been born in Eastern or Western Europe.³³ When the birth places of the parents of the respondents was considered, it was found that New Zealand as birth place only ranked as fourth of the adults surveyed. 'The most predominant birth place was the Soviet Union (214), followed by the United Kingdom (193). Other significant birth places were Poland (145) and Germany (80). The writers observe:

New Zealand has often been the final destination for Jews whose migration has been in stages. An important part of the migration has been from Europe, especially Eastern Europe to Britain dating from the late nineteenth century. Then migrants, or more often their children, completed the next stage by travelling onto New Zealand during the twentieth century. This gives the Wellington Jewish community a very different profile to any other migrant community in New Zealand, both in the variety of countries of origin, especially for parents (and also for

³¹ibid., page 149.

³²J. M. Jaffe, 'Social Conflicts and Changes in the Auckland Jewish Community', University of Auckland M.A. thesis in Sociology, 1976.

³³M. J. Salinger, D. B. Esterman, D. Levy, L. F. Young, *Wellington Jewry 1983: A Survey of the Jewish Community in the Wellington Area*, Wellington 1985, pages 15-16.

grandparents), and the step-wise nature of the migration. The Indian and Chinese communities do exhibit some of the same characteristics in their migration patterns but not nearly to the same extent.³⁴

In other ways too, the survey portrays the Jewish community as distinctly different from the general population. These are its mature age structure, general affluence and level of education.³⁵

While these conclusions, along with the findings of the other studies about Jews in New Zealand, are interesting, they are of only partial relevance to this study because the populations surveyed are drawn only from people who are members of the established Jewish communities. For example, the Wellington survey was confined to people who were recorded on the mailing lists of the two Hebrew congregations (the Orthodox and the Liberal) and to members of various other Jewish organizations. The interviewees in this study include a far more diverse group of people, most of whom do not belong to Jewish congregations or organizations, but merely have a Jewish background.

Finally, on the subject of New Zealand Jews, a 1982 study by Paul Spoonley and Helen Cox of anti-Semitism in New Zealand since 1945, provides a context for the perceptions of respondents in this study. Spoonley and Cox examine acts of vandalism aimed at Jewish property which have taken place during those years. Such attacks have tended to follow public comment or media programs which have focused on Jews. They also look at some of the groups in New Zealand that have espoused an anti-Semitic ideology. The most significant of these in the post-war period and up until about 1960 was the Social Credit Political League.³⁶

The conclusions of the study are that while 'New Zealand has not experienced the extensive and often violent anti-Semitism that has marked the history of practically every European country, nevertheless, there has been evidence of local anti-Semitism and for the target group, the Jews, any indication of such beliefs and feelings, however minor, is a matter for concern'.³⁷ It is likely that even a small number of anti-Semitic incidents and

³⁴ibid., pages 17-18.

³⁵ibid., page 60.

³⁶Paul Spoonley, Helen Cox, 'Anti-Semitism in New Zealand since 1945', Report no. 11, June 7 1982, New Zealand Jewish Council, Reports and Educational Papers.

³⁷ibid., pages 10-11.

groups would have the effect of reinforcing the anxieties and justifying the siege mentality of New Zealand Jews.

New Zealand Social History

Apart from studies about different ethnic groups in New Zealand and the literature about Jews in New Zealand, already referred to, there is little written in New Zealand social history that is directly pertinent to this study. The book by R. A. Lochore (*From Europe to New Zealand: An Account of our Continental European Settlers*), referred to previously, is of some relevance. One of the chapters of that book focuses on refugees from Hitler. The main interest of the chapter and of the book generally is in the statistical information it contains. The opinions and assumptions about non-British immigrants which also permeate the book reflect views prevalent in New Zealand in the thirties and forties. As such, *From Europe to New Zealand* is useful as social background.

Other works in New Zealand social history which provide background about New Zealand in the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties also have some relevance to the present study because the experiences of the people interviewed need to be seen in the context of the changing social history of New Zealand during their growing up years. *The Oxford History of New Zealand*³⁸ and Nancy Taylor's *The Home Front*³⁹ provide not only facts and figures and information about demographic and other social patterns but also an analysis of the social, political and economic climate. A number of other histories - Lauris Edmond's *Women in Wartime*⁴⁰, Jock Phillips' *A Man's Country?*⁴¹ and Keith Sinclair's *A Destiny Apart*⁴² also provide illuminating background information. Feminist analysis (for example, the writing of Helen May⁴³) contributes to the picture of New Zealand society in the post-war years.

³⁸W. H. Oliver ed., with B. R. Williams, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington 1981.

³⁹Nancy M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*, vols. 1 and 2, Wellington 1986.

⁴⁰Lauris Edmond ed., with Carolyn Milward, *Women in Wartime: New Zealand Women Tell their Story*, Wellington 1986.

⁴¹Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History*, Auckland 1987.

⁴²Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for a National Identity*, Wellington 1986.

⁴³Helen May, 'Motherhood in the 1950s: An Experience of Contradiction', Sue Middleton ed., *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, Wellington 1988, pages 57-71. Helen May's

Recollections of New Zealanders about their childhood - Michael King's *Being Pakeha* ⁴⁴ and Michael Gifkin's *Through the Looking Glass* ⁴⁵, for example - also supply the New Zealand context for the refugee/immigrant experiences of the present study. Because of the lack of detailed, qualitative studies describing and analysing family life in New Zealand during these years (as opposed to large scale sociological surveys), the fragmented and impressionistic picture derived from such accounts is important.

Above all, novels, stories, plays and poems convey the flavour of New Zealand during the period of this study. Janet Frame, Bruce Mason and also Yvonne du Fresne (of the immigrant writers) are among those whose works illustrate the attitudes which prevailed.

Holocaust Studies.

This study is part of a vast literature generated by the Holocaust and its aftermath. That literature includes a very large number of historical studies. Lucy Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* ⁴⁶ and Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* ⁴⁷ (a book which draws on personal memories of the Holocaust as well as written sources) are two books from the many which provide a wide overview.

Stories, poems, biographies, autobiographies and academic research drawn from various fields about all aspects of the genocide of Europe's Jews are important background for this study. It is, however, impracticable here to attempt to refer to even a small portion of that very large literature. As with studies about ethnicity, the problem for the researcher is the overwhelming amount of material of potential interest and relevance.

The growing body of overseas research about the generational effects of the Holocaust, focusing on children of Holocaust survivors, is particularly relevant. 'Child

PhD thesis is also of interest; Helen May, 'Post-War Women 1945-1960 and their Daughters 1970-1985: An Analysis of Contradiction, Continuity and Change in Two Generations of Pakeha Women as Mothers, Wives and Workers', Victoria University of Wellington PhD thesis in Anthropology, 1987.

⁴⁴Michael King, *Being Pakeha: An Encounter with New Zealand and the Maori Renaissance*, Auckland 1985.

⁴⁵Selected and introduced by Michael Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass : Recollections of Childhood from 20 Prominent New Zealanders*, Auckland 1988.

⁴⁶Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*, London 1975.

⁴⁷Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation*, New York 1972.

survivors' and 'children of survivors', as they are referred to in that literature, are among those interviewed in this study. Definitions of survivorhood vary but most commentators use the term to distinguish refugees who lost relatives and friends, their country, jobs, position in life and material possessions but did not live under threats nor suffer daily torture and deprivation in concentration camps or in hiding.

The main theme of the literature about children of Holocaust survivors is that the trauma of the concentration camp and of other life-threatening and dehumanizing experiences suffered by the parents ('survivor syndrome') is in diverse ways re-experienced in the lives of the next generation. A vast array of symptoms are attributed to a 'survivor syndrome'. These include reduced energy and fatigue, restlessness, mistrust of others, pathological expressions of mourning related to 'survivor guilt', chronic anxiety, dread of the future, chronic depression, recurrent nightmares, insomnia, social isolation and a variety of psychophysiological disorders such as head-aches and peptic ulcers.⁴⁸ Much of the second generation literature looks at the question of whether these 'behaviour disorders' in the parents have psycho-pathological consequences for their children. The titles of these studies convey their main preoccupations: 'Difficulties in Separation-Individuation as Experienced by Offspring of Nazi Holocaust Survivors'⁴⁹, 'Children and Families of Holocaust Survivors: A Psychological Overview'⁵⁰, 'Therapeutic Groups for Children of Holocaust Survivors'⁵¹ and so on.

The findings of some of the studies do show a relationship between over-protective parents and moderately phobic children or children in frequent combat with their parents. In other scenarios, children have become 'witnesses to their parents' past traumatic experiences, producing depressive effect and feelings of guilt'.⁵² In some families, parents have been shown to be angry and suspicious of the non-Jewish world and expect their children to respond similarly. The most 'pernicious' consequence in a number of the

⁴⁸This is a summary of the discussion by Norman Solkoff, 'Children of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust: A Critical Review of the Literature', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 51, 1, January 1981, pages 29-42.

⁴⁹Joan T. Freyberg, 'Difficulties in Separation-Individuation as Experienced by Offspring of Nazi Holocaust Survivors', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 50, 1, 1980, pages 87-95.

⁵⁰Erica Wanderman, in Lucy Y. Steinitz, D.M. Szonyi, eds., *Living After the Holocaust: Reflections by Children of Survivors in America*, 2ed., New York 1979, pages 115-125.

⁵¹Eva Fogelman, Bella Savaran, *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, April 1979, 29, 2, pages 211-236.

⁵²Solkoff, 'Children of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust', page 32.

studies is regarded as being situations where 'children are made to feel they have to provide a justification for their parents' past suffering. The parents in these cases place unrealistic demands on their children with unfortunate consequences'.⁵³ The most salient features of the 'child of survivor syndrome' are regarded as the situation where the child is over-protected, angry with his/her parents, fearful and guilty.

Some studies have, however, raised doubts about the existence of a 'child of survivor syndrome'. The writers of these studies find difficulty with the generalizations made about children of survivors or consider that more research is needed before they have validity.⁵⁴ Others believe that if there is such a syndrome it is likely to be mild in its 'psycho-pathological' aspects. Some commentators even argue that these children have become less psychologically vulnerable, more competent and more creative as a result of their intrafamilial experiences.⁵⁵ As one writes:

Now the time has come for all of us to acknowledge the resilience that exists in many survivor families. We need to carry out a systematic exploration to further identify positive aspects of the Holocaust legacy and to enhance our understanding about how these strengths are transmitted from one generation to the next. To accomplish such understanding is the ultimate challenge of the Holocaust.⁵⁶

The most thoughtful of the studies come to few clear-cut conclusions, but suggest the complexities involved in studying children of survivors. These include the difficulties of finding a common denominator in the families of survivors, of isolating the essential problems connected with being a child of survivors and in making meaningful comparisons between children of survivors.

There are a number of difficulties in relating these studies to the present study. Firstly, only some interviewees in the present study are survivors or children of survivors. Although there seems little doubt that there are significant differences between refugee

⁵³ibid.

⁵⁴J. Kestenberg, 'Psychoanalytic Contributions to the Problem of Children of Survivors from Nazi Persecution', *Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, 1972, 10, 4, pages 311-325.

⁵⁵Solkoff, 'Children of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust', page 35.

⁵⁶Maleta Pilcz, 'Understanding the Survivor Family: An Acknowledgment of the Positive Dimensions of the Holocaust Legacy', Steinitz ed., *Living After the Holocaust*, page 166.

families in terms of the sufferings and losses they had experienced, it is in fact very difficult to separate what is distinctly related to the Holocaust (survivor) experience and what is related to being a refugee, whether Jewish or not. As one writer concluded 'the Holocaust and its wrenching impact upon the survivors were added burdens to all the other problems that any new immigrant faced'.⁵⁷

The second difficulty in relating the research about children of Holocaust survivors to this study is that such studies are in the main based on clinical populations, while the present study is not. However, the main difficulty concerns the focus of much of that literature. Although interesting as background, the clinical and psychiatric orientations of these works detract from their pertinence to this study. The smaller number of studies with a different focus are more relevant.

The writings of Helen Epstein in her book *Children of the Holocaust*⁵⁸ and in a number of articles based on her own experiences as a child of survivors and on interviews with children of survivors (who are not a clinical population) are of interest. Closer to investigative reporting than to scholarship,⁵⁹ Epstein's is a moving account of the diverse attitudes and experiences of children of survivors. She makes no attempt to account for the differences in her respondents and lets them speak for themselves. Of herself she writes:

Before I was five, I asked my mother: 'Who put the number on your arm? Why? Did it hurt? Why don't I have grandparents? Why did the Germans kill them? Where are they buried? Why aren't they buried? Then where are they?

My mother said that before the war, my father had a fiancée, two parents and two brothers. All five were gassed to death in Auschwitz. Before the war, she had a mother, a father, and a husband. All three were shot dead by the German S.S. She and my father had been deported to the Terezin ghetto along with most Czechoslovak Jews, and then sent to a series of camps including Auschwitz and Bergen-

⁵⁷Jack Nusan Porter, 'The Social and Psychological After-effects of the Holocaust on Jewish Survivors and their Children', Byron L. Sherwin, Susan G. Ament, *Encountering the Holocaust: An Interdisciplinary Survey*, Chicago 1979, page 202.

⁵⁸Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, New York 1979.

⁵⁹Solkoff, op. cit., page 35, dismisses Epstein's style as 'at once seductive and superficial' and is critical of what he regards as her failure to account for the differences in the responses of her interviewees.

Belsen. Like many survivors they met after the war and married as soon as they could assemble the requisite documents. Like most survivors, they had a child as soon as possible. I was born in Prague, and was named after my grandmother, Helena ... Seven months later, we emigrated to America ... I became an American child. I watched the Mickey Mouse Club, played baseball and memorized the score of every musical on Broadway. My teachers were pleased with me. I had several 'best' friends. I seemed to be as well adjusted as any other little girl growing up on the upper west side of New York. But when my mother took me to Carnegie Hall, I would often imagine a group of men in black coats bursting into the auditorium and shooting everybody dead. Other times, I went to St Patrick's Cathedral, crossed myself, and lit four candles for my grandparents. When I rode the subways at rush hour, I pretended the trains were going to Auschwitz ...⁶⁰

Other accounts of personal experiences also provide useful insights into some of the lasting effects of the Holocaust. An article about children of survivors in the *Jewish Spectator* shows the ways that the horror of the past impacts on the mundane present:

Sitting on the porch of our small one-family brick house, in late August of 1969, my parents and I discussed buying a car.

'I think a small economical car would be best', I said. 'How about one of those little VW's?'

My parents stared at me in disbelief. Standing up slowly, my father casually remarked before going into the house: 'It's so hot out here, so hot like in a crematorium'.

My parents are survivors of the Nazi death camps. They settled in the United States six years after being liberated.⁶¹

⁶⁰Helen Epstein, 'Heirs of the Holocaust: The Lingering Legacy for Children of Survivors', *New York Times Magazine*, June 19 1979, page 14.

⁶¹Marilyn I. Ludzki, 'Children of Survivors', *Jewish Spectator*, vol. 42, no. 3, Fall 1977, page 41.

In the same article, a young man writes of the inability of his mother to accept his decision to go away to school (university). For survivors of the Holocaust, letting their children go is inextricably connected with the fear that to leave is to never come back.

Guilt about the past and the difficulties parents and children faced in talking about the Holocaust are also important themes in the literature. A woman remembering her reaction to hearing the stories of how her parents and their friends had survived wrote of feeling 'accused' by these memories:

... they [the stories] pointed up my own insufficiencies. I had not suffered. I had not survived. I was four years old, or five, or six, or seven, eight, nine, ten, an adolescent, an adult. In some way, everything they told me annihilated the validity of my experiences and feelings. What childish pain could compare with seeing one's loved ones murdered, of being hunted, of starving and freezing? I knew even when I was very young that nothing, not the children who made fun of my foreign English and foreign manners nor the bullies in the neighbourhood compared with the pain my parents had endured.⁶²

The psychohistorical approach taken by Robert M. Prince (*The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation*) is also of interest.⁶³ Although Prince's emphasis is on the psychological, it is psychology within the context of history. He defines psychohistory as a method which involves 'seeking out groups of men and women whose own history illuminates our era. The focus is therefore upon themes, forms and images that are in significant ways shared, rather than upon the life of a single person as such ...'⁶⁴ Prince's central conclusion is that none of his interviewees 'regardless of character organization or extent of conscious acknowledgement of the impact of the Holocaust on present identity, escaped the presence of Holocaust imagery as a

⁶²Toby Mostysher, 'The Weight of the Past: Reminiscences of a Child of Survivors', Steinitz ed., *Living After the Holocaust*, page 6.

⁶³Robert M. Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation*, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1985. For a useful introduction to psychohistorical literature see Ken Plummer, *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method*, London 1983, page 83.

⁶⁴Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust*, page 18, quoting R. J. Lifton, *History and Human Survival: Essays on the Young and Old, Survivors and the Dead, Peace and War, and on Contemporary Psychohistory*, New York 1971, pages 7-8.

means of constructing his experience'.⁶⁵ ('His' includes 'her' as Prince interviewed ten male and ten female students.)

Most relevant to the present study are those studies which have entirely moved away from analysing children of survivors from a psychological, psychosocial or psychohistorical point of view to examining some of the long-term implications of such a 'survivor' background. A number of interesting issues are raised in these studies. One researcher, for example, asked the following question: 'Because their parents were confronted by the threats of death and of cultural dissolution, will survivor children express a concern for ethnic survival through an enhanced sensitivity to culture and ancestry?' The study's conclusion is affirmative and the observation is made that such findings have implications for the ways in which cultures generally respond to threat.⁶⁶

Some of the research focuses on the social and political attitudes of adult children of survivors. A Canadian study explored 'whether a major historical event like the Holocaust has observable inter-generational micro-level consequences'. The consequences looked at are such socio-political attitudes as commitment to civil liberties for dissenting views, tolerance for minorities, propensity for militant defense of threatened rights of Jews and non-Jews, views on immigration policy and commitment to the defense of Israel.⁶⁷ Its findings, according to the authors, 'raise the possibility that the Holocaust has, in a variety of ways, helped shape the attitudes of the young adult Jews in our sample'.⁶⁸

A study by two of the same authors⁶⁹ examined knowledge and information seeking about the Holocaust among adult children of survivors. In the study, the responses of children of survivors were compared with controls (with children whose parents had not directly experienced the Holocaust). The questions in the study relating to communication between parents and children about Holocaust related matters are most pertinent to this study. The findings reveal that children of survivors differ significantly from the controls in their perceptions. 'They are more likely than other groups to indicate that their parents had told them too little about the historical events that affected their

⁶⁵Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust*, page 205.

⁶⁶David Heller, 'Themes of Culture and Ancestry Among Children of Concentration Camp Survivors', *Psychiatry*, vol. 45, August 1982, pages 247, 257.

⁶⁷Morton Weinfeld, John J. Sigal, Sir Mortimer B. Davis, 'The Effect of the Holocaust on Selected Socio-political Attitudes of Adult Children of Survivors', *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 23, 3, August 1986, page 365.

⁶⁸ibid., page 377.

⁶⁹Morton Weinfeld, John Sigal, 'Knowledge of the Holocaust Among Adult Children of Survivors', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 18, I, 1986.

parents' lives', although these respondents were most informed about those events and felt most strongly that they had been affected by those events.⁷⁰

What is the connection between the present study and the various works referred to in this review of literature? Studies of ethnicity and assimilation in New Zealand and elsewhere, New Zealand social history, studies about New Zealand Jews and research about children of Holocaust survivors in the United States and Canada are pertinent to this study in two ways. First, as background, these studies provide a context alongside which the experiences of interviewees in the present study may be regarded.

Second, the literature complements the approach and the findings of the present study. This study approaches its subject - growing up in New Zealand for a group of second generation Jewish refugees, who include some child survivors and some children of survivors - by emphasizing the individual experiences of interviewees. Notions drawn from diverse studies - assimilation, ethnic identity, siege mentality, intergenerational conflict, marginality, survivor syndrome, child of survivor syndrome and others - are important because they provide a conceptual framework and a point of reference for the subjective experiences which are the main focus of this study.

Methodology

The Interviews

The thirty-two people interviewed⁷¹ in this study found the process of remembering and talking about their refugee/immigrant lives sometimes interesting, occasionally a relief, at times painful. The memories evoked laughter, anger, sadness, guilt. Some found remembering easy; others groped without success for buried, elusive recollections.

The principal interviews were usually about three hours long and most were tape-recorded.⁷² Sometimes the writer met with the interviewees several times. Some

⁷⁰ibid., page 74.

⁷¹Three interviews with first generation refugees were also completed to supplement information obtained from interviews in *A Small Price to Pay*. Five teachers were also interviewed.

⁷²These tapes are in possession of the writer and are named and dated. As some people in the study do not wish to be identified, full names and dates of interviews are not provided in the text. Some people are referred to by pseudonym, others by their own first names.

interviewees were known to the writer and conversations about topics relevant to the study took place not only at the interview proper but over dinners or afternoon teas or on other social occasions. In addition to the thirty-two people interviewed, the writer had discussions relating to the study with many other second generation refugees and their comments are also part of the study although the people concerned are not named. The fact that the writer herself is a second generation refugee with a central European Jewish background (although from a different emigration) had a number of consequences for this study (my perspective is discussed in the final section of this chapter). In terms of the interviews, the similarity in background between the interviewer and the interviewees meant that in addition to the set interviews, a great deal of information was available to the writer from her own experience and from the experiences of her friends and acquaintances.

The interviews were carried out without a set questionnaire. A list of topics was used to guide the recollections of respondents (see Appendix 1 for this list). Certain topics were discussed much more fully by some respondents than by others. Complete life histories were not sought. Rather than attempting to portray the entirety of peoples' lives, the intention was to focus on particular issues. The interviews were structured in such a way that respondents had the opportunity to talk about those issues which were of most concern to them.

The people interviewed are men and women of Austrian, Czech, German, Hungarian or Polish origin. All except one has a Jewish or part-Jewish background. The family backgrounds of the interviewees are socio-economically and educationally diverse, including those from prosperous business and professional backgrounds as well as the children of small business and tradespeople.

All of the people interviewed have a tertiary education. The majority have been to university. They are a mixed group of single and married people. Many of them have children. Most were living in Wellington at the time of interview, but they had grown up in various parts of rural or urban New Zealand.

The interviewees were selected by the 'snowball' method, and an attempt was made to obtain a diverse group of people for the study. Glaser and Strauss's concept of 'saturation' was used to determine the point at which it was apparent that enough data had been collected. Saturation thus defined implies there is sufficient information to 'sustain

As full, real names are not used, it was decided not to footnote the comments of individual interviewees. The interviews were carried out between August 1987 and February 1989 in Auckland and in Wellington.

the analysis' and that more data would add 'bulk' but would not facilitate the emergence of further categorizations.⁷³

Can such a sample be representative? Is it possible to arrive at firm conclusions about the experiences of refugee children and children of refugees on the basis of the small number of interviews on which this study is based? Such questions are often raised in qualitative research of this kind. It cannot be stated with certainty that the people interviewed are typical of the total population of second generation Central and Eastern European refugees. A number of them may well be exceptional in some ways. Nor can it be said that the more general findings of the study are unique to the group dealt with. Within the study, there is no concerted attempt to compare this group with any other group although, where appropriate, research which has a bearing on this study is used as a point of reference. The intention is to obtain depth, not breadth. The findings of this study relate to these particular people at this time. How much they have in common with others will need to be determined in a future study.

Omissions

This study is not about childhood, adolescence and adulthood per se. It is about middle-aged people looking back from a distance of twenty, thirty or forty years at what it was like to grow up a foreigner in New Zealand, a child of strangers, a child of refugees. It is also about what it was and is like to be a Jew or to have a Jewish background in the years since the decimation of the majority of European Jewry.

This is not a study of an ethnic community. The focus is on individual experiences and perceptions, not on the interactions of the second generation with each other through formal or informal organizations and networks. As previously stated, such interactions often did not exist or took place infrequently.

A number of omissions from the study need mention. The extent, severity and consequences of psychological breakdown in refugee families as a result of their harrowing experiences was not investigated by the writer. This is a painful subject, which, understandably, interviewees did not always wish to discuss (or the writer to intrude upon). It became evident that the psychological stability of some second generation

⁷³B. G. Glaser, A. L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago 1967, pages 111-112.

refugees may well have been undermined by the conflicts and tensions arising out of a refugee-immigrant background. Such instances were pointed out to the writer in the course of her conversations with both first and second generation interviewees but the subject was not pursued any further.

Marriage, a crucial issue in any consideration of assimilation, warrants a much fuller discussion than it has been given in this study. Subjects such as language and adolescence (especially adolescent sexuality) are dealt with only partially and require further research. The situation of second generation interviewees who have chosen to leave New Zealand (impressionistic evidence suggests that this is a sizeable group) and the third generation are touched on but also require more detailed examination in another study.

The situation of some interviewees has received more emphasis than that of others. The experiences of the child refugees who arrived in New Zealand in the late forties having survived the war in hiding or in ghettos in Europe have not been adequately dealt with. In particular, the plight of the three interviewees who lost their parents in the war has not received the attention it deserves. Again, such experiences need to be the subject of a separate study.

The views of a small number of children of refugees and refugee children who have in their own perception become completely indistinguishable or almost indistinguishable from other New Zealanders and whose predominant recollection of childhood was that it was just like that of any other New Zealander, have been referred to but have also not been given the attention warranted. This study focuses on the differences between the interviewees and the rest of the population, rather than on the many significant ways in which the children of refugees have come to share the attitudes and way of life of other New Zealanders.

Other Methodological Considerations

One of the central problems in the approach of this study was finding appropriate ways of ordering the material and moving it beyond the haphazardness and the chaos of real experience to attempt explanations, to show patterns, relationships and connections without losing the essential emphasis on the diversity of individual experiences.

A related problem of the study was posed by one interviewee. She observed the difficulty of 'distilling what is just part of growing up and what is particular to growing up

with this type of background'. This was a difficulty that the interviewer/writer shared with interviewees. It was at times virtually impossible to distinguish what was the product of individual personality and particular situations and what was related to more general group characteristics and predicaments.

These problems were overcome to some extent by moving the focus from the personalities of people in the study and placing it on their reflections and recollections. This study is unlike that of some others in this field in that there are no character analyses of individual respondents. There are no case studies presented and the biographical notes are fragmentary. The interpretation focuses on the historical meaning of the interviewees' experiences, on historical themes and patterns, not on personal, psychosocial or psychological interpretations.

What kind of historical meaning can be derived from the interviews in this study in particular and from oral sources generally? The problem is a complex one. The first part of the question is especially difficult to answer. The subject of the interviews - the reflections about the past of a post-Holocaust generation who grew up in a country far removed from the calamities that overwhelmed their families in Europe - is one which cannot easily be fitted into a particular discipline. Those sections of the study which are concerned with culture and identity are by their very nature interdisciplinary. While adopting a historical focus, the study also draws on the concepts and approaches of psychology, sociology, education, anthropology and linguistics. What does its historical focus consist of? The study deals with the impact of historical events (the Holocaust, war and migration) on individual lives. It is concerned with effects and consequences revealed over time, and examines the generational aspects of persecution, displacement and cultural adjustment. It portrays social and cultural change by examining changes in attitudes, self-perceptions and social relationships. It examines the connections between past and present, between first and second generation refugees and between the adult interviewees and the refugee children of the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties they once were. The study is located in a particular society - New Zealand. Aspects of the changing social history of that country are reflected in the experiences of growing up that are portrayed.

The question of the historical meaning to be derived from the way oral sources have been used in this study is less difficult to answer. Although oral history is now well established as a valid and for some types of histories extremely appropriate historical

method,⁷⁴ it nonetheless does continue to be criticized for a variety of reasons. It is not intended here to go over ground very adequately covered by other historians who have attacked or defended oral history on technical, theoretical or ethical grounds. However, a number of points convincingly put by John Murphy in an article, 'The Voice of Memory: History, Autobiography and Oral Memory', which are particularly pertinent to this study, will be looked at.

Murphy believes that the practitioners of oral history fail to theorize adequately:

Having been both privileged to rummage through someone's personal memory, and complicit in articulating what was found there, the oral historians' critical faculties are partially paralysed. Hence the appetite for information exceeds the capacity and desire of oral historians to digest it.⁷⁵

While theory and analysis are important, they are not as important in this study as people speaking for themselves, offering their own interpretations and presenting their stories without undue interruption by 'abstruse theory or methodological meanderings'.⁷⁶ The historical meaning of the experiences that the interviewees are both part of and reflecting on does emerge from such use of oral testimony. For example, the recollections and reflections of one interviewee about escaping from Germany while leaving behind a large extended family consisting of uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents, all of whom either perished in the Holocaust or were forced to emigrate to different parts of the world, describes her own personal experience of family dissolution as well as the process whereby the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe were destroyed during the Nazi epoch.

Murphy also considers that oral historians take insufficient note of the fact that the relationship between the historian and his or her informants plays a crucial part in constructing the meaning of the knowledge produced. He makes much of the point that the editing of texts is an act of interpretation. He also discusses the notion that oral history, like autobiography, is as much an account of the present as of the past.

⁷⁴See Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford 1978.

⁷⁵John Murphy, 'The Voice of Memory: History, Autobiography and Oral Memory', University of Melbourne, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 87, October 1986, page 171.

⁷⁶Plummer, *Documents of Life*, page 119.

The process of research (the interviewing) is an important part of the eventual outcome of the research. The two, process and outcome, are inseparable. It is also impossible to expunge the interviewer/writer from the text which eventuates from the interviews. In this study, although I am rarely overtly present in the text, what was talked and written about is conveyed from my perspective, with my biases and my personality. However, the focus of the study remains at every stage where it belongs - with the people interviewed.

A number of points need to be made regarding editing and interpretation. An enormous variety and amount of information was collected. There is a degree of arbitrariness involved in deciding what to include and what to leave out. The aim is to obtain a tight focus on particular themes and issues and to show the diversity of perspectives at the cost of comprehensiveness. With this intention, a considerable amount of information about the families in the study, including such significant events in the lives of the people as death and illness, have not been included.

Respondents' comments have been edited for the sake of readability. The removal of repetitions, hesitations, some of the qualifications, inconsistencies and back-tracking of peoples' speech means that certain layers of meaning and possibly density of meaning are lost. Certainly, editing of this kind involves interpretation. This study makes no claim to an objectivity which excludes interpretation of that kind.

There is also interpretation of another kind. This study analyzes the meaning of the data and generalizes from it. Although the writer's preference was to let the text speak for itself and confine generalizations to a minimum, academic requirements dictated a certain amount of analytic interpretation. Nonetheless, the situation where, although the people speak from time to time, the content of the study is almost entirely the analysis and interpretation of the writer, is avoided. The thoughts and ideas of the interviewees have been emphasized, not those of the writer. Writing through the voices of others is a valid approach and is the one adopted in this study.

One of the difficulties related to 'letting the text speak for itself' in a historical study concerns the corroboration of the oral evidence. When oral evidence relates to facts or to events outside the experience of the interviewee, it is, of course, important to check the accuracy and validity of the statements presented. However, some oral evidence by its very nature cannot be corroborated. When, for example, the subject is the self-perceptions and experiences of an interviewee, I did not consider it appropriate to confirm the evidence

from such outside sources as another informant who had known the interviewee. Although several of the people in the study were known to me as children, I tried to put aside that knowledge in order to allow the adult recollections of those interviewees to predominate. However, occasionally an outside perspective, such as the views of teachers about their refugee pupils, seemed useful and is introduced to provide another dimension to the discussion.

As history by definition is supposed to be concerned with the past, the point made by Murphy and others that oral history and autobiography are as much an account of the present as of the past, requires consideration. All knowledge is tentative, as is all history, not just the findings of oral history. Oral history reveals the perceptions about the past of respondents during the period (days, weeks or months) of interview. Inevitably these perceptions change and inevitably too, the perceived past is filtered through the present.

Memories and perceptions of childhood evolve throughout one's life and are particularly fickle. While some adults do remember something of their earliest childhood experiences, others seem to have largely forgotten their childhood. They can remember only odd incidents, though even these are more often remembered from the retellings of parents, other relatives or friends rather than directly. In particular, unhappy periods of childhood may be forgotten. The sometimes traumatic effect on children of refugee/immigration experiences has not always been recognized either by the children themselves or by the adults. The tendency has been to suppose that children adjust easily. It is likely too that abrupt changes in children's circumstances have significant impact on what they remember as adults. Perhaps a sudden, complete break with the past means that less is remembered of life before the major change. Children's partial understanding of events also affect later memories. The personal and the historical, the momentous and the insignificant are jumbled up together. The fragmentary, selective, disconnected nature of the recollections must be considered too. People remember small incidents, smells, tastes, sounds and feelings - the put-downs, the hurts, fears, anxieties. Therefore, because of the nature of its concerns, there is little that is not partly subjective in this study. It is not the facts that matter in this study, as in other studies based on oral sources, but what the experience in question was like.

It would be satisfying to draw certain unambiguous dividing lines, but this cannot be done. For example, it is impossible to entirely disentangle what is just part of growing up and what is particular to growing up with a Jewish-refugee background. Similarly, the

dividing line between the subjects and the writer is sometimes blurred and interviewees' recollections about their growing up years in New Zealand cannot be separated from their current perceptions and preoccupations. This is a study of the past and of the present.

My Perspective

Finally, something needs to be said about the connection between my own background and the subject of this study. I was born in Hungary after the war. With my parents, I came to New Zealand in 1957 after the Hungarian uprising. My father survived the war as a Jewish slave labourer in Russia; my mother by assuming a non-Jewish identity in Budapest. Some of my close relatives, including my grandfather, were killed by the Nazis. My parents and later my grandmother, who joined us in 1958, did their best to adjust to New Zealand. Like many other Central European Jews, they have to some extent remained strangers in their adopted country.

This study is in part an elucidation of my own past. Although I have resisted focusing on that past, I expect that my experiences have provided insights for my research into the experiences of others. How did this happen? It is certain that throughout the study I have interpreted the recollections of others in the light of my own memories and perceptions. This has not always been a conscious process. However, I do recall many times in the course of interviews, while someone was talking of his or her experiences, a strong sense of 'yes, oh yes, that is how it was'. At other times, the opposite happened. The words of the person I was interviewing awakened my own memories, which were sometimes very different from those being spoken about. I have tried to convey as accurately as I was able both the experiences which were like mine as well as those which were different.

Of all the experiences that I have in common with the people I interviewed, the ones that stand out are: the abrupt break with the old world; the acquisition of a new language, English, which severed me from my childhood; life in a small, close nuclear family; the weight of the past; the lack of relatives; foreign parents who did not understand and could not help with finding a place in the New Zealand world; the pressures to conform at school and the urge to remain different.

As a child and teenager, I kept a diary. A great deal of what I wrote makes me squirm with embarrassment when I read it now. However, occasionally, I conveyed a

little of how I felt as a foreign and Jewish child in New Zealand of the 1950s and 1960s. Much of the time, I seemed to be angry. When I was fifteen, I wrote:

Although their backgrounds vary widely, the Hungarian Jews in Wellington are in many ways very alike. They all go to the pictures every Saturday night, they receive visitors or go visiting on Sunday afternoons, they drink at least five cups of coffee per day, they are all certain that they are incomparably superior in culture and taste to the uncouth, insensitive, carefree Kiwi. They imagine that only European Jews are capable of understanding suffering. They cannot comprehend how New Zealanders are able to derive pleasure from gardening, odd-jobs round the house, camping, tramping or merely sitting in their cars looking at the sea. They have lived their lives in big cities and are accustomed to spending their time in cafes, sipping poisonously strong coffee. Every word of criticism that I hear of New Zealand and New Zealanders makes me so angry. New Zealand has provided a home, a refuge for these homeless Hungarians. In many cases New Zealand was the only country willing to let them in and now they have the cheek to criticize New Zealand and to compare it unfavourably with a land that caused them many years of suffering.

With rather more understanding, a little later in my diary I wrote of an elderly, urban, foreign woman's isolation as the younger generation adapt rapidly to New Zealand and spare little time for her in their busy lives:

Alone again, the old woman glances at her watch. Good. It is almost two. Soon it will be time to get ready to go to town. Going to town is an important occasion, an event to be looked forward to. In town when there is a bustling crowd, busy traffic and open shops, she can recapture that sense of being part of a live city. If only the city was bigger!

Later in the afternoon, she may be found in town, sitting in a crowded coffee bar with three or four other women whose lives are

replicas of hers. They are all homesick, lonely, disillusioned. Yet they are resigned to their fate, the fate of foreigners in a strange land, a land both hospitable and cruel.

The women in the cafe all talk at once. Neither listens to what the other has to say. Each is engrossed by her own troubles. Yet together they are almost happy. They speak the same language; not only the same words, but also the same meaning behind them. They remember and remind each other about their past lives. They are momentarily content for they have created a bit of home in a crowded cafe in a strange city.

Suddenly the waitress appears. She politely asks them if they wouldn't mind vacating their table as many people who have just arrived had no seats. At first the old women do not realize what the waitress is saying. (In a Budapest or Viennese cafe, you could sit all day over one cup of coffee.) Then they understand. They leave the coffee bar and are once again rootless, homeless strangers in a foreign country.

My attitudes to my foreign background as a child and teenager were mixed, as were those of others in this study. I was very ambivalent about being Jewish too, regarding Jewishness as something that kept me apart from my classmates. On one occasion, after an argument with my friends at school about the responsibility of ordinary Germans for the atrocities of Hitler's regime, during which I took the view that the Germans were responsible and the others argued that they were not, I wrote with anger about my friends' failure to understand my attitude to Germans:

Although sometimes I think that I have a great deal in common with the girls in my class and I am very pleased I get on well with them, at other times I realize that in many ways we are worlds apart. I very much want to be a New Zealander, but in New Zealand my background is so unusual that I cannot be ordinary like the others.

But generally I felt well accepted at school and looked on the New Zealand world as an escape from the refugee/immigrant/Jewish worlds of home.

These different worlds are the subject of Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2

DIFFERENT WORLDS

The people in this study frequently spoke of different worlds. They talked of moving between the Central or Eastern European world of home and the New Zealand world of school and neighbourhood. They spoke of being Jewish and of how this could mean leading a double life. They were aware that the customs and values of one world were sometimes in conflict with those of another. Some managed to negotiate and move between different worlds with relative ease, others were afflicted by a sense of inadequacy or discomfort in whichever world they found themselves.

The Jewish worlds were the people and institutions of the established Jewish communities in New Zealand and also the Jewish worlds of the past and of the future, including notions of Jewish life in the post-Holocaust period. The refugee world involved living from day-to-day in a refugee family in New Zealand, as well as looking back at the Central or Eastern European world of which the second generation may or may not have had direct experience. The New Zealand world consisted of the realities and myths of New Zealand life in the late thirties, forties, fifties and early sixties as well as their outsiders' perceptions of this.

These different worlds were many and various. They were the external worlds of daily life, private and public, as well as the internal worlds of the imagination.

Refugee Worlds

What were the refugee/Jewish worlds encountered by interviewees like? The purpose of the sections which follow is to provide the background and the context for the experiences discussed in later chapters.

Some Characteristics of Central and Eastern European Refugees¹

¹This discussion is based on secondary sources and on information drawn from interviews with first and second generation refugees in *A Small Price to Pay* and in this study.

Although the diversity of the group makes the task of generalizing a very difficult one, some broadly common characteristics may be noted. All but one interviewee in the study had a Jewish or part-Jewish background. Yet in what sense can they be termed 'Jewish' refugees? The association with Judaism varied enormously. Some were connected to Judaism only by birth, the origin of a grandparent or by marriage and had the identity of 'Jew' imposed by Hitler's edicts. Those who identified themselves as Jewish did so in diverse ways. Some were ethnic or cultural Jews, others were Zionists. Of those who were Jewish by religion, the observance of Jewish religion varied greatly not only between the different shades of Orthodox and Liberal Jews but also between Central European and Eastern European Jews as a group.

The shared European Jewish background reveals a common heritage which included great diversity. An examination of the situation of Jews in Europe in the century before the rise of Hitler partly explains this. The migration of refugees from Hitler from Europe to New Zealand and elsewhere was often just one more migration and one more cultural adjustment among several previously made by these families since the mid nineteenth century. From the 1840s, the removal of centuries-old civil and legal disabilities against Jews in Central and Western Europe (known as the emancipation) provided the hope that by assimilating into the countries where they were settled, Jews could move from their former position of isolation and ostracism in European societies to become part of the social and political mainstream. Although the emancipation created opportunities for Jews to succeed in and enter non-Jewish society, they were not able to do so on their own terms as Jews, but only by renouncing their cultural and religious heritage. However, even assimilation did not ensure a firmly rooted place in the non-Jewish world. Emancipated and assimilated Jews continued to be regarded as outcasts along with their non-assimilated co-religionists from the East.

Jewish civil emancipation in Eastern Europe followed by several generations that of Western Europe. In the nineteenth century, Jews still lived apart from the rest of the population. Most of them were very poor and suffered frequent bouts of anti-Semitism. They tended to flee from one country to another as occasioned by persecution or other catastrophe.

The introduction of civil liberties in Western and Central Europe was accompanied by the right of free settlement. Eastern and Western European Jews took advantage of this liberalization to move from places where they were oppressed to where they were better treated and where there were more opportunities. Very often, this involved movement

from Eastern areas to the West and from rural areas and small towns to major urban centres. Jews migrated in large numbers, because generally their ties to their places of residence were not strong. Nor did they have ties to their occupations, which had usually been forced on them.²

The refugees who came to New Zealand, therefore, shared a common history of persecution and uprooting. However, they differed in their degree of Jewish identification, in their degree of assimilation to their former countries and in how long they had been established in those countries. For example, some families in this study had been settled in Germany for several generations before being uprooted by Hitler, whilst others were first or second generation immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The refugees differed in a number of other significant ways. Their political background varied, ranging from conservative to Communist to apolitical. The occupational background of the refugees was also diverse, containing, however, proportionately more business and professional people than would be found in a cross-section of New Zealanders' occupations.³ There were few rural workers or industrial labourers and a considerable number of doctors, dentists, architects, engineers and manufacturers. There were also among them some distinguished scholars and artists.

Generally, the refugees who came to New Zealand were a well-educated, predominantly middle-class group, accustomed to a comfortable and relatively prosperous life-style. But the diversity of their backgrounds needs also to be emphasized. They included wealthy manufacturers and directors of companies as well as small shop-keepers and junior employees. Some had been eminent and experienced in their fields, while others had been forced to emigrate before they had completed their education or acquired any work skills. While the refugees were mainly middle-class, this label must be applied to them with caution. A middle-class life could mean having lived in a household with several servants or it could mean a struggle to make ends meet while obtaining work qualifications. Some of the women had been entirely spared the necessity to earn a living

²The preceding discussion of Jewish history since the emancipation is drawn from a number of sources: Ismar Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life*, translated by Moses Hadas, Philadelphia 1944, pages 3-80; Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*, Baltimore 1986; Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, edited and introduced by Ron H. Feldman, New York 1978; Ernest Gellner, 'From Königsberg to Manhattan (or Hannah, Rahel, Martin and Elfrieda or Thy Neighbour's *Gemeinschaft*)', *Culture, Identity and Politics*, Cambridge 1987.

³Lochore, *From Europe to New Zealand*, pages 77-78.

or the drudgery of cooking and housework, but by no means all of them had been so sheltered.

The refugees were almost all city people - they were from Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Brno, Augsburg, Breslau and other major European cities. They were accustomed to amenities of city life largely unavailable in New Zealand in the thirties, forties and fifties - coffee-houses, theatres and so on. A number of the refugees had been active participants in the intellectual and cultural life of their communities, still more had been involved as enthusiastic followers or spectators.

Dislocation

In 1941, in his autobiography *World of Yesterday*,⁴ Stefan Zweig wrote:

For truly I have been detached, as rarely anyone has been in the past, from all roots and from the very earth which nurtures them. I was born in 1881 in a great and mighty empire, in the monarchy of the Habsburgs. But do not look for it on the map; it has been swept away without trace. I grew up in Vienna, the two-thousand-year-old supernational metropolis, and was forced to leave it like a criminal before it was degraded to a German provincial city. My literary work, in the language in which I wrote it, was burned to ashes in the same land where my books made friends of millions of readers. And so I belong nowhere, and everywhere am a stranger, a guest at best. Europe, the homeland of my heart's choice is lost to me ... My feeling is that the world in which I grew up, and the world of today and the world between the two, are entirely separate worlds ... All the bridges between our today and our yesterday and our yesteryears have been burnt ...⁵

Most of that book was written while Stefan Zweig was already in the United States, where he had emigrated to escape 'the most terrible defeat of reason and the wildest triumph of

⁴Stefan Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, London 1943.

⁵ibid., pages 5-6.

brutality in the chronicle of the ages'.⁶ In 1942, in Brazil, Zweig and his wife, overwhelmed by the experience of persecution, uprooting and migration, committed suicide. In a farewell note, Zweig gave 'heartfelt thanks to this wonderful land of Brazil which afforded me and my work such kind and hospitable repose' and wrote of his inability to make a 'new beginning' and of his 'exhaustion' after 'long years of homeless wandering'.⁷

In *World of Yesterday*, Zweig vividly depicts both the world of security that was lost and the subsequent experiences which utterly defeated him: the deprivations, humiliations and cruelties:

I will never forget the sight which once met me in a London travel bureau; it was filled with refugees, almost all Jews, everyone one of them wanting to go - anywhere. Merely to another country, anywhere into the polar ice or the scorching sands of Sahara, only away, only on, because their transit visa having expired, they had to go on, on with wife and child to new stars, to a new-language world, to folk whom they did not know and who did not want to receive them.

There I met a once very wealthy industrialist from Vienna, who had been one of our most intelligent art collectors; he was so old, so grey, so weary that I did not recognize him at first. Weakly with both hands he clung to the table. I asked him where he was going. 'I don't know', he said. 'One goes wherever one is still admitted. Someone told me I might be able to get visa for Haiti or San Domingo here'. My heart skipped a beat: an old worn-out man, atremble with the hope of going to a country which hitherto he would not have been able to find on the map ... Someone next to him asked in eager desperation how one could get to Shanghai ... There they crowded, erstwhile university professors, bankers, merchants, landed proprietors, musicians; each ready to drag the miserable ruins of his existence over earth and oceans anywhere, to do and suffer anything, only away, away from Europe, only away!⁸

⁶ibid., page 6.

⁷ibid., page 328.

⁸ibid., pages 319-320.

Zweig's recollections have been quoted at some length to introduce some further common features in the background and experiences of refugees from Hitler wherever they settled. The New Zealand refugee world too was a world of the grateful - just for being alive and for having been granted a place to settle. It was a world of losses: people, country, possessions, livelihood, social status and position, security. It was a world of the humiliated, the displaced and the dispossessed. If the refugees formed a community, then it was primarily a community of expulsion. The main link between the refugees with different religious beliefs, nationalities, occupations, socio-economic levels and interests was that they were driven out of their countries and had no land to go to.

The sense of being displaced, of homelessness, of belonging nowhere affected the younger generation as well as the older and is conveyed poignantly in Anita Brookner's novel *Latecomers*.⁹ This is a book about two men, Fibich and Hartmann, who as children escape from Nazi Germany and spend the rest of their lives in England. Brookner shows how in different ways the two attempt to come to terms with the losses inherent in being refugees. Although the idea of 'home' is central in their lives, it is a concept which fills Fibich, more prepared than Hartmann to delve into the meaning of his life, with 'despair'. Fibich goes 'home' to Berlin but, remembering very little about his pre-emigration childhood or his family (who were killed by the Nazis) he finds it just a 'foreign city' and returns to London, his anxiety and depression unrelieved by his journey. In the following passage, Brookner conveys both Fibich's state of mind on his return from Berlin as well as providing a glimpse at the half-submerged insecurities and anxieties of former refugees:

He could be sitting comfortably in his own chair, in his own drawing room, doing something entirely pleasant - reading, listening to music - when the idea of home would strike through him with a pang, as if home were somewhere else. Thus the homesickness that had afflicted him in Berlin had nothing to do with any home that he had ever known, but rather as if his place was eternally somewhere else, and, as if, displaced as he was, he was only safe when he was fast asleep.¹⁰

⁹Anita Brookner, *Latecomers*, London 1988.

¹⁰*ibid.*, page 229.

The notion of 'homesickness' for a home that one has never known is particularly pertinent to the people in this study, many of whom were either too young to have firm memories of their European life or were New Zealand-born and had no direct experience of their parents' pre-emigration worlds. The sense of belonging nowhere and the perception that they were neither Europeans nor quite New Zealanders, to be explored in Chapter 8, was very strong in a number of the second generation interviewees in this study.

Zweig's observation of having lived his life in entirely 'separate worlds' and his comment that there were no bridges between these worlds is also relevant to the refugee families in this study whose perceptions in this regard are strikingly different from those of other immigrant groups in New Zealand. Amelia Batistich's immigrant world, for example, is one in which the connections with Dalmatia are lovingly maintained by the immigrants and by their New Zealand-born children.* Yvonne du Fresne's writing abounds with similar links between the Danish settlers and their Scandinavian roots.¹¹ Other immigrant communities in New Zealand have also been able to adapt to their new country with one foot left in the past. The refugees in this study, by contrast, were aware that home was gone, that there were no ways back, that the links between past and present had been utterly severed by what the Nazis had done.

The Holocaust

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall
 we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
 drink it and drink it
 we are digging a grave in the sky it is ample to lie there
 A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
 he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
 hair Margarete
 he writes it and walks from the house the stars glitter
 he whistles his dogs up
 he whistles his Jews out and orders a grave to be dug in
 the earth

¹¹For example, Yvonne du Fresne, *The Bear from the North: Tales of a New Zealand Childhood*, London 1989.

* See Bibliography, page 317.

he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the mornings at noon we drink you at
nightfall

drink you and drink you

A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
hair Margarete

Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the
sky it is ample there

He shouts stab deeper in earth you there and you others
you sing and you play

he grabs at the iron in his belt and swings it and blue
are his eyes

stab deeper your spades you there and you others play
on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at nightfall
we drink you at noon in the mornings we drink you at
nightfall

drink you and drink you

a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He shouts play sweeter death's music death comes as a
master from Germany

he shouts stroke darker the strings and as smoke you
shall climb to the sky

then you will have a grave in the clouds it is ample to lie
there

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night

we drink you at noon death comes as a master from
 Germany
 we drink you at nightfall and morning we drink you
 and drink you
 a master from Germany death comes with eyes that are
 blue
 with a bullet of lead he will hit in the mark he will hit
 you
 a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
 he hunts us down with his dogs in the sky he gives us a
 grave
 he plays with the serpents and dreams death comes as a
 master from Germany

 your golden hair Margarete
 your ashen hair Shulamith.

In Paul Celan's *Fugue of Death*¹² the personal anguish and the ugly theme are distanced by the imagery and the musical structure to produce poetry with a kind of 'terrible beauty'.¹³

The eventual outcome of the failure of emancipation and assimilation was the Nazi era. Stefan Zweig in *World of Yesterday* wrote bitterly of the fate of Jews whose:

... forefathers and ancestors of medieval times had at least known what
 they suffered for; for their beliefs, for their law ... Thrown on the
 pyre, they pressed the scripture that was holy to them against their
 breast and through their inner fire were less sensitive to the murderous
 flames. Driven from land to land, there still remained for them a last
 home, their home in God ... As long as their religion bound them
 together they still were a community ... But the Jews of the twentieth

¹²Paul Celan, *Poems*, selected, translated and introduced by Michael Hamburger, bilingual edition, New York 1980, pages 51-53.

¹³Paul Celan, *Selected Poems*, Penguin, from the Introduction by Michael Hamburger, page 12.

century had for long not been a community. They had no common faith, they were conscious of their Judaism rather as a burden than as something to be proud of ... To integrate themselves and become articulated with the people with whom they lived, to dissolve themselves in the common life, was the purpose for which they strove impatiently for the sake of peace from persecution, rest on the eternal flight. Thus the one group no longer understood the other, melted down into other peoples as they were, more Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen, Russians than they were Jews.¹⁴

The Holocaust - the destruction that took place during the Nazi era - has been the most momentous event to shape modern Jewish identity. Its force was felt not only among those Jews who personally experienced it but among all individuals who could even remotely perceive themselves as Jews. For in that era, neither the high cultural attainments of the society in which one lived, nor the assimilation of the Jews into that society precluded the possibility of individuals being identified and persecuted as Jews.

The term 'Holocaust' is the one Jews themselves have chosen to describe their fate during World War Two. The word means a great destruction and devastation. The English word is derived from the Greek *holokauston*, which is a translation of the Hebrew *olah*, which means 'burnt offering'.¹⁵

The notion of the Holocaust was central to the Jewish world of many of the children of refugees growing up in New Zealand in the post-war years. How that past was dealt with in families is the subject of Chapter 7. However, children's awareness of the Holocaust and their ideas about its place in their world did not only derive from their families. The subject was dealt with by the Jewish youth movement *Habonim*, and there were also films, magazine articles and picture books about the war and concentration camps. One can only speculate about how children saw themselves in relation to those pictures of Jewish skeletons in striped clothes in concentration camps and naked corpses in mass graves. Did they identify with them as Jews? In children's eyes was it 'them' being

¹⁴Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, pages 320-321.

¹⁵Lucy S. Davidowitz, *The War against the Jews, 1933-1945*, London 1975, page xv.

killed by the Nazis or was it 'us'? Did they wonder 'why did they hate us?' or 'why did they hate them?'¹⁶

For some interviewees, information about the horrors, and especially such pictorial evidence, was sufficient to freeze further curiosity about the Holocaust for many years. Others returned to their families or to books for further enlightenment. In their search for understanding, children wanted not only facts but explanations about the motives and behaviour of the persecutors and their victims. They wanted also accounts of the past which personalized and brought to life the persecuted and dead millions. This is perhaps one of the reasons for the enormous popularity of books such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* amongst young people.

The Holocaust may be regarded as the culmination of the history of Jewish persecution, or as another 'link in the chain of Jewish suffering'.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, recurrent cycles of disaster have marked the history of Jewish people. For children of refugees, especially for those who identified strongly with Judaism, a Jewish background meant encountering a history of persecution and of frequent migration to escape oppressive socio-economic conditions and anti-Semitism. It meant encountering a history populated by generations of victims and survivors.

Refugee Families in New Zealand

It is difficult to say exactly how many refugees came to New Zealand from Central and Eastern Europe in the years before the Second World War. This is partly because accurate figures which distinguished refugees from immigrants were not kept and officials at the time found it difficult to classify by nationality people left stateless by Hitler's persecution, some of whom had fled from one temporary home to another, their passports and travel documents reflecting not their nationalities, but their escape routes from Europe. R. A. Lochore estimated that the pre-war refugees (most of whom had a Jewish background) were of the following nationalities: German, 507; Austrian, 248; Czechoslovak, 121; Polish, 81; Hungarian, 72; others, 25.¹⁸

¹⁶There is an interesting discussion about this by Adrienne Rich, 'Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity (1982)', Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*, New York 1986, page 107.

¹⁷Davidowitz, *The War Against the Jews*, page xv.

¹⁸Lochore, *From Europe to New Zealand*, page 74.

Approximately 300 Jewish refugees entered New Zealand in the years between 1945 and 1948 but the larger group of refugees from the displaced person's camps in Europe, who came to New Zealand in the years 1948-1952, were mainly non-Jewish. 4,500 displaced people, most of them Northern Europeans from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia were selected for immigration to New Zealand. Among them were only a small number of Central and Eastern European Jewish refugees.¹⁹

Whether they came to New Zealand before or after the war, gaining an entry permit for New Zealand was a matter of chance and luck, and depended on having financial resources and the right contacts. Desperate refugees, especially before the war, did not choose New Zealand in particular as their destination, unless they had close relatives already in that country. People migrated to wherever they could gain an entry permit. Many more people wanted to migrate to New Zealand than received entry permits. The small number of refugees who succeeded in reaching New Zealand were immensely grateful for the privilege of doing so.²⁰

Refugees differed in how personally they had been affected by Hitler's persecution. Some had the foresight and the means to make an early escape from Europe with some or most of their close relatives accompanying them, while others escaped themselves but lost entire families in the Holocaust. Some, trapped in pre-war Nazi Europe, had been in concentration camps, and were released only when their emigration could be arranged. Still others spent the war years in Europe, in hiding, in ghettos, or in slave labour camps, arriving in New Zealand with remnants of their families in the post-war period. Some refugees came alone to New Zealand, others came with relatives. Some came with capital which enabled them to start businesses, requalify in professions, buy houses. Others came penniless, entirely dependent at first on the support of sponsors or, in the case of women, on the live-in teaching or housekeeping jobs they obtained.

As a number of interviewees observed, 'what went on in the home', that is, the behaviour and attitudes of the parents and the interactions within the family were probably even more significant for children of refugees than what they experienced in schools or in New Zealand society generally. Consequently, the major differences in the background of refugee families help account for the very diverse ways that people in this study experienced being Jewish and growing up in New Zealand with a foreign background.

¹⁹Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, pages 6, 122.

²⁰ibid., Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 6.

What were some other characteristics of refugee families in New Zealand? How did the first generation respond to the losses of the past and to the struggles to re-establish in a new country? What were their hopes and fears for their children? What was life like in this world of former refugees?

The severity of the cultural dislocation experienced by some of the refugees can in part be attributed to the abrupt and total break with their former life. Although very grateful and relieved to be safe in New Zealand, many experienced nagging loneliness and persistent homesickness during their early years. As one refugee commented:

You lived on two levels somehow. You lived here and yet you didn't. For the first fifteen years in New Zealand, I woke up every day in Prague. I dreamt of Prague and I had a recurring dream of being back there. Every time I woke up, New Zealand seemed far away and I would think: 'Thank goodness, I am in Prague'.

For the pre-war refugees there was also overwhelming anxiety mixed with guilt about family and friends left behind. It felt, said one, 'terrible to be safe when others weren't'. There were also the more common difficulties of learning a new language, finding habitable accommodation, earning a living, finding an appropriate occupation and re-establishing disrupted professional careers.

Refugees not only shared these and a number of other difficulties but, by and large, their hopes and expectations of the new country were also similar. Although New Zealand and New Zealanders struck them as very strange and in many ways utterly alien, they wanted to like New Zealand and to understand New Zealanders. They wanted to be regarded as acceptable settlers, to fit in, and they wanted above all that their children should fit in and belong in New Zealand.²¹

Having experienced homelessness and insecurity, refugees wanted to settle down, to be secure again, to build up a safe world for their children. The effort a number of the refugees put into obtaining material security was to compensate not only for material losses but also for psychological ones. The struggle to become established and to regain a comfortable lifestyle was a way of recovering self-respect, social position and identity in

²¹The preceding discussion is based on interviews with first and second generation refugees.

the new country. However, sometimes New Zealanders tended to misunderstand refugees' pursuit of material security. They thought the refugees greedy, uppish, grasping. In their view, the refugees, who did not look poor and ragged as refugees should, worked 'too hard' and this was to the disadvantage of New Zealanders.²²

While they shared similar aims and problems, refugees differed in their ability to adjust to New Zealand and the stresses of their new life. Some refugees settled well, others did not. Some successfully put down new roots, whilst others lived for many years with a sense of being in the 'wrong' place. Some refugees took up new pastimes, others searched in vain for the *Kultur* Europe. Many were very positive about New Zealand - its scenic beauty, its freedom, its people. They felt New Zealand had broadened their experience and added to their life. At the other extreme, there were refugees who were utterly demoralized by all that they found lacking in the new country.

A joke told by refugees at the time conveys a little about the state of mind of the latter group. 'A Viennese Pekinese was confronting a New Zealand sheep dog. The sheep dog says to the Pekinese: "But you are so small". "Ah, but in Vienna", the Pekinese replies, "I was a St. Bernard"'.²³ Some refugees simply could not adapt to the many losses - of family and friends, of country, material possessions, professions and social status - they had suffered. They lived in the past, in an idealized world, talking of the 'good old days', which were, as one refugee observed 'really the bad old days'.

More common than strongly positive or negative attitudes was ambivalence, not only towards New Zealand but also towards the recent past of persecution, Judaism and German culture. Consequently, the first generation often gave ambiguous messages to the second about forgetting and remembering the past, about being Jewish, and about the possibility of separating an abhorrence for Nazi Germany from German language and culture and German people generally.

Sometimes, ambivalence about Judaism arose from the wish of parents to protect children from the negative aspects of Jewishness (the possibility of anti-Semitism). One woman, for example, although she did not deny her Jewish background, never spoke to her children of being Jewish or of Jewish things. Another refugee recalled that she 'almost never' talked to anyone about 'the Jewish reason as to why I came to New Zealand'. This was in part because until Hitler Jewishness had meant nothing to her and partly that if she

²²This is based on a conversation with Lucie Halberstam, 6 July 1988 and on interviews with first generation refugees.

²³As told the writer by George Haydn, 7 November 1987.

encountered hostility during the war years she preferred to be attacked as a German rather than as a Jew. Ambivalence about German culture and about Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary (because of the anti-Semitic histories of these countries) showed also in the attitudes of first generation refugees regarding the children's retention or acquisition of German, Czech, Polish and other languages. If parents made any efforts in this direction, they were very half-hearted ones. Most wanted the children to 'get on' and become New Zealanders, not be outsiders as they would always be. But inevitably there were mixed feelings and mixed messages about the loss of a truly shared culture and language between the generations.

It seems that a number of the children were brought up in a kind of limbo. They received few clear messages from their families about how the old ways fitted into the new or about the merits of either cultural world. Many received neither a Jewish education nor a Christian one. A consequence of such an upbringing was that at least some of the children grew up feeling uncertain about which community they belonged in and about how to behave in the world outside home.

The fact that there was much that parents did not know about how New Zealand society worked and that they could not teach their children what was appropriate in different situations also contributed to children being reared in what was to an extent a social/moral vacuum. In fact, it was the children who very often interpreted the ways of the new society to their parents, and advised them on what was acceptable behaviour and what was not.

Such a reversal of the usual role of parents and children led to tensions and stresses in refugee families. There were other stresses too, arising out of the traumas of the recent past. One refugee observed that it took time to adjust to the freedom in New Zealand. In their early years, refugees still felt 'frightened' and these fears were probably reinforced by attitudes towards enemy aliens in the war years and the occasional instances of anti-Semitism. Some refugees continued to suffer from fears and insecurity throughout their lives in New Zealand.

New Zealander Vera Ziman, who as a member of the Auckland Jewish Refugee Committee assisted newly arrived refugees in the late thirties, recollected that the refugees suffered from 'nerves' because of their recent experiences. This showed in their fears about what their children might encounter at school, in the impatience and excitability of

their speech and in their emotional outbursts and reluctance to trust people.²⁴ Some of the findings of the literature about Holocaust survivors and their relationship with their children, discussed in the Introduction, is relevant here.

The literature suggests that one of the characteristics of such families is their tendency to be small, close and enclosed (against outsiders). Journalist Helen Paske, in an article 'Life after the Holocaust' wrote of the strength of family attachments in these families: 'Jewish family closeness is a cliché, but these families seem to be even closer. It is as if, lacking grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins for their children, they have made up with extra, loving concern ... They touch, kiss and embrace without reserve'.²⁵ There was also negative aspects to life in such families. Emotional intensity, accentuated by the unhealed scars of the past, at times placed overwhelming pressures and obligations on both parents and children alike.

There were a number of significant differences between New Zealand families and refugee families. Some of these have already emerged in this discussion. Other differences - taste in food, drinking habits, housing styles, attitudes to physical activity and to the outdoors - will be discussed later in this chapter or in subsequent chapters. However, two additional points relating to characteristics of refugee families in New Zealand and the interaction between the refugee and New Zealand worlds must be highlighted here.

Firstly, the refugees were volatile, temperamental and more direct, emotional and demonstrative in the way they expressed themselves than what some refugees called the 'level-headed, stiff upper-lip kiwi people'. As one woman observed: 'People had extreme emotional reactions by New Zealand standards. And they all talked at once, loudly, waving their hands. Everybody used to talk and nobody used to listen'.

Secondly, many of the first generation spoke of an upbringing lacking training in practical skills of any kind. After almost fifty years in New Zealand, one woman spoke of the fact that she was still

helpless with things that any New Zealander would normally do - any small repairs, anything that needs tools. For putting a nail in, I need an

²⁴Interviewed, November 1984, tape and transcript in possession of the writer.

²⁵Helen Paske, 'Life after the Holocaust', *New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979, page 12.

expert. It stems from a different attitude; it is the pioneering spirit, which I have not got at all.

Some refugees eventually acquired such skills. They became handy-men and gardeners and derived immense satisfaction from the performance of such tasks. Women, who had been sheltered by their privileged socio-economic status from the necessity to do household chores of various kinds, were forced by the circumstances of their new life to learn these tasks very quickly. Other refugees learned the basics, but their practical skill, by New Zealand standards, remained limited.

One respondent recollected that his father 'tried to be a do-it-yourself man, but he is not a very practical person and was much more at home with intellectual pursuits than, for example, making a concrete drive'. Although first generation refugees were usually very keen to ensure that the next generation were not, as they had been, helpless at performing necessary practical and domestic tasks, children of refugees were still more likely to receive from their parents an introduction to 'intellectual pursuits' than training in car maintenance and repair, or basic carpentry or even instruction about changing light bulbs.

Rather than such practical occupations, many second generation interviewees noted that their parents had eyes, above all, for books and pictures. They observed them reading classical German and English literature and making the best of the city life New Zealand had to offer: attending concerts and the theatre and sitting with other refugees in the few available coffee houses or, more commonly, drinking coffee in each others' homes, discussing politics, art, literature and the good/bad old days.

At such gatherings, when people became involved in talking, sometimes someone would forget themselves and say, 'but here in *Wien* ...' Those words, or others similar, doubtless spoken by first generation refugees on numerous occasions at such gatherings and frequently overheard by refugee children and children of refugees, sum up one of the most important characteristics of the refugee world in New Zealand that has been portrayed in the first part of this chapter. The world of the adults was clearly a separate world - located neither entirely in the past nor quite in the present. But the world of their children growing up in New Zealand was also an in-between world, but of quite a different kind. It was a world with its links to the European-Jewish past severed and sometimes without firm connections to the New Zealand present.

New Zealand Worlds

What were the New Zealand worlds encountered by refugees and their children like? A number of characteristics of New Zealand society and of New Zealanders stood out in the recollections of first generation refugees. They noted, for example, New Zealanders' unease about foreigners and cultural differences, the homogeneity and the rural or provincial character of New Zealand cities, the separate worlds of men and women and the barriers between the refugees and New Zealand Jews. Second generation interviewees, encountering the New Zealand world at schools and in their neighbourhoods, made additional observations. They spoke of being Jewish in a Christian society, of being without the extended families taken for granted by New Zealanders and about the attitudes to and perceptions of the war of their New Zealand peers. The sections which follow examine briefly those characteristics and institutions of New Zealand society which seem to have been the most significant for first and second generation refugees and most commonly referred to by them. Where relevant, facts and figures about New Zealand are supplemented by the personal recollections of New Zealanders and of first and second generation refugees. As in the previous discussion of refugee worlds, the purpose of the discussion is to set the scene for subsequent chapters by providing a context alongside which the experiences of the people in this study may be regarded.

Attitudes towards Foreigners

M. K. Joseph's ironic plea in Keith Buchanan's 1961 article 'The Stranger in our Midst' ran:

From all foreigners with their unintelligible cooking
 From the vicious habit of public enjoyment
 From Kermiesse and Carnival, High day and festival
 From pubs, cafes, bullfights and barbecues
 From Virgil and vintages, fountains and frescoe painting
 From afterthought and apperception
 From tragedy, from comedy
 And from the arrow of God
 Saint Anniversary Day

Saint Arbour Day

Saint Labour Day

Defend us.²⁶

The experience of growing up in New Zealand with a foreign and Jewish background was to some extent determined by the ways that refugees and their children reacted to and coped with the usually negative attitudes to cultural differences that they encountered in New Zealand during the years covered by this study.

In the predominantly British population²⁷ of New Zealand in the years between the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1960s, the foreign-born (non-British) element was very small.²⁸ In 1936, 2.51 percent of New Zealand's population was of foreign origin (born in a country which was not part of the British Commonwealth); in 1945, 1.55 percent was foreign born; in 1951, 1.58 percent; in 1956, 2.18 percent and in 1961, 2.4 percent.²⁹ The number and proportion of Jews in the population was also very small. In 1945, 3,470 out of a total New Zealand population of 1,702,298 (0.217 percent) were recorded as Jewish.³⁰

These figures suggest that New Zealanders' contacts with groups of different cultural origins were very limited. Although New Zealanders had served overseas in two world wars, and an increasing number of them travelled abroad during the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties, there is little information about the impact of this contact with other cultures. What is evident, though, is that suspicion of the foreigners who had settled in New Zealand was not uncommon during these years.

The only study found by the writer which attempted to analyse and measure New Zealanders' attitudes towards different cultural/ethnic groups during this period was a 1952

²⁶Keith Buchanan, 'The Stranger in our Midst', *Comment*, 6, vol 2., no. 2, summer 1961, pages 25-26.

²⁷Maori people were mainly to be found in rural areas during these years and are not considered in this discussion.

²⁸See Appendix 2 for table giving further details.

²⁹New Zealand Population Census, 'Birthplaces and duration of residence of overseas-born', 1936-1961, Wellington. According to calculations carried out by Lochore, in 1941, one person out of 183 was of alien origin; in 1948, one in 244 was; in 1951, there was one alien to every 185 British subjects; Lochore, *From Europe to New Zealand*, page 14.

³⁰New Zealand Population Census 1951, 'Religious Professions with adherents over 2,000', Wellington. See Appendix 3 for further details about the religious profession of the New Zealand population.

study by John McCreary.³¹ In that study, the attitudes towards other national and religious groups of one thousand subjects were investigated by means of a modified version of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. According to McCreary, some of the findings of the study are of doubtful validity because of methodological problems. Nonetheless, the study shows that ignorance about other groups played a part in the negative attitudes towards different national and religious groups of the New Zealanders surveyed. However, the study also demonstrates that increased social contact and information did not necessarily facilitate tolerance or positive feelings.³²

Of particular interest in the McCreary study is the ranking of national and religious groups in terms of how well they were tolerated by New Zealanders. British, Australians, Americans and Maori are found at the top (in that order) of the scale; Germans, Poles, Greeks, Jews and Italians (also in that order) are in the middle, and Chinese, Russians, Hindus, Negroes and Japanese are at the bottom.³³

There is a great deal of information to be drawn from books, plays, newspapers and magazines of the time about attitudes. Evidence from official government archives is also available. What is very often revealed is the strong unease of New Zealanders about people who are culturally different and the strongly held view that if immigrants come to New Zealand they must assimilate to New Zealand ways as quickly as possible. While most new immigrants were suspect, there was more antipathy to some newcomers than to others. The preferred migrant groups were generally those who were regarded as the least different and those others who were expected to assimilate the most readily.

Central and East European Jewish refugees were not generally looked on favourably in these respects. These attitudes, including anti-Semitism in New Zealand in the pre-war, war and post-war years, are explored in my earlier study *A Small Price to Pay*. Before the war, New Zealand's restrictive immigration policy ensured that only a small number (about 1,000) of mainly Jewish refugees from Hitler's regimes were able to enter New Zealand. During the war years, the suspicion of Jews, but more commonly of anyone who seemed foreign, combined with fears that these pre-war refugees from Germany and Austria could be fifth columnists. There were many calls on the government to deal firmly with the possible threat from enemy aliens. Some of those who made such

³¹J. R. McCreary, 'The Modification of International Attitudes: A New Zealand Study', Victoria University College, Publications in Psychology, no. 2, 1952.

³²*ibid.*, pages 47-49.

³³*ibid.*, page 49.

requests were not only concerned with New Zealand's wartime security but with protecting their own business or professional interests from competition. For example, Sir Carrick Robertson, President of the Auckland branch of the British Medical Association (B.M.A.), was reported in the *Evening Post* as saying:

We do not suggest that all, or any of these aliens are spies, but what we do know is that their roots for generations have been nurtured on German soil, and it is difficult to believe that just because of their mass expulsion during a political upheaval, they are not at the bottom of their hearts loyal to Germany ... We say that it is not right that such people should be free to circulate among us.

Sir Carrick, who was also concerned about alien doctors taking over the practice of New Zealand doctors who were away fighting, was quoted as saying that his views were supported by a large and representative body of Auckland practitioners: 'When the war is over, our kith and kin will return to find their places taken by men of the very race they went forth to fight'.³⁴

A climate of suspicion and watchfulness of foreigners and especially of those termed enemy aliens continued throughout the war years. After the war, although the panic about fifth columnists and the concerns about enemy aliens ended, attitudes regarding foreigners were largely unchanged. A certain amount of anti-Semitism was also a feature of the post-war years. A new arrival in New Zealand in the late 1940s made the following observations:

I have only lived eight months in New Zealand. But already I am struck by something in connection with the subject in hand. I find men and women in this, the Antipodes of Nazi Europe, who have never met a Jew, but who know all the Nazi half truths about the Jew off by heart ...³⁵

³⁴*Evening Post*, 28 May 1940, page 6.

³⁵C. A. F. Knight, 'Race Hatred Continues in Europe', *New Zealand Listener*, 17 October 1947, page 22.

In the post-war years, several thousand non-British immigrants received permits to settle in New Zealand. Preference was at all times given to groups considered 'assimilable', usually Northern Europeans. This was justified on the grounds that a small country like New Zealand could not afford to have 'alien groups who are not at one with ourselves'.³⁶ Children were more welcome than adults because they were regarded as more easily assimilable. A writer in the *New Zealand National Review* expressed this view:

Children are the best type of immigrants. They are fresh and eager; willing to accept their adopted country as their own; to adopt its ways and to be in every way except by birth, citizens of that country. Coming as children, they have no great language problems to overcome and no foreign background to forget.³⁷

In Lochore's book *From Europe to New Zealand*, attitudes commonly held by New Zealanders about non-British immigrants are made explicit. Acknowledging that New Zealand needed a bigger population and that this increase could not all come from Britain because 'she cannot well spare us another million citizens this century', Lochore considered that the solution was to 'make new Britishers: by procreation, and by assimilation; by making suitable aliens into vectors of the British way of life that still has so much to give to the world'.³⁸

Such attitudes are also explored in New Zealand literature. Bruce Mason did so with gentle humour in a play written and first performed in Auckland in 1958. Entitled 'Birds in the Wilderness', this play is partly about the encounter with New Zealand and New Zealanders of two elderly refugees from Hungary - Ferenc and Ania Szabo. In one scene, as the two arrive at the home of a New Zealand couple with whom they hope to board temporarily, Mrs Szabo instructs her husband about appropriate behaviour in their new country.

³⁶National Archives, L1 22/1/27, part 5, memo entitled 'Immigration', to Director of Employment from Assistant Under-Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, 16 May 1950, page 1.

³⁷*New Zealand National Review*, 15 June 1944, pages 13-14.

³⁸Lochore, *From Europe to New Zealand*, page 89.

Mrs Szabo: You must speak English now, Apus (Father). All the time. We are English now. It is not polite any more to speak Hungarian. Do not forget.

Szabo: I will not forget.

He bows.

Mrs. Szabo: Do not bow too often. The English do not like it. It makes them suspect.

Szabo: Suspect what?

Mrs Szabo: That we are not as they are.

Szabo: We are not. Nor are we in England.

Mrs Szabo: We are where it is more English than in England itself. This is the Little Britain of the South Seas. I read so, in the pamphlet. Do not bow. Except to the Queen herself or to the Queen's Governor.

He bows; remembers, halts, head down.

Mrs Szabo: Keep your head up. Look in the eyes of people. It is the English way.

Szabo: So much to remember.³⁹

³⁹Bruce Mason, 'Birds in the Wilderness', 1958. A copy of the play was obtained from Playmarket, Wellington, with the permission of Diana Mason. The play is dedicated to the memory of Albert Lenart of Budapest (1880-1967), who came as a refugee to New Zealand.

In a more serious vein, Janet Frame's novel *Living in the Maniototo* highlights similar assimilationist attitudes. In the following excerpt, Zita, a former Hungarian refugee, looks back:

Let me tell you something of my life. I have a vivid early memory of eating a meal of boiled shredded cotton flannel mixed with one mashed potato, as a soup which served our family for our one daily meal. And that was some years after the end of the Second World War, in Hungary. I remember terror, and lights blazing, and being in a camp with my parents and brother, waiting to be chosen, approved of, by the New Zealand government ... Everyone said you had to be extra clever and beautiful and good and healthy to get into New Zealand, therefore most people did not try, so many of them were sick, with limbs missing, and sores, and lice, and you weren't approved of, if you were sick or had limbs missing or were dirty; and some who'd been angry and violent were also not wanted. Therefore it was only the quiet ones, like us, who were chosen, with all our arms and legs and cheerful smiles and clean hands and face and hair (everyone said you had to like baths and washing, and I remember my mother's joy when it was reported by the interpreter that one of the New Zealand officials had said our family was 'spotless'. It was translated as not having measles, but later we learned that it meant not being stained with blood or beetroot juice). We did feel sorry for the poor old people, some of whom were deaf or blind and not wanting to wash because not washing kept you warm in winter, but we didn't have time to feel too sorry for them, we were so busy practicing to look adaptable and smiling and intelligent. Father was skillful in teaching us. He knew English too, and taught us English words and phrases and when to say them, and especially to say them when the New Zealand officials were visiting the camp with their brief cases full of notes about us, and their judging faces ... It was his English that had helped him to be chosen. It would enable him to 'fit in', they said. The New Zealand aim was to have people who would 'fit in', readily and painlessly (painless for those already there). Like invisible mending. Or like an insect that

moves to another tree and is given a new camouflage and told, stay on that bough, blend, and all will be well ...⁴⁰

A Homogeneous Country?

Apart from unease about foreigners and cultural differences, what was the New Zealand world encountered by refugees and their children like? The country struck first generation refugees as very homogeneous. Two aspects of New Zealand's homogeneity were noted in particular. First, New Zealand's egalitarian and classless characteristics; second, its cultural homogeneity, derived from the British, lower middle-class origin of many of its inhabitants.

Although the notion of New Zealanders being all more or less on the same social level is very strongly contradicted in some of the literature, including fiction,⁴¹ the myth of New Zealand as an egalitarian and classless society has been very persistent, in part because of the difficulties of finding appropriate labels for the social gradations that developed. Graeme Dunstall, in his essay 'The Social Pattern' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, observes that the ruling idea of post-war society was that 'everybody acts the same, receives the same amount of the world's goods, everyone moves in the same direction ... The ethos of equality sapped the consciousness of class' and obscured a more convincing way of describing social stratification in New Zealand'.⁴² Occupational mobility and the fact that many of the visible differences in lifestyle between worker and boss lessened in the two decades from the late forties also contributed to the feeling of the fluidity of the social structure.⁴³

The perceptions of New Zealanders reinforced the myth of sameness, according to Dunstall. Despite the disparities of income, ideas about social rank were ambiguous and 'the badges of social position subtle'.⁴⁴ The personal recollections of New Zealanders,

⁴⁰Janet Frame, *Living in the Maniototo*, New York 1979, pages 147-148.

⁴¹To give just one example, Stevan Eldred-Grigg's portrayal in *Oracles and Miracles* of the lives of working class women in Christchurch in the thirties and forties shows the strongly contrasting lives of the middle and upper middle classes during that time. Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Oracles and Miracles*, Auckland 1987.

⁴²Graeme Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', Oliver with Williams ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, page 399.

⁴³ibid., pages 399, 423.

⁴⁴ibid., page 423.

whether they grew up in the pre-war or the post-war years, reflect both the prevailing egalitarian myths and the ambiguities of social gradations.⁴⁵

The new arrivals, the refugees, were particularly prone to be confused by these ambiguities in part because in Continental European societies social distinctions were more pronounced than those they found in New Zealand. Refugees, who were predominantly middle-class, had difficulty correctly placing people in the social hierarchy and were misled into considering New Zealand an almost classless society by such instances as a domestic 'help' who turned out to be doctor's sister, workers who did not remove their hats in the presence of the boss, workers calling their boss by his first name and other signs of this kind.⁴⁶

The myth of New Zealand's cultural homogeneity has been as persistent as the myth of its classless characteristics. A number of New Zealanders have written about the country's homogeneity in terms of a culturally drab lifestyle and the stifling of self-expression and creativity of its people. For example, a writer in *Landfall* in 1953 observed that the 'New Zealand pattern is of a piece ... even the vivid colours of destitution ... do not hide the grey lower middle-class ideas beneath'.⁴⁷ Those New Zealanders who saw themselves in some ways as outsiders were particularly inclined to note the cultural homogeneity, conformity and antipathy to self-expression and originality of their society. Bruce Mason, in 'Birds in the Wilderness', has one of the New Zealand characters refer to the country as the 'backyard of the world': 'Why do people come here? For history, for culture, for style? They come here for shelter; its all we can offer ... We've no class, no traditions, no credentials'.⁴⁸

This view of New Zealand was also held by some of the real outsiders - the refugees - who were accustomed to the more culturally diverse societies of Continental Europe. This is evident not only in the comments made by some interviewees in *A Small Price to Pay*, but in the stories of Otti Binswanger, a refugee from Germany, who in 1945

⁴⁵For example, writer and educationalist Phoebe Meikle, who grew up in Tauranga during the 1920s, discusses in *Through the Looking Glass* the complexities of social ranking in that town. She views Tauranga as a 'pre-consumer' society in which the gap between top and bottom was not as wide as it is today. Phoebe Meikle, 'Child as Mother', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, page 134.

⁴⁶Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 51.

⁴⁷Robert Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', *Landfall*, vol. 7, 1953, page 30.

⁴⁸Mason, 'Birds in the Wilderness', page 121.

wrote a book entitled, *'And How Do You Like this Country?': Stories of New Zealand*.⁴⁹ The predominating theme of these stories is that those who are different (whether foreign or local) face utter lack of understanding and strong pressures to behave like everyone else. Children suffer particularly in this respect.

One of Binswanger's stories entitled 'So Green was my Playground' portrays the stifling and clobbering effect on an ordinary sensitive New Zealand boy of the education he receives at home and at school. The boy's life of freedom, intense enjoyment of the outdoors and intelligent observation of the natural world is brought to an end by the rigid, conformist expectations of the adults. The story describes the changes in the boy after the years spent at school 'where there were many rules one had to observe and to remember, otherwise there would be trouble', and where he is introduced to sport because, according to his teachers, he needs a bit of 'waking up'. Eventually, the boy 'takes to the games with a sort of silent passion, like someone who is going to close all doors behind him, cutting out all contacts or interests which could interfere with this most important activity'. After a few more years of this sort of life, although the trophies and cups on the mantel piece in the sitting room are increasing in number and his parents are very proud, 'the boy has forgotten his dreams'. When he grows up, he:

will enter his father's business without doubt and hesitation. He will seek the company of his former school mates and join all possible sports clubs. He cannot imagine life without games, but because he does not imagine very much at all he is never worried about things which do not concern football or cricket ...⁵⁰

This story presents the making of a New Zealander from the viewpoint of one refugee. Binswanger's conclusion is that: 'Too many in this country have allowed themselves to become paralysed by a contagious dullness which twines its dangerous arms around so many a keen beginner ...'⁵¹

⁴⁹Otti Binswanger, *'And How Do You Like this Country?': Stories of New Zealand*, Christchurch 1945.

⁵⁰*ibid.*, pages 25-36.

⁵¹Binswanger, 'An End to Pioneering', in *'And How Do You Like this Country?'*, page 84.

The 'dullness' Binswanger writes about was also noted by refugees with respect to the material culture. They observed, for example, the lack of variety of New Zealand housing and the 'bastardized Victorian taste apparent in their exteriors and interiors'.⁵² One refugee in *A Small Price to Pay* recalled that the house her family built was disliked by New Zealanders 'because the walls were panelled in wood rather than wall-papered and the house had many windows. The house was unusual. It was not what New Zealanders had and therefore an offence'.⁵³

In the eyes of the refugees, the leisure activities of New Zealanders also illustrated the prevailing homogeneity: sport for young men; sport, gardening, handy-man type activities for family men; sewing and cooking for women. Above all for men in the 1950s, the trio of 'rugby, racing and beer' predominated.⁵⁴ Refugees were astounded by the drinking habits of some New Zealand males.⁵⁵ They were also surprised by the many sports clubs in every big and small town, especially by the prevalence of rugby. Such impressions are confirmed by available figures which demonstrate that this trend was well established.⁵⁶

Eating habits show similar uniformity. Refugees were struck by the monotonous diet of New Zealanders. The columns of the *New Zealand Womans' Weekly* convey the culinary world of those years. The gradual introduction during the sixties of foods new to New Zealanders and different ways of preparing food highlight what was missing from New Zealanders' diets prior to the much heralded innovations. The titles of the food columns speak for themselves: 'The Subtle Art of Cooking with a Hint of Garlic', 'How Do You Serve Coffee?', 'Wine Can Enhance Your Meals', 'Learn to Cook with Eggplant', and many others. There are articles about foods regarded as particularly odd: continental

⁵²Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 36.

⁵³ibid., page 54.

⁵⁴Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', pages 423-424.

⁵⁵Conrad Bollinger, *Grog's Own Country: The Story of Liquor Licensing in New Zealand*, Auckland 1959, is an informative account of New Zealanders' drinking habits.

⁵⁶Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, pages 143-155. See also discussion by Phillips, *A Man's Country?*; Jock Phillips, 'Mummy's Boys: Pakeha Men and Male Culture in New Zealand', Phillida Bunkle, Beryl Hughes eds., *Women in New Zealand Society*, Auckland 1980, page 230. There is also an interesting discussion about the role of rugby in New Zealand society by Geoff Fougere, 'Sport, Culture and Identity: The Case of Rugby Football', David Novitz, Bill Willmott eds., *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, Wellington 1989, pages 110-122. See also Miles Fairburn's discussion of the increase in popular involvement in sports clubs and teams between the 1890s and the 1920s; Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900*, Auckland 1989, pages 179-181.

sausages, blue-vein cheese, green peppers, yoghurt and special cakes which by the early sixties were referred to as 'torte'. Women are told how to prepare these 'strange' foods in order to introduce variety into their family's diets.

Although in some ways (food is an obvious example) New Zealand culture was markedly homogeneous, the perceptions of the refugees about New Zealand coincided not so much with the reality but with the myths of the post-war period about the kind of society New Zealand was. However, in view of the more visible and entrenched divisions and diversity of the heterogeneous societies of their countries of origin, it is hardly unexpected that New Zealand appeared homogeneous and egalitarian to the refugees. Above all, it appeared to the refugees that foreigners stood out all the more because New Zealanders seemed so much the same.

A Christian Country?

One of the aims of this study (as stated in the Introduction) is to examine the experience of growing up in New Zealand with a Jewish background in the post-Holocaust years. This inquiry needs to take place in the context of the religious beliefs and practices of New Zealanders during the period in question.

Most writers about religion seem to agree that New Zealand was 'basically' a Christian country, but are divided over what exactly this means. There is no dispute over the fact that the patterns of religious belief and disbelief of the great majority of New Zealanders have been shaped by the Christian churches and the Bible. There are differing views, however, about the significance and implications of attitudes outside the churches referred to in the literature as 'civil religion', and 'folk religion'. (Examples of civil religion are the prayers to open Parliament and New Zealand's national hymn, 'God defend New Zealand'. Folk religion consists of customs such as the sending of Christmas cards and the saying of grace at formal dinners.)⁵⁷ Some dismiss the many expressions of civil and folk religion as nominal Christianity whilst others see them as 'the common currency of a genuine non-sectarian New Zealand piety'.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Brian Colless, Peter Donovan, 'The Religion of the New Zealanders', Brian Colless, Peter Donovan eds., *Religion in New Zealand Society*, second edition, Palmerston North 1985, pages 9-14.

⁵⁸*ibid.*, page 12.

This uncertainty about the place and importance of Christianity in New Zealand society does not generally apply to the period from the late nineteenth century up to about 1940. Most agree that the 'religious dimensions' of that period were 'sizeable and consequential'.⁵⁹ It is in the increasingly secularized society of the post-war years that commentators have found some difficulty with defining the nature, role and extent of religion in New Zealand.

Although the practitioners of religious studies have many reservations about interpreting the findings of the New Zealand Census about religious affiliation,⁶⁰ census returns have nonetheless been used to measure the state of religion in New Zealand. As a declining number of New Zealanders have acknowledged an affiliation to one of the

In looking at what kind of Christian country New Zealand was, several further points need to be made. New Zealanders in the period of this study regarded themselves as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and Methodists and so on, rather than simply as Christians. Religious pluralism and consequent sectarian rivalry has been the pattern in New Zealand from the period of early settlement. An important consequence of religious pluralism and ensuing rivalry was the necessity for religious neutrality to prevail at the official and governing level. This explains, for example, the introduction of the secular clause in the 1877 Education Act. The clause was not intended to prohibit religious (Christian) education but to introduce religious neutrality into the state education system in order to 'transcend sectarian narrowness and bitter hostility'.⁶²

Another consequence of religious pluralism and sectarian rivalry has been that there is in New Zealand no legal association between church and state. At state functions, when a religious component is wanted by the government, the Anglican Church usually fills this role merely because it is the largest religious denomination and not because it is allied to the state, as the church is or has been in a number of Western and Eastern European countries. It is therefore possible to view New Zealand as a 'secular or religiously neutral state', with Christianity in a less privileged position than in some of the countries of origin of the families in this study.⁶³

But this was not how New Zealand society seemed to the newcomers. To the mainly non-Christian refugees and their children, the various manifestations of Christianity inside and outside the churches, nominal or not, appeared sufficiently broad and encompassing for them to regard New Zealand as certainly a Christian country. Although 'the tangible evidences of religion were unspectacular enough' ... they did not find 'holy cities' or 'sacred shrines',⁶⁴ the evidence for Christianity as a pervasive and rigid regulator of behaviour was everywhere around them. When a refugee hung out her washing on Good Friday, her neighbour yelled over the fence: 'These foreigners, they don't know our customs, hanging out the washing on our holiest day'. This refugee has now lived in New Zealand almost fifty years and has not hung out washing on Good Friday since.⁶⁵ Other refugees learned similar lessons. Lawns must not be mowed on Sundays; but if you had to, it was permissible to mow the back lawn but not the front. Shopping and amusements

⁶²Geering, 'The Pluralist Tendency', page 218.

⁶³ibid., page 219.

⁶⁴Colless, Donovan, 'The Religion of the New Zealanders', page 9.

⁶⁵Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 54.

were forbidden on Sundays and many other examples of a society dominated by a Christian or Puritan ethic were soon evident.

Refugees' observations reflect the particular strand of Christian belief and practice, known as Sabbatarianism, which was prevalent in New Zealand during these years. Sabbatarianism, which is connected with the obligation to adhere to strict Sunday observance laws - church going, devotional reading and moral recreation, originated with the Scottish and English Reformers, especially John Knox.⁶⁶ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Sabbatarianism 'accorded well with the religious attitudes of the English, Welsh and Scottish middle-classes who scorned a Continental Sunday', and regarded the strict observance of the Sabbath as 'a bulwark against secularism'.⁶⁷ These views were transplanted to the colonies and were still flourishing in New Zealand in the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties as evidenced by the many laws preventing business and recreational activities on Sundays as well as by the attitudes of the New Zealanders encountered by refugees.

In the eyes of refugee families, the pervasiveness of Christianity was also evident in many of the activities of suburban life which centred round either the many sport clubs and sporting organizations already mentioned (which mainly catered for men), or around numerous Christian organizations and clubs for men, women and children with social, educational and community service functions of many kinds. These included: boys' and girls' brigades, YMCA, YWCA, Scouts, Guides, Scripture Union, Bible Class, Student Christian Movement, Youth for Christ, League of Mothers, Anglican Mothers' Union, and countless other such organizations.

Not only did many of the activities for children and teenagers centre around one or other of the churches, but Jewish or agnostic children at school were reminded at daily prayers and readings from the Bible that Christianity was the religion of their new country. If not a particularly religious society, New Zealand certainly seemed to the refugees and their children to have all the trappings of a Christian one.

It was a society which took Christianity so much for granted that the existence of other possibilities, of other religions or of no religion, was virtually unacknowledged. This conclusion is strengthened by the ironic example of writers who completely ignore non-Christians in their papers and articles purporting to be concerned with religion in New

⁶⁶*Encyclopedia Britanica*, fifteenth edition, Chicago 1985, vol. 10, pages 279-280.

⁶⁷J. C. J. Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, London 1983, page 216.

Zealand society. Evidently, in their view, a view which probably reflected that of New Zealanders generally, religion is entirely to be equated with Christianity.⁶⁸

That hostility directed against individual Jews was limited was the positive outcome of such attitudes. There was a certain amount of generalized anti-Semitism, referred to earlier, which was probably based on stereotypes and prejudices imported from Europe. However, many New Zealanders had not personally encountered Jewish people because Jews were such a small proportion of the population. If or when they did meet Jews, they very often were not aware of doing so. The practice of Judaism was for most New Zealand Jews something they did in the privacy of their homes. There was very little public evidence of Judaism. In part because of this Jewish invisibility, religious bigotry in New Zealand was far more likely to be directed against Roman Catholics (and less frequently against Protestants) than against Jews.

Refugees, particularly sensitive as they were to religious bigotry, observed many instances of it. One of the women in the study recalled that her father was asked at the factory where he worked what his religion was and when he replied, 'oh, I'm Jewish', his questioner responded, 'Well, at least that is not as bad as being Catholic'. A man in the study remembered being told by his father who was, despite his Austrian origin, in the Home Guard during the war that, on one occasion, as part of an exercise he was ordered to close off roads 'damaged by the Japanese invasion' and this was done in such a way that Catholics on their way to the Cathedral had to make a long detour. His father assumed that this outcome was not totally accidental.

New Zealand Jews

What was the relationship between the refugees and New Zealand Jews? What was the established Jewish community like? While the New Zealand Jewish community in the late thirties to early sixties will not be discussed in detail, a few points pertinent to the relationship between the refugees from Europe and the established Jewish community will be made. This relationship had, of course, a major impact on the ways refugee children

⁶⁸Two articles from the many available are cited to support this view: H. Mol, M.T.V. Reidy, 'Religion in New Zealand', Webb, Collette eds., *New Zealand Society: Contemporary Perspectives*, pages 264-282; Michael Hill, 'Religion', Spoonley, Pearson, Shirley eds., *New Zealand: Sociological Perspectives*, pages 169-195.

and children of refugees experienced being Jewish in New Zealand in the post-Holocaust years.

The observance of Jewish religion in refugee homes both before and after migration varied enormously, ranging from families who paid it no attention at all to those that observed dietary laws, celebrated Jewish festivals, attended synagogue regularly and tried to ensure that their children had a religious education. This discussion is most relevant to those refugee parents who did wish to establish links with New Zealand Jews and to give their children a Jewish upbringing of some kind.

The Jewish community's origins and immigration patterns,⁶⁹ referred to in the introduction, reveals its strongly migrant character. The emigration patterns of the community are also of interest. The different waves of immigration to New Zealand did not necessarily have a permanent demographic effect. Had all those who arrived, stayed, the community would have been much larger. But many moved on and at any period of New Zealand history a considerable number in the community were newcomers. According to the 1966 Census for the Auckland area, 765 out of the total of 1620 Jews were born in New Zealand (47 percent). The proportions for Wellington (42 percent) and Christchurch (39 percent) were even less. It appears that many Jewish people have regarded New Zealand as a temporary residence before going on elsewhere - to find marriage partners and/or a fuller Jewish life in Australia, Israel or the United States.⁷⁰

The Census figures (or at least of those who were willing to state they were Jewish in the Census) also reveal the smallness of the community. The size of the community (figures were given earlier) has been a perennial concern to New Zealand Jews.⁷¹ New Zealand's restrictive immigration policies meant that it was difficult to replenish with new immigrants the population lost through emigration or through assimilation and intermarriage, a trend which was also of immense concern.⁷²

Despite the wish of the community to recruit more members, the response of New Zealand Jews to the new arrivals from Hitler's Europe was ambivalent. The community felt a strong sense of obligation to help the refugees, but the prevailing ethos of ethnic

⁶⁹This discussion is drawn from two main sources: Pitt, 'Early History of the Wellington Jewish Community, 1840-1900'; Salinger, Esterman, Levy, Young, *Wellington Jewry* 1983.

⁷⁰Gluckman, Pitt, 'The Judaic Contribution: the Jewish Community in New Zealand', Colless, Donovan eds., *Religion in New Zealand Society*, pages 144-145.

⁷¹There are many references in the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle* to this concern.

⁷²*ibid.*

inconspicuousness and the fear that anti-Semitism would be provoked or brought to the surface by the newcomers tempered the welcome accorded them. New Zealand Jews were too insecure and anxious about their own acceptance in New Zealand to be wholehearted in their welcome. They were fearful not only of anti-Semitism but of being identified by New Zealanders with the strangeness of the newcomers. Sometimes, the refugees were themselves ambivalent or frightened. A background of persecution disposed them to fear making visible connections with Jews in New Zealand.⁷³

There were also particular causes of discord between the refugees and the new arrivals. Often, even the more observant newcomers were considered insufficiently religious by the established Orthodox community. However, in the thirties and forties, there were no other Jewish denominations for them to become affiliated with. It was not until 1956 that liberal Judaism arrived in New Zealand. Its introduction in Auckland in April of that year was perceived as an immense threat to the unity of the small, struggling Orthodox communities.⁷⁴

The uncompromising attitudes of members of the Orthodox community towards part-Jews and mixed marriages also caused a rift between that community and the newcomers who had a more inclusive and flexible interpretation of Jewish customs and beliefs. A number of children of mixed marriages in this study spoke of the rejection and hostility they had encountered when they or their parents had attempted to connect with the Orthodox community.

Probably the most significant barrier between the newcomers and New Zealand Jews occurred because many New Zealand Jews found the refugees too strange to be comfortable with socially.⁷⁵ While some New Zealand Jews were very welcoming, and some refugees and their children felt well accepted, the predominant recollection of both New Zealanders and refugees was of the uneasy relationship that had existed between them.

⁷³Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, pages 62-67. There are many parallels between the attitudes of New Zealand Jews to the newcomers and those of Australian Jews. See Hilary L. Rubinstein's, 'From Jewish Non-Distinctiveness to Group Invisibility: Australian Jewish Identity and Responses, 1830-1950', W. D. Rubinstein ed., *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, Sydney 1987, for a pertinent discussion of this subject.

⁷⁴*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, April 1956, Editorial, page 1.

⁷⁵Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 64.

The War: Attitudes and Perceptions of the Post-War Generation⁷⁶

A number of the refugee children in the study commented that they felt different from their New Zealand classmates because the meaning of the war was different for them than for New Zealand children. They believed they were more personally involved in the war. Yet the experience of World War Two was a dominant part of the mental world of New Zealanders in the forties and fifties. What was the impact of the war on New Zealand children who grew up during those years? What were their perceptions of the war?

The Second World War claimed the lives of 11,625 New Zealanders, and a further 17,000 were wounded. More than 150,000 men were in the armed forces at their peak in September 1942. But though the civilian population came to know blackouts, sirens, fire-watching, army parades and fund-raising campaigns, the basic social pattern was disrupted only temporarily. Civilian life and property were largely unharmed. In many respects the war merely accentuated the uniformity and drabness of life inherited from the depression of the 1930s.⁷⁷

Some New Zealand children had direct recollections of wartime. They remembered the black-outs, school fund raising efforts, the men going off to fight, the army parades, military camps, petrol rationing, the Americans stationed in New Zealand giving 'cookies' to children, wearing identity disc bracelets, large classes at school because many teachers had enlisted, being frightened of the Japanese and much else. A not atypical memory probably is that of the school child in Lauris Edmond's *Women in Wartime*, whose awareness of the war focused on the world map 'above the wall on the settee. Grandpa referred to it daily as he listened to the war news. He had pins that he moved from place to place as armies advanced or retreated'.⁷⁸

Some New Zealanders remembered the 'lighter' side of wartime, others the darker: the anxiety about beloved relatives away fighting and the casualty lists that were published almost daily in the newspapers. Although New Zealand children growing up during the war years did not see bombs dropping, soldiers fighting or men, women and children

⁷⁶A related subject that is not considered in this section is New Zealand's lack of militarism in comparison, perhaps, with the countries of origin of the refugees. Refugees did not comment on this, and the complexities involved in assessing the different kinds of militarism that exist in diverse, changing societies places the subject outside the scope of this study.

⁷⁷Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', page 397.

⁷⁸Edmond ed., *Women in Wartime*, page 48.

being deported, some of them nonetheless had the sense that their childhood was 'dominated' by the war.⁷⁹

For those who grew up in the post-war years, the impact of the war was less direct, being filtered through the recollections and attitudes of relatives who had lived through the war years. Yet a number of the post-war generation have written about the war in terms which suggest that it was in various ways a 'pivotal' experience. The war along with the depression were both 'large shadows, from somewhere long ago' for David McGill.⁸⁰ The values emphasized in Michael King's childhood were those that had 'evolved as a result of the austerities, social disruptions and emotional deprivations of war'.⁸¹ At home, King's father was reticent about the war 'especially talking to those who had not shared the experience'. The effects of the war showed not in what he said or did not say about his experiences but in the determination of his parents 'to create the idyll of suburban domesticity to compensate for the lost years'.⁸²

Further research is needed to determine the generality of such observations. What were the effects on family life of those 'lost years'? As Jock Phillips observes in *A Man's Country?*, the transition from soldier to family man was not easy for either the soldier or for his family.⁸³ It is very difficult to generalize. Much depended on whether the men concerned had had a 'good' or 'bad' war.

New Zealanders' observations about the centrality of the war do not differ substantially from those of the refugee children in this study. Yet the war did not come to New Zealand; New Zealanders went to the war. As Phillips comments, they went off to fight in Europe's war, on behalf of British dreams.⁸⁴ New Zealand families were not displaced, scattered and decimated by the war. The enemy were not former neighbours and acquaintances, but distant foreigners. New Zealanders were the victors in the war, not

⁷⁹For example, Sir Hamish Hay, whose five years at secondary school coincided with the war wrote: 'Around us were hundreds of men and women in uniform ... our newspapers dominated by reports of theatres of war and we were constantly reminded of the casualties that had occurred. As young and I hope thoughtful and impressionable teenagers, we weren't lying back in the sun just enjoying ourselves while our elder brothers and sisters were sacrificing their lives ...'; Sir Hamish Hay, 'A Schoolboy at War', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, pages 104-105.

⁸⁰David McGill, *The Kid from Matata: Memoirs of a Post-War Pakeha Childhood*, Wellington 1987, page 1.

⁸¹King, *Being Pakeha*, page 32.

⁸²ibid., page 38.

⁸³Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, page 213.

⁸⁴ibid., page 198.

its victims. Jewish refugee children spoke, as did New Zealand children, of the war as a large shadow from long ago. But the substance of that shadow for the two groups of children was different in significant ways.

Schools

For refugee children and children of refugees, encountering the New Zealand world meant primarily becoming part of the world of school. What were New Zealand schools like?

A state system of education predominated in New Zealand. Barely twelve percent of primary pupils and sixteen percent of secondary pupils were in private schools in 1940. From 1939 on, state education was 'informed by the ethos of cultural uniformity, social integration and equality.'⁸⁵ This implied, firstly, equality of access. No one was to be denied education on the grounds of means, location, sex, race or physical disability. Secondly, there was to be equality of treatment irrespective of ability and vocational aspirations. Additionally, the schools were to offer varied courses to cater for the diverse needs and abilities of the children.

In the 1930s and 1940s, changes were introduced into the primary school system to foster the values of 'spontaneity, self-expression and self-fulfillment'. The intention was to make learning both relevant to a child's experience and interesting.⁸⁶

There is evidence that some groups of pupils did not 'reap the full benefit of the ethos of equal educational opportunity'.⁸⁷ Children of manual workers and girls were among these groups. Were the culturally different also disadvantaged at school? Did schools cater at all for the cultural diversity of pupils? From about 1930 onwards in Maori schools, there was a change in policy from assimilationist ideology to one of cultural adaptation. Teachers in these schools were encouraged to foster in their pupils a 'healthy racial pride, stimulated by knowledge of and research into the past history and achievements of the Maori'. A statement of principles circulated to schools by the Department of Education required each school to 'be interested in one or more of the Maori

⁸⁵Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', page 413.

⁸⁶Erik Olssen, Andre Levesque, 'Towards a History of the European Family in New Zealand', Peggy G. Koopman-Boyden ed., *Families in New Zealand Society*, Wellington 1978, page 16.

⁸⁷Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', page 415.

crafts and studies'.⁸⁸ Some historians of education have regarded these changes as significant, others as superficial. For those of the latter view, it is evident that despite some small changes, after 1930 Maori had still to make their way through a school system that was almost entirely monocultural. According to Dunstall, the educational failure of Maori children at school may be attributed to the monocultural education system. It pointed up, along with the disadvantage suffered due to sex and class, the post-war gap between the ethos and reality of equality.⁸⁹

There is no evidence that the impact of assimilationist policies and monoculturalism on groups other than Maori was considered by those who formulated policy. As it was expected of other ethnic groups that they assimilate as rapidly as possible, it may be assumed that the role of the schools as agents of assimilation was not questioned.

The school was accepted by refugee parents too as the place where their children would be turned into New Zealanders. Refugee parents expected their children not only to become integrated at school, but also to succeed academically (for most, academic success included the minimum of a university education). They viewed education as the key to overcoming the handicaps of an immigrant background and to success in the new country. By and large their expectations were met by New Zealand schools.

Refugee children whose cultural backgrounds, as those of Maori children, were largely unacknowledged in the schools, did not fail to achieve. On the contrary, backed by the values of their parents concerning the significance of a good education, they usually did very well indeed. Unlike Maori, they were successfully brought into the mainstream of economic and social life. But there were cultural losses. There were also among them those who suffered, socially and psychologically, in a monocultural system which marginalised those who had not yet absorbed the cultural and behavioural patterns of the country. Some of the experiences of the children at school, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, reflect their perceptions of marginality and portray the costs of assimilation.

⁸⁸John Barrington, 'The Maori Schools: Fresh Perspectives', Roger Openshaw, David Mckenzie eds., *Reinterpreting the Educational Past: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*, Wellington 1987, page 169.

⁸⁹Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', page 416.

'The Idyll of Suburban Domesticity'⁹⁰ and Other Aspects of New Zealand Lifestyles in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties

When extended families were the norm, Granma read to the kids at bedtime and everybody went to church, when kids helped Mum with the dishes and Dad in the vege garden, before racing off to float logs around the lagoon and build huts in the lupins, and rival gangs were repelled with shanghais ...

So runs the blurb of David McGill's *The Kid from Matata: Memoirs of a Post-War Pakeha Childhood*.⁹¹ Part myth, part idealized reality, this predictable, safe world, centred round an out-of-doors type of family life in which men were men and women and children knew their place, appears again and again in the literature about New Zealand families during this period. Whether the writers concerned were stifled or agreeably pampered by this world is immaterial to the overwhelming impression of security and continuity emanating from it.⁹² Two aspects of New Zealanders' lifestyles referred to in the above quotation will be examined in this section: first, their out-of-doors type of family life and second, the secure world of the New Zealand extended family.

How rural/outdoors, in fact, was the lifestyle of New Zealanders in the post-war years? The reality was that the rural world had been shrinking since the turn of the century and was rapidly growing smaller after World War Two. In 1936, a third of the population was rural; by 1976 the proportion was one sixth. However until the 1960s, though declining in relative terms, the rural population continued to grow as a result of increasing fertility and the subdivision and resettlement of land. To give an indication, the number of farm holdings rose from 86,239 in 1946 to a peak of 92,395 in 1955.⁹³

Within the cities and towns, where sixty-two percent of the population were concentrated by 1961,⁹⁴ most people lived in suburbia. Vast tracts of suburban two or

⁹⁰King, *Being Pakeha*, page 38.

⁹¹McGill, *The Kid from Matata*, cover.

⁹²For example, Peter Lange in his recollections of childhood observed: 'It was a very secure childhood. Security of family, gang, church, geography. We were loved and cared for, the period was prosperous, there was little trauma, lot of laughter - a fortunate time to enjoy a fortunate childhood'; Peter Lange, 'Behind the Monument', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, page 153.

⁹³Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', page 406.

⁹⁴Stephen D. Webb, 'Urbanization Processes in New Zealand', Stephen D. Webb, John Collette, eds., *New Zealand Society: Contemporary Perspectives*, Sydney 1973, page 330.

three bedroomed bungalows with undulations of lawns stretching out obliterated the sense of being in an urban environment.⁹⁵

The childhood recollections of New Zealanders reflect the absence of an urban environment. New Zealand children, wherever they are living (in rural areas or in suburbia) and whichever social class they belong to, are portrayed as exposed to the land and the water - to the marvels of beaches, rivers, mountains and bush. David McGill's recollections, referred to at the beginning of this section, abound in descriptions of a rural 'paradise':

Across the main road was a drop to the raupo swamp and lagoon full of eels and carp, pukekos and shags, swans and ducks in season, seagulls wheeling over the sand dunes to the surging, limitless Pacific Ocean nobody dared to swim in ... In retrospect it was Arcadia.⁹⁶

McGill spent hours playing in the lagoon or rolling down hills of bouncy grass and riding sliding boards which were greased with 'mum's dripping'.⁹⁷ School was an unwelcome interruption, though it did not have the devastating effect that it had on the child described by Binswanger. For Sir Peter Elworthy, who later became a leader in the farming community, for example, if school was unpleasant and the requirements of conformity arduous, these were only a small part of life in comparison to the idylls of his rural childhood where he had the freedom of the countryside to explore, ponies to ride and fishing and tennis to pursue on his family's beautiful Southland farm.⁹⁸

Numerous other accounts of New Zealand childhoods echo those already cited. They are filled with descriptions of fishing, 'messaging round' in boats and on jetties, building forts in the trees, swimming, riding ponies (for the wealthier country children) and other such activities. In the suburbs too, 'good New Zealand children' were expected to amuse themselves outside. This aspect of children's lifestyles is reflected in the 'Janet and John' school reading books analysed by Anne Else.⁹⁹ The books convey a strong

⁹⁵Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', page 404.

⁹⁶McGill, *The Kid from Matata*, page 2.

⁹⁷*ibid.*, page 39.

⁹⁸Sir Peter Elworthy, 'A Balanced Diet', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, pages 113-118.

⁹⁹Anne Else, 'Edmonds Cookery and Bernadine', *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, August 1986, page 74.

image of what was regarded in the fifties (and earlier) as the right way for children and parents to live. The right way for children was clearly to be occupied outdoors.

To the refugees, most of whom were from the major cities of Central and Eastern Europe, it certainly seemed that the country they had come to was by and large a rural one. New Zealand towns and suburbs reminded them of the countryside where they used to go on vacations. Even the capital city seemed like a provincial town. The cultural life of European cities was virtually non-existent even in New Zealand's largest cities. There were few cafes, restaurants, theatres and other amenities of urban culture as they had known it.

Raising children in such an environment was obviously very different from the upbringing of children in Continental European cities. Binswanger's description of the 'Making of a New Zealander', referred to earlier, focused on these crucial differences and highlighted what had struck her as one of the most important aspects of a New Zealand childhood - its outdoors character. As refugees saw it, New Zealand children were not very often inside, as Continental European city children would have been - playing cards or chess, reading books, discussing philosophy, literature, history or going to concerts, theatres and art galleries.

Refugee children who had memories of life in European cities before emigration were also struck by the rural/outdoors character of life in New Zealand. In particular, they noted the ready access to the outdoors available to them in New Zealand. In contrast with their parents who missed the amenities of Central European cities, many refugee children were very appreciative of their new freedom in New Zealand which contrasted greatly with their earlier life in multi-storeyed apartment blocks.

A number of other aspects of New Zealand lifestyles and characteristics of New Zealand families also stood out in the recollections of interviewees. Refugees and their children, uprooted from their own secure worlds, were impressed by the qualities of safety and stability in the New Zealand world they encountered. Above all, refugee children and children of refugees noticed the large extended families of New Zealanders. They envied the grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, aunts and cousins that their New Zealand peers were surrounded by and took for granted.¹⁰⁰ Although the New Zealand family was

¹⁰⁰David McGill's reminiscences about his childhood are peopled by his countless relations: 'Uncle Jack had died young but there was Aunt Gladys who gave nice presents ... There were also long bus rides to see Uncle Owen in Glen Eden and Aunt Beryl in Pakuranga ... Uncle Bill had a service station' ... Uncle John and Aunt Joyce weren't really relations but then there were also 'Auntie Beryl and Uncle John who never stopped

changing and becoming more nuclear (the family of the fifties and sixties was less likely to include other kin as lodgers),¹⁰¹ relatives nonetheless continued to be a very important social network, providing material and moral help as well as the sense of roots, connections and stability irrevocably lost by truncated refugee families.

Apart from the extended family, security for New Zealand children was, perhaps, enhanced by the predictability of roles and relationships in the family. A number of writers about New Zealand families have noted that 'the cult of domesticity' was particularly 'pre-eminent during the 1950s ... The suburban ideal of home and garden enjoyed the allegiance of most of those born since 1910 ... Most of this (the fifties) decade's adult population had been born between 1910 and 1930 ... They had imbibed the ideals of domesticity and true womanhood with their mother's milk'. Having lived through the Depression and two world wars, that generation are shown as 'emotionally hungering for a period of quiet suburban life'.¹⁰²

Similar notions and lifestyles are depicted in the magazines and journals of the period - in the *New Zealand Womans' Weekly*, the *Parents Centre Bulletin*, the Department of Education's *School Journal*, the Department's school reading books and elsewhere. The mothers are cooking and cleaning and washing and caring for the children; the fathers are going off to work, carpentering, gardening and taking their sons fishing.

The many negative aspects, for men, women and children of domestic life in this period have been described and analysed elsewhere¹⁰³ and will not be discussed here as this subject is beyond the scope of this study. Some aspects of the sexual polarization and the particular brand of 'male culture' of New Zealand society were observed with surprise by the refugees. In social relationships, they noted the rigid separation between the sexes. At parties or dances and in private homes of whatever socio-economic level, men congregated on one side of the room, women on the other; men and women had entirely different subjects of conversation. Binswanger describes one such social occasion in a story entitled 'God's Own Country'. A visitor, Jim, arrives for the evening at the home of a New Zealand husband and wife:

smoking a pipe'. And on McGill goes for several more pages to list more of his relatives who lived in the suburbs of Auckland; McGill, *The Kid from Matata*, pages 97-99.

¹⁰¹Olssen, Levesque, 'History of the European Family in New Zealand', page 19.

¹⁰²ibid., page 18. Others writers have written in a similar vein.

¹⁰³For example in Helen May, 'Motherhood in the 1950s: An Experience of Contradiction', Sue Middleton ed., *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, Wellington 1988, pages 57-71.

Soon after Jim had come in, his wife had disappeared into the scullery and the children had run outside. The two men are alone in the room. When the woman returns to set the table she might hardly exist; it is as though she has withdrawn herself from the company now that the two men are together. She calls for the children to say good night and leaves together with them to put them to bed.¹⁰⁴

Refugees also noticed the lack of physical demonstrativeness of New Zealanders. Men and women did not walk arm-in-arm or touch and demonstrate affection in public. There was little kissing and embracing (without sexual connotation) between family members. This was highlighted for one interviewee on the occasion when she met her New Zealand father-in-law for the first time.

My husband, Sam [not his real name] and I took a Newmans bus to Hastings and his father met the bus. I was aware that this was August and the two had not met since the Christmas before. My family used to kiss each other when they were saying good-night from one day to the next. Sam and his father shook hands! I couldn't believe it! They were obviously delighted to see each other and they really cared about each other, yet they shook hands!

New Zealand, as first generation refugees perceived it, was a homogeneous, rural country, pervaded by Sabbatarianism and remote from the civilization of pre-war Europe. New Zealanders were suspicious of foreigners and sometimes intolerant of cultural differences. Men and women were practical, undemonstrative and moved in different worlds. These and other negative aspects of the New Zealand world encountered by refugees have emerged in this discussion. However, although a number of refugees found the country in many ways strange, uncongenial and difficult to adjust to, it needs to be stressed that New Zealand in their eyes also possessed some very positive characteristics. These characteristics eased the process of settlement and created opportunities for the

¹⁰⁴Binswanger, *'And How Do You Like this Country?'*, page 15.

newcomers and their children.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps most important was the readiness in New Zealand to accept newcomers provided they were prepared to fit in and assimilate. Refugees soon became aware that while antagonism towards foreigners who wished to retain a separate cultural identity was strong, New Zealand was an open society with few barriers to assimilation. They observed with a mixture of relief, pride and anxiety that at school their children were rapidly turned into New Zealanders (at least superficially). The consequences (the gains and the losses) involved in refugees' encounter with a strongly assimilationist New Zealand society will be discussed in the remaining chapters.

The different worlds introduced in this chapter - the refugee world, the Jewish world and the New Zealand world - were many and multi-faceted. Not only were they different for each person but they were also more complex than the notion of past/present, European/New Zealand and real/imagined worlds portrayed in the preceding pages.

The chapters which follow build on this introduction, focusing on the interaction between the different worlds of the people in this study. While the adults - the first generation - were preoccupied with settling and becoming established in a strange country, their children, whether European or New Zealand-born, struggled to fit in and to find ways of belonging. As previously discussed, the New Zealand world they encountered was a strongly assimilationist one. It was also a homogeneous world in which foreigners stood out because of distinct cultural differences. How did the second generation grapple with being different? What was it like to grow up with one foot in the refugee world and one in the New Zealand world? What were the second generations' connections with and perceptions of the Jewish past? What were some of the consequences of a history of uprooting and persecution?

¹⁰⁵These are discussed in Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, for example on pages 29-33.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHILDREN

Who are the people in this study? What was their childhood like? This chapter introduces the children and some of their main preoccupations and concerns. Some children adjusted well in New Zealand but many others seemed adrift between the different worlds discussed in the last chapter. The concept of alienation helps explain their difficulties. Alienation is the experience of feeling out of place and of feeling one is different from the host society and indeed from one's own group - marginal. Lonely and isolated as a number of interviewees were to some extent, their recollections portray the struggles and stresses ... but also the necessary adaptations and successful adjustments of an immigrant childhood.

'What was it like for you in New Zealand as a foreign child, a Jewish refugee child, a child of refugees?' interviewees were asked. Part of the difficulty in answering this question derived from the problem of isolating what was just part of growing up in New Zealand and what was particular to growing up with this type of background.

'I really think that my history could have been that of any New Zealander from the age of about ten or so; it was only the first few years of my life that were different. I had a pretty average and normal New Zealand childhood'. This was the observation of Jonathon (not his real name), who was seven when he came to New Zealand from Germany with his parents in 1938.

Jonathon's perception of his childhood as being not too different from a 'normal' New Zealand one was shared by a few of those interviewed. Many others, however, had a strong sense of living in the different worlds discussed in Chapter 2. The experiences of the children in this study were very diverse. Their age at arrival in New Zealand and whether they had recollections of Europe, whether they identified themselves as Jewish, whether their parents or other close relatives had been in concentration camps, the date of their parents' emigration (whether they had escaped in the early years of the Nazi regime, just before the war, or were trapped in Europe during the war) and other characteristics which will emerge in this and later chapters, all contributed to this diversity. There were also significant differences between interviewees whose childhood was passed in New Zealand in the late thirties and forties and those who grew up in the fifties and sixties. Other immigrants settled in New Zealand in the intervening period and the latter group

grew up in a more cosmopolitan New Zealand. Nonetheless, both groups encountered the restrictive and constricting, homogeneous society, suspicious of cultural differences, that was described in the last chapter.

Children who grew up in the 1940s shared with their New Zealand peers memories of wartime New Zealand. John (born in Berlin in 1935, aged four when he arrived in New Zealand with his parents in 1939) had recollections of American soldiers marching to Anderson Park past his Thorndon home in Wellington and throwing nickels and dimes to the children. He remembered also air raid practices, searchlights and gas mask drill at school.

Refugee children had also memories and perceptions of the war which were not shared with their New Zealand peers. Some of the European-born had direct experience of the horrors of the war. Others were the children of survivors of Nazi persecution. Moreover, the sense of belonging to a persecuted minority did not always end with emigration. During the war years, the hysteria about fifth columnists, the mutterings about 'bloody foreigners', accusations of spying and other sinister interpretations of their families' innocent activities impinged severely on some of the children in this study. Others, by contrast, were barely aware of their transformation from children of refugees to children of enemy aliens.

In the post-war years, the adaptation and attitudes of their parents to New Zealand and the nature of family relationships were significant determinants of how the children experienced growing up in a foreign country. 'Our childhood was like a lovely fantasy. It was so happy', recalled Hannah, aged three when she came with her parents and sister to New Zealand from Germany in 1932. Hannah attributed the happiness and security of her childhood to the very positive attitude her parents had. They made the best of things and hid unpleasant realities, like instances of anti-Semitism, from the children.

You can laugh or cry about things. Some people cried, but my father laughed. The day after he was naturalized, which was straight after the war, we went to the races to celebrate because he loved the races. We were driving along and a huge, black car overtook us. Daddy said, 'probably one of those bloody foreigners'. My parents had refugee friends who grizzled a lot. Some died of broken hearts. My parents were young, malleable and full of life and enthusiasm.

George's recollection was that his parents talked constantly of leaving New Zealand, but never did. George, born in Poland in 1944 during the German occupation, came to New Zealand with his parents and sister in 1952 at the age of eight. Throughout his childhood he was very much aware of his parents' unhappiness in New Zealand and of the effect on him of their attitudes. In his view, their dissatisfaction with the country they were living in had 'somehow permeated through to the next generation'.

Whether the message was that 'New Zealand is the best country in the world' or whether it was that it is not quite adequate, the children's own attitudes were affected in direct and indirect ways. Some children observed their parents energetically striving to make the best of their new life; others noted the adults' 'instinctive disapproval of all things Kiwi'. A number of children were aware that their parents were above all grateful to be in New Zealand and accepted and were accepted by the people with whom they came into contact; others saw the loneliness and isolation of the adults.

In recollections of childhood, parental memories did not always coincide with those of their children. The adults were often too busy and too preoccupied with their own struggles to be very aware of what their children were experiencing. They tended to believe that for children who were growing up in the safety of New Zealand, any problems which arose could only be minor ones.

Michael was born in New Zealand in 1944. His parents, originally from Austria, emigrated first to Palestine and subsequently to New Zealand, arriving in Wellington in 1940 with a son aged fifteen and a daughter of seven. Recollecting the struggles of her two foreign-born older children to adjust to a strange country, Michael's mother considered that her New Zealand-born child (Michael) had few difficulties by comparison. In her view, 'the upbringing of children in New Zealand was really very easy. Michael was a happy child. He fitted in well'.

How generally applicable is this observation? Was it as easy as some of the parents supposed for children to adjust in New Zealand? Did the New Zealand-born and those who were young children when they arrived fit in relatively easily in comparison with foreign-born older children? There are no clear-cut answers to these questions, in part because any firm conclusions are obscured by the differing personalities of the interviewees. Certainly, some of the children did adapt seemingly easily (Jonathon's comments in this regard were quoted earlier) but many others, whether or not they were New Zealand-born and whatever their age when they reached New Zealand, experienced mild to severe problems of cultural adjustment.

Lucie was one of those who had a difficult time. Her recollection of what it was like to be a refugee child was that it was 'hell, generally'. She was eight when in 1940 she came to New Zealand from Bratislava with her parents. Tom, who was two and a half years old when he came from Germany to New Zealand with his family in 1939, also had unhappy memories of childhood. 'It is almost a blank. It was not a good period and I have blanked most of it out. I really don't feel that I have had a normal childhood'.

Not only did the recollections of the adults sometimes differ from those of the children, but the evidence from photographs is also confusing. Renate, aged one when she came to New Zealand with her parents and sister, grew up with an uncomfortable sense of a difference which could not be hidden. Yet, 'every picture of me in those days shows me with a beam from ear to ear. So I obviously was very happy and at peace with all the world'.

A number of the interviewees attributed much of their unhappiness as children to factors arising out of a refugee-immigrant background. The necessity to grow up quickly, the struggle to meet parental expectations, the effort required to obtain peer acceptance and the failure in some cases to fit in despite strenuous efforts to do so, were at times overwhelming. However, it must be noted that some children, whatever their background, perceive themselves as odd or different and attribute their difficulties to whatever most strikes them as different about their families. This may be poverty, wealth, the illness of a member of the family or a variety of other characteristics. Many of the children in this study focused their difficulties and sense of difference on their foreign, Jewish, refugee background.

Whether children's recollections were of a predominantly happy and 'normal' childhood or an unhappy and odd one, and whether they spoke mostly of their successful and easy adaptation to the New Zealand world or their fruitless struggles for acceptance, it is evident that there were costs involved. There was a price to pay for trying to fit in, for failing to do so, but also for successfully assimilating. The remainder of this chapter explores the children's perceptions and experiences, the diverse ways in which they grappled with their difference in a monocultural society, with the pressures and urges to conform and with the stresses of life in families suffering from the effects of recent persecution. Central to this discussion is the underlying theme concerning the gains and losses of assimilation.

Being Different

Michael: 'I think that most people felt a certain sense of not being part of this very homogeneous, very British society. You couldn't help but grow up feeling that you were just a little bit different. It was a feeling of not quite belonging'.

Most of those interviewed grew up with a sense of difference, but differed widely in their responses to this. For some it was an uncomfortable feeling of being not only different, but somehow deficient. Others were aware of only a vague impression of being 'out on a limb' and attempted to conform in the specific areas in which their difference was most obvious. Still others were proud of being different, while a few did not believe they were different enough and wished for the 'colour' of a foreign background.

When children visited the homes of New Zealand friends and neighbours, the differences, big and small, were quickly apparent. The observations made by children of mainly middle-class, well-educated refugees coming into contact with children of 'working-class' New Zealanders (the difficulties of defining such social gradations were referred to in the previous chapter) reflected not only the cultural differences but also the class and socio-economic differences of their respective families.

Jonathon played with the children of a neighbour who was a water-side worker and observed that 'their house was pretty bare and sparsely furnished. It was a fairly humble sort of home with an outside lavatory. My parents were bookish sort of people; I was used to a home where there were books and book shelves, pictures on the walls and classical music'. The differences Jonathon observed were probably mainly socio-economic/class ones rather than cultural, although children of middle-class New Zealanders visiting the homes of refugees were struck by the prevalence of the same characteristics - the classical music, the books, the 'different' pictures on the walls - that Jonathon noted were missing at his friends' house. As of course the houses of many middle-class New Zealanders were filled with music, books and pictures, differences in culture between New Zealand middle-class families also have to be taken into account. It is also important to remember the point, highlighted in the previous chapter, that the background of the refugees was also by no means uniform. Not all refugees' homes were, as was Jonathon's, filled with the trappings of an educated social/cultural milieu. Although predominantly middle-class, they too came from backgrounds which were socio-economically and culturally diverse.

Social class differences, intermingled with cultural ones, featured in the relationship between a number of refugee families and their neighbours. Miriam (not her real name) was born in New Zealand in 1945. Her parents, refugees from Czechoslovakia, arrived in New Zealand in the late 1930s. For several years of Miriam's childhood, the family lived in a state housing area. As Miriam remembers: 'Next door to us lived people who wouldn't speak to us because we were Germans, but we had good communication with neighbours on our other side. We obviously were quite different from the people around us'. One of the obvious differences was the family's house. Miriam's mother recalled: 'We built a house which looked really different among the uniform state houses. Our house was the only one which was facing the sun instead of the street. The neighbours were really put out by it. They called it a chicken coop. It was just different'. Miriam's recollection is that the house faced the 'wrong' way, wrong presumably from a child's perspective because it faced a different way from the others.

Although many of the interviewees had difficulty with defining and describing the differences they had observed, their observations suggest similar perceptions. A number made the general comment that New Zealand houses, which tended to be broadly similar regardless of the social ranking of their occupants, looked 'normal' and 'right' in comparison with their own. A child with a part-refugee background described New Zealanders' houses as 'unambiguous'. In her house, the manifestations of the different cultures mingled and were 'confusing'.

Those children who encountered New Zealanders who were attracted by the differences they observed in the houses of refugees were less likely to consider their own homes and cultural environment 'wrong'. Hannah had a friend who very much admired the design of the family house. 'He would bustle round exclaiming, "Oh what a beautiful house!" because for him it was something quite different'. His admiration extended to Hannah's parents - 'Oh they are so interesting!' - and to the food which he found 'fascinating'. Others in the study reported similar instances of New Zealanders (usually with middle-class backgrounds) whose association with a refugee family meant a very welcome introduction to another culture as well as to art, music, theatre, intellectual debate, and to 'delectable' food.

Above all, children visiting each other were struck by the two most obvious cultural differences - language (the subject of Chapter 6), and food and drink. As with housing, the cultural differences between refugees and New Zealanders regarding the types of foods eaten, how the foods were cooked and what was drunk were partly cultural and partly

socio-economic/class ones.¹ Refugee children were often uncomfortable about such differences and put considerable effort into attempting to make their household's style of food acceptable for New Zealand visitors. Lucie recalled pretending that the cottage cheese filling in a pastry was custard and giving *Wiener Schnitzel* the more palatable name of 'crumbed cutlet'. She also tried to persuade her mother to make pikelets and scones for after school visitors. 'But of course one never quite knew how they were made. It took us many years to discover that you do not grease a pan for pikelets. These are the sorts of things which no recipe book will tell you because everybody is expected to know them'.

Jenny (not her real name) was born in New Zealand in 1944 to Hungarian parents who reached New Zealand before the outbreak of war. 'By the time I was aware of life, they were quite established. They had bought a house; father had a secure job. Things were tight, but not desperate and they were improving'. Nonetheless, Jenny was very much aware that her family was different and felt uncomfortable about this difference. She tried, without success, to have a home that was as much like New Zealand homes as possible.

I felt self-conscious about bringing people home. My mother would put on a beautiful chocolate cake for afternoon tea, but if I went to a New Zealanders' place you would get a piece of bread and butter or a scone. Before I would bring someone home I would say to my mother, 'I only want you to make scones for afternoon tea. That is all I had at somebody else's place'. But even when she made scones, her scones weren't the same as everyone else's. She could never be the same even though I kept trying to get her to be the same. I wanted her to look the same, to wear the same type of clothes as New Zealand mothers and to talk the same as they did.

When Jenny visited New Zealanders' homes, she never revealed that she was not used to the foods they took for granted.

¹There is a body of mainly anthropological literature analysing the connections between social gradations and food. For example, Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge 1982; Mary Douglas, ed., *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*, New York 1984. I am not aware of this type of analysis having been applied specifically to New Zealand.

I remember staying with a friend one night and in the morning when we came down for breakfast I was asked if I wanted porridge. I had never heard of porridge. I think I might have read about it but certainly didn't know what it was. But if they asked, 'do you want porridge?', then obviously it was what everybody eats for breakfast. I said, 'yes'. Then they asked me if I wanted hot milk or cold and I had no idea but I wasn't going to let on. Every time I went and had anything different at someone else's house, I came home and said, 'this is what I like; this is what you must make - for example, pumpkin. You must make pumpkin because New Zealanders have pumpkin'.

Some children disliked New Zealand food at first. Foods such as mutton, porridge, suet and salted butter were strange and took time to get used to. However, the need to conform soon supplanted the children's earlier tastes. Miriam's mother recalled her daughters asking, 'why do we have to have brown bread while the others have white bread?', and on another occasion, 'Mum, when the billet (a temporary boarder) comes, can you buy white bread?' 'The billet was quite happy with brown bread as it turned out'.

There were also different notions regarding what constituted a meal. For example, in the 1930s and 1940s, many New Zealanders tended to eat salads, consisting usually of only lettuce and tomatoes, mainly in the summer. In Miriam's household, however, there was an emphasis on salads the whole year round. Into the salads would be put all the different vegetables that were in season at a particular time. Miriam's mother recalled that: 'On one occasion, my younger daughter must have had a talk with one of our neighbours and told her we were having fifteen different vegetables for dinner that day. My daughter came back from the neighbour saying, "Mrs Anderson says there is no such thing as fifteen vegetables"'.

Renate very much enjoyed watching food being prepared when she was a child. She was struck by the marked differences between what her New Zealand neighbours did and what was customary in her family.

Our neighbour would say, 'oh we're having tea, I'll just pop these peaches in the oven to take the chill off them'. My mother, on the other hand, would be putting peaches into the fridge to make them colder. I couldn't work it out. How could people be so different?

Never mind that they ate different foods - bread and dripping and things like that. I recognized that you either had or didn't have certain foods, but to do something so opposite with the same food, that really impressed me.

For Renate, the 'abiding' fact about her childhood was being different. The recognition of always being 'out of step' with others around her came early. 'I didn't like it, I didn't like it at all'. But becoming the same as the others did not seem to be possible either. Certain behaviours could be copied. For example, one interviewee adapted her table manners (how she held cutlery, for instance) to the company in which she found herself (Continental European or New Zealand), but there was a great deal that could not be changed by imitation alone. Renate:

You couldn't be the same because you didn't know how - it was elusive. You could watch the others, you could learn some things but it was quite difficult to get it just 'right'. Sometimes you nearly succeeded and then you did something wrong, something that was with you from home. A lot of ordinary things reminded you that you were different.

Renate was aware that she did not know about 'the small things of New Zealand life that others knew about instinctively'. (This perception will be discussed further in Chapter 5.) 'Our grandparents played chess, while everyone else's played poker. We couldn't ever talk about poker because we didn't know what it was'. This is one small example from the many which could be given.

Why did being different matter so much to the children in this study? Miriam's mother recalled a discussion she had with her daughter on this subject. 'I said to her, "it doesn't matter if you are different; as long as you don't hurt anybody, you can do what you like". And she replied, "you must conform". Not being different from the others was really important for the children at that time'.

Although the wish to be like their peers is common to most children, the urge to conform was probably particularly strong among these children from an ethnic and usually also from a religious minority background. The association, however tenuous and undefined for some of the children, with a history of persecution, must also have had a

significant impact on their behaviour and attitudes. (This association and its consequences will be discussed further at a later stage.) The strongest memory of many of the interviewees concerned feelings of embarrassment. Embarrassment in children is a very powerful emotion and many of the people in this study suffered from it acutely.

The grounds for feeling embarrassed were many. Very often, it was the parents themselves (not only the food they served) who were regarded as extremely 'funny' and therefore embarrassing. At certain stages of their lives, many children without a foreign background feel similarly about their parents. However, it is likely that this situation was exacerbated for foreign children. While children could rapidly acquire acceptable English and New Zealand ways, the assimilation of the parents was much slower or non-existent. As Miriam's mother observed:

The thing that happened very often was that the children were somehow irritated by these parents who couldn't speak English properly, who did things differently, whose houses looked different, whose furniture was different, whose taste was different. I know of one child who had to go to school every day with his father on the same tram and the father always told us laughingly that if he went to the front of the tram, then the child would go right to the back because he just couldn't stand his father saying, 'one section, please' in his strong, Czech accent.

Lisa, born in Trieste, Italy, was one year old when she came to New Zealand with her parents and sister in 1939. She remembered 'minding' very much being in the tram or the bus with her parents because they spoke very loud, accented English.

I thought everyone looked at them because they were strange and foreign. What I would do is sit in a completely different part of the bus so that no one would know that we were related. This went on for years. I also remember being very uncomfortable when my mother came to school to speak with teachers. I was just very conscious of her foreign accent.

But disowning parents in this way was not a satisfactory solution. Lisa: 'I knew that my parents were regarded by some as "bloody foreigners". I sort of internalized their attitude (insecurity) and did not feel comfortable about my own Kiwi bona-fidess'.

Walter's reaction was similar. He was born in Germany and was two years old when he came to New Zealand with his parents in 1938. He remembered vividly 'the very difficult years of being seen by members of the community as German'. The family settled in a small town on the South Island. Walter recalled being very ashamed of his background and trying to disguise not only his German origins but also his Jewishness. 'I would be very troubled by my mother's accent when we went shopping together and embarrassed by her sampling fruit in shops. I did not want to go shopping with my mother because of her accent'.

A considerable number of the people in this study had such recollections. Interviewees spoke of trying to change particularly embarrassing aspects of their parents' behaviour, usually with little success. For example, one boy tried to correct his father's English despite the anger that this aroused because, 'his English was a very sensitive issue'. Bringing friends home from school became an ordeal for some children in part because of their shame at their parents' 'coming out with the most amazing botches of the English language'.

Some children never invited others home, preferring to try to keep their different worlds separate. 'My parents were clearly so different; I didn't know quite how they would react to these other children', recalled Tom. Moreover, his own struggle for acceptance at school was difficult enough without risking introducing his few friends to his parents whom they would undoubtedly find strange and perhaps unacceptable.

When Jenny brought children home from school, she was embarrassed by her mother's much more emotional style of speaking and behaving than New Zealand mothers.

She was very volatile. She would cry easily. I found that very embarrassing because everyone else's mother would talk of sad things and bad things with a very calm exterior and in a very controlled manner. She would show real concern about other people if something was going wrong, whereas the New Zealanders had such a tight rein on their emotions. They said, 'oh, how terrible', and 'oh, that is nice', in almost the same tone of voice.

Linked to embarrassment at this lack of culturally appropriate restraint was some children's dismay at how noisy their parents appeared alongside New Zealanders. Lisa enjoyed visiting her friend, Julie, who lived nearby, because it was quieter at Julie's house and there was sedate conversation in place of the shouting that went on in her own home.

And then, while I was at Julie's, I would hear my mother yell across:
 'Lisa!' My mother was the only one to yell for her child to come home.
 I don't know why she yelled for me because they were on the phone. I
 used to think that Julie's mother didn't think much of the fact that my
 mother would yell for me. It is not something she would have done.

Others interviewed in this study gave examples of the 'hurdle' and 'strain' which they experienced when the New Zealand and the foreign worlds came into contact. Annette was born in 1948 in New Zealand. Her mother was a New Zealander; her father a wartime refugee from Austria. Annette was not herself embarrassed by the differences in her household, but she was aware that 'bringing people home meant bringing them into an environment in which they might feel uncomfortable'.

It is important to emphasize that there were also a few interviewees who were troubled neither by their own sense of difference or by New Zealanders' reactions to it. These children were comfortable both in the New Zealand world and in the refugee world. Katherine, for example, born in New Zealand in 1946 to an Austrian father and Czech mother, thought her family was so wonderful that it 'never crossed her mind that other people wouldn't'. Katherine, although very aware of her parents' foreign behaviour, appearance and accents, was not embarrassed by this. She had, in fact, barely noticed the latter. 'At college I remember a girl saying to me, "I can't understand a word your father says". I was absolutely astounded'.

Katherine remembered people laughing at the food she ate, such as the yoghurt which her mother made herself, but she could not recall being troubled by this at all. Katherine always brought children home from school. The house was usually full of them. Some of her New Zealand friends thought she was odd going to orchestra and chamber music concerts. Such attitudes did not interfere with Katherine's attendance or her enjoyment of these concerts.

Katherine, unlike many of the other people in this study, spent her childhood years surrounded by an extended family of uncles, aunts and cousins, all of whom lived nearby.

Moreover, a number of the immediate neighbours of the family were former Central European refugees.

We were always surrounded by a lot of Europeans. It was not so much that I felt we were different from New Zealanders but that they were different from us. I felt that they were missing so much. I thought that we had so much fun; we seemed to make more noise, laugh more, hug more. It seemed to me that we were the lucky ones.

It is evident that there were diverse attitudes to being different - ranging from desperation or discomfort to acceptance and positive feelings about themselves and their families. The first two reactions, however, were more common than the last two. (A possible explanation for this will be offered in the conclusion to this chapter.) How can the divergent responses of the children be explained? Those interviewees (referred to earlier) encountering New Zealanders who were fascinated and attracted by the different culture they came into contact with were more likely to experience being different positively. Parental attitudes were important but do not provide a sufficient explanation because siblings frequently responded differently one from another. Individual differences of personality were clearly also responsible in part. Some children, despite their background or their parents' attitudes or the snubs they encountered, were more secure or perhaps less sensitive than others and behaved accordingly. Hannah, for example, enjoyed being different. Occasionally she would think how marvellous it must be to have an 'English' background, but most of the time she accepted her foreign background and was not embarrassed by it. However, her sister reacted differently. Hannah:

I used to talk German to my sister and sometimes if I wanted to be really horrible (when I was about twelve and she ten) I would embarrass her by talking in German to her at the top of my voice. Kids are really horrible sometimes to their younger sisters. She hated me doing this and I used to delight in it.

Embarrassment, miserable experience though it was, was not the worst consequence of being different in a homogeneous society. Some children were baited and teased, undergoing all the various put-downs that children inflict on those whom they

perceive as odd and vulnerable. Some children fended off the teasing with jokes, others with their fists. Still others withdrew. Their accounts of childhood convey the isolation and the loneliness of their struggles for acceptance. Children sometimes fought these battles in the parks and on the street of their neighbourhoods. However, mostly it was at school that the more negative side of being different was experienced. These school experiences will be discussed in the next chapter.

Stresses

The reflections of interviewees about growing up in refugee families reveal the strength, resilience and adaptability of the refugees as well as the lingering effects of the Holocaust, of the dislocation and the stresses of migration. On balance, the most striking characteristic of refugee families was their will and ability to live their lives as though the Holocaust had not happened.

Family and Community

Being isolated, unconnected, living in a small family which lacked a broader social base in the community, was a stressful feature of a number of refugee children's childhood. Katherine grew up in a family with uncles, aunts and cousins, while Hannah and Renate had four grandparents living nearby. Both families were very unusual in this respect. Growing up in a small, isolated nuclear family was far more common. The impact of the Holocaust for the post-war generation was often experienced through the lack of relatives.

Howard, born in New Zealand in 1958 to a New Zealand mother and German refugee father, grew up virtually without relatives. Most of his father's family, including Howard's grandparents, were killed by the Nazis and there were few relatives on his mother's side: 'I always did envy other children who had grown up in large, sprawling families and would go along to family gatherings with cousins, uncles, aunts all over the place'.

David and Anne (born in New Zealand to a German mother and Czech father) were brought up without an extended family. As David recalls: 'That was one of the things I have always regretted. We felt in many ways quite isolated as children compared with

New Zealanders who knew everybody and were always off to stay on farms all over New Zealand with their various relatives'.

For Lisa, growing up without relatives was central to the feeling she had of not quite belonging. 'Being robbed of grandparents made me a little more of a gypsy. My only relative was an aunt who lived with us and her nerves weren't too good. My mother would read letters aloud from cousins in Israel so as to make them come alive for us'. By contrast, next door at Lisa's friend's house, 'There was Auntie Maude and cousin Peter and grandparents. There was a kind of stability and continuity which I didn't have'.

Tom too experienced the lack of relatives as a serious deprivation. Neither of his grandparents on either side of the family survived the war and other relatives were either killed or dispersed around the world. 'It was a very small family in New Zealand. In my early years, not only did I not have the benefit of grandparents, but I was also without the benefit of parents because they were too busy working'.

In a sense, the dead or dispersed relatives were not entirely absent. They were present in the letters read out to Lisa and to others, in photographs and in the recollections of parents. Some parents made determined efforts to bring missing relatives alive for their children, for example by talking about them or by lighting candles on the anniversaries of their deaths, whilst others were unable or unwilling to do so. (This subject will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.)

Anthony was born in New Zealand in 1944 to a British mother and a father who came as a refugee from Germany. Anthony's father was reticent in sharing his past with his New Zealand family. Nonetheless 'my grandmother and my grandfather on Dad's side were always present. I was always conscious of the fact that they had done things, achieved things, had personalities. They were present through the furniture, the books, the paintings [which were from Germany] and through the anecdotes'.

Did the wider refugee community provide a substitute extended family? The small number of refugees and the diversity of their backgrounds meant that such a development was less possible in New Zealand than in places with much bigger refugee populations. However, a number of families did have a kind of community life with other refugees. Renate:

Everyone came on Sundays to our place. Mum baked all morning and by Sunday night all the baking had gone - the bread rolls, the cream puffs. People came with their children. When I meet with those kids

now we have a really strong bond that is nothing to do with what we are now but with the fact that we all knew that only at those gatherings could our parents really relax and talk and laugh and be themselves. Yet they [the people who formed this group] weren't people who would have been friends in normal circumstances because they were from all the mixtures of German-Jewish life. The only thing they really had in common was the push from everyone else to push them together.

Miriam too grew up with some sense of belonging to a 'community'. In the state housing area where the family stood out as outsiders because of the social class and cultural differences already referred to, her mother had little interaction with the people around her. (She also stood out because she was the only woman in that neighbourhood who ran a business as well as a home.) However, the family did have regular social contact with other refugees. Miriam: 'Once a week [at a coffee bar] on Lambton Quay the "Continental" would gather. It was the only place in Wellington where you could get decent coffee'. While the adults drank coffee, Miriam would have a chocolate sundae.

However, Continental European refugee origins provided insufficient common ground for many refugees. Vivienne, for example, born in New Zealand in 1941 to Czech refugee parents, often heard her mother speaking of people who were not 'of our background'. The phrase referred to the absence of shared values about cultural matters - about attitudes to books, music, art - as well as to a classification based on former socio-economic level and professional attainment. Vivienne's mother applied this classification to Continental European refugees as much as to New Zealanders; to Jews and to non-Jews alike. As few of the family's acquaintances possessed the 'right' background, Vivienne had a very isolated childhood.

A number of the refugee families had little contact with either the refugee, Jewish or wider New Zealand community. The men did not go to the pubs or belong to the local sports clubs and the families did not participate in either the church based social and recreational organizations or in the social/cultural and religious activities associated with the synagogue. The day-to-day reality for children in such circumstances was a small nuclear family; a close family, too close, too vulnerable and too isolated (according to interviewees). Annette, among others, commented on the intensity of relationships in such a family: 'Our family always felt very small and very vulnerable'. In Annette's view, it

was too small to provide sufficient support for the children. 'If we had linked into some social group [the church or the synagogue, for example], it would have felt more grounded, but it was just mother, father, two children and grandparents'. There were numerous relatives on her New Zealand mother's side but very little contact ever took place with this family because, by marrying a 'foreigner', Annette's mother had rebelled against the values of her family and to some extent cut herself off from them.

'Up Against the Wall'

Living in an isolated nuclear family was stressful for many interviewees. There were a number of other stresses. Probably the most important of these was the various ways in which the parents' sufferings and pre-emigration experiences of persecution affected their children. A number of people in this study attributed many of the negative aspects of their upbringing to 'what their parents had been through'. Proneness to impatience, emotional outbursts, irrational fears and a reluctance to trust other people were thought to be due to earlier traumatic experiences.

Some interviewees spoke of the fact that their parents' and other relatives' ability to enjoy life had been permanently damaged. This was the case not only for those refugees who had endured direct threats to their lives and undergone physical and mental suffering in concentration camps, but also for those whose experiences of persecution had been more indirect.

Vivienne remembered on one occasion visiting a New Zealand family who seemed to do things 'just for fun'. This struck her as being so different from her family: 'In my family there was never any sense of looking at life from a child's point of view'. Vivienne's belief is that it was the stress of the Holocaust endured by her mother and the deaths of her parents in concentration camps (of which she never spoke), which caused her intolerance of children, her inability to see their point of view and her attitude to life of being 'up against the wall'.

Lisa's experience was also of a highly stressed household: 'After years and years of not hearing any news about their families, my parents found out about the fate of my father's family'. (They were killed in one of the concentration camps.) Lisa's parents did not talk a great deal about this or about the Holocaust generally. The stress and the pain showed indirectly.

It was that their patience with children was affected. They were on a shorter fuse [than other people]. I will give one example. When I was quite little, in the week-ends my sister and I used to go into my mother's feather bed for sleep-ins. I had a little rubber doll, which I found out later was something my Hungarian grandparents had given me when I was born in Italy. I called this doll 'little girlie'. One morning, in my mother's bed, I said something about 'little girlie'. My mother gave me one hang of a yank and a slap, threw me out of bed and said, 'don't say that word again!' I was terribly upset and cried. Was all this because I had called my doll 'little girlie'? What had in fact happened was that my mother had understood me to have said 'Goering' (Field Marshall Goering).

The stress in the household was increased by the presence of Lisa's aunt, whose parents and beloved sister had perished at Auschwitz.

She was having a hard time adjusting to being in New Zealand and thinking she should have stayed behind with her family, at the same time realizing that if she had stayed behind she would not have survived herself. My aunt's nerves were shot. She didn't like the sound of children playing - bouncing balls and things like that. So I tried to play at other people's places more. I didn't like the tension at our place. I had a very good girl friend down the street and I would be at her place a lot of the time. It was quieter there.

Jenny's aunt, her grandmother and a cousin, all survivors of the Nazi persecution of Jews in Hungary, joined their family in New Zealand a few years after the war.

My aunt was in a very emotionally unbalanced state when she arrived and very depressed. She attempted suicide on a number of occasions. This was a result of her experiences in the war. Before, she had been a perfectly capable, normal, intelligent person. Going through the concentration camp, finding her fiancée killed, watching her sister die next to her - she wasn't strong enough to cope with. As a seven or

eight year old, I did not realize what my aunt's strange behaviour was about. I was upset when she would scream and get out of control. I didn't want my friends to meet her because she was so different and unpredictable. Even the smallest thing can throw you when you are a child. When you bring your friends home, you want to have everything normal and sensible and the way it is in everyone else's family. I used to say to my mother, 'I'm bringing a friend home today. You are to make sure she [her aunt] is out of the way in her room and doesn't come out while my friend is here.'

Jenny believes that living with her aunt, seeing what Nazi persecution had done to her, and her family's experiences of the war generally, had a major impact on the children in the family. Attitudes to food, for example, were affected.

As children, we were never allowed to waste a piece of food. We grew up knowing how many people that we actually knew or would have known had died of starvation. So we had a different attitude to scraps of food. It wasn't a joke (or a very distant problem as the hungry people of India or Africa are). It was my cousin's mother or father who might have lived if they had had two more pieces of bread to eat. Then they might have had just enough stamina to carry them through another two days and they might have been saved. My cousin's mother lived (in one of the concentration camps) right until the end of the war, was actually liberated and died in the hospital afterwards.

Jenny knew of other people who died literally for want of one piece of food. 'It was as touch and go as that. When you have grown up knowing vividly about things like that; about people being herded together for three days in cattle trucks without food or water and taken to concentration camps, your attitude to every thing is different'.

A number of other children in this study were brought up with similar attitudes to wasting food. David: 'We were made to eat our crusts and every single thing on our plates. We had to eat everything whether we liked it or not and whether it was too much or not. It was an inflexible rule. This came particularly from Dad who had gone through the

beginnings of the German occupation and hadn't had enough food'. The message was well learned for even forty years on it 'hurts' David to see food being wasted.

Other Stresses

The upbringing of the children in this study was usually fairly strict and regimented and this was seen by interviewees as another stressful feature of family life. To some extent, individual and cultural factors were responsible as parents transplanted the child-rearing practices of their former milieux to their new country. Anxiety and insecurity about appropriate behaviour in a strange country probably also played a part by undermining both parental authority and self-confidence. 'My mother was very strict and frightening'; 'my parents were very strict and over-anxious', were frequent comments. Anne: 'If I was late walking home from school, my mother just about tore my or her own hair out and would be on the point of ringing the police'.

Marei, born in Germany in 1935, was three when she came to New Zealand with her brother, parents and German nanny, known as Lolein. Hers was also a strict and regimented childhood. She considers that her life was more programmed and supervised than that of her New Zealand friends.

I was always being picked up and taken places. [Also] the other children always seemed to have money to spend at the shops, but Lolein didn't think it was good to eat sweets or to eat between meals. As soon as we came home from school, we had our evening meal at four o' clock. Everyday we had soup. It was standard. Your meal was put on the table and you had to eat it all up. I hated soup for years afterwards. When I left home for university, I used to live on chelsea buns. I had a rotten diet for many years to make up for the rigid sort of eating of my childhood.

Anecdotes about parental behaviour regarded as over-protective abound. Renate was collected from St. Johns Ambulance while every other child just went on home. Jonathon's parents were 'great worriers about all details big and small and certainly about things like having plenty of warm clothes on'. Ernie, born in New Zealand in 1943 (he is the brother of Lisa), 'was pampered and over-protected' by his family: 'You had to really

rug up warm against the elements. We were wrapped up too warmly for the climate. I used to try and fight against this. 'It's not Europe, you know', I would say'. There were strict rules too about the time Ernie had to be home. 'They were possibly worried I might become the victim of some anti-Semitic rogues around the neighbourhood'. (This was not an irrational fear on their part as the local bully boys did occasionally pick on Ernie.)

The different attitudes of urban, Continental European parents regarding the outdoors is also revealed in their over-protective behaviour. The fact that family picnics and camping holidays were less common among the refugees than in New Zealand families is an example of differences in outlook. (However, in some families, insufficient spare time for leisure activities is a more likely explanation for the lack of holidays and recreational outings of any kind.) As discussed in Chapter 2, New Zealand parents regarded the suburban garden or the countryside as the most appropriate playground for their children. By contrast, some refugee parents could never feel entirely comfortable about exposing their children to the rigours and the (imagined) dangers of the physical environment.

How did children respond to such attitudes? Many felt strongly that they had to conform to the wishes and expectations of their parents with the consequence of seeming to be priggish or 'goody-goods' in the eyes of their New Zealand peers. (This is discussed more fully in the next chapter.) It was difficult for the children to rebel against their parents and the reason is significant in the light of the earlier discussion concerning the impact of the Holocaust on the new generation growing up in New Zealand. As Ernie observed: 'I never rebelled against my parents very much. I had very strong respect for them and I felt in a very special way for all that they had gone through. I was named after my mother's brother. I am their connection with the past. In a sense I am their connection with all those who died'.²

The generation born after the Holocaust were the link to the past, but also represented the future. Because so many had died, the living were 'special'. Being 'special', 'precious' and 'indulged' in close, over-protective, intense, small families also made standing up against the dictates of the family difficult and, for some children, quite impossible.

²Although Ernie's uncle in fact died before the Holocaust, Ernie's perception was that by being named after him he was connected to other relatives who had died in the Holocaust.

Being Poor

For some of the people in this study, the initial and, in some cases, the continuing poverty associated with migration had a bigger impact on their childhood than having refugee/foreign parents. Some families were able to regain comfortable standards of living in a relatively short time. Others had many years of financial struggle ahead of them.

Poor, overcrowded accommodation caused severe problems for some families. Marei and her family, covered in insect bites, had to move out of their first flat in Newtown, Wellington, in order to have the place fumigated. Their second flat was up a hundred steps. As Marei recalls: 'My father always said that that flat got notoriety because subsequent to our living there, a baby got bitten by a rat'. For Jenny's family, having a very crowded house posed problems: 'It put a lot of strain on the family in every way'.

Mothers and fathers working long hours affected children. Tom: 'My father I never saw because he was always working. He wasn't earning very much in those early years. My mother went out working as well, as a charwoman'. Others spoke of the long hours their parents worked, at first merely to earn enough to live on, later to improve their lot and become established. Many refugees worked and struggled to recover the financial, professional and personal losses incurred by war and forced migration.

George's parents were among those who worked very hard: 'Although my father had a very physically taxing job, during the two week annual holiday that he was given and was obliged to take, he used to get another job'. Consequently, during the years of George's childhood, there were no family holidays. George and others consider that their parents' hard work was not only motivated by the desire to obtain a comfortable standard of living but was also related to an intense desire for security. They struggled to achieve material security to compensate for all the losses they had suffered. George: 'My parents only spent money on necessities. I sometimes had to walk to the other side of town to save 3d on a pair of school pants. Every single penny counted'.

Many refugees were unsuccessful in regaining even a small portion of what was lost. Nonetheless, the success of some refugee families in achieving a degree of material security and a relatively comfortable standard of living sometimes evoked unfavourable reactions in New Zealanders, including in the refugee children's New Zealand peers. According to Lucie and others, the refugees' success and their efforts to achieve, seen as working 'too hard', were resented, in part, because they did not live up to the image of refugees as 'ragged, starving waifs'.

Poverty, the lack of an extended family, the sense of being without a community, exposure to the tensions, fears, anxieties and sometimes overwhelming love and attention of their parents were stressful features of the childhood of interviewees. The lasting (and sometimes damaging) legacy of the past is examined further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Religion

The long-term effects of persecution and dislocation and the concerns and uncertainties experienced by a number of the children regarding being different, regarding fitting in and belonging are also reflected in their comments about religion.

Ernie had an upbringing in which being Jewish played an important part. His early memories are of being emotionally moved by the Jewish music he heard in the synagogue. He attended Hebrew School on Sundays and became a teacher there from the age of twelve.

For Ernie, being Jewish meant being different in a particular way. His own experiences (for example, the encounters with neighbourhood bullies, referred to earlier) and his parents' extreme sensitivity to any possibility of anti-Semitism, combined to give Ernie a strong sense of injustice and the feeling of being part of a persecuted minority even as a fairly young child.

Anthony too had a religious Jewish upbringing.

I think that when I was a primary school kid, family life was more Jewish than it has ever been since. This was due to my parents' wish to give me the rudiments [of a Jewish education]. The Jewish things were preparing for *Bar-Mitzvah* [celebration of the passage of the Jewish male from boyhood to adulthood], celebrating *Pesach* [Passover], learning Hebrew once a month with a few other Jewish children in Palmerston North, synagogue in Wellington a couple of times a year on the High Holy Days [The Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement], having the prayer book and *tallis* [special shawl for prayer] from grandfather, and sitting in Dad's seat in the synagogue

next to an elderly Jew who took an interest in me and would say, 'You're K H's boy, aren't you?'

For Anthony, as for Ernie, there was a negative side of being Jewish. The occasional denigration of his religion seemed to him linked to his foreign background.

I was always conscious of the fact that I was a Jewish boy, the son of those 'bloody Germans', the outsider. You were always conscious of the fact that you are the one who has to prove yourself; you had to be better than others; you had to be able to hide your Jewishness; you had to be like everybody else. The Jewish part of you had to be very private.

Hannah was brought up in an Orthodox household, which meant keeping strictly to Jewish rituals about religion. Because the family lived in a small rural area, her mother came to Wellington once a week to buy *kosher* meat (animal killed according to Jewish law). Family life centred round Jewish rituals: 'Friday nights were really special, with ten of us at table; the white cloth and silver candle stick and my mother lighting the candles. My father would bless each child'.

Jewish festivals were celebrated. 'My friends had Christmas and I had *Channukah* [Jewish festival which takes place approximately the same time each year as Christmas]. 'My father had a *Channukah* record [disc] and we lit candles each night'. The house had glass doors opening out into the countryside. Hannah remembers the clear, summer nights, the glass doors opened and the family and friends standing outside singing along with the record:

Even as a child I knew that that was something amazing to be happening in a New Zealand paddock. It gave me the warmth and strength not to care about anybody else outside. Because it was so warm, so loving, so right, it gave me the feeling that what other people said and did was not so important.

A close, warm family and the maintenance in the home of Jewish traditions did not necessarily mean that children were, as Hannah, secure and comfortable in their

Jewishness. Walter's upbringing was also a fairly traditionally religious one. His father became lay preacher and spiritual leader of the Dunedin Hebrew Congregation in 1942. At this time, the family were still living in the small town where they had first settled on arrival in New Zealand and his father used to hitch-hike into Dunedin to run the services.

Because of the influence of his parents and the reading and the discussions that took place, Walter grew up strongly conscious of his Jewish identity. By late adolescence, it had become an identity he was proud of. During the years of his childhood, however, he was very ashamed and embarrassed about being different. When the family moved to Dunedin and became part of the Jewish community there, he felt more secure. But he still worked hard to disguise his Jewishness.

I certainly wouldn't tell people I was Jewish. I recall, whenever I went to the synagogue, checking to make sure that friends or schoolmates were not nearby and ducking into the library next door instead of into the synagogue if they were. I was very circumspect about going in there and about others seeing me going in there. When I think of this today, I cringe. But that is how I felt as a kid.

John too was uncomfortable about being Jewish, despite an upbringing which included the maintenance of some Jewish traditions.

I would no more have dreamt of walking down the street wearing a *yarmulka* [head covering worn by an Orthodox Jew] than I would dream of jumping a nine foot fence. Going to other children's homes was always a nerve-wracking experience because I knew they were going to serve me ham or pork. It happened every time and I was confronted with this bloody problem. Am I going to tell the hostess or would I shut up and eat it? For a long time, I didn't have the self-confidence to say, 'I don't eat this'. I was amazed and delighted to discover, of course, that no bolt of lightning struck me when I did eat the pork.

Miriam remembered when she was a child standing outside a church wishing that she could go in. When questioned, why, she replied, 'I suppose because everyone else

did'. In the state housing area where the family lived, many of the people were Roman Catholics. Though both Miriam's parents were Jewish and there was 'even a rabbi in the family somewhere', neither came from an Orthodox background. Recalls Miriam's mother:

We were Jewish but not religious. So I couldn't give my children a religious education. I had religious grandparents and I can remember the celebration of festivals in their home when I was a child, but my children didn't have this at all. For them, there was nothing, just the fact that we were Jewish. If they asked us, why, we couldn't answer. We just were.

A number of the people in this study were similarly Jewish in name only. For some of them, Judaism meant little that was positive. Although most of the time the puzzling fact of being Jewish could be ignored, they nonetheless remained Jewish enough to feel that they were to some extent outsiders in a Christian (however nominally) country. Being neither properly Jewish nor Christian contributed to the feeling of being unconnected to the wider community referred to earlier. Miriam's comments also reflect this limbo existence: 'I hardly ever went to the synagogue; I never talked about being Jewish; we didn't keep the Jewish festivals. Christmas was always a difficult time. It was a time when I thought, "I don't know what to do on this day when everyone else is celebrating"'.

Some parents were, like Miriam's, unable to provide a Jewish upbringing for their children, while others were reluctant or unwilling to do so. Katherine, looking back at her childhood, expressed feelings of nostalgia for the Jewish home life she did not have. Although the family celebrated the Jewish festivals, she was as a child 'barely aware of being Jewish'. She enjoyed singing in the Presbyterian church choir until the Minister asked for her removal when he found out that she was Jewish. Then she attended Hebrew School which she did not enjoy very much. Katherine's predominant recollection about the attitude of her father to Judaism was that 'he didn't want us to be different, he really didn't. The strongest memory I have which showed this was when I first wanted to join *Habonim*' [a Zionist Jewish youth group]. A friend wrote to Katherine urging her to join 'this neat youth group because its got lots of boys'. When Katherine approached her father about joining, he seemed annoyed.

I thought he was angry about it, but I guess (now) that he was upset. I must have dug my heels in because I joined after all and loved it. In the end my father too came round and was involved in various ways in the Jewish community. Later, I asked my father about being Jewish, about his opposition to my going to *Habonim*, and to his allowing me to sing in the church choir and he said, 'I always thought if you didn't know you were Jewish, when another Hitler comes, you might get away with it'. I remember this very clearly because it was 'when' another Hitler comes, not 'if'. He was always expecting anti-Semitism to occur and wanted to protect me from it. He wouldn't have gone out of his way to tell people he was Jewish.

Having parents who, while not actually denying they were of Jewish background, made sure it was not emphasized, was the experience of a number of those interviewed. The adults were motivated by the wish to protect their children from the negative Jewish stereotypes with which they themselves had been branded. However, the decision that some parents made to dissociate from other Jews sometimes caused problems for the second generation. It could leave children isolated, belonging neither in the Jewish community or in any of the other communities based on religious affiliation.

Julia was brought up as neither Jewish or Christian. Looking back at her childhood, it seemed to Julia that she was denied the opportunity to be Jewish. She was born in New Zealand in 1953 to a mother who was a refugee from Germany. Although of full Jewish descent, she grew up with a non-Jewish father of Scottish background. As a child, Julia had no contact with the Jewish community, nor any Jewish education of any kind. Nonetheless, by the time she was in the early standards at school, she started to 'realize' she was Jewish. She began to notice Jewish people and to identify with a Jewish girl in her class who seemed quite isolated. A visit to the synagogue with this girl and her family 'fascinated' her. She gradually became aware of her own 'Jewish' appearance. At some stage, Julia began to wish that she could be part of a Jewish family. 'My mother didn't talk about being Jewish. She said that she felt more German than she did Jewish. My father, on the other hand, encouraged my Jewish feelings in a way by making remarks such as, "my clever Jewish daughter"'. Julia attributes this to her father's liberal, non-conformist beliefs about the rights of minorities and also to the fact that because his Scottish origins were important to him, he was able to affirm Julia's Jewish identity in a

way that her mother, wishing to put her refugee background behind her and wanting to become a New Zealander as quickly as possible, could not.

In order to affirm her identity, Julia began to wear a *Magen David* (Star of David, symbolizing Jewishness) round her neck. However, this determination to be Jewish received no support from her mother. The strongest message conveyed by Julia's mother to her daughter about Jewishness was a negative one, concerning the vulnerability of Jews. This came out in relation to demonstrations and protests that Julia became involved in: 'It was at times like that that her feelings about the past resurfaced. I guess it reminded her of Hitler Youth demonstrations'. Julia recalled her mother's panic:

The implication was, 'Jews are vulnerable; don't expose yourself. The only passionate response about Jewishness that I have had from my mother is to do with her fear for my safety. The only time the passion of being Jewish has emerged in her is when she attempts to protect me from being it.

For some part-Jews in this study, their experience of Jewishness was also problematic. Jane was born in New Zealand in 1948 to a Czech refugee father and New Zealand mother. Her father's upbringing had been non-religious. Jane's upbringing was agnostic. For Jane, as for a number of others already referred to, being without religion meant not quite fitting into either the Jewish or the non-Jewish worlds. Jane recalled feeling ill at ease when she was included in Jewish ceremonies because she was unfamiliar with the protocol.

Annette's sense of social isolation was exacerbated by being a child of a mixed marriage. Her father had a Jewish background; her mother did not. Neither parent wished the children, Annette and her brother Peter (born in New Zealand in 1946), to be brought up as Christians. However, linking into the Jewish community was not possible for children without Jewish mothers.

Peter recalled that his mother wanted him to learn about his Jewish background, but 'they [the members of the established Orthodox community] wouldn't allow me to go to the Hebrew school because she wasn't Jewish'. Many years later, at his grandmother's funeral, Peter found that attitudes had not changed. When he tried to be a pall bearer at the funeral, he was pushed away.

George's mother had an Orthodox Jewish background; his father was non-Jewish. This is a more acceptable situation among religious Jews than having a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Nonetheless, George encountered many difficulties. In his early childhood in Europe, being Jewish was something to hide. 'I was born in 1944 in an anti-Semitic country, occupied by the Nazis. In such circumstances, Judaism wasn't a very healthy tradition to maintain'. Later in the displaced persons' camp where there were very few Jews, it was the same. On board the ship, bringing them to New Zealand, the family encountered, among the other displaced people migrating to New Zealand, former Nazis threatening to push Jews overboard. George is unsure how much such incidents impinged on him. The earliest clear memories that he has concerning Jewishness are of hearing the word 'Jew' in family arguments. Also, he remembers that his mother kept telling him he was Jewish, 'but it didn't mean much'.

When George was nine the family moved to Wellington from the small town where they had first settled on arrival in New Zealand. He became more aware of his Jewish background as it became possible to mix with other Jewish families. At this stage, his mother attempted to get George involved in Judaism at a religious and social level. He had days off school (on the High Holy Days) to go to synagogue, 'but I couldn't understand what was going on in *shul* [synagogue] and I didn't have the right hat or *tallis*. I used to spend the whole day standing outside while people went in and out because I felt I had to wait for my mother. I felt confused in the synagogue'. Without a Jewish father, without having been circumcized, or having had a *bar-mitzvah*, George did not feel 'right' among Jews: 'Life would have been much easier if Mum had completely given up her Judaism and I could have grown up as a New Zealand agnostic'.

A small number of the people interviewed were brought up as Christians. However, this had not protected those who had spent a portion of their childhood in Europe during the pre-war or war years from persecution as Jews. It was above all bewildering for children who had not regarded themselves as Jewish and had sometimes barely known what a Jew was to find themselves the target of abuse. When Jonathon was called '*Jude*' in a pejorative way at his school in Germany, he used to reply indignantly that he was not one. But the memory of that and another incident when he was bullied, picked on and sworn at for being a 'blasted Jew' has stayed with him.

Mary, born in Hungary in 1935, came to New Zealand with her brother in 1947. She was eleven and a half at the time. Her family had converted to Catholicism, but this had not prevented their persecution as Jews by the Nazis. Her grandparents and some other

relatives reached the safety of New Zealand before the war, but Mary, her brother and their parents did not. Mary's parents did not survive the war. In New Zealand, she has remained a Catholic although her relatives have not.

It was drilled into me throughout the war that I was Jewish by race. I concluded that Jewishness is not to do with religion. I was born Jewish and feel Jewish in that sense. I have also found over the years that a lot of the people I have become friends with later turn out to be Jewish or half-Jewish. There is an affinity between us, a shared heritage, a bond, but it is not a religious bond.

Lucie, with a Catholic mother and Jewish father, was brought up Catholic and has remained one. 'I belong there [in the Church] more than I do to any other group in New Zealand. They were the most ready to accept and the most hospitable'. But the bond she feels with other Catholics is, as for Mary, a religious and not a cultural one. She does not identify with the New Zealand-Irish culture of the New Zealand Catholic church, for this has a very different tradition from that of her mother's brand of Catholicism.

Helen was born in New Zealand in 1945. Her parents, who had a Catholic background, were Sudeten German refugees from Czechoslovakia who came to New Zealand in 1940. Helen considered that apart from the obvious differences of food and language, her childhood was not particularly different from a New Zealander's. The family settled in Island Bay, Wellington, and became very much involved in and part of that community. Her parents, as Social Democrats, were not practising Catholics and Helen occasionally went to the local Presbyterian church. Her foreign background has never been an issue for Helen who has always felt she belonged in the community where she was living.

Religious expression in refugee families was diverse. Orthodox Jews, secular/cultural Jews, part-Jews, refugees with a Jewish background who had renounced Judaism entirely and one non-Jewish refugee family are all represented in this study. What kind of impact did religious origin and adherence have on the experience of growing up as a child of refugees? In both simple and complicated ways, being part of a minority religion affected children. When he was a child of three or four, Ernie put a stocking at the end of his bed and wondered the next day why there was nothing in it. Receiving a Christmas present, as some Jewish children did, was not, of course, a sufficient or appropriate

antidote to basic uncertainties about identity and belonging. While some people in this study moved with ease between the different religious worlds of their childhood - from the church to the synagogue, from Easter egg hunts to the *Pesach Seder* (Feast at Passover), from *Chanukah* to Christmas, from *kosher* meat to bacon and eggs - others could not do so. The marginality of these interviewees in both the Jewish and the Christian worlds is striking.

Was the apparent ease of Helen's integration in part related to her non-Jewish background? The children with a Jewish background who were given at least a nominally Christian upbringing were not spared the conflicts and the struggles for peer acceptance of other refugee children, but at least religion was not an issue for them in the way it was for the Jewish or part-Jewish children who remained without links to Christianity. Being Jewish as well as foreign tended to make the children of refugees feel doubly different and increased the conflicts and pressures which were very much part of their lives.

It was perhaps the connection of a Jewish background with the recent past of persecution that had the most significant effect on the children's attitudes. The effects of such a legacy on parents and children probably best explains the desperation of some of the children about standing out and their determination to belong and to fit in. It helps to explain the motives of those who, looking 'Jewish', even considered ways of changing their appearance and sometimes did so.

Only a minority, of course, felt the shame of being Jewish and the urge to conform so extremely. Attitudes to Jewishness in refugee families were diverse, changed over time and the children reacted to the attitudes they encountered in diverse ways. Moreover, the connection between parental attitudes to Jewishness and children's attitudes is complicated. As shown earlier, the maintenance in some families of a strongly Jewish religious tradition did not necessarily mean that children in these families felt secure about being Jewish. The effect on children of parents who tried to hide or attempted to not 'emphasize' their Jewishness is also complicated. Sometimes this behaviour made children turn determinedly to Judaism. At other times, children became negative or indifferent about Jewishness. For part-Jewish children, the situation was further complicated by the less than positive attitudes (sometimes outright rejection) of the established Orthodox Jewish communities. What is clear is that very often little that was positive about being Jewish was passed on to the children in this study by their families or by the Jewish and wider

communities.³ No doubt such a legacy contributed to the ambivalence with which some refugee children later came to regard their Jewishness. The complexities of Jewish identity are discussed further in the following chapters.

What was it like then to be a foreign child, a refugee child, a Jewish child in New Zealand between the late 1930s and the 1960s? The diverse backgrounds of the children introduced in this chapter and the variety of their responses to these questions needs emphasis. Although some common patterns in the attitudes of the children - precious, over-protected and indulged in small nuclear families by parents struggling to put aside the calamities of the past in order to make a fresh start in a strange country - are evident, it is not possible to categorize the children or the families and to distinguish between them on the basis of their different reactions and attitudes. Nor is it useful or illuminating to link differences among the children to particular features of family background, family adjustment to New Zealand, age or date of arrival in New Zealand or New Zealand birth or other such characteristics.

What stands out is the marginality of many of these children with a Jewish refugee background, and the strenuous efforts they made to overcome their isolation and belong in the New Zealand world. (The costs of this attempt to assimilate, whether successful or not, are considered in subsequent chapters.) While belonging is an issue for all children and particularly for immigrant children, accounts of children of other immigrant groups (those that are non-Jewish and without a background of persecution) do not reveal the same desperation about being different. Danish/New Zealand writer, Yvonne du Fresne, for example, portrays in her stories children whose wish to blend with the majority culture are mitigated by a pride in their background. In the stories 'Armistice Day' and 'Coronation Day', the protagonist Astrid Westergaard is, with her family's backing, proud of her fierce, Viking warrior ancestors and stands up for their right to take their place alongside the omnipresent British heroes at her monocultural New Zealand school.⁴ Such pride was in a number of instances (though not always) absent in the childhood recollections of the people in this study. A considerable number of the interviewees conveyed the sense that there had been something embarrassing, almost shameful, about

³The exception is the part played by the Jewish youth movement in the lives of some of the children. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁴Yvonne du Fresne, *The Bear from the North: Tales of a New Zealand Childhood*, London 1989, pages 92-97; 98-103.

being a refugee and particularly a Jewish refugee. Embarrassed about their clothes, their accents, the food their parents served and the way their parents behaved, the struggle to fit in was for many of the people in this study the most significant aspect of their New Zealand childhood.

CHAPTER 4

REFUGEE CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

It is now at least a dozen years since the main pre-war wave of Hitler's refugees arrived in this country. How far have the digestive juices of tolerance, sympathy, and imagination done their work of assimilation? It was unfortunate that the same train of events which led to the coming of these people to New Zealand should make them not only aliens, but enemy aliens. Undoubtedly many of them suffered during the war, not just from petty persecution, but because however much they wanted to be New Zealanders, they were also Germans or Hungarians or Austrians or Czechs. Although not completely accepted, most of the refugees would admit they are more New Zealanders now than Continentals - with their accents and background and memories they will never be wholly New Zealanders; but their children, many of whom speak only English, will be. The children ... seem to be a fairly indistinguishable cross-section of the school population, not only intellectually but also in appearance, with the same clothes, haircuts and often good local accents. They are the clever and the less clever, the gifted and the not particularly outstanding ...

Thus wrote a columnist in *Here and Now* in October, 1951.¹ How did refugee children and children of refugees fare at school in New Zealand? Were they in fact 'a fairly indistinguishable cross-section of the school population'? How did the 'digestive juices' of assimilation operate in the world of school? How did teachers view the children? What were the children's perception of their school days; what were their difficulties; what were their successes? An examination of the school experiences of refugee children and children of refugees brings into sharp focus a number of the themes introduced in the last two chapters. It was at school that the children's struggles with belonging, with being accepted and with the conflicting expectations of the refugee and New Zealand worlds most

¹*Here and Now*, vol. 2, no.1, October, 1951, page 11.

commonly took place. Children's accounts of their school experiences reveal the stresses involved in needing to fit in and the gains and losses involved in assimilation.

Teachers' Views

For an 'outside' perspective of the children's school experiences, the comments of their teachers have some relevance. How did they perceive these children? What did they see as the task of teachers of students with a different cultural background?

According to the teachers interviewed in this study, foreign children usually fitted into the school system with considerable ease. The role of teachers was confined to facilitating that process by treating foreign children no differently from anybody else. Max Riske² was a teacher at Karori Normal School in the late 1930s and during the war years. He considers that 'the refugee children were not a significant matter in the teaching world' partly because they were small in number, scattered over many schools and also because they adapted so readily.

These views were shared by the other teachers interviewed. A number of the teachers did, in fact, regard individual refugee children as 'different' in certain ways but a liberal professional ethos dictated that such differences be ignored or, if this was not possible, minimized. The intention was to treat differences with respect but at the same time it was expected of the foreign children that they 'fit into the mould'³ as quickly as possible.

Brian Barrett⁴ began teaching in 1951. He taught a senior class at Karori West School in 1954 and 1955. In the late 1950s, he was at a small country school. In the 1970s, he spent a number of years in an inner city school with a culturally mixed school population. It is his view that the teachers in the 1950s were 'not tuned into minorities, their rights or what we should be doing for them. Except for those that were completely non-English speaking (and they were few and far in between) the foreign kids were just expected to conform and mostly they were clever enough to do just that'.

²Interviewed, 19 June 1988.

³Brian Barrett, interviewed 15 June 1988.

⁴ibid.

Pat Lissington⁵ was teaching at Wellington East Girls College in the 1950s. Her recollection is that it was so ingrained in 'liberal' teachers that, in the interests of the children, it was best to ignore racial/cultural differences, that she herself was scarcely aware of the religious or ethnic background of the children in her classes.

Other factors were probably also involved in such lack of awareness. At Karori West School (which in the 1950s catered for a low to middle-class social grouping, including children from a state housing area), the classes were big. There could be forty-eight children in one class. Brian Barrett: 'The desks were placed individually in rows and there was not room between the front desk and the black board to actually walk in front. That room was so full! So one did not get the same opportunities to talk to the children or to deal individually with them as we would these days'.⁶

Two of the teachers interviewed, Pat Macaskill⁷ and Jack Shallcrass⁸, taught at Rongotai College in the 1940s and 1950s. Both spoke of the strong liberal tradition at Rongotai during those years. The college appears to have been unusual in a number of respects. Jack Shallcrass: 'It was regarded as a hot-bed of communism/radicalism politically and educationally. Rongotai was, for instance, the first secondary school to make special provision for slow and reluctant learners in the Wellington area. Rongotai was also the first school to get rid of boxing and replace it with fencing'.

The Principal of the College was Fritz Renner (of German origin). According to Pat Macaskill, he was a brilliant headmaster and prepared to take account of his pupils' individual needs and interests. A great deal of freedom (an unusual amount for those years) was allowed children to behave as they wished. A child of refugees, for example, who wanted to learn the cello, which was rather unusual at Rongotai in those days, was given permission to practise in the Principal's study.

What were the characteristics that the teachers observed in their foreign pupils and how well tolerated were these differences by the New Zealand students? Some of the refugee children and children of refugees clearly looked different in ways that the teachers found difficult to define. 'He looked very un-English', 'Jewish-looking', 'awkward build and gait' were some of the comments. The children's clothes also looked somehow

⁵Conversation with the writer, 20 September 1988.

⁶The very large classes (sometimes with as many as fifty or sixty children in one class with one teacher) that were prevalent in the thirties and forties are discussed in detail in Taylor, *The Home Front*, page 1121.

⁷Interviewed, 9 June 1988.

⁸Interviewed, 15 June 1988.

different: ill-fitting and uncomfortable. Shorts hung down in a different way, boots were worn at inappropriate times and so on.

In terms of behaviour and character, the most common observation focused on the foreign students' seriousness and intensity about their work and on their earnest desire to succeed. What also struck the teachers was a degree of social sophistication that the New Zealand children did not have. Pat Macaskill: 'They were more inclined to join in adult conversation and to talk seriously about things which concerned them'.

The teachers were divided over how well refugee children were accepted by other children, but stressed that all children of whatever background could become the butt of teasing if they possessed certain characteristics. Brian Barrett: 'The kids I have seen who are picked on have to have something else about them that is different. They are not picked on because they are Jewish. It is because they speak differently or because they are made to dress with some peculiarity or it might be because of some physical characteristic'.

Jack Shallcrass was aware of New Zealand boys who, because of their difference, became the target of bullies. 'Children can be very cruel to each other. It really is a herd-mob instinct - like birds picking to death one which has been wounded. It is also a strong human characteristic to stone, burn or whatever, anyone who is daring to be different'.

Pat Macaskill's view, on the other hand, was that it was unacceptable behaviour at Rongotai to bully or sneer at anyone for being foreign. If there was the occasional laughter 'it wasn't unkind' and if there was unkindness, it was out of sight of authority. Jack Shallcrass too remembered mainly 'good-natured razzing' and that one of the refugee students who was 'a bit of a joke to a lot of the boys', seemed 'to have the ability to absorb the taunts without apparently being upset by them'. According to Shallcrass, this boy eventually became one of the 'characters' around the school. There was also anti-Jewish feeling at the school and some of the taunts were not quite so 'good-natured' but were clearly anti-Semitic. Shallcrass never heard the taunts himself but was aware of 'jokes' along the lines of 'Hitler didn't do the job properly' and that sort of thing. The situation was discussed occasionally at staff meetings, he recalled.

What conclusions, if any, can be drawn from the comments of the teachers interviewed in this study? It seems that in the period in question, children with different backgrounds were certainly expected to 'fit into the mould', even by liberal teachers. This was because teachers generally believed that such conformity was in the foreign children's best interest. As far as the teachers could tell, refugee children and children of refugees adapted with relative ease to New Zealand schools. Although they evidently adjusted

sufficiently well for the teachers to regard them as no problem in the class-room, they did not always do so enough (as will be shown presently) to escape the bullying and the teasing of their classmates in the playground. However, generalizing on the basis of the views of the small number of teachers interviewed needs to be done with a degree of caution. More research is needed on the subject of teachers' attitudes to the cultural differences of their pupils in the 1930s to the 1960s.

The Children's Experiences at School

The War Years⁹

In 1940, the Director of Education, Dr C. E. Beeby, stated that teachers could not ignore the war but should act as 'a buffer between their pupils and the beastliness of war, to produce a generation without mental scars, though willing to fight if need be'.¹⁰ There were members of the public, some on school committees and boards of governors who wanted 'direct, robust patriotism, with raised flags' in schools. The Minister of Education, H.G.R. Mason took the stand that schools should not be places of propaganda, although patriotism with a modest amount of flag raising was compatible with democratic values.¹¹

Whatever the views of the adults, it was inevitable that the patriotic fervour of wartime with its accompanying xenophobia against those seen as outsiders would be reflected in the behaviour of children in schools. Teachers, moreover, were not always willing or always able to act as buffers between a child and his or her tormentors. The victims of such attitudes were not only the children of German refugees or the children of anybody suspected of alien (and, in particular enemy alien) descent, but were also New Zealand children whose parents held dissenting views of one kind or another. As Nancy Taylor comments in her book *The Home Front*, 'a pacifist's adversities were fully shared by his family. Mothers grieved over children returning from school in tears or with shut faces, having been jeered at or avoided'.¹²

⁹For a full discussion of education during the war years, including details about shortages of teachers and equipment and measures to ensure the safety of children in case of attack, see Taylor, *The Home Front*, Chapter 22.

¹⁰Taylor, *The Home Front*, page 1138.

¹¹ibid.

¹²ibid., page 207.

Children of Jehovah's Witnesses were also in a difficult situation. That organization, regarded as subversive because its adherents placed the authority of Jehovah ahead of secular authority, was banned during the war years. At one stage, the possibility of suspending children of Jehovah's Witnesses from schools was considered (but never implemented) because parents who were Jehovah's Witnesses had asked that their children be excused from saluting the flag in school.¹³

A number of the boys in this study who had part of their New Zealand schooling during the war years recalled being called 'bloody Hun' or 'Nazi'. John started at a Wellington school in 1940. He ran away on his first day but this, he believes, had less to do with being a refugee than with being five years old.

The first thing that happened at school was that the teacher said: 'his name is Hans, but we can't call him Hans. Lets call him John'. My parents nodded their heads and gratefully agreed. But I still had this other part to my name - Schlesinger [not his real name]. I used to get called a Nazi by the kids at school because I had this German name (they pronounced 'Nazi' with a 'Z' as in zoo). I coped with this by ignoring it and by punching people's noses when I got angry enough.

John became accustomed to such taunts and they did not eventually bother him too much. Walter 'coped' less well. He recalled the games played by children at the small country school he went to during the war: 'They were war games with Germans as the enemy. I knew that the children had no awareness of what was happening to Jews in Europe. People thought of us as German refugees, but what was prominent for them was "German" not "refugee" or "Jew"'. At school, Walter made every effort to disguise his background. 'At times, I didn't go to school, but spent whole days hiding under a hedge. It was a very lonely time'.

By contrast, Jonathon, who also did his primary schooling during the war years, felt well accepted. Apart from some early difficulties which arose because his clothing was clearly different, he enjoyed his school years.

Renate, a 'bright, tidy and obedient child', was also well accepted at school. However, the girls she became friendly with 'had no more idea of where Germany was or

¹³ibid., pages 234-243.

what Jews could be or why we might be here than flying to the moon'. Despite the general friendliness Renate encountered, she found the situation of being a German child in wartime New Zealand a bewildering one.

In 1939 when I started school, we lived near to where the military camp was. The men were just off to fight the Germans. We sat in class with our I.D.'s round our necks. This was [to assist with identification] in case the Germans came and we were scattered. But we were Germans. I didn't ever quite understand it. How come everybody hated Germans? We had fled from Germans and now they might invade New Zealand and some children thought we were on their [the Germans'] side. That was all beyond a five year old's understanding.

Sonny, aged eleven when she came to New Zealand with her parents and sister in 1939, began school just before the outbreak of war.

I was the first child at that school who wasn't Scottish or English; the first European¹⁴ anyone had ever heard or seen! Everybody made an enormous fuss of me. They crowded round me, looking at my different clothes. I was invited to their houses. They were very kind.

When war began, Sonny changed schools. At her new school the 'fuss' continued. Everybody was very kind, yet eventually Sonny's response to the predicament of being a German girl at school was the same as that of the boys who were taunted with their German background. Especially in war time, she did not want to be different.

It was ironic that having been persecuted as Jews in Germany, a number of Jewish refugee families suffered as Germans in wartime New Zealand. The change in status from refugee to enemy alien had serious repercussions for some first generation refugees at work and in their neighbourhoods.¹⁵ During the war years, the victims of Nazism were

¹⁴'European' in this context means white but non-British. 'Scots' or 'English' refers to descent not nationality. A note in the Introduction provides further explanation about terminology.

¹⁵Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, Chapter 5.

confused by some New Zealanders with Nazis. Children at school did not escape the consequences of wartime xenophobia. Interviewees' accounts convey the hurt and the bewilderment of children exposed to the anti-German attitudes of wartime New Zealand.

The stigma of being German diminished in the post-war period and gradually disappeared. By the time John left school in 1951, the war 'no longer figured in anyone's conversation'. There were, however, lingering negative connotations of having a German name into the 1950s. There was also the occasional negative incident associated with being German. Helen, who did not start school until 1950, recalled one such incident. When she volunteered to translate the lines of a German song for a teacher and walked up to the front of the class to do this, she heard one girl say to another: 'my father hates Germans'.

Post-War Years

Jenny: 'I think I always felt different at school partly because my parents were foreign and partly because I was Jewish. I had two things which made me different from all my other classmates'.

While the negative image of Germans and Germany was less pervasive, the stigma of difference due to a foreign background and other cultural differences continued in the late 1940s and 1950s. Different names, different accents, different clothes, different foods, different behaviour could all occasion ridicule or antagonism.

One of Jenny's earliest memories of starting school is of the children laughing at her Hungarian accent. Jenny was born in New Zealand and was brought up speaking English. She had an accent because she spoke the way she had heard her parents speak English, pronouncing some of the words with a different vowel sound. The rapid effect of the laughter at school was that she very quickly talked with a broad New Zealand accent. 'I tried to use all the expressions and swear words and common touches that I heard among the school children rather than be different from them'.

John's difficulties with his name were not over when he was transformed from Hans to John. 'I remember that when I announced the name, Schlesinger, at my first form class at college, the entire class fell about laughing'. Pat Macaskill was the teacher in charge and remembers the incident.

Schlesinger was of course distressed. I gave the class a severe lecture on the way you behave to people who are different and how improper it was to laugh at someone's name if they happen to be a foreigner and that to do so was very offensive.

Some children encountered classmates who were fascinated by their foreignness. The children at Hannah's school would say to her, 'speak some German, Hannah'. Others too were repeatedly requested by classmates to say words in their 'strange' languages.

Being foreign became less and less an issue as years passed. Children lost their accents, dressed like New Zealanders and behaved in most ways like their classmates. At primary school during the 1950s - the time of war comics and war books - Michael felt very much a New Zealander. He does not believe his classmates were even aware of his foreign background. In Michael's mind, foreigners were Germans (real Germans, not his family). In the 1950s, schools became less monocultural as a variety of other immigrants entered New Zealand.

What was it like for Jewish children in New Zealand schools in the post-war years? Although there were networks of schools for Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic children, there were no Jewish day schools available, such as existed in countries with larger Jewish communities. Being Jewish in New Zealand schools meant belonging to a very small religious and cultural minority. (This was the case whether children were attending a state school, as most did, or a private school.) How did this affect the children? In particular, what were the implications for them of religious instruction in primary schools and of prayers and bible readings at secondary schools? Were children who identified as Jewish in a religious sense affected differently from those whose Jewish identification lacked a religious dimension? How did the school system deal with religious minorities?

The state primary school system established by the Education Act of 1877 was, in theory, a secular one. In practice, the Act was circumvented by the 'Nelson System' which was in operation in many primary schools. Since the schools were offering more hours of instruction than was required by law, it was usually possible, with the agreement of the school committees, to close the schools for secular instruction for a short time each week without appearing to break the law and to use that time for religious instruction.

Attendance at the religious classes thus provided was not compulsory 'but the likelihood of parents ostentatiously withdrawing their children was not great'.¹⁶

The 1877 Act was not concerned with secondary education and the secular clauses in the Act did not apply to secondary schools. No provision was made in 1877 or later to alter that anomalous situation. Religious instruction in secondary schools was left entirely to the discretion of the controlling bodies of each school. At most secondary schools, it became customary to have a daily reading from the Bible at assembly, the Lord's Prayer and a hymn. Children who had their parents' permission could withdraw from this part of assembly. This, in brief, was the state 'secular' education system.¹⁷

The established Jewish communities of New Zealand were reasonably satisfied with the Nelson system. Their main concern had been that religious instruction in state schools should not be made compulsory.

As long as Jewish children do not attend these classes, the Hebrew congregation can have no objection to the Nelson system. However, it is not unlikely that some Jewish children, in a desire not to appear as non-conformists among their fellows or without the knowledge of their parents, may in fact be attending such classes. If this is so, we would expect the school staff to see to it, where it comes to their notice, that these children are required to absent themselves from these classes. We would go further and say that the onus should be placed on the visiting religious instructor to satisfy himself that every pupil attending his class does so with the consent of his parents. As a corollary to our lack of objection to the Nelson system, we would expect the same right of entry into the public schools for religious instruction to Jewish children as it is granted under that system to the Christian community.¹⁸

¹⁶J. C. Dakin, *Education in New Zealand*, Auckland 1973, page 23.

¹⁷Information provided by Jack Shallcrass, interview, 15 June 1988; I. A. McLaren, *Education in a Small Democracy: New Zealand*, London 1974.

¹⁸'Conference on Religious Instruction in State Schools', *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, July/August 1958, page 8.

As Jewish children were scattered in small numbers throughout many schools, it is unlikely that this 'right' was very often exercised. Did the Nelson system pose a problem for Jewish refugee children? What did they and others who did not fit into the Anglican-Presbyterian mould do while the local ministers instructed the majority of their classmates? As many New Zealand parents were reluctant to assume their right to withdraw their children,¹⁹ it is not surprising that foreign parents too were on the whole reluctant to draw attention to themselves and to their children by doing so.

The attitudes of the children ranged from indifference - as one woman recalled: 'I just stood there and waited until they were over; the prayers meant nothing to me' - to acute discomfort. Miriam, whose Jewish background was not religious, participated enthusiastically. Conformity was what was expected and she conformed.

I now am very grateful [for the opportunity to take part in prayers and religious instruction] in lots of ways. I learned how to sing hymns, which is very important in an Anglican²⁰ country. You have to be able to do that and I learnt at school. I know the Lords Prayer because it was said every day at our secular state school. It was taken totally for granted that there was no other religion, no other way of living, no other cultures.

Walter, who was from a religious Jewish home, attended prayers and felt uncomfortable but to withdraw from them did not seem a valid option. 'The number of Jewish children at my school was so small and I wouldn't have wanted to stay out and be different'. By contrast, Hannah, also from a religious home, was unconcerned. 'The local priest and minister were all friendly with my father and told him: "The girls can come; I won't teach them any of the New Testament, only the Old".'

Anthony, who attended the divinity classes at his college, felt uncomfortable but hid these feelings successfully. The divinity teacher described Anthony's classroom performance in his school report as 'benevolent but detached'.

¹⁹Dakin, *Education in New Zealand*, page 23.

²⁰This is of course a personal view and a Wellington one and is held, probably quite widely, with some justification. Religion in New Zealand is discussed in Chapter 2.

Some children felt unsure what to do - whether to stay or leave. They were very anxious to do 'right' but did not know what was appropriate and there was often no clear guidance from parents who were themselves ambivalent.

Renate eventually resolved the conflict by deciding that attending prayers did not 'stop her being Jewish' but her first encounter with religious instruction at her primary school was a distressing experience.

Once, a man came to school and he didn't have a collar on and he was half way through his lesson when I suddenly realized he was a minister and perhaps I shouldn't be in the classroom. I worried: 'what if somebody noticed I was there when I wasn't supposed to be?' The teacher hadn't said 'go out' but I wasn't sure whether I should be in the classroom or not. The minister talked about pathways and pathfinders at first, but when he talked about Jesus Christ I was sure I was in the room when I shouldn't be. I sat there thinking: 'if I get out and walk out it will be terrible and if I sit here maybe somebody will see me and that will be worse'.

At secondary school, George was also unsure what was appropriate when placed in the uncomfortable situation of needing to decide rapidly about attending prayers.

On my first day at college they said: 'Jewish boys can go outside' and I had to make a split second decision, was I Jewish or wasn't I? Or should I just please my mother? [George's mother wanted him to identify as Jewish] That's where, I think, a lot of the trauma arose. My natural instinct was to try to blend in and be one of the crowd. But I made the decision, stood up, went out and the die was cast. Even though I didn't like it, I was determined to stick with it and henceforth always stayed outside. It was a strange thing to do. I chose for some reason or other to identify myself as being different from the others, as completely alien.

At primary school, children who did not attend religious instruction had to remain 'outside' - sometimes alone, sometimes with one or two other children. Julia recalled that

at her school there was one other Jewish girl who 'used to get quite a hard time from the others because she couldn't come to religious instruction. She was quite isolated'.

A more usual difficulty was that there was nothing to do while the other children were receiving their religious instruction. As Brian Barrett recalled: 'At Karori West School there was one Jewish student in that position. There was nothing else set for him to do other than just sit in the corridor and read a book. In those days there were no spare rooms, libraries, computer rooms'.

Peter, whose non-attendance was not due to his Jewish religion but to his parents' objection to religious instruction of any kind, was confined to a small room with two other children - a Jewish girl and a boy from a Christian Scientist family. 'We had nothing to do. We were supposed to just sit there and be good. So we played up of course. I was separated from the others and ended up sitting outside the Headmaster's office for the rest of the year'.

At secondary school, the ordeal of being 'outside' was at least shared with a group. Ernie: 'We stuck together, those of us who were different. At college, they had hymns every morning, and as we Jewish boys lined up, the teachers walked past us. "Boys, pull your socks up", someone would call out. They looked at us as they went past and then we filed in when the hymns finished'.

Mary was comfortable with leaving assembly during prayers. At her school (as at other state schools), the Catholic girls left together with the Jewish girls, enabling Mary to feel part of two groups. Tom, however, disliked the experience in spite of the group solidarity: 'Again we were being singled out. Everybody knew who the Jews of the college were'.

For most of the children, the Christian observances at New Zealand primary and secondary schools did not pose serious problems. Nonetheless, their effect was to reinforce the children's perception of estrangement from the majority. For children from non-religious homes, this perception was a vague and difficult to nail down sense of difference related to the possession of a foreign-Jewish background. For children from religious homes, the situation was probably more clear-cut. Jewish children were a group apart because they practised a different religion from other New Zealanders.

In addition to withdrawing from religious instruction and bible readings, Jewish children from the more observant families stood out in a number of other ways that the non-religious children did not. They had days off for Jewish festivals and took special food, for example, *matzoh* (unleavened bread) to school during Passover. The

experiences of these children as well as the reactions of their classmates varied. Hannah at a private Presbyterian girls' school in Wellington found that 'everyone' was 'fascinated' by her being Jewish. The *matzoh* she took to school to share with class mates was regarded by them as a special treat. Hannah's attitude to being Jewish was, at this stage of her life, that 'it was like freckles; you couldn't get away from it, so you had to make something positive of it'.

John's experience was different. He was anxious 'not to seem to be different' and remembers that he was not too keen to take *matzoh* to school. 'The kids would say, "what's that funny flat bread?" And give you a funny look. "What have you got there?" said in a mutter. The kids took a very negative view of the fact that this was different from what they ate'.

Jenny recalled 'playing down' being Jewish. On the occasions when her Jewishness was exposed to public scrutiny at school, she felt very uncomfortable.

It did make us different. We missed days of school for the Jewish festivals. The other girls would question me, 'why are you eating different foods: why are you missing school?' I often felt embarrassed and wished I didn't have to explain. I found being Jewish hard to explain. There was no glib little sentence to sum up everything that Judaism was.

Yet, Jenny felt obligated to try to provide a proper explanation.

I didn't want them to have the wrong idea [about Judaism]. The other girls often asked very basic questions which were hard to answer such as, 'why don't you believe in Jesus?' There is no one smart answer which conveys everything. I didn't want them left thinking that we were just pagans or in some way deprived by the fact that we were not Christians. I also found it embarrassing if any of the teachers asked me in front of the class, 'what is the Jewish viewpoint on such and such?' This happened from time to time. I also hated it when teachers said things implying that if you weren't a Christian, you were definitely less good, that you wouldn't have the same high moral standards as Christians. The adjective, 'Christian', was used quite

widely to mean good and kind. I think as a Jewish person one is very sensitive to the use of words like that.

For much of the time, Jenny was the only Jewish person in her class and felt she had to be a spokesperson for Jews.

They talked about the Crucifixion and it was implied that Jews rather than the Romans had crucified Christ. That was uncomfortable. Some teachers handled it much less sensitively than others. I think in the minds of many people, the Jews were lumped together with the Turks and infidels and people of a lesser religion. I really felt I had to give a good account of the Jewish viewpoint and correct false impressions and popular misconceptions.

Some in the study preferred at school to avoid disclosure of the fact that they were Jewish. Was the main reason for this the ordeal of public exposure that Jenny and others found so uncomfortable and the general pressures to conform? Or was there also overt anti-Semitism?

Detailed research about anti-Semitism in New Zealand schools has not been carried out by the writer. Preliminary investigation suggests that there were only occasional instances of it. In the years 1947 and 1948, the struggle to establish the Jewish state (which involved a campaign against the British in Palestine) provided a focus for a certain amount of anti-Jewish feeling.²¹ The *New Zealand Judean Bulletin* expressed concern about evidence of anti-Semitism in Auckland schools in 1948.

Congregants who are parents of children attending Auckland's schools have recently produced evidence of definite anti-Jewish bias in lessons given on Palestine, and in definition of 'Jewish' characteristics. The following appeared in a pamphlet issued to the pupils of a girls' school, designed to show the damage done by generalization. "'Jews': avaricious, unscrupulous in money matters, fawning and hypocritical,

²¹The *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle* closely monitored anti-Semitism in the New Zealand community. Many articles and columns were written discussing particular incidents as well as the instances of anti-Semitic reporting in the press.

racial and religious fanatics'. This example could only leave on the mind of the child a very unfortunate impression, and lead to definite mischief. 'Typical' photos of the races also did not improve matters. A social studies lesson given on Palestine to boys at King's School was so distorted that when the notes on it were seen by one of the parents he immediately wrote in protest to the Headmaster. The reply was that 'it depended on who read it' whether it could be considered biased or not!²²

Those interviewed in this study spoke of occasional incidents of anti-Semitism among teachers as well as pupils, but most stressed how infrequent such incidents were and that to fight back provided a quick and effective remedy if the offender was a fellow pupil. As Ernie recalled: 'I was very proud of being Jewish and very sensitive about being teased. Anybody who kidded me, I responded. Sometimes I got bashed as a result'.

John remembered only one incident, a fight, involving anti-Semitism, in all his years at secondary school. Anthony spoke of 'odd sparks of anti-Semitism' to which he responded swiftly. 'One day, at college, a chap called me a "bloody Jew" and I nearly knocked his block off'.

Michael's experience was similar:

At secondary school, there were a series of small incidents that gave me a sense of difference and drove home the fact that I wasn't the standard, normal New Zealander. For example, one day a boy turned round and swore at me something about being Jewish. I'm rather a passive person in the sense of using physical force, but I simply took to him and beat him up with the full support of the class. He became the outcast because of what he had said.

Anti-Semitic teachers were more difficult to deal with. Tom's experience was unpleasant.

²²*New Zealand Judean Bulletin*, vol. 8, no. 3, July-August 1948, page 2.

The answer to the first question relates to matters discussed in earlier chapters. It is the association of Jewishness with persecution that made being Jewish at school more problematical and more uncomfortable than being a Presbyterian at an Anglican school. Secondly, there is little to distinguish the recollections about being Jewish at school of children with a religious background from those with a non-religious one in terms of the extent of the discomfort and sense of alienation they had experienced. The former background made children more visibly Jewish, sometimes making life difficult for the children. On the other hand, the latter background probably resulted in greater bewilderment for children who were, perhaps, more likely to be uncertain about the meaning and implications of having a Jewish background in a Christian society.

The war, being German or of other enemy alien nationality, and having a foreign and a Jewish background, significantly affected the lives of the children at school. The remainder of this chapter looks at some specific school experiences. The themes which predominate are, as in the earlier sections, the pressures and urges to conform and the children's efforts to fit in and make sense of the world of school.

Clothes

Many children had vivid memories of enduring acute misery and humiliation because they were dressed by their parents differently from New Zealand children. The European-born, whose parents had little time to adjust to New Zealand before sending their children to school, were the most likely to suffer in this regard.

George's first New Zealand school experience was at a small settlement outside Wanganui.

On the first day I went to school, I wore leather pantlets that German children [often] wear. They are very sensible gear as they are almost indestructible. You can even slide round rocks in them. They are ornately patterned. I wore these pantlets to school and all the children laughed at me. I couldn't understand it. I felt humiliated and embarrassed. I think I got New Zealand pants pretty quickly.

Jonathon's first days at school were also made 'traumatic' by a similar type of leather pantlets.

There was a fair amount of teasing because my parents didn't cotton onto the fact that New Zealanders dress differently. They did insist on sending me to school in a lot of outfits that were no doubt quite anonymous in Germany, but rather stood out here, such as the velvety leather outfits that were popular in Bavaria. They had a bib and braces. To really top the outfit of you needed a Tyrolean hat complete with feather.

(Jonathon possessed such a hat with feather but did not wear it to school.)

There were some fairly rough young lads at school in those days who didn't think this was suitable sort of gear to be seen in. I remember I got picked on a bit and some of the school bullies took to me a few times. I fought back and it settled down. Many years later, I learned that my mother used to follow me anxiously to school, making sure that I got as far as the school at least without getting into trouble.

There were some typical outfits for girls too which marked out their wearers as clearly foreign. Lisa: 'My socks were higher than other children's and I had to wear a little Austrian *dirndl*'. Although she felt uncomfortable about looking different, Lisa loved the little *dirndls* her mother made: 'She made them with little frilly aprons and cute little square necks and little puffed sleeves'. Lisa recalled with particular fondness a red embroidered vest from Hungary that she asked her mother to copy in blue when she outgrew the red one.

However, by no means were all refugee girls dressed in *dirndls*. Miriam's mother, for example, liked clothes to look 'simple' but her daughter's taste, influenced by current school fashion, was different. She and Miriam had a number of discussions on the subject. 'Admiring an embroidered dress, Miriam would say, "I know, Mum, you don't like it, but its lovely". Our tastes were different'.

It is likely that such differences in taste arose from the children's keen desire to look like everybody else. This was not easy to achieve. Marei was dressed in elegant clothes which looked like she had stepped out of *Paris Vogue*.

We had little navy blue coats which were double breasted with little mother of pearl buttons. We also had white wooly spats and strange little laced up boots. The worst thing we had, and I seem to have had these for years, were underwear called 'combinations'. It was like putting on a one piece bathing suit. When we used to go swimming at school, the other little girls would take off their panties under their skirts and put on their togs and then take off their tops. But I had these horrible combinations on, so I had to take everything off before I could put on my togs. I was horribly embarrassed.

Part of the problem, Marei remembered, was that it took such a long time to grow out of the strange clothes that had been brought to New Zealand: 'and that our mother was so good at making them last longer'.

Mothers who had 'alien' tastes were also incapable of making or buying new clothes that looked like everyone else's. Renate: 'If it was sandshoes, for example, for sure my mother bought sandshoes which were different from what other mothers bought - even though there couldn't have been that many different sandshoes that were available to buy'. Renate very much wanted a gym frock when she was a young school girl because this is what her friends were wearing. But there was no point in asking her mother about it because she would have a go at making one, 'but it would not be quite right'.

Many further examples of children's concerns about their 'wrong' clothes could be given. Generally they were dressed with more formality than New Zealand children. It is important to state too that while some parents insisted on leather pants others attempted to acquire more 'acceptable' clothing for their children. However, on the whole, most parents were far too involved in their own struggles to be concerned about whether a child was dressed like everybody else. As Renate commented, 'I came home with good school reports. That was sufficient for my mother to conclude that I was O.K.'.

For many older children, the obligatory school uniform was a great relief. However, some parents could not afford to buy their children a uniform and attempted to make the blouses, gym frocks and to knit the cardigans. Usually these home-made items looked different from the shop-bought ones.

Of course, foreign children were not the only ones to face the teasing or the hostility of their peers for looking different. Sir Peter Elworthy, for example, writing in *Through the Looking Glass* of his school days at Timaru and Waimataitai Schools vividly describes

his particular struggles. On one occasion trouble arose because Sir Peter's mother insisted on braces with which to hold up her sons' trousers.

The fashion was to wear a belt, so we secretly procured a belt each and wore both belt and braces. I made every effort to hide the braces under layers of clothing and can recall nearly fainting from heat because of this deception. But I was discovered, with cries of derision and much blasphemy. My adrenalin still pumps as I recall the agony of that moment. This departure from custom resulted in a siege being laid for my brothers and I as we entered the school one morning. Battles were waged round the streets and in local garages, and I remember sneaking home for the day while the fury subsided.²⁴

Physical peculiarities or any form of weakness could also be the excuse to make the life of a classmate, whether foreign or not, a misery. The most upsetting aspect of school for writer, David McGill, was other children making fun of his ears which stuck out. 'Dad said I should be happy with what the Lord provided, but I wasn't because the other kids never stopped making fun of them'.²⁵ Kevin Ireland, who was still at age thirteen 'a tiny boy', describes in *Through the Looking Glass* how he suffered for this disability in the 'Takapuna gang wars'.²⁶ Also, in Michael King's *One of the Boys?*, he recounts with much gusto 'the system of bullying' that ruled his Auckland school.²⁷

What, if anything, is special about the taunts that refugee children were subject to? Was it worse for a refugee child to be made to wear leather pantlets and to be teased for doing so than for a New Zealand child from a hard-up family to wear pants made from his mother's discarded tweed skirt? Certainly, that New Zealand boy forty years later still recalls the embarrassment of having to wear such pants.²⁸

It may be argued, as one interviewee did, that there is no difference in the two situations described if the comparison is confined to isolated instances. The difference

²⁴ Sir Peter Elworthy, 'A Balanced Diet', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, page 117.

²⁵ McGill, *The Kid from Matata*, page 35.

²⁶ Kevin Ireland, 'In the Pink', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, page 23.

²⁷ Kevin Ireland, 'One of the Bohemians', Michael King ed., *One of the Boys?: Changing Views of Masculinity in New Zealand*, Auckland 1988, pages 94-99.

²⁸ Tim Beaglehole spoke of this at a Victoria University of Wellington, History Department seminar, April 1988.

becomes apparent, however, when one considers that the taunts suffered by some refugee children about their appearance were repeated in many other areas of their lives. The New Zealand boy may have looked odd wearing tweed pants, but that was about the only way in which that boy was odd. He was not also odd in the food he ate, in the language he spoke, in the accent with which he spoke, in the shape of the bedclothes his mother hung out on the line, and in everything, in fact, that he did. It is the extent to which the person's life is affected that makes the difference. Being teased for being foreign or for having red hair amounts to the same thing provided a child is not teased or feels he might be teased for almost everything he or she does.²⁹

The desperation and the despair conveyed in these observations needs to be balanced by a reiteration of points emphasized earlier regarding the diversity of the experiences of those interviewed. A number of children fitted in at school with relatively little difficulty. They were accepted by their peers, or teased only a little, in spite of their different clothes or behaviour or other characteristics. A few children remained outsiders, but were unconcerned about this. However, for the children who did not fit in, in spite of their strenuous efforts to do so, the sense of being part of a persecuted minority probably also contributed to the strength of their feelings about looking different, about being teased for doing so and about being accepted generally.

School Lunches

As the clothes the children wore, so too the lunch they took to school each day was an easily identifiable difference between them and New Zealand children. However, whether a child was at school in the forties and fifties or in the sixties made an enormous difference to the attitudes encountered.

Anecdotes from the earlier period abound with incidents which show that New Zealand children were aghast at the sight of foreign children deviating from the diet that was customary for New Zealanders. The foreign children's usual response was embarrassment and a keen desire to conform. In particular, the rye bread, specially baked by their mothers, was a source of acute discomfort for a number of the children in this study. One woman recalled New Zealand children stamping on her lunch, presumably

²⁹This discussion follows very closely comments made by Lucie.

because of the wrong colour of the bread contained in it: 'We were the German kids with the black bread! How we longed for white bread!', was a common recollection.

Vivienne was 'very self-conscious' about the lunch she took to school. 'I had this dark, brown bread which no one else had. Looking at my lunch, the children would say, "yuk, what's that?" It was the same for Ernie. The children would watch him eat with looks of 'what the hell is this guy eating!' on their faces.

The colour of the bread was not the only thing wrong with the lunches their mothers prepared for them. Lisa's sandwiches were

great, big door-stops, while Kiwi sandwiches were skinny things. The kids would say nasty things about my thick sandwiches. I used to beg my mother to buy meat pies to pack in my school lunch but to no avail. This didn't mean that I didn't like the things she cooked; its just that I was easily intimidated. When you are a kid and not such a confident one, these sorts of things matter.

Anne, who also did not appreciate the brown bread made by her mother, improvised her own solution to the problem of taking a lunch that 'looked different and was an enormous source of embarrassment'. She ate the filling in the sandwiches and stored the bread in a cupboard. Anne has a memory of this subterfuge going on for years. 'I just stored away what I didn't eat and this meant that I wasn't lying to my mother when I said I hadn't thrown my lunch away'.

It was somewhat different for children at school in the sixties and early seventies. By this time, the gulf between the foreign and New Zealand worlds had narrowed. Howard, during the later period, used to go to school with salami and wurst sandwiches and trade them with other children for peanut butter or marmite ones. The children were fascinated by his different lunch and wanted to try the new foods. It is possible to speculate that the children of the refugees were the vanguard of the subsequent food revolution in New Zealand.³⁰

As the clothes worn at school, a foreign-looking lunch taken to school each day was a problem for many of the children who were struggling, in that rigidly conformist world,

³⁰Renata Yates makes this observation with regard to Australia, in Karl Bittman, ed., *Strauss to Matilda: Viennese in Australia, 1938-1988*, Wenkart Foundation, Leichardt, New South Wales 1988, page 241.

to shed the visible signs of a different background. Children's recollections show the strategies adopted to meet both the requirements of parents regarding appropriate clothes and diet as well as the expectations of their New Zealand peers. The picture conveyed is of children, adrift between the different worlds, manoeuvring uneasily between them.

Teasing And Bullying

Children, struggling to fit in and to be accepted were devastated by the instances of teasing and bullying they sometimes encountered: 'It is this feeling of total vulnerability, when there isn't a spot that isn't open to attack, which cuts all ground from beneath you feet. You feel you are completely defenceless and completely impotent', recalled Lucie.

Name calling - 'bloody German Jew', or 'Hungarian rat' and others in a similar vein - seemed to be more often directed at boys than at girls. Boys were also more often the target of physical violence. Brothers and sisters at the same school could have quite different experiences. Mary at her school, for example, found that everyone treated her most kindly. Before the arrival of Mary and her brother, the headmaster had talked to the pupils. 'He told them all about our terrible sad lives and that we were "poor orphans" and said that they were to be very nice to us and look after us and so on'. But this directive provided no protection for Mary's brother, aged eight when he started at the school, who was rapidly involved in strife and fights in response to the baiting he encountered. One can only speculate about the reasons why (apart from her gender) Mary was more readily accepted than her brother. Mary:

Possibly he was more different than I was; possibly he was less good at assimilating, but I think the main reason might have been that he reacted (by getting angry and upset) to the teasing. It was a vicious circle because once he had started to be teased, he would react and they would tease him more.

By the time George started at a Wellington school, he could speak English and no longer wore 'strange' clothes. Yet his desire to blend in was not achieved. His troubles began soon after starting at the school:

A boy started beating me up and for some reason the rest of the class joined in as well. A pack instinct came out. Often, I had trouble getting home. I used to have to run to get away from them. I don't know why they picked on me. The teachers must have been aware of what was going on and did nothing about it.

George stayed about two years at that school until the family moved again.

I was really upset to leave the school in spite of the beatings. The devil you know is always better even if your life is pretty miserable. I remember meeting those kids a year after I had left and I still quaked with fear and was ready to run away. But I feared moving to become again the centre of attention in a new school with new faces.

Girls who were not accepted at school faced a different type of situation. Vivienne was not chased and beaten up, her fate was to become very isolated. No one would talk to her. The other girls would just sit about, gossip with each other and 'gang up' against Vivienne.

I was very much picked on at school. I had no means of defending myself. I just accepted it thinking I must have deserved it. I was very actively picked on but it wasn't because I was Jewish, although, I think, the kids obviously picked up that I was something different. I remember a girl pointing at me and saying: "Ha ha, Vivienne is Roman Catholic, Vivienne is Roman Catholic". Since I didn't know what a Roman Catholic was but I was aware that it must be something undesirable, I believed that I really must be one.

This incident is reminiscent of Max Frisch's play *Andorra*, although in that play the protagonist Andri, who has become an outcast because of anti-Semitism, ironically turns out to be not Jewish at all.

Andri: Ever since I have been able to hear, people have told me I'm different, and I watched to see if what they said was true. And it is

true, Father: I am different. People told me my kind have a certain way of moving, and I looked at myself in the mirror almost every evening. They are right: I do move like this and like this. I can't help it. And I watched to see if it was true that I was always thinking of money, when the Andorrans watch me and think, now he's thinking of money; and they were right again: I am always thinking of money. Its true. And I have no guts, I've tried, its no use: I have no guts, only fear. And people told me that my kind are cowards, I watched out for this too ...³¹

A number of interviewees recalled instances of religious bigotry directed against Catholics.

At school, no one ever thought you were Jewish. The bias that existed quite strongly was anti-Catholic. I remember the Catholic children going down hill to their school in the opposite direction in their uniforms. Quite often you would hear children singing anti-Catholic songs. But I don't think anyone at primary school had the faintest notion that I was Jewish.

Anti-Catholic bias had repercussions for least one of the children in this study whose background was part-Jewish although her upbringing was a Catholic one. Lucie went first to her local convent primary school and then to a Catholic girls' school in Wellington. The convent school had positive features, the main one being the closeness between the pupils and staff, making it like 'a little family'. However, being part of the Catholic school system also had negative aspects, especially for a child who had already experienced discrimination.

It was an environment where you were constantly subject to the public schoolboys' harassment on your way to school and on your way home - as a Catholic. This is something which I felt more (than the other children) partly because this was one more layer of persecution laid on

³¹Max Frisch, *Andorra*, translated by Michael Bullock, Eyre Methuen, 1964, page 61.

top of other layers. I felt it more than various friends I walked back and forward with. They would simply yell abuse back, or, when we had stones thrown at us, they would pick up some stones from the road and hurl them back. This was something I couldn't do. I think if you have more and more experience of this, rather than developing a thick skin, you feel it more. On my way home from school in Bratislava, I got set upon by local boys as a Jew and was knocked around physically much more so than by the public school boys here, but I thought that New Zealand children ought to know better.³²

A common thread in the experiences of boys and girls at school was that teasing was somehow connected to other children's perception of them as vulnerable. They could become vulnerable by showing their feelings and not maintaining the customary 'stiff upper lip' or by expressing opinions very strongly and failing to be sufficiently non-committal. However, probably the most serious infringement of children's code of behaviour was made by refugee children who came to be regarded by their peers as 'prigs' or 'goody-goodies'.

David and Anne were both picked on at school. Anne remembers her primary school days, until she was in about standard two, as 'sheer hell'.

I never knew when I was going to be ganged up against. Part of the reason for this was that they sensed that here was a weak link that they could pick on. Also we were different. We looked different, we had slight accents, and we didn't belong to any of their churches.

David attributes their difficulties at school to the additional fact that 'we must have been right horrible proper prigs or thought of as such because of these tremendously high standards that our parents were expecting of us'.

³²Lucie's explanation regarding her expectation that New Zealand children 'ought to know better' is as follows: 'I expected New Zealand children, having been brought up in an ostensibly liberal/democratic society, to largely live up to the proclaimed principles of their elders and be tolerant. Their failure to do so struck me as somehow worse than Nazi persecution because the latter were only living up to their own declared principles'.

Being too absorbed in the parental or adult way of looking at things is probably what is implied in priggishness. Such an outcome is not surprising in the small, close, stressed families that a number of the children of refugees were growing up in. Vivienne:

Children who are over-dominated by their parents will be goody-goodies and will see the world from their parents' perspective. Part of being a child is resisting that to some degree. Being a goody-good might have been part of the reason why I was picked on.

An incident recalled by Ernie provides further illustration. On this occasion, he succumbed to peer pressure to do something naughty.

Mr Bonda was a Dutch teacher who used to get a helluva lot of lip from the kids in my standard four class because he was a foreigner. I was about the only one in the class who really liked him. One day the kids said to me, 'take this rubber band and flick it at Mr Bonda'. They got me to do it because I was the goody-boy who didn't misbehave because I had been told not to. So I flicked the rubber band at Mr Bonda. He turned round and said, 'who was it?' The kids all said it was me. So Mr Bonda took me outside into the corridor. I can remember this like yesterday. And he took a strap out of his desk and said to me, 'Ernie, look, I like you. You're one of my favourites in the class', or words to that effect. 'But I've got to show that what you did was wrong and I want you to play along with this. I'm going to give you the strap, but I'm not going to give you the strap'. Then he took the strap out and struck his knee four times. And all the kids inside the classroom were listening - one, two, three - aw! I went back in the classroom trying not to smile. He had belted himself to protect me. He identified with me and I with him.

The pattern of an almost surreptitious solidarity between foreign teachers and their foreign pupils which is revealed occasionally contrasts with the examples of lack of solidarity between different refugee children at the same school. According to a number of interviewees, children who were themselves struggling to fit in tried to distance themselves

from the tribulations of other children, perhaps less adept at assimilating or more recent newcomers, whom they regarded as even more visibly foreign than themselves.

What distinguishes those children who were teased and bullied at school from those who were not? Girls tended to be better treated, but by no means always. The way children responded to the teasing could also make a difference. There also seems to have been a connection between the children's ability or inability to free themselves sufficiently from the demands and values of the refugee world of their parents and their success or failure at coping with the pressures of school.

'Snivelling Bookworms'³³

It is evident that a process of careful negotiation between the rules and expectations of different worlds was required of the children. This is particularly obvious in relation to scholastic achievement. Refugee children were characterized by a strong motivation to succeed at school. However, in the New Zealand school environment they encountered deep suspicion of such endeavour and a strong dislike of cleverness. It needs to be stressed, however, that New Zealand children who were clever and interested in books and intellectual pursuits of various kinds encountered similar attitudes. For example, Maurice Gee writing of his school days in *Through the Looking Glass* recalled:

racing through our readers - Milly Molly Mandy, thatched cottages, English lanes, none of it the least bit strange - and being first on to Book Two, Book Three, Book Four. I was pleased with myself and very excited - but there was a sourness in Miss Wolf [Maurice Gee's teacher] as she gave me each new book. I think she did not like cleverness. (Though perhaps I made too much of being first.)³⁴

It also needs stating that it was not only in New Zealand that intelligent children, foreign or local, encountered a certain amount of disapproval. There are many examples to illustrate this, such as the experiences of Judith Kerr, described in a partly autobiographical trilogy. Judith Kerr is the daughter of Alfred Kerr, a distinguished German dramatic critic,

³³ This epithet is drawn from Kevin Ireland's recollections of his boyhood in Ireland, 'One of the Bohemians', King, ed., *One of the Boys?*, page 95.

³⁴ Maurice Gee, 'Creek and Kitchen', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, page 88.

poet and essayist. She escaped as a child from Nazi Germany with her parents and brother, and eventually settled with her family in England. Her three books, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, *The Other Way Round* and *A Small Person Far Away*, tell the migration story of a young girl, Anna, whose escape from Nazi Germany mirrors the author's. In many ways the experiences of Anna/Judith Kerr parallel those of refugee children in New Zealand. Anna's school experiences, and particularly the attitudes she encounters regarding intellectual achievement, are relevant here. When the unhappy years of school are finally behind her, she looks back and remembers:

'Clever', they had called her at the Metcalfe Boarding School for Girls. 'That clever little refugee girl'. She had not realized at first that it was derogatory. Nobody much had liked her at Miss Metcalfe's. 'At least I've finished with all that', she thought'.³⁵

For women and girls, to be clever was even more problematic than for boys and men with intellectual inclinations. Articles in *The New Zealand Woman's Weekly* convey a little of the flavour of the attitudes prevailing in the 1950s and early 1960s. For example, considerable debate in the magazine focused on the marriage prospects of intelligent women. Were women afraid to be left on the shelf because they were intelligent? A survey revealed that some were afraid and some were not. Further discussion looked at how women could use their intelligence 'subtly' in order to remain non-threatening to men.³⁶ An examination of articles in magazines and newspapers in the 1960s reveals a similar social climate. One article, for example, posed the question: 'The Brainy Wife: Does she make or break a marriage?'³⁷

Parental values concerning education and intellectual achievement had a major impact on the children's own achievements and on their attitudes. This impact was sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Current research reveals the stress imposed on children by too much pressure to succeed. Chinese students in New Zealand, for example, have been shown to be suffering in this regard.³⁸ There were also among the

³⁵Judith Kerr, *The Other Way Round*, London 1975, page 10.

³⁶*The New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 5 October, 1959, pages 4-5.

³⁷*New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 5 April, 1965, page 12.

³⁸Chung Chi-Ying, 'Chinese Students - Model Students: A Myth or Reality?', *New Settlers and Multicultural Education Issues*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1988, Department of Education, Wellington, pages 17-18.

children in this study those who felt they were 'ground into the dust'³⁹ by their parents' expectations. An often repeated 'Jewish' joke goes: 'What is a Jewish drop-out? Answer: someone without a PhD'.

Even those Jewish immigrant children who were brought up in an orphanage were very successful at school. Chaim (not his real name) was born in Poland in 1927 and came to New Zealand in 1938 at the age of eleven, as part of a group of twelve children brought to New Zealand by Max and Annie Deckston. He grew up in a home for Jewish children established in Wellington by the Deckstons, who had also brought to New Zealand in 1935 another group of twelve children from Poland. Chaim recalled 'the tremendous discipline' in the home (known subsequently as the Deckston Home) affecting all aspects of life, but especially study: 'We would get up at five in the morning and ... get the house clean and do our *duvenning* [prayers] and we would also do our homework'.

Poet Alistair Campbell, writing of his 'drab existence' at a Presbyterian orphanage in the mid 1930s, commented that "'homies" or "orphies" were not in those days expected to excel at school and they seldom did'.⁴⁰ The Campbell children were an exception. However, among the Deckston children, it was failure and not success that was exceptional. The children went to Rintoul Street School in Newtown, and according to a report in the *New Zealand Radio Record* very rapidly began 'showing a scholastic prowess that makes them the criteria in their school'. The *Record* provides further details:

Isaac went through four primers in one year. Eileen completed five standards in three and a half years and Shirley shifted from standard four to standard six in one year. And most of the rest of the first group have some academic honour to make them proud. In fact, the child who hasn't done better than the one standard in the required time is the unusual one. The second group that came over a little more than two years ago has continued to keep to the Institute's [Deckston Home's] high standard of learning. They speak English now with practically no accent and the first group regards its native tongue as the foreign one.⁴¹

³⁹One of the interviewees described the effects of parental expectations thus.

⁴⁰Alistair Campbell, *Island to Island*, Christchurch 1984, page 90.

⁴¹*New Zealand Radio Record*, 26 May 1939, pages 1-2.

The parents of the children in this study were usually most anxious to ensure their children's success. 'You can take away a person's possessions, or even his country, but you cannot take away his education' was the prevailing maxim. Ernie recalled 'a very high emphasis on us kids doing well'.

Our academic success was a great source of pride to them. My curriculum vitae was very easy to put together for right from the plunket book and the first lock of hair, the school reports, the cut-outs from newspapers about achievements and successes, they are all assembled in our separate folders. They wanted us to be successful in order to be able to counter any prejudice with economic independence. My parents realized that if you have a 'weakness' because of your cultural background, you can compensate with your record of hard work and educational achievement.

Peter and Annette too received 'a very powerful message' from their father about the value of education. Annette: 'The message was that you can't do without a proper education, which meant a tertiary education. The other part of the message was that unless you achieve the best, it is not quite good enough'. Peter: 'Father's way of thinking was that achievement in the intellectual arena was of most value. Other forms of achievement were largely ignored. Leisure pursuits were not encouraged. The emphasis was on study with as much time as possible devoted to it'.

Peter found this approach oppressive and he would sometimes go to his room and pretend to work. But for many others in the study, there was no conflict between their parents' wishes and their own inclinations. Jonathon:

I certainly got every encouragement from my parents to study hard and they would have taken it for granted that if possible I would get a tertiary education and go into a professional career. But my parents encouraged me rather than pushed me. I was basically a self-starter.

George also received every encouragement from his mother to succeed, and this added to his own strong sense that education had the potential to liberate the individual

from the constraints imposed by the past and by one's background. With the encouragement of one particular teacher, by the sixth form at college George was doing very well scholastically and this achievement was very important for him. 'It was during secondary school days that I decided I am an individual with a brain and that I should create my own life, form my own ideas and then I would not feel that I was any longer a prisoner of the past'.

Valuing education was not merely about obtaining adequate qualifications. As Jane recalled:

There was tremendous emphasis on knowledge, on seeking knowledge and on being informed [in the refugee community]. I was brought up in an environment in which you didn't actually talk about something unless you were well informed. My father was a broadly educated person, an avid reader and he valued the exchange of ideas. He enjoyed energetic arguments about a whole range of topics.

How did children who were also very interested in the exchange of ideas and in books fare at school? For some, the pressure to conform meant that knowledge and interests had to be hidden from other children and from teachers. Michael, for example, was interested in and familiar with the plays of Shakespeare while still at primary school, but this was not something which he felt could be revealed to his peers or to his teachers. Marei recalled making a conscious decision to be as different from her brother as she could: 'He was solitary, academic, buried in a world of books. I wanted to be different from him - to be one of the crowd'.

Being one of the crowd meant doing less well at school work in order to fit in better with other children. Lucie learned to 'operate on two levels'.

You had to make sure you didn't get better marks than anyone else; you made deliberate mistakes to be one with your friends, but in your private life you read a lot, you did well in your exams and you wished to go to university.

While specific areas of precocity could be hidden and under-achievement was an option, some children in this study still remained outsiders because they either could not or

did not wish to disguise their real interests. John: 'The music we listened to on the radio, the things my father talked about, the kind of books I read, these were way out of kilter with what the majority of my classmates read, thought about, talked about and were taught at school'.

Perhaps as a substitute for social contact with other children, John read a great deal as a child:

As a result I used words that the other kids had never heard of. When I used words containing many syllables in front of those kids, they would say, 'what did you do? Swallow a dictionary?' The experience of having it beaten out of you by the other children stopped you from showing it to the teachers. You didn't want to put your hand up all the time.

Lucie's comments reveal the special attraction of books to children already isolated from peers by other differences.

You concentrate on books because you are less happy in the playground. Because you read a lot, you become more isolated because New Zealand children didn't like those who do well academically, especially those who are already despised for their difference. So the immigrant child spends even more time with books because books don't swear at you, bite back at you, make you feel out of place or say 'you're funny'. It is a world you can arrange yourself, unlike the social world which you are not in control of. Books are a safe world. It is books which keep you sane.

Robert (not his real name), born in Budapest in 1934, came to New Zealand with his parents and brother in 1948. He was fourteen years old. Fitting into school was especially difficult for teenagers and older children, particularly those with the traumatic years of the war behind them. Robert was astonished by his first sight of a New Zealand secondary school: It consisted of '... a brick building with ivy on it and one football field after another, totalling about eleven football fields'. It seemed to Robert like the sort of school you read about in English schoolboy stories.

His time at the school was not a happy one. When he first started, he spoke virtually no English. It took him about a year to pick up enough English 'to get by'.

In my second year, I was put in the 'B' stream which I considered inappropriate for my abilities. The kids were really quite mean to me and I wanted to get out of that class. I found the children very immature. Having lived through the war, we were physically immature (I was very small), but I think intellectually and emotionally we were much more mature. I didn't fit into that class and in order to get out of the 'B' stream I worked so hard that I topped all my classes except in English. The school made a big thing of this. It was specially mentioned at end of year assembly, especially as the dux of the school was Chinese and the runner-up Indian. My winning all the prizes in the fourth form got undue publicity. I felt very uncomfortable about it and never again tried that hard. I just 'got by' in my future years at school.

Many years after he had left school, Robert wrote a story (published in the *New Zealand Listener*)⁴² which expressed some of his feelings about being a foreign child at school. A number of the themes concerning the plight of children who are different and 'bookish' are depicted in it. The story is about a boy, Peter, who is a 'stranger', an outsider, a loner who sits alone at school, reading. His peers seem to him like 'silly little children'. His private names for two of these children are Mouse and Rat. One day, somebody knocks the book Peter is reading out of his hand. Peter bends down to pick it up and sees a foot trample on it.

The foot kicked it, someone picked it up and tossed it to someone else. The book was thrown about, passed like a football with its pages flopping. Red hot anger flooded through Peter. He could see it now, it was the Rat who had started this, who had knocked the book out of his hand, trampled on it and thrown it to the Mouse. The Mouse and the Rat tossed it backwards and forwards. Now there were others all

⁴²S. Cegledy, 'The Fight', *New Zealand Listener*, 21 June 1968, page 10.

screaming ... Peter was mad, mad and helpless. He tried to chase his book, but it was hurled from one to the other. He could never catch up with it. At last in his unbridled rage he forgot everything. He only saw the broad grin of the Mouse. He took after him. He chased him with all his strength but the Mouse was nimble on his feet and Peter was no runner. He ran with his clumsy flat feet, panting, blind with fury while the Mouse dodged all over the place. Then one final burst and Peter ran straight into him. The Mouse hit him and he hit back. He tried to hit hard but his fists kept missing the mark

Eventually, Peter almost gets the better of Mouse, but then Rat intervenes to help Mouse. Both get 'stuck into' Peter who is kicked and punched mercilessly until the intervention of yet another boy. Peter's private name for this third boy is King: "'King" because he was a Maori and he had a name that sounded much like King'. King helps Peter to his feet and Peter 'slinks off'. His thoughts are bitter and angry ones.

He sat on his own all afternoon. He didn't talk to anybody. The others were talking about him; they were discussing the fight. He knew, but he didn't care. They could say what they liked. The whole school could gang up on him. Their mocking, their laughter was like the braying of asses. He preferred open hostility to condescension. The way some of them befriended him - 'poor little lost boy, the poor stranger'. It was worse than the baiting of the Rat and the Mouse. At least he could hit back, give vent to his hatred ... but the patronizing condescension of some of the others he found humiliating and he was helpless in face of this humiliation.

What could he do? Tell them that he had lived more in five years than they would in twenty? Tell them that he was a grown man while they were still chasing each other round like children?... He had his consolation. He could prove his superiority. He could outstrip them in his school work with hardly any effort ... They hated him because he was better than they and he hated them because they did not understand. They did not understand what loneliness was. There was a time when he had had friends, with whose help he could have taken

the whole school on, friends with whose help he would have punished the Rat and the Mouse and all the others who jeered. But those friends were far away. Here he was on his own, completely on his own.

King later finds Peter's book and returns it to him. He talks to Peter as though he understands what it means to be an outsider. King is from the East Coast and, as the only Maori in the class, 'used to hate it here too'. The story concludes with King and Peter bicycling off home together.

Neither of them said much. There was something about the King he liked, something that reminded him of friends he had left behind. They parted. 'See you', said the King. 'See you'.

Parental values concerning education and the children's own strong desire to achieve scholastic success and to pursue interests out of line with peer values conflicted with children's wish to conform and to fit in. There were different ways of dealing with this conflict. Some children rejected the values of their family; others chose to ignore the expectations of their peers. Most common, perhaps, was the attempt to 'operate on two levels', referred to by Lucie. By this means, with the aid of diverse strategies and deceptions, children tried to meet the expectations of their different worlds.

Older Children

A number of others in this study were, like Robert, no longer children when they started secondary schooling in New Zealand, yet had to try to adjust to this new world. Eva was fourteen when she arrived in New Zealand from Italy (originally from Germany, the family migrated to Italy to escape the Nazis) and began to attend Girls' High School in Christchurch.

I chose Girls' High because they had just changed from black stockings to brown stockings and I thought that would be less unbearable than black stockings. I just couldn't see myself in black stockings.

There were two other refugee girls there at the time. At first it was a bit difficult because the girls were terribly curious about where

we had come from. They treated us as though we had come from the moon. They seemed to have hardly heard of Europe, asking if there are cats and dogs in Europe, for example, and other questions which seemed really silly.

And then they wanted me to go and stay with them for weekends. I was terrified of finding myself in a completely strange family for a weekend without knowing exactly what they were saying and without knowing how to behave. So I refused all their invitations and they thought I was 'stuck up'. I know the other girls at the school looked on me as an oddity and I didn't want to be an oddity. I tried to become 'normal'.

Although much of her year at college is a blur in Eva's memory, a few details about that time have remained. In history class, she was surprised to be taught about the black hole of Calcutta: 'such a disgrace would never have been admitted in Germany or Italy where history was white-washed in favour of the homeland'.⁴³ But she was also astonished by her English teacher who, when asked by a girl in the class who Petrarch was, said: 'a Greek philosopher'. Mostly during her time at college, Eva understood little of what went on and 'fitting in' was a problem. Like Robert, she felt more mature than her classmates.

In New Zealand, the girls of fourteen or fifteen were children. Girls of that age are children, I realize that now, but at the time it struck me as odd because in Italy I had been Signorina Eva and treated quite differently, as a young adult. I suppose my experiences through these political times had forced me to mature in some ways more rapidly than a child growing up in New Zealand would have had the opportunity to do. So that really doesn't say anything against New Zealand schools; it just meant that I didn't fit in.

⁴³There are of course degrees of ethnocentricity in the presentation of history. Yvonne du Fresne's portrayal of New Zealand schools in the thirties, from a second generation immigrant Danish viewpoint, shows the domination of British values, heroes and glorious victories in the curriculum. See for example, 'Armistice Day' in *The Bear from the North: Tales of a New Zealand Childhood*, London 1989, pages 92-98.

Eva stayed only one year at college in New Zealand, leaving to continue her education at night school. Being treated like the child she was not and her discomfort with rules and regulations, which stifled even the smallest expressions of individuality, are her clearest memories of her time at school.

I think the uniform and the rules about what we were and were not allowed to do seemed to overshadow most other things. I found it extraordinary that we were not allowed to leave the school grounds without gloves and hat on and not only did we have to wear a hat, but it had to have its brim turned down. When I turned mine up because I didn't think it suited me to wear it turned down, I was reprimanded for disobeying school rules.

Agnes (not her real name) was born in Budapest in 1932. She came to New Zealand with her aunt and grandmother in 1948 at the age of sixteen, to join members of her family who had managed to escape from Hungary before the war. Her parents and many other relatives had not survived Nazi persecution.

Agnes found the girls and teachers at her Wellington college kind and helpful. She never tried to share with them anything of her war experiences because 'that is not something you can share with people who haven't been through it. They were all very nice and kind but I have never found anybody who could come very close because of a total difference in our ways of thinking and in our backgrounds'.

Agnes's main concern at school was to resume her interrupted education and to succeed in a foreign language.

I arrived in New Zealand on 15 November 1948 and I sat School Certificate on 15 November 1949. I sat in six subjects and I passed in all subjects barring English in which I got a total of thirty percent. There was quite a lot of discussion at the school because the Headmistress would not consider that someone who had not passed School Certificate in English could possibly go onto the sixth form. However, somehow she was advised that I could have a provisional pass and I was allowed into the sixth form and was accredited University Entrance.

For Mary, 'the high point' of her New Zealand schooling was obtaining a national scholarship at the end of her upper sixth form year.

This was in part due to one of the language teachers, who was a German refugee herself. She was a tremendous task-master, a real slave driver to everybody. Every so often she made the point that she drove me particularly hard because of my background. I resented this terribly. Once when I may have said something cheeky, she did say to me: 'you and I have to stick together', and I thought: 'I don't want to have to stick together with you ever'. I really hated the suggestion that she was expecting different things from me because of the connection between us.

It is interesting to note that Mary's reaction to her foreign teacher is in contrast with the earlier example of solidarity between a foreign teacher and his foreign pupil. Clearly, no firm conclusions are possible about these relationships.

Aged eleven when she arrived in New Zealand, Mary was still young enough to have a good chance of fitting into the New Zealand school system. She found that the uniform helped in her task of 'working at being like everybody else'. At times, she found it difficult not to regard a difference in background as a deficiency in herself. There were so many things that she did not know and which others took for granted. Mary, like a number of other refugee children, also had a different perspective and more maturity than New Zealand peers of a similar age. She overcame these barriers to relationships by becoming friends with the 'more serious children in her class'.

Older children, as those who were younger when they reached New Zealand and the New Zealand-born, tried to adapt and to fit in. However, the older the children were, the more likely they were, after their initial attempts to become rapidly 'normal' had failed, to choose to resign themselves to the impossibility of becoming like everybody else. Interviewees' recollections highlight, above all, the enormous value placed on scholastic achievement and on making up for lost time by older children whose education had been interrupted by the war.

Sport

Children of refugees, striving to belong and to fit in, soon understood that the route to acceptance and recognition at school was often through achievement in sport (especially the right sport). This was particularly so for boys, but girls too were affected.

The creme de la creme of sports was, of course, rugby with cricket following closely behind. Sir John Marshall, writing in (*Through the Looking Glass*) of his secondary school days which were 'so normal that it would be tedious to write about them at any length' had this to say about the activities and achievements of those years:

I played cricket for the first eleven and rugby for the first fifteen. I got a medal, long since lost, for the half mile at the school sports. I swam and played tennis. I was a sergeant in the school cadets. I passed the matriculation examination ...⁴⁴

Sir John was academically successful too, but that meant nothing without the sporting success.

According to Jack Shallcrass, although by the late 1940s and early 1950s rugby was not compulsory in schools generally, it was still the game to play. At Wellington College, in the late 1930s, in a school of 600 pupils, there were about twenty-five fully active rugby teams. It was possible to play hockey, but soccer was strictly forbidden. The school was even able to prevent boys who wished to play soccer in the week-end for outside clubs from doing so. The justification was that the school had the first call on their services for winter games. Shallcrass recalled the Deputy-Headmaster warning pupils: "'keep away from soccer players; show me a soccer player and I'll show you a rogue!" He would say this and mean it!

Michael played soccer at first (by the late 1950s, soccer was permitted), but soon found that

if you are one of the school's fat boys, rugby is really the only way to establish your identity. I trained in my sixth form year to get into the top weight-graded team and to the surprise of everybody did. Sport

⁴⁴Sir John Marshall, 'All in the Making', Gifkins, *Through the Looking Glass*, page 80.

was the way to social acceptability and to being not just the smart guy at school.

Tom gave three reasons why sport was important. The first was to gain peer acceptance, the second was to become strong and self-reliant and the third was to prove to himself that he was as 'capable as the next person'.

It is interesting to note that children of New Zealanders who were the target of hostility during the war years because they were conscientious observers or pacifists, chose also to try to overcome prejudice by excelling in sport. 'I had to play football very hard', the son of A. C. Barrington, the well-known pacifist, recalled.⁴⁵

In general, the team sports played in New Zealand schools were never as highly regarded in refugee families as intellectual, musical or other kinds of achievement. If there was interest in sport, it was likely to be in gymnastics, tennis, fencing, mountaineering and occasionally soccer, which was the main football played in Europe. Unlike many New Zealand parents who would enthusiastically encourage and cheer on their children's sporting efforts, most refugee parents were uncomprehending, indifferent or even shocked by the sight of their children spending all those hours running up and down muddy fields. These attitudes applied especially to rugby. Michael's mother:

Both the boys played rugby and I was horrified by how they looked when they came home. And the worry! Will they come home in one piece? Very often they didn't. They had to have ~~5~~ ⁴ lumps on their lips and elsewhere. I just suffered the rugby and the cricket, but didn't go and watch. These immigrant children had to prove that they are as good as the others.

Many in the study recalled receiving very little support or understanding from parents for sporting pursuits. The values of school were clearly at odds with the values of home. Tom believes he was even looked on as a kind of 'black sheep' in the Jewish community for the type of sports he engaged in. These were rugby, running, shooting and tramping. 'They were very unusual activities for a boy like me and my parents, who

⁴⁵Taylor, *The Home Front*, page 207.

would have preferred me to achieve scholastic success, had some trouble explaining it to their friends'.

George too found that the values of school (concerning sport) received little support at home. He played rugby and really enjoyed the social prestige his prowess at the game brought him. 'I was the star of my medium grade team and we seemed to win all our games'. His parents did not come to watch the games; nor did George wish them to.

I would have been embarrassed by their foreignness if they had come. Also they would have said how silly the game was. Other people's parents came along but they were almost coaching. Mine wouldn't have understood the game. If my mother had come, she would have been frightened when I was tackled.

The other problem George faced was that his parents saw money spent on sport as a 'frivolous expenditure'. For this reason he was unable to take up cricket or athletics seriously.

I was very fast and had a very good side-step. (These skills were acquired running away from the bullies at school.) But I never kept up the running in the off-season. My parents would never have seen the point of buying me running shoes and doing all the things to get me started.

Jonathon's parents tried very hard to adapt to New Zealand and were very successful in many ways but 'they never assimilated to rugby':

I vividly remember they came to watch me play once and it was too much for them. It was very probably too much for me also. They never came again. I dare say they would have watched me more often if I had encouraged them. It was on that sort of occasion that the fact that my parents were different certainly showed.

Some people in the study recalled having been very troubled by this difference between what their families regarded as important and what New Zealanders valued. Jenny, for example, observed:

I felt that my home background and my parents' values were not what my peer group stressed. I would have given anything for my mum and dad to have taken me to a rugby match because that's where everybody else went on a Saturday afternoon. Girls went with their brothers and their fathers to the big tests whereas my parents thought that sport was not cultured. They would have spent the money to take me to a symphony orchestra concert, but not to a rugby match.

Some parents did take steps to bridge the gulf between the different worlds, usually for their children's sake. Howard, for example, did attend sporting events with his father, but this, he believes, was not out of genuine interest on his father's part.

My father was not sports-minded. Music and intellectual pursuits were what really interested him. He did get interested in rugby in a superficial way and tried to follow what was happening. I think he did this because he saw it as a very Kiwi thing to do. He was also keen for us kids to do lots of sport, again because he wanted us to do all the things that Kiwi kids do.

Whatever the attitude of their parents, for those refugee children who had the aptitude, excelling at sport did lead to a degree of acceptance and on occasions 'honour and glory'. As Walter, who at first played hockey ('a very second rate thing to do') commented, it was running which was his 'salvation'. 'I was a good middle distance runner and the only time I felt a sense of prestige in all my childhood years was the year I held the school record for a middle distance event'.

This discussion of attitudes to sport among refugees and their children highlights three themes discussed earlier. First, children's need to find a place in the monocultural, conformist world of school is apparent. Second, interviewees' accounts portray the plight of children located in two worlds that were in significant ways ignorant about each other and utterly alien to each other. One of the consequences of this was that if/when children

experienced difficulties at school, parents could not help resolve these. Children usually had to struggle unsupported by their families and in some cases in opposition to their families, to make their way in the New Zealand world. The third theme, related to the second, concerns the costs of assimilation. Tom's situation provides an illustration. For Tom, who became a 'black sheep' in the eyes of his family as a result of his skills in rugby, running, shooting and tramping, the result of success in the New Zealand world of sport was failure to meet the expectations of the refugee/Jewish worlds.

Rebels and Loners

The theme of conformity has predominated in this discussion of school experiences. Most of the children needed to prove themselves New Zealanders. They had to create for themselves a sense of belonging. They did this by adopting broad, local accents and by making efforts to look and behave as much as possible like their peers. Putting aside other interests - classical music, reading - to play sport, and coming home from games with bloodied lips to their aghast and incomprehending parents was one way of proving that they were not outsiders but New Zealanders. By lining up outside Athletic Park to watch the All Blacks play and by proudly reciting the names of every All Black in the team, they showed they belonged in the country which was so strange for their parents but no longer so for them.

The values that refugee children were conforming to were the subject of an editorial by Jean Wishart in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1956:

... unfortunately, in New Zealand there is a tendency to link the intellectual with the eccentric. A person who seeks after knowledge long past the age of compulsory education is liable to be considered an oddity. And if he actually enjoys going to concerts of serious music, attending exhibitions of art, or going to adult education lectures, he runs the risk of being labelled a pretentious highbrow. New Zealand is not alone in this spiritual poverty. It is a trait of all new countries. The hard life of the pioneer developed physical powers rather than imagination and creative instincts.

Just prior to the war a couple emigrated to this country from Central Europe. They brought with them a long tradition of culture

and, particularly, a love of music. Their son, born here, has inherited this love of music, and from an early age has loved to go with his mother to concerts. But now at the age of twelve, his New Zealand upbringing is beginning to show, for when the National Orchestra was last around, and his mother suggested taking him, his reply was: 'I'd like to go, Mum, but what would the fellers say if they found out?'

While it is most desirable that the child's physical welfare be looked after, that he should be encouraged to play team games and take part in sport generally, it seems deplorable that his spiritual development, which would stand him in good stead until the end of his life, is thus discouraged by popular opinion.⁴⁶

Conformity to popular opinion was not, however, the whole story. While some children played rugby, others played chess or the violin: activities which clearly defined them as outsiders at most state secondary schools. Some protested about aspects of school life - by their secondary school years, some children of refugees felt secure enough to break the rules and to object to those they believed were unjust or inappropriate.

Although they felt more secure, a number of children never came to feel they belonged. They remained loners at school. Forming friendships remained difficult. Of course, there were also many who made close friends. For those who did experience difficulty with social relationships, it is likely that a combination of personal and cultural reasons were responsible. George made the following comments:

At one stage, when I was in the fifth or sixth form, someone made a friendly overture and suggested we go the races together. I just didn't know how to cope with it and I said, 'no, I have to go home to study'. At this stage, I think, I was scared of forming close relationships. I don't know if that was related to being a refugee - perhaps the trauma of frequent moves and being always different had this effect. But it may have just been my personality. I just didn't have the knack of socializing; I didn't have the things to talk about.

⁴⁶*New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, editorial, 31 May 1956

What patterns emerge from this examination of the experience of being a foreigner, a child of refugees, a Jewish child in the schools of the late thirties, forties, fifties and sixties? It is evident that until the children were able to absorb the cultural and behavioural patterns of the majority, they were to some extent marginalized. Whether termed 'Huns' or 'Nazis' or the equally derogatory 'goody-goods', 'swots', 'intellectuals' or 'cissies', they were clearly outsiders. Private differences were exposed to public scrutiny at school. What they ate for lunch could be known by all. How children spoke, what they wore, how they behaved, what their parents were like, were similarly there for everyone to see.

Clearly, there were diverse ways of grappling with the ordeal of being different and with the pressures to assimilate in a monocultural society. Some of the discomfort or the suffering of the interviewees was in their own minds. It was enough to be aware that they or their parents were not completely accepted in a strange country, or to believe that they or their parents were seen by others as different, for them to feel insecure and unhappy - even without any open manifestations of rejection or unfriendliness from New Zealanders. However, a number of the children also experienced the lack of acknowledgement, or worst of all, the 'putting down' of difference that occurred in New Zealand schools. They had to contend with attitudes that equated being different with being deficient.

Did having a Jewish background as well as a refugee/foreign one make a difference? During the war years, the school world reflected aspects of the crueller adult world outside. At this time, some children were confronted by the irony inherent in being despised as Jews and as Germans. In the post-war years, the effects and consequences of being Jewish are difficult to distinguish from those related to having a foreign/refugee background. However, instances of anti-Semitism did occasionally occur at school. The impact of even infrequent, generalized anti-Semitism on the post-Holocaust generation was probably relatively severe.

The implications for children at school of other consequences of a Jewish refugee background are also difficult to assess. A past of persecution and the severing of roots that was its consequence probably affected the strength and nature of the children's reaction to teasing and bullying that was unrelated to their Jewishness. How did children look back on a past of persecution? The mixture of defiance and shame about their background and the embarrassment and desperation about being different shown by some of the children at school was probably linked to the complexities inherent in doing so.

Having described a number of the difficulties faced by the children at school, it is nevertheless important to emphasize that, in spite of negative experiences, many of the children did adjust relatively well at school. In the eyes of their teachers, this was certainly the case. A study of this kind cannot measure scholastic and sporting achievement or success in social relationships. Nonetheless, on the basis of the teachers' evaluation, interviewees' own recollections and interviewees' subsequent careers (see notes about this at the end of the study), it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that in terms of exterior indices of success or failure, the adaptation of these children was successful. They did well in examinations, competed competently in sports teams, made friends and enterprisingly adopted diverse strategies and accommodations to deal with the conflicting demands and expectations of the refugee and New Zealand worlds. However, because the need to fit in and to resolve conflict can itself create stress and because successful assimilation can involve cultural losses, in terms of the children's own perceptions and in their own estimation, they sometimes experienced real difficulties and a sense of failure.

CHAPTER 5

ADOLESCENCE: THE GAP WIDENS

'Come and have tea on Saturday' is the casual invitation which Anna, the protagonist in Judith Kerr's autobiographical novel *The Other Way Round* receives from a young man she likes very much.

She was thrown at once into confusion. Girls didn't go alone to men's houses ... did they? On the other hand, why not? She looked at him, carelessly perched on one of the stools in the art-room. He seemed quite unconcerned, as though he had suggested something very ordinary.

'All right', she said with a curious sense of excitement, and he wrote down the address for her on a piece of paper. Then he added the telephone number. 'In case you change your mind', he said.

In case she changed her mind? Did that mean it wasn't so ordinary after all? Oh, she thought, I wish we'd always stayed in one country, then Mama would have been able to tell me what people do and what they don't do and then I'd know.¹

At adolescence, new issues, concerns and conflicts joined those of the earlier years.² It was often at adolescence that the effects of migration on the second generation were most strongly felt and the different worlds, explored in earlier chapters, came into sharpest conflict.

This chapter deals with only some of the major issues that preoccupied refugee adolescents. Sexuality, for example, is beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, the discussion of the situation of those interviewees who, in part because of their very success at assimilating, experienced the tensions between the New Zealand and refugee worlds most sharply, is, unfortunately, limited by gaps in the information available from

¹Kerr, *The Other Way Round*, page 190.

²A general discussion about the major issues of adolescence and an introduction to the literature about adolescence in New Zealand may be found in Jane and James Ritchie, *The Dangerous Age*, Sydney 1984.

interviews. Information drawing on the writer's own experiences is used to supplement the interview material to a limited extent.

Strains and Stresses

At adolescence, relationships with parents became more problematic than before. Generational conflicts are a well-known, though perhaps over-emphasized, phenomenon of adolescent-parent relationships.³ But for refugee children and children of refugees, the 'generation gap' was widened by a cultural gap and by the special circumstances of forced migration and the destruction of their parents' former lives.

The upheavals of migration meant that in many cases, their parents' authority had become undermined. Marion Berghahn, in her study of three generations of German-Jewish refugees in England, made the following observations about the relationship between the generations:

Because of the difficult circumstances most refugees found themselves in, they were deprived of the traditional parental role of offering protection and guidance to their children; and this at a time at which their children urgently needed their parents' assistance - above all emotionally.⁴

In part, it was language which was the problem (this is the subject of the next chapter). Another difficulty was that in New Zealand and in England, after the initial period of settlement, the traditional parental role was no longer strengthened by outside pressures as it had been in Central and Eastern Europe. Persecution had made families inward looking in Europe. The ethos in small, close families that 'nothing else matters as long as we are together' was not appropriate in the new, assimilationist country (where instances of anti-Semitism were infrequent), and became suffocating for adolescents striving to become independent and establish a separate identity. As one young refugee in

³Jane and James Ritchie, *Growing Up in New Zealand*, Auckland 1978, pages 76-78.

⁴Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, page 134.

Berghahn's study put it: 'In Germany our parents were our one and only source of strength'. But in Britain:

... their scale of values and their social behaviour are no longer automatically adopted by us, for much of it is, or at first sight seems to be, a source of weakness rather than strength in the new environment. Those of us who were lucky enough to come here with our parents find that the answer to many of our daily problems are no longer found at home, but in our English surroundings.

As Berghahn observes, one can easily imagine the friction which must have resulted within families from such a situation.⁵

The generation gap was also exacerbated by children coming to view parents as part of a world they no longer really remembered, if they had ever known it at all. Judith Kerr in *The Other Way Round* conveys Anna's separateness from this adult world of former refugees:

'Whatever happened to him?' asked Mama, and they quickly slid into the kind of conversation which Anna had heard at every meeting of grown-ups since she had left Berlin at the age of nine. It was an endless listing of relatives, friends and acquaintances who had been part of the old life in Germany and who were now strewn all over the world. Some had done well for themselves, some had been caught by the Nazis, and most of them were struggling to survive.

Anna had either never known or forgotten nearly all these people, and the conversation meant little to her. Her eyes wandered round the room.^{5a}

Anna looks outside, beyond the confines of her parents' world. The adults, on the other hand, cannot help looking inwards. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, first generation refugees, whether they talked incessantly of the past or tried to live their lives as though the calamities of the past had not happened, existed to some extent in a limbo world, neither

⁵ibid., page 135.

^{5a} Kerr, *The Other Way Round*, page 147

fully detached from the past nor entirely located in the present. They lived in New Zealand, yet they did not entirely do so.

Such semi-detachment from the real world was not possible for the second generation. As discussed in the last chapter, the school was the locus for the closest contacts with the new society and one where conformity was expected. Children, for whom assimilation (at least superficially) was seemingly rapid, had problems with being forced by parents back into the Central or Eastern European identity they were trying to discard in order to fit in with their peers. The children in such families were torn between their desire to be dutiful offspring and their need to develop the trappings of individuality (from their parents) in order to conform with their New Zealand peers and belong in the new country. Some examples of this conflict were revealed in the discussion of school experiences in Chapter 4: Michael spoke of coming home after playing rugby, injured but proud, to horrified and incomprehending parents; Jonathon recalled his parents' inability to 'assimilate to rugby'. This affected to some extent Jonathon's own whole-hearted enjoyment of the sport. Tom and George remembered finding peer acceptance through sport, but failing by that means to meet parental and community expectations. A diary kept by the writer contains evidence to support the notion of a widening gap at adolescence between the different worlds of first and second generation refugees, and of the conflict between the wish to discard the refugee world in order to belong in New Zealand and the pressures to meet family expectations.

However, in a number of respects, refugee adolescents faced the same problems as New Zealand teenagers, although with extra dimensions added to them. Lucie recalled:

When we arrived in New Zealand I was just nine. There were a couple of years of just trying to adjust and no sooner had one got over the worst of that, then one hit the teenage years and got the problems of adolescence coming on top of the problems of cultural adjustment. I think the one problem exacerbates the other.

In Lucie's view, the problems particular to adolescence were many:

The tensions between what your friends wanted to do and what your parents were prepared to allow, the problems of girls adjusting to the company of boys in a society where separation of the sexes was much

more accentuated than in the background where I came from, and the usual sort of problems where the generation gap manifests itself.

As during childhood, the smallness of the family made the situation worse.

I had no brothers or sisters whose advice or company might have been helpful, or grandparents, uncles, aunts who tend to take a more lenient/doting attitude than parents do. I had none of that, so I felt all the more emotionally exposed. Also, I think adolescence is made more difficult because parents who are immigrants and refugees are under very much greater tension. They, therefore, become more restrictive in attitudes to children. They are more anxious; therefore they are more inclined to clamp down and say, 'no, you musn't do this or that'. They are partly afraid of the usual things and partly afraid of the unknown. They have the feeling, 'we musn't do the wrong thing in this society'. And you get a much heavier hand exerted on you and you feel that there is no one to turn to, nobody to say, 'don't worry about this'.

Lucie did try to rebel, but 'didn't get very far'. She 'gave in', perhaps 'too quickly', because of her own ambivalence and uncertainty about where she wished to belong.

I felt very torn between the one tradition I tried to become part of here and the other [her mother's]. It was a funny thing - the position where on the one hand you feel your mother clamps down on the things you want to do on the spur of the moment and prevents you doing the things your friends ask you to do, and on the other hand, feeling in your heart of hearts that this [the New Zealand tradition] is a tradition that you don't entirely want to become part of.

Some adolescents did cut themselves adrift from the old, sometimes without truly feeling part of the new. They could persuade themselves that they were indeed like everyone else because they liked the same films, the same books and because they danced

to the same tunes as other members of their generation.⁶ Others adopted their parents' values and traditions, to varying degrees. For example, David's father was 'dead set' against the New Zealand world of rugby and drinking. David adopted his father's values as his own, although it meant that he did not enjoy the later years at secondary school and years at university where such activities were very much the way of life. 'It seemed stupid to do the things that the others did - like going to the pub and drinking yourself rotten. I thought, that's not very sensible. I'm going to feel bloody awful. So I never went through that phase'. Also, as discussed in the last chapter, some refugee adolescents continued to pursue the intellectual and musical interests esteemed in the refugee world, in spite of the strong pressures from New Zealand peers to adopt different values and interests.

That some of the people in this study were ambivalent about the 'new tradition' and did not feel part of New Zealand teenage culture, can to some extent be attributed to the fact that a number of younger refugees and the children of refugees had been deprived of their youth. Forced by circumstances to grow up too quickly, the usual concerns and activities of their New Zealand peers did not greatly appeal to them. They struck Jenny, for example, as rather insignificant.

They went to their churches and Bible classes and to dances. I went occasionally to some Jewish dances [dances organized by the Jewish community], but if possible I avoided them or missed out on them. Boy friends, girl friends, break-ups - all seemed rather trivial. The fact that the European war situation was very immediate for us made a difference to many things. I felt that I was a lot more mature than the other girls [Jewish or non-Jewish girls who did not have a refugee background] and that I had experienced a lot more of human tragedy, even at second-hand. I felt that they had, in many cases, such safe, sheltered, cosy lives.

Having my aunt living with us and seeing what the war had done to her, the stories that we heard, the things that we knew about (the death of uncles and aunts in the concentration camps), the different

⁶The protagonist in Bernard Mathias, *The Caretakers*, London 1988, Penguin edition, translated by Freeman G. Henry, page 166, expresses these thoughts which also aptly describe those of a group of interviewees in this study.

people that we mixed with, all those things gave me, I felt, a lot of extra maturity. I thought it made me a deeper, less trivial, more sensitive person as a teenager.

The other girls would spend hours deciding whether a blue cardigan would be better than a pink one or moaning about the fact that they had to baby-sit for a younger brother or sister instead of being able to do something that they would rather do. Sometimes this would be quite irksome when things were much more difficult for me at home. I often had to stay home to look after a mentally unstable aunt and it wasn't fun in a way baby-sitting for a younger sibling could be. It was frightening.

I had to handle situations that normally you wouldn't expect a teenager to handle. But I compartmentalized this. There was that side to me, but a lot of the time I chose to keep it separate or not to let it show. There were times when it suited me to be trivial - to keep my thoughts and my conversation at the same level as the other girls.

Finding common ground with New Zealand teenagers was also difficult for Robert, who was fourteen when he arrived in New Zealand. In many ways, his experiences were similar to those of first generation refugees.

For a couple of years I really grieved for the friends I had left behind. I felt very lonely and very alienated in my first few years in New Zealand. At the age of fourteen, I was dabbling in philosophy and all sorts of things like that which had no meaning for my New Zealand contemporaries. I had had a very eventful life up to the age of fourteen and I was trying to grapple with the meaning of life.

Nobody that Robert encountered at his school was interested in serious reading, or if they were, they were certainly not interested in talking about books. In any case, the books that had 'mattered' to Robert in Hungary were totally unknown in New Zealand. The hardest

adjustment he faced was the necessity to accept that with emigration 'whole chunks of your life had become totally meaningless'.⁷

It was the same with music. He could not talk to anybody about, for example, gypsy music - 'yet hearing gypsy music brings back a whole world, but it is a world I couldn't share with anybody'. When he tried socializing with New Zealand teenagers, the difficulties were enormous.

I kept saying the wrong things. People didn't know what I was talking about. When I took girls out, really I had nothing to say to them. I would go to parties and I had no conversation because the things that meant something to me meant absolutely nothing to the people there.

Unlike others in the study who remembered their adolescent years as a time when they were 'desperate' to conform, being different was not an issue for Robert, who accepted that he was unable to 'fit in' no matter how hard he tried.

George's adolescence was also a lonely time. His experience of social 'failure' was similar to Robert's but was accentuated by his perception of belonging nowhere which stemmed from his part-Jewish background. Relationships with girls were difficult.

I looked European and girls weren't attracted to me. They went for the rugby league type: crew-cuts, ectomorph facial features, thick-as-two-planks type of look. I definitely didn't look like the typical New Zealander and I also behaved differently.

George also recalled that his uncertainty about the 'rules' of social intercourse was a problem. He remained isolated from New Zealand contemporaries.

I didn't have the things to talk about. I learned (eventually) what the things were that (other people) talked about, but it didn't come naturally. And, if anything, when I picked on a subject, I tended to over-react, to over-boast. I didn't develop any decent social skills until

⁷Robert is referring here to Gertie Gilbert's comments in *Beaglehole, A Small Price to Pay*, page 48. His own experience of intellectual isolation was very similar to that described by Gertie Gilbert, who was sixteen when she arrived in New Zealand.

later in life, but I don't know whether to put this down to my refugee background or not. I think coming from a mixed background where I felt strange in both communities at a religious and cultural level and was unable to form ties or to feel I belonged in either camp [was in part responsible].

Renate too spoke of a strong sense of being on the 'outer' of teenage life. This derived in part from her awareness that social life for her classmates revolved round church-based activities such as Bible class parties, which she did not attend. A number of the interviewees also mentioned that exclusion from the social life of their peers arising out of their own non-affiliation to one of the Christian denominations was an obvious difference between themselves and other New Zealand teenagers.

What of Jewishness at adolescence? For some in the study, their teenage years coincided with their first personal encounter with anti-Semitism. Katherine was rebuffed by a boyfriend when he found out that she was Jewish.

A friend told me: 'He has found out that you are Jewish and doesn't want to take you out any more'. I felt as though I had been kicked in the stomach. It was a physical pain. I was shocked, hurt and very frightened. My father's expectation that another Hitler could at any time appear and influence New Zealanders seemed very real.

Katherine's reaction to that particular incident was defiance. She began wearing the biggest *Magen David* she could find.

For other children, it was at adolescence that feelings of shame and the desire to disguise their Jewishness were most acute. The extreme manifestation of this was the feeling that looking Jewish was ugly. 'I wanted to look blonde, have a nose that went up at the end and have blue eyes', recalled one interviewee. However, those who wished to change their appearance were not necessarily aware then that it was their Jewish appearance that they wanted to alter. They were conscious more of a desire to look like everybody else, rather than a wish not to look Jewish.

At around the age of eleven or twelve, when all her friends were going to their Christian Sunday schools, Julia became interested in becoming baptised and confirmed. This was a combination of an urge toward spirituality, the desire for conformity and the

wish to be part of a community. But not long afterwards the episode ended because she found it was the wrong community. It was not religious beliefs that she was searching for but connections to a group whom she could regard as her people and a sense of belonging.

The strains and stresses at adolescence for many of the people in the study were acute. Relationships with parents and with peers were sometimes seriously affected. In particular, the accounts of interviewees reveal the need for belonging, the tensions arising out of ambivalence about their refugee/immigrant/Jewish and New Zealand identities, and the attempts made to come to terms with mixed feelings, confusion and uncertainty about the values operating in different worlds.

Not Knowing the Rules

As previously referred to, interviewees' difficulties in social relationships derived in part from their not knowing how to behave appropriately in different situations and not being able to turn to parents for guidance - because they knew even less than their children about the culture and customs of New Zealand society. Inadvertently transgressing social norms, however minor, that everyone else knew about except them, was a traumatic experience for some. Eva recalled that while staying with their New Zealand sponsors,⁸ the family got up in the morning, leaving their beds unmade.

It was only a long time afterwards that we realized what a terrible thing that was to do. Since then I have had an absolute obsession about making my own bed. I would never go to a hotel or a motel and leave my bed unmade. I make my bed no matter where I am and I am sure it dates back to the feeling of shame I felt when I realized that we should have made our beds.

Lucie remembered many instances of adverse reactions from people because evidently she had done the 'wrong' thing in a social situation. But the problem for her was never knowing what it was exactly that she had done wrong: 'There are things that other

⁸Some refugees were sponsored by an individual or an organization. Sponsors guaranteed the initial support of the newcomers.

people so take for granted that they never think to tell you. So you never find out what it is that you do not know. In so many ways, I am sure, one has caused offence because one did not know and one still does not know'.

Lucie attributed some of her difficulties in social relationships, as did George, to her mixed background: 'one didn't have a single cultural background to retreat to. You had two which meant that in a sense you had neither'. For Lucie, a sense that there was 'a brick wall between herself and other people' began in her childhood and became accentuated at adolescence. It was a wall she battled against for years because she thought 'it could be done; that the wall could be broken down'. She used to believe that 'it was just a question of not knowing the right level to strike with this group or that'. However, these difficulties, the sense of being 'in the wrong', of persistently 'putting her foot in it' and the feeling that yet again she had said or done something that was inappropriate or offensive, persisted.

Annette and her brother Peter, children of a mixed marriage too, also spoke of confusion over how to behave. They both formed a strong impression that other people had certain ways of socializing - for example with neighbours, in pubs, at weddings - that they did not know about. Eventually, they learned to copy the customs of New Zealanders, but the perception that their behaviour was just shallow imitation rather than the 'real Kiwi way' persisted. Annette and Peter's difficulty, as of others from a similar background, was to find ways of connecting appropriately with the world outside the family.

Renate's childhood was marked by all the things, little and small, that neither she nor her family knew about or understood but which is familiar to and taken for granted by New Zealand children:

The other kids had bank books and on a certain day each week, the children brought 3d or whatever to bank. And we (my sister and I) didn't have bank books and we kept going home and explaining, but Mum didn't know what they were, so we never had them. And I really wanted a bank book!

There were other things like that which our parents didn't understand and how could they? You could buy your lunch at school. Monday was the day for that. If you took the right money to school, you could have fish and chips or a pie. The teachers took the order in

the morning and at lunchtime someone came with the lunches in a box. I didn't understand for a long time where those hot lunches came from and how you could get them. One day I went home and said I really wanted to have fish and chips like everybody else. 'No problem', said Mum. '*Opa* [grandfather] will bring them'. And *Opa* brought me chips that Mum made herself and he, poor man, waited for me at the school gate with them.

But it was terrible because they were not right. Yet, how could I say they were not right? My parents could not understand why they were not right and neither could I. I didn't know how it [the system of getting lunches] worked. I had described it to Mum exactly - the chips wrapped in paper and so on. It was really sad, for I knew that there was something quite bad about *Opa* having to come down to school with the chips and then they weren't right anyhow. It took years before I worked out why the chips weren't right.

Not knowing how systems worked, how the rules operated persisted into Renate's teenage years. She remained ignorant about many aspects of New Zealand life longer than other children, and attributes this to being a child of refugees, of outsiders. 'I would go home with something I didn't know and I didn't have anyone at home who knew what it meant, or what it was. At the time I felt I was the only person who had this [predicament]'. The overwhelming feeling was one of 'not being quite "in" on how life operated'.

In a review of Anita Brookner's novel *Latecomers*, Chris Else provides an explanation of the book's title which is pertinent to this discussion. He writes that the two former refugee protagonists, Hartmann and Fibich 'are latecomers, like people who miss the beginning of the movie and have to work doubly hard to catch up, understand and assimilate themselves into the meanings which other people take so much for granted'.⁹ This is an apt observation about the consequences of dislocation. It also accurately describes the experience of alienation of a number of people in this study who struggled, during their childhood and adolescence, to understand and integrate the nuances of the culture and by no means always succeeded in doing so.

⁹*Evening Post*, 17 December 1988, page 29.

What, if anything, is distinctive about the problems and concerns of the people in this study at adolescence? The fear of peer rejection, for example, 'of being outside, shunned and cold-shouldered', is a strong fear of many teenagers whatever their background.¹⁰ A number of the other issues so far discussed in this chapter - identity problems, alienation and generational conflicts - are also often associated with adolescence generally. What, in fact, were the 'extra dimensions' of refugee adolescence referred to earlier by Lucie?

As a result of gaps in the material, it is difficult to do more than speculate about possible answers to this question. Probably, feelings of alienation, identity problems and the need to conform to the peer group were stronger among refugee adolescents than among New Zealanders because of the formers' previous experiences of uprooting and struggles to find acceptance. It is possible that refugee parents were more inclined to be protective or over-protective because of their uncertainty about what was appropriate in the new society. Perhaps parents who were refugees were more inclined than New Zealand parents to 'clamp down' on teenagers because their authority had been undermined by migration and by language barriers and because they were generally under greater stress as a result of their earlier traumatic experiences. It is likely too that the relationship between refugee parents and their teenaged children was made more difficult by the lack of an extended family to assist and to provide support.

The most important 'extra dimension' of refugee adolescence, however, is probably related to family tensions caused by the second generation's rapid assimilation to the New Zealand world. Although first generation refugees wanted their children to assimilate and belong in New Zealand, the costs of assimilation in terms of family relationships were sometimes heavy. At best, there could be considerable misunderstanding between parents and teenagers; at worst, a widening gap and severe estrangement between first generation refugees and their teenaged offspring.

¹⁰Jack Shallcrass's (1968) study of the fears, hopes and values of New Zealand sixth formers revealed the power of the need to conform to the peer group at mid adolescence. This study formed part of a student survey about attitudes towards the future referred to in H. Ornauer, H. Wiberg, A. Sicinski, J. Galtung eds., *Images of the World in the Year 2000: A Comparative Ten Nation Study*, New York 1976, pages 186-216.

Connecting

For some of the interviewees, the Jewish youth group *Habonim* provided the solution to their difficulties: conflict with their parents, their need for some kind of cultural/ethnic identification, their desire for an antidote to ambivalence, shame or insecurity associated with Jewishness, and their wish for a social life outside the Christian framework of Bible class dances and church socials attended by their peers. Attending *Habonim* eased, to some extent, the tension between different worlds, because those who went to *Habonim* could at the same time regard themselves as good Jews and as good New Zealanders.

Habonim, which means 'the builders' in Hebrew, was (and is) a Zionist group for Jewish young people. Its New Zealand origins date back to 1946.¹¹ *Habonim*'s two aims at that time were, in fact, conflicting ones. The first was to provide Jewish education for young people who would continue to live in New Zealand and the second was to prepare young people for *Aliyah* (settlement in Israel or literally 'going up to the land').

The aims of *Habonim* were set out in its constitution in 1948 and did not change substantially throughout the 1950s and 1960s.¹² Most importantly, the purpose of the youth group was (and is) to try to counter the assimilative forces of New Zealand society on Jewish young people. The main challenge regarding Jewish youth, in the eyes of the established Jewish community, was 'arousing an active interest to participate in particularly Jewish activity' and 'attracting Jewish youth to a Jewish group in competition with many other outside activities'.¹³

A varied program was organized by *Habonim* leaders, who were mainly teenagers themselves, to attract young people. Most important were the annual summer camps held in different parts of the country. Reports of the activities at these camps featured regularly in the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*. The highlight of a camp in the mid 1960s was a visit to the Maori community at Mourea near Rotorua. After the greetings, the dinner and the songs and dances

¹¹*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, September 1946, contains a report of *Habonim*'s beginning.

¹²'The Aims and Ideals in New Zealand *Habonim*', *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 20 September 1965, page 13.

¹³*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 19 March 1962, page 11.

the two groups mingled freely and informally, talking, singing and dancing till the early hours of the morning. After sleeping the night in the *whare*, the *chaverim* [colleagues] departed with new insight and understanding of the Maori people and its ancient culture. It is to be hoped that this friendly interchange between the two groups, each striving to maintain its own heritage, will be the first of many.¹⁴

An interesting characteristic of *Habonim* camps was that they were for boys and girls and were almost entirely run by the young people themselves, with only a token amount of adult supervision. An unusual amount of contact between boys and girls (in comparison with what was customary for New Zealand teenagers at that time) was certainly a feature of these camps.¹⁵ Why the permissiveness? It may be that the Continental European background of the parents of the adolescents attending the camps contributed to a different attitude. The parents (perhaps unlike many New Zealand parents at that time) were more prepared to accept that their male and female children could socialize with each other without sexually 'misbehaving'. Lucie's earlier comment about the separation of the sexes being more accentuated in New Zealand than in Czechoslovakia is relevant here.

Additionally, a number of the interviewees attributed their parents' liberal attitudes to the expectation by both parents and children that the prime focus of *Habonim* was to provide a Jewish education. This expectation was, apparently, accompanied by the assumption that the adolescents would be self-disciplined, mature and possess values different from their non-Jewish peers. However, the connection between a Jewish education, and self-discipline and maturity in sexual behaviour is by no means clear to the writer. The subject warrants further investigation.

For the people in this study who attended *Habonim* in their teenage years, the experience was significant in a number of ways. Perhaps most important was in fostering a pride in being Jewish. Walter attributed to the influence of the Jewish peer group he met in *Habonim* a strengthening of his Jewish consciousness. 'It was very much a turning

¹⁴'Horas and Hakas', *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 18 January 1964, page 5. There are two further reports of such visits.

¹⁵There were other sexually mixed camps in the forties, fifties and sixties but they were run by adults for children. More investigation is needed in this area.

point in my personal identity. I overcame the shame, fears, hiding, disguising of my Jewishness which is how I remember my childhood years'.

The annual *Habonim* summer camp became the 'focal point' of Walter's year. Others interviewed also spoke with immense enthusiasm of this event and of *Habonim* generally. For Anthony, *Habonim* was one of the 'real joys' of his childhood.

I loved it. I really did. I made a lot of very good friends, a number of them with a similar background to mine. They were my role models. When I was boarding at College, I would go on Sundays to the Jewish social club [where *Habonim* meetings were held]. There would be discussion groups where we would earnestly talk of *Aliyah* and sing songs of Zion. I would wear my blue shirt [the uniform] and learn the skills of self-defence.

The opportunity, at *Habonim*, to make friends with whom there was common ground and who included members of the opposite sex, was stressed by most of the interviewees. The appeal of *Habonim* to the more intellectual children is evident too. Michael, who remembers *Habonim* as having been the 'centre' of his life, found 'ideas that were exciting' there.

Habonim also provided the chance to be independent (of family) and to live an outdoor life over the summer. For Ernie, the youth group meant a combination of all these things:

Habonim was a liberation. It meant a wonderful opportunity to make friends, develop leadership skills, the opportunity to lead an outdoor life, to see different parts of New Zealand, and the chance to learn about my national and religious origins.

These comments, especially the view of *Habonim* as an experience of liberation and an outdoor life, need to be regarded in the light of characteristics of refugee families discussed in earlier chapters.

Habonim did not appeal to everyone. John went along only once. 'That was enough for me. I had enough'. John found the open display of national/ religious/ethnic consciousness embarrassing. 'I got a prickly sensation behind the eyes when I saw them

singing and dancing in a circle. I understand now what they were trying to do and the pride they took in the new state, but I couldn't relate to that then'.

George had a similar reaction.

'I went along to *Habonim* quite often. We used to do Israeli dancing outside the Jewish club where it could be observed by some of my classmates who belonged to the youth club [Christian] next door. Again I was being identified with an alien group. I couldn't run away and hide and I couldn't express the fact that I was embarrassed by being Jewish and different, but at the same time I couldn't enjoy the dances. If I had felt entirely at home being Jewish, it would not have been embarrassing.

George's sense of being at home in neither world, the Jewish or the non-Jewish, made his situation more problematic. He went to *Habonim* at his mother's bidding, after being forbidden to attend Scouts. But he did not go to *Habonim* merely to please his mother. He does recall that as an adolescent, he was searching for an identity - which was possibly a Jewish one - but could not entirely overcome his ambivalence about Judaism. George recalled also wishing to play cricket, but giving this up because the time when the game was played conflicted with a Jewish religious class he also wanted to attend. He finally avoided the conflict by participating in neither.

About half of the interviewees did not go to *Habonim*. Among this group were the children of refugees who were either Christians or did not identify at all with Judaism or with any religion. Others had parents who did have some kind of Jewish identification but did not want their children to attend *Habonim* because to do so would give Jewishness too much emphasis in their lives. Some of these children found a social life of sorts in the church-affiliated groups to which their classmates belonged. A few chose to belong to no organized group, others had this option forced on them by their parents' ambivalence about or opposition to their joining either a Jewish group or a Christian one. As discussed earlier, for these interviewees, social isolation made for a lonely adolescence.

What was adolescence like for refugee children and children of refugees? Although *Habonim* provided a solution for some interviewees, adolescence was clearly a time of tension between different worlds for many of the people in this study. There were various

ways of reacting to this. One possibility was to oppose the family to some extent. Mary's teenage rebellion was to remain a practising Catholic; Julia's was to turn to Judaism. Another option was to compartmentalize the different worlds, while another was to opt out of the conflict. This was the choice George made on the occasion when he decided neither to play cricket nor to attend a class in Jewish religion.

The other matter that sometimes came to a head at adolescence was the second generation's difficulties with the unwritten and unarticulated conventions of everyday life. A number of interviewees spoke of their uncertainties about how to behave in and connect with the world outside the family.

The feeling of alienation which such uncertainty occasioned may be linked to the perception of belonging nowhere and of being without roots, which also struck some people particularly strongly at adolescence. This too is probably closely associated with the effects of emigration and of the consequent dislocation. Renate's sense of 'not being in on how life operated' was shared by a number of interviewees. The accounts of those in the study who for one reason or another did not attend or did not fit into the Jewish youth group convey the impression of teenagers adrift between different worlds.

Berghahn came to similar conclusions in her study. In her view, the main difference between first and second generation emigrants (emigrants who were children when they migrated) was that the latter's lives:

had been disrupted at a particularly sensitive stage of their development, namely when they were still struggling with the problem of growing up and forming an identity. The older generation were at an advantage in this respect: they were forced to leave after their formative years; that is, after they had built a solid psychological, cultural and social base.

Berghahn writes of a degree of emotional security provided for the first generation by contacts with other refugees from Germany, which helped to create an *Ersatz* (replacement) of some sort for the lost home.

In contrast, the younger ones lacked their parents' attachment to German culture. What is more, they had left Germany at an age at which circles of friends and acquaintances were not yet firmly

established. They had to start from scratch building up friendship networks in Britain. Not surprisingly, quite a few among the respondents said they had difficulties establishing close relationships with other people or to make friends in general. They found it difficult to fit in anywhere.¹⁶

In part, it was the failure to form close ties at adolescence which led some young people to look to a future outside New Zealand. George, for example, from his teenage years onwards, planned to leave New Zealand 'to become part of a wider cosmopolitan world'. As a teenager, Lisa too already knew that she would probably be leaving New Zealand and that she would not be coming back. While for some who planned to leave, the attraction was a wider, more cosmopolitan, Continental European world outside New Zealand, for the former *Habonimniks*, going on *Aliyah* to Israel became the main goal in life. The decisions made about their lives and the views they formed as adults about their religious and national identities are the subject of the final chapter.

There is considerable continuity between the issues explored in earlier chapters and those examined in this one. It is evident that the pressures and urges to conform, generational conflicts, the effects of dislocation and the costs of assimilation were particularly strong during the teenage years. As in previous chapters, two general points need stressing. First, the diversity of recollections is striking. For example, the experiences of those interviewees who attended *Habonim* were very different from those who had little or no contact with other Jewish young people. Conflict, rebellion, alienation, isolation and insecurity were by no means constant or general. Such behaviour and states of mind were an aspect of the refugee adolescent experience, but were not the whole story. Second, the adaptability and resilience of refugee adolescents and their families requires emphasis. Although at adolescence the gap widened - between first and second generation refugees and between the Jewish-refugee and New Zealand worlds - conflicts were sometimes resolved and accommodations and compromises arrived at.

¹⁶Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, pages 133-134.

CHAPTER 6

LANGUAGE: TO RENOUNCE OR TO REMEMBER

Philosopher and literary critic George Steiner, writes in *Language and Silence* of 'the eruption of barbarism in modern Europe', the mass murder of the Jews and the destruction under Nazism and Stalinism of the 'particular genius of Central European humanism'. Not only did those events shape his own life, but they also had a profound effect on the German language.

... the German language was not innocent of the horrors of Nazism. It is not merely that a Hitler, a Goebbels, and a Himmler happened to speak German. Nazism found in the language precisely what it needed to give voice to its savagery. Hitler heard inside his native tongue the latent hysteria, the confusion, the quality of hypnotic trance ... He sensed in German another music than that of Goethe, Heine and Mann; a rasping cadence, half nebulous jargon, half obscenity. And instead of turning away in nauseated disbelief, the German people gave massive echo to the man's bellowing. It bellowed back out of a million throats and smashed down boots ... A language in which one can write a *Horst Wessel Lied* is ready to give hell a native tongue. (How should the word *spritzen* recover a sane meaning after having signified to millions the 'spurting' of Jewish blood from knife points?)

And that is what happened under the *Reich*. Not silence or evasion, but an immense outpouring of precise, serviceable words. It was one of the peculiar horrors of the Nazi era that all that happened was recorded, catalogued, chronicled, set down; that words were committed to saying things no human mouth should ever have said and no paper made by man should ever have been inscribed with. It is nauseating and nearly unbearable to recall what was done and spoken, but one must. In the Gestapo cellars, stenographers took down carefully the noises of fear and agony wrenched, burned or beaten out of the human voice. The tortures and experiments carried out on live

human beings at Belsen and Matthaussen were exactly recorded. The regulations governing the number of blows to be meted out on the flogging blocks at Dachau were set down in writing. When Polish rabbis were compelled to shovel out open latrines with their hands and mouths, there were German officers there to record the fact, to photograph it and to label the photographs. When the S.S. elite guards separated mothers from children at the entrance to the death camps, they did not proceed in silence. They proclaimed the imminent horrors in loud jeers: '*Heida, heida, juchheisassa, Scheissjuden in den Schornstein!*' ... The unspeakable being said, over and over, for twelve years. The unthinkable being written down, indexed, filed for reference ... A language being used to run hell, getting the habits of hell into its syntax ... Gradually, words lost their original meaning and acquired nightmarish definitions. *Jude, Pole, Russe* came to mean two-legged lice, putrid vermin which good Aryans must squash, as a party manual said, 'like roaches on a dirty wall'. 'Final Solution', *endgultige Losung*, came to signify the death of six million human beings in gas ovens.¹

George Steiner goes on to elaborate further on the 'infection' and the 'pollution' of the German language with 'bestialities' and with 'falsehoods'. His comments have been presented here in some detail by way of background to the discussion which follows - a discussion which is not confined to language but ranges sufficiently widely to include some of the connections between language, culture and identity. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the languages used in refugee families, on 'forgetting' German and other first languages, on why this happened, and on learning English.

¹George Steiner, 'The Hollow Miracle', *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman*, New York 1967, pages 99-100.

Attitudes

Like Steiner, many first generation refugees in this study were unable to reconcile the breakdown in civilized behaviour and the abuse of language under the Nazi epoch with the best in German culture, a culture many had identified with completely. The language of Hitler was also the language of a beloved literature. The language which had been 'used to run hell' was also their own mother tongue. A partial or a total rejection of things German (and to a lesser extent also of Czech, Hungarian and Polish culture because these nations had approved and cooperated in the Nazi persecution of Jews) implied the renunciation of their own former identities. The ambivalent and complicated attitudes to the past in general and to German language and culture in particular, determined, to some extent, how the refugee families settled in the new country used language.

Anthony, like many others in this study, grew up speaking and writing English. German was not the language of the household, in part because his mother was English, but also because his father was reluctant to teach Anthony German and was probably also too busy to do so. Anthony:

The German language remained the language of the books in the hall and in the front room, and of the family history, locked up. It was something remote and something denied and became a symbol of a particularly nasty set of people and a particularly nasty set of memories.

It is not particularly surprising that a household with only one refugee parent who was 'trying to put the past behind him' should become English speaking. Eva's family situation was quite different, yet the same language shift took place because attitudes to German language and culture were similar. Eva:

When we [mother, brother and I] first arrived, we spoke German because that was the only language I knew properly. But within two or three months we stopped speaking German at home. We had New Zealand boarders and this meant that at dinner we had to speak English and on the street we couldn't speak German because it was the enemy

language. So we stopped speaking German very, very quickly in New Zealand and we have never spoken German amongst ourselves since.

In a minority of refugee families, attitudes were different. Marei recalled summer holidays at Raumati (on the Kapiti Coast near Wellington) during which she with her mother and brother read aloud together the plays of Lessing and Schiller. Her mother would not deny her love of German literature and wished to pass it on to her children.

In the household of Paul Oestreicher,² who was born in Meiningen, Germany in 1931, and emigrated to New Zealand with his parents in 1939 at the age of seven, German culture was also not renounced.

What marked out my parents from most German-Jewish refugees in New Zealand was their refusal to deny their roots in German culture. They refused to be anti-German because of what the Nazis had done. My father's attitude was that we are all sinners: 'God knows what I might have been if I hadn't been a Jew'. So I was brought up in a household which held the view that Nazism is evil, but all countries are capable of evil. Germans are no worse than others. I was never brought up in an anti-German framework. German culture was very much part of our home. I never spoke anything but German to my parents. They insisted on this, partly for my sake so I wouldn't forget the language, but they also wanted to keep it up for their own sake. They felt happier talking German. My parents conformed to the point of not talking German in public. I was taught as a child, 'when we go out, we speak English because people will find it offensive if we don't'. But I felt like a German child during those war and post-war years.

It is interesting to note that both Paul Oestreicher and Marei were brought up in families that had renounced the Jewish religion. It is possible that this had some bearing on their attitudes, making it more possible and necessary to separate abhorrence for the *Reich* from German culture generally.

²Interviewed in Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 61.

Some parents continued to speak German, Polish, Czech or Hungarian to each other, but spoke English to the children. Other households, despite the inadequacies of the parents' English, became entirely English speaking in a relatively short time. A number of reasons, additional to the attitudes that the first generation had about German, Czech, Hungarian and Polish language and culture, account for this. In wartime, German or indeed any foreign language which might be mistaken for German, could not be spoken in public without arousing suspicion or hostility.³ Furthermore, linguistic diversity continued to be unacceptable in the largely monocultural New Zealand of the late 1940s and 1950s. Foreigners of whatever background 'yabbering away' publicly in their own languages, were likely to encounter, if not outright antagonism, at least embarrassing curiosity. A child of Yugoslav immigrants, for example, recollected her father being spat on in Wellington streets during the 1940s for speaking his own language.⁴ Refugees spoke broken English in public places and those who could not speak English at all soon decided that remaining silent was their safest option.

Refugees were aware of strong pressures from the community - from their sponsors, from employers, from government officials and from New Zealand Jews - to familiarize themselves with English. Furthermore, no encouragement was given, for example by the schools, to maintain first languages in refugee families. As one refugee who later regretted that her children learned so little German commented: 'My husband and I spoke German to each other, but the children never picked it up really; the times in which we lived were completely against it'.

The parents' own wishes, in fact, were often in accord with the assimilationist pressures around them. Many wanted to integrate as quickly as possible themselves; even more, they wanted their children to become New Zealanders rapidly. Relinquishing or never facilitating the acquisition of German or the other languages seemed a small price to pay at the time to achieve these objectives. Annette considered that her father's very strong desire to assimilate determined the choice of English as the family language. Annette's New Zealand mother was able to speak German, but her parents spoke that language to each other mainly when they did not wish their children to understand the conversation.

³Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 58.

⁴Miranda Jakich, 'The Yugoslav Language in New Zealand', Walter Hirsh ed., *Living Languages: Bilingualism and Community Languages in New Zealand*, Auckland 1987, page 123.

As well as making no effort to help their children retain or acquire the parents' original language, many parents even went to some lengths to prevent children learning it. Katherine:

My father didn't want us to speak anything but English in the house. Our parents only spoke other languages - Czech or German - when they did not want us to understand. They spoke to each other in German until they realized we were picking it up and then they started speaking Czech.

Some parents were unsure about the best course of action regarding language. They worried that if they spoke English at home, their children would pick up their own wrong accent. They believed children should hear English spoken by English people and German by Germans. Others disagreed. 'Better the worst English than the best German', was a not uncommon attitude.

There were also parents who believed that discouraging first languages was the best means of ensuring that their children learned proper English and did well at school. This, in fact, was the 'policy' at the Deckston Home for Jewish children. It seems that the children at the home were strongly discouraged by their guardians and other staff from speaking Yiddish in order to ensure the adequacy of their English and their scholastic success.⁵

Such attitudes were in line with the educational thinking of the day regarding how children of a different culture could best be helped to fit into school and their new country as quickly as possible. The views of educationalists about the schooling of immigrant children in Australia during those years were clearly stated in 1951 in an article by a headmaster of a primary school at a migrant holding centre. The headmaster wrote:

The child must learn to think in English from the start ... English is to be the basis of all instruction. It is the avenue to mutual understanding. It is the key to the success of the whole immigration project ... English

⁵Interview with Ida Payes, 25 August 1988; tape and transcript in possession of the writer. Yiddish was the usual first language of Polish Jews.

must be spoken to the pupils and by them, all day and everyday, in every activity, in school and out of it.⁶

It is likely that similar views were held in New Zealand. They certainly were in relation to Maori education.⁷ In early 1930, T.B. Strong, the Director of Education, 'could see no reason for the Maori retaining the use of his own language, believing that the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss on the Maori'.⁸ This commonly held view was accompanied by the belief that the 'road to success for Maori children was to master the English language'.⁹

Although from 1930, there was some attempt to modify this policy of assimilation by introducing selected aspects of Maori culture to the school curriculum, the actual effects on Maori language of this change of policy are unclear and are a matter of debate by writers on this subject.¹⁰ It is evident that even if the changes in policy were not entirely 'rhetorical in nature',¹¹ Maori nonetheless remained in a position of utter inferiority in relation to English.

This was certainly the place of other non-English languages in schools and in society generally. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, school teachers tended to advise foreign parents that speaking English at home to their children was in their children's best interest.¹²

Often, first generation refugees themselves saw no purpose in their children retaining another language. To some extent, this was related to the fact that for many of them exchanging their former languages for English meant a widening of horizons and the opportunity to overcome limitations by becoming part of a larger cultural group. As one of the Czech refugees interviewed in *A Small Price to Pay* observed: 'To me, coming to New

⁶Jean I. Martin, 'Child Migrant Education in the Fifties and Sixties' in *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses, 1947-77*, Studies in Society 2, Sydney 1978, pages 85-6.

⁷J. M. Barrington, T. H. Beaglehole, *Maori Schools in a Changing Society: An Historical Review*, Wellington 1974, Foreword and pages 204-205.

⁸*ibid.*, page 205.

⁹John C. Moorfield, 'Implications for Schools of Research Findings in Bilingual Education', Hirsh ed., *Living Languages*, page 32.

¹⁰John Barrington, 'The Maori Schools: Fresh Perspectives', Roger Openshaw, David McKenzie eds., *Reinterpreting the Educational Past: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*, Educational Research Series no. 67, Wellington 1987, pages 168-180.

¹¹*ibid.*, page 169.

¹²Jakich, 'The Yugoslav Language in New Zealand', Hirsh ed., *Living Languages*, page 119. Regarding the similar situation in Australia, see Martin, 'Child Migrant Education in the Fifties and Sixties', *The Migrant Presence*, page 96.

Zealand was getting rid of the ghetto mentality of just belonging to a small group ... Think of the number of people who speak English! ... The cultural variety of these people is enormous in comparison with those who speak Czech'.¹³ Jane remembered her father saying that there was no point in learning Czech because it was only spoken in Czechoslovakia. When a Czech refugee who held different views attempted to teach that language to the children of other refugees in the 1940s, the conversation class she established at the Wellington Czech Club continued for only a few weeks. 'One by one people dropped out. The parents had no interest in it. Everybody wanted their children to get on and become New Zealanders'.¹⁴

The dilemmas and complexities influencing the choices made by first generation refugees regarding what was to be and what was not to be the family language or languages are evident. Attitudes to the past, attitudes to linguistic diversity among New Zealanders encountered by refugees and the hopes and aspirations of refugees for their children growing up in the new country all influenced the decisions they made. These decisions ranged from (in a few cases) encouraging the acquisition or maintenance of German and other languages to discouraging this entirely. Many parents had mixed feelings about these matters. The consequences of their uncertainty, their ambivalence and in some cases indifference are discussed in the following section.

'Forgetting' First Languages

What did the children do regarding language? What happened at school? How did they respond to the diverse attitudes of their parents? Very often children did not learn German, Czech, Hungarian or Polish at home and if they did, these languages were rapidly

¹³Interview with Gertie Gilbert, 30 October 1984, tape and transcript in possession of the writer.

¹⁴Lotte Steiner, in Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, page 60. The writer has not discovered any classes teaching Hungarian to children and is not aware of any German classes available for primary school age children until the late 1970s. German was available in some secondary schools in the 1930s. This stopped during the war, but German teaching in some secondary schools was resumed in the post-war period. The lack of children's language classes to facilitate the retention of Central and Eastern European languages contrasts with the efforts of some other groups in this direction - for example, the Indian community set up Gujarati language classes for children in Auckland and Wellington in the 1950s (Shanti Patel, 'Gujarati and Hindi in New Zealand', Hirsh ed., *Living Languages*, pages 151-153).

abandoned by them when they started school. Increasingly, they began to speak to each other and to their parents only in English.¹⁵ This seemed to happen whatever the wishes of the parents, although it probably happened more quickly in those families where a decision to change to English was made.¹⁶ What happened in Tom's family was fairly typical. His parents spoke German to each other and to Tom, but Tom refused to speak German because he did not want to be different from anyone else. In a home in which obedience was expected in all other areas of daily living, Tom's parents did not insist that Tom and his brother speak in German. Being ambivalent, they were prepared to go along with the abandonment of the language by the next generation.

The urge to be like their peers was the main motive driving the behaviour of many of the children. After six months in New Zealand, Lucie, who was eight when she arrived, refused to speak German. Although her parents were upset, she was not deterred: 'I was determined to completely forget German'. The reason for this was her wish to speak English without the accent that those who continued to speak German at home seemed to her to retain. In fact, Lucie did not entirely succeed in forgetting her first language. Although, she speaks only a little German, her comprehension of the language, oral and written, was retained.

Sonny, aged ten, after a short stay in England, already adopted English on the boat on the way to New Zealand. Her parents, not wanting their daughter to forget German entirely, encouraged her to keep a diary (in German) on the boat. Sonny disliked this activity very much and threw the diary away.¹⁷ Subsequently, in New Zealand, she wanted to be a 'New Zealand child' as far as possible. 'My parents continued to speak German to us, but my sister and I spoke English'.

The New Zealand-born show a similar pattern. Michael grew up speaking English and German with equal fluency. It was not until he went to school that he realized just how 'odd' this was and that German was not the 'flavour of the month'. Then he dropped the German rapidly and developed a broad New Zealand accent.

¹⁵Studies of some other immigrant groups in New Zealand show a similar pattern. See for example, Alberdina P. M. Kroef, 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants in New Zealand', University of Auckland M.A. thesis in Linguistics, February 1977; Jakich, 'The Yugoslav Language in New Zealand', Hirsh ed., *Living Languages*, pages 117-124.

¹⁶This is suggested in Kroef's thesis, 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants in New Zealand', page 70.

¹⁷In New Zealand, at her parents' suggestion, she began another diary - also in German. However, she 'doubts its honesty' as an accurate record of her early impressions.

Helen too spoke German fluently as a pre-school child. When she went to school, she abandoned it quickly because 'no one else at school spoke a foreign language'. Helen's parents continued to speak to each other and to Helen in German, but once she had started school, despite her parents' protests (they did not want her to forget German), she answered them in English. 'I wanted to become as the other children here'.

Walter recalled that his knowledge of German was 'a dim, dark, secret in his childhood years'. Lisa has similar memories:

When I was growing up, I never wanted to speak German. I never wanted to let any kids hear me speak German. I was trying to be a New Zealander. We [refugee children] all spoke English. We were showing in that way that we were different from our parents.

George too wanted to distance himself from his parents. He could remember how it felt to walk down the street 'with parents yabbering away in Polish'. He would cross the street to avoid being with them. While George's mother's first language was Yiddish, his parents spoke Polish to each other and George had also learned some German during his years at the displaced persons' camp in Germany. In New Zealand, he 'succeeded' in quickly 'forgetting' all three languages. 'My mother encouraged me to speak Polish, but I refused. I didn't want to have anything to do with it'.

There were exceptions to the pattern of rapid abandonment of first languages. By the late fifties and sixties, knowing another language at school, though still rather strange and lacking a stamp of validity, was no longer something to be ashamed of. The younger respondents in this study were more likely to consider being multi-lingual almost a positive attribute. The distance from the war years and a changing New Zealand environment brought about by successive waves of immigrants contributed to the new attitudes.

The presence of grandparents in a small number of the families seemed also to make a difference to first language retention and/or acquisition.¹⁸ In Renate's household, for example, four grandparents ensured that the dominant family language continued to be German. The children were encouraged to speak both English and German and continued to do so throughout their school years and as adults.

¹⁸Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, page 240, notes that some of her respondents commented that their grandmothers did not always accept their role as cultural transmitters and sometimes resented being considered the 'German granny'.

Jenny, until the age of four, was brought up knowing not a word of Hungarian. Her parents spoke and read to the children only in English. But when Jenny's grandmother, aunt and cousin arrived from Hungary in 1948, the household was suddenly transformed into a Hungarian-speaking one.¹⁹ Jenny began to learn Hungarian.

I asked every time there was a word I did not understand and I kept asking. I was very keen to learn because I didn't want to be excluded from the conversations. My mother sat for hours with her mother asking questions and I was determined to listen and to understand. I became very fond of my grandmother and wanted to speak to her. She was very patient and very tolerant and when I struggled to say something, she would help me. And she wasn't busy. She spent a lot of time just sitting - either mending or folding washing. She was a very loving, safe, warm and constantly available haven to me as a growing child.

By contrast, Jenny's younger sister did not want to learn Hungarian or the German which Jenny also picked up by listening, as she frequently did, to her grandmother talking to her German-speaking visitors.

My sister did not want to be involved. She wanted her world²⁰ to remain uncomplicated, I suppose. She made no effort. When Hungarian was being spoken she just shut off. It did not concern her. If anyone wanted to communicate with her, they would talk to her in English. So she could only speak to my grandmother with hugs and kisses.

It is difficult to generalize about language shift and language maintenance. There was much variation between families and even among siblings in the same family. However, more often than not, first languages were either never adequately learned or

¹⁹The transformation was not just a linguistic one. Other aspects of domestic life also became more Hungarian.

²⁰The 'world' referred to in the quotation implies something broader than the linguistic world.

were not retained by the younger refugee children or by the New Zealand-born children of refugees. Why was this the case? The linguistic behaviour of first and second generation refugees has to be considered in the light of patterns and processes discussed in earlier chapters - the lingering effects of persecution and rejection by their former countries and the pressures and urges to fit into the new country.

Did interviewees, as adults, regret the loss of the languages in question? Many did not, a few did. Anthony spoke of the fact that his motivation to learn German has remained very limited in spite of his interest in his father's family's history, an interest that he cannot pursue without a better knowledge of German than he possesses. Annette, on the other hand, considers it 'a pity' that her parents did not 'insist' that she speak German. Jane, to some extent, also shares these feelings. She spoke of her visit to Czechoslovakia as an adult which was a 'hollow experience' in part because of her ignorance of the language.

The loss of first languages in childhood was not necessarily permanent. For Jenny, learning Hungarian at the age of four was a relatively easy matter; a small number of others struggled when much older to relearn from books the languages they regretted never having learned properly or having forgotten so easily as children.

The interest shown, for example in the German language, by a few of the second generation once past childhood, does not reflect a deep interest in or commitment to German culture or German ethnicity, such as one may find among other minorities - Samoans, for example.²¹ However, given the ambivalence of their parents, as well as themselves, about German culture, this is not at all surprising.

Learning English

Very few of the people in this study could recall problems with English. This is not at all unexpected in the New Zealand-born and in those who arrived as young children. Marei, for example, who was three when she arrived, cannot remember learning to speak English. 'I just remember doing what everyone else did'. Other children who were under the age of around eight, the writer included, have similar recollections. The comments of a seven

²¹There is a considerable literature dealing with this subject. See for example, M. T. Kerslake, D. Kerslake, *'Fa'a Samoa'*, Hirsh ed., *Living Languages*, pages 143-149.

year old in a study of Dutch immigrants sums up the experience of learning English for many young children: 'I know I couldn't speak a word of English when we came but somehow I don't remember ever not being able to speak it'.²²

Only Lisa, who was eighteen months old when she arrived in New Zealand and Tom, who was two and a half, mentioned experiencing difficulties. Lisa: 'I didn't go to any kind of pre-school, nor had I socialized with many New Zealand children, so when I started school I didn't have a good command of English'. Lisa remembered 'minding' that her English was 'not that good'. She felt uncomfortable and shy about expressing herself. Because of these difficulties, she ended up a year behind her peers at primary school and attributed this to the fact that, at this stage, her parents spoke very little English. Tom too felt at a disadvantage because of his English, which remained his worst subject throughout his schooldays. In his view, these difficulties may be attributed to the fact that German was spoken at his home and his parents could not help him with English.

Unlike today, schools in the thirties, forties and fifties made few provisions for children for whom English was a second language. According to commentator Graham Kennedy in a paper giving a historical view of English teaching in New Zealand over one hundred and fifty years, 'benign neglect characterizes the teaching of English to minorities. Children were usually left to learn by the "sink or swim", also termed "submersion" method'.²³ Sometimes, teachers regarded children of non-English speaking origin as one type of slow learner and dealt with them accordingly.²⁴ Certainly, schools were often without the resources that were required to cater for the needs of immigrants who did not speak English.²⁵ The experiences of children who learned English in such circumstances has been little documented in New Zealand. Kennedy included a personal recollection in his paper. This was an anecdote concerning the likely 'agony' of a Dutch boy, wearing

²² Kroef, 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants in New Zealand', page 115.

²³ Graham Kennedy, 'English Language Teaching in New Zealand: Where we have been and where we might be going', paper delivered at the First National Conference on Community Languages and English as a Second Language, 31 August-3 September 1988, Wellington College of Education.

²⁴ This was the writer's experience at Te Aro School, Wellington, in the late 1950s. At this school, Hungarian refugee children, the deaf and others received 'remedial' instruction together.

²⁵ This was certainly the case in Australia, despite the large numbers of migrant children; see Martin, 'Child Migrant Education in the Fifties and Sixties', *The Migrant Presence*, pages 90-91. More research is needed on the situation in New Zealand.

lace-up boots and strange clothes 'mobbed' by Kennedy and others during a lunch break at school. 'All the boy could say when mobbed by us kids was, "I no speak English"'.²⁶

The older the children, the more effort required to learn English. This effort has sometimes been under-estimated, the assumption being that children learn new languages so easily. Judith Kerr in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, describes vividly both the exertion required and the triumph when the language is finally mastered. Anna's brother, Max, determined and desperate to look and speak like everyone else at school, returns home each day 'white and tired' from his struggles. For Anna, when one day she finds herself saying a sentence perfectly in the new language:

It was like a miracle. She could not believe that it would last. It was as though she had suddenly found that she could fly, and she expected each moment to crash to the ground again. With her heart beating faster than usual she went into the classroom - but her new talent persisted.²⁷

The first year at school was generally the hardest. Jonathon remembers that at the age of seven, when he could speak and understand a little English but could not read or write it at all, he was 'in terror' because the teacher announced that the children had to write about a fairy tale or a story, such as *Alice in Wonderland*.

This was something every New Zealand child would know about but about which I knew nothing. I didn't have the faintest idea of what was involved or what the teacher was talking about. It weighed on me that sooner or later I was going to have to sit down and write this story when I knew jolly well I couldn't.

Mary, aged eleven when she arrived, had to really 'work' at learning English. She too sometimes came up against all those things that most New Zealand children knew about but she did not. The teacher in the incident which follows was apparently quite oblivious of possible cultural differences between Mary and the other students. Mary:

²⁶Kennedy, 'English Language Teaching in New Zealand'.

²⁷Kerr, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, page 154.

I can remember, for instance, coming across the word, bush-lawyer. The teacher cast her eye around and said: 'Who can tell me the meaning of bush-lawyer?' And she picked on me. I said, 'I don't know'. I had absolutely no idea what bush-lawyer was. She said, 'Have a guess; think about what a lawyer does'. Well, of course, a number of people in my family having been lawyers, in my scale of values, a lawyer was high. A lawyer was a person who spoke out and who was intelligent and so on. So, I thought that perhaps a bush-lawyer was a bird, a bird that made intelligent noises. It did not occur to me to think of the grasping side of lawyers. That was a sort of embarrassing moment in the classroom. I didn't like being shown up. There may have been others in the class who did not know the answer, but I felt that (my lack of knowledge) was due to my background and that there was a deficiency there.²⁸

Children with inadequate English and knowledge of the culture sometimes found that this was equated with scholastic backwardness. Such children were placed in streams inappropriate to their abilities. Children who were put in classes below their age level experienced social difficulties. A nine year old in the Dutch study, who was put back two classes, felt that the consequence of having had to learn a new language was that he was never able to 'catch up'.²⁹

Although the New Zealand education system did little to assist children with non-English speaking backgrounds to learn English, it is clear that most of the people in this study were not seriously affected or for long disadvantaged by this lack of provision. The ease with which even older children acquired a good command of English in a relatively short time is striking. Doubtless, the attitudes in refugee families regarding scholastic achievement in general and the value of the English language in particular assisted them in this process.

²⁸A bush-lawyer is a clinging plant which grows in the New Zealand bush.

²⁹Kroef, 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants', page 114.

Barriers

The fact that children rapidly adopted English as their primary, and sometimes only language, while adults took much longer to acquire adequate English and some never did so, had consequences for family relationships.

The parents' authority, already undermined by the upheavals of emigration, was probably further impaired by language problems. An article in a refugee newspaper in England discussed the question of whether one should speak German or English with one's children, and warned against talking in broken English marred by a foreign accent:

Imagine you explain something to a child, or want to admonish it, and suddenly you get stuck and start looking for the right word or you make a mistake which your child might correct. How easily can linguistic uncertainty be mistaken for factual uncertainty!³⁰

While some children helped their parents by acting as their interpreters and mediators in the English world, others arrogantly corrected their parents' bad English or made fun of them either openly or behind their backs. All such situations, the negative as well as the positive, undermined the status of the parents and upset the usual relationship between children and parents.

Lucie gave some examples. In her view, the children's role of helping with their parents' English was sometimes 'pushed too far'.

On the quite spurious argument that 'you learn this at school', parents would pressure one not only to write letters but also negotiate directly with tradesmen and government officials, which was highly embarrassing, and of course very difficult because children do not have the technical background necessary for this. One felt very exposed.

According to Lucie, making fun of their parents' poor English provided children with a means of 'getting their own back' on parents who made such excessive demands. Their

³⁰Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, pages 134-135.

mockery demonstrated to their parents that they did not always 'know best', even in the very ordinary things, and therefore had no right to be so heavy-handed.

The relationship between parents and children was further eroded when children refused to speak German, Czech, Hungarian or Polish or to admit that they understood these languages. When children were quite obviously ashamed of their parents' broken English or foreign accent, the gap widened even more.

However, a more lasting and therefore more serious problem, was the lack of a shared terminology for deeper and more personal discussions. As one refugee parent observed: 'I found this a definite hurdle; the fact that I had to bring up children in a different language and that I couldn't express myself the way that I would have wanted to. It was a barrier'.

Some of the difficulties of bringing up children in a foreign language were explored in the study (already referred to several times) of the use of language by a group of Dutch immigrants in New Zealand.³¹ Respondents in the study noted that conversations between parents and children about sex, religion or any topics of a more personal and emotional kind, faced more than usual obstacles because of the lack of a truly common language.

Judith Kerr, in *A Small Person Far Away*, highlights the predicament of a father and daughter without a shared language.

During his last years, when her German had faded and Papa's English remained inadequate, they had made a joke of addressing each other formally in French. 'Qu'en pensez-vous, mon pere?' ... The different languages and the different countries ...

Without a language in common, many types of communication, for example about concepts and ideas, were impossible or very limited. Tom recalled the difficulties of discussing books with his father:

My father had quite a library of German literature. Very occasionally, when he was an old man, he read German poetry to me. He enjoyed doing this. I enjoyed the fact that he was enjoying reading to me more

³¹ Kroef, 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants in New Zealand', pages 71, 127.

than the actual poetry itself. My knowledge of German wasn't really enough to get the best out of it. [Yet] I think he liked to read it to himself and to share it with me a little bit.

It has been widely observed that as the first generation ages, the English that the old people struggled to acquire over the years sometimes declines. The knowledge of their mother tongue has also faded in the fifty years since emigration. Yet, the first generation revert more and more to these first languages. So, in the end, the roles are reversed. No longer do parents talk to children in poor or inadequate English; it is now the children's turn, with their infantile German vocabulary, their broken, outdated Czech, or their odd, ungrammatical Hungarian to try to talk to the parents. Fortunately, while speaking in the half-forgotten languages is difficult for the second generation, comprehension is usually easier. The barriers are not insurmountable. The obliteration of the languages of the past is not total. A kind of conversation between former refugees and their children is still possible.

The lack of a common first language sometimes resulted in complex barriers between parents and children. On the basis of this study, however, it is not possible to arrive at firm conclusions about these. The subject warrants further investigation. Parents and children were affected in different and complicated ways which changed over time, and it is likely that the consequences in terms of personal relationships have been enduring.

An examination of the use of language in refugee families reveals that English rapidly became dominant in most of them. Why did this happen? Why have many of the second generation as adults only an inadequate command of the Central and Eastern European languages of the first generation? These developments are not difficult to explain. The successful efforts made by first generation refugees to acquire adequate English, the ease with which second generation refugees learned English, the assimilationist attitudes prevailing in New Zealand, the fact that the refugees from Hitler who settled in New Zealand were a small group without a common language, the legacy of the past and the resulting ambivalence about, in particular, German language and culture, and, above all, the adaptability of the refugees and the desire of both parents and children to belong in New Zealand: all these factors had a part to play.

The problems of intergenerational communication discussed in this chapter are not the only lasting consequences of the predominance of English in refugee families and of the

failure of second generation refugees to retain or acquire the Central and Eastern European languages in question. In order to fit into the New Zealand world, many of the people in this study renounced the diverse and rich linguistic world of their early years. They were successfully assimilated into the English speaking world. But, as discussed in earlier chapters, there was a price to pay for assimilation. Robert, who has in fact retained fluency in his first language partly because of his age at arrival in New Zealand, spoke of this, observing that he becomes 'a different person' when he speaks Hungarian. He becomes more vivacious, blunter and assumes a number of other characteristics that he does not possess when he speaks English. The real loss of not knowing Hungarian or Czech or German or Polish is the impossibility without a fluent knowledge of the language concerned of becoming this 'different person'. In other words, because language is the core component of culture, the loss goes beyond the linguistic and encompasses many aspects of personal and ethnic identity.

Being in a sense robbed³² of their languages and of their ethnic identity is one of the long-term effects on the second generation of the dislocation associated with a refugee background and with the Holocaust. This legacy is the subject of the last two chapters.

³²Some children of refugees have described the loss of their language in these terms, for example, Anne Ranasinghe in an address at the reopening of a synagogue in Essen, Germany, that was burnt down by the Nazis in November 1938, reported in the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, June 1989, page 1.

CHAPTER 7

FACING THE PAST

A conversation which takes place in Anita Brookner's *Latecomers* between the protagonists Ribich and Hartmann demonstrates two very different attitudes to the traumatic experiences of the past. The men have been friends and business associates over the fifty years since

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

... the war. What you look for the long-term? The thing is, you don't want to be a latecomer.

the Nazi epoch, and reflecting on the influences of such a history on their life in New Zealand - is the subject of this chapter.

Berghahn in *German-Jewish Refugees in England* noted among nearly all her younger respondents (the British-born children of refugees) a 'detachment' from the history of Nazi Germany. Tending to set the Nazi period into the general context of world history, the Holocaust was regarded by them as 'a thing of the past, as distant history which does not mean much', or as events which happened as a result of 'special circumstances'.² Such attitudes, though they existed, were uncommon in this study. Perhaps the detachment that Berghahn observed was, at least in some cases, a self-protective device adopted by her respondents, not true detachment. Certainly, the past, whether overtly or covertly, appears very much part of the lives of most of those interviewed in this study. It is probably very much part of the lives of the post-war generation of Jewish origin wherever they have settled, and especially so of those who were children during the Nazi period.

What emerges from this and most related studies (see the Introduction for discussion of current research on children of Holocaust survivors) is a picture of people deeply preoccupied with what happened in 'the war' (as the events of the Holocaust are often euphemistically called), beneath the surface of their busy lives. Very often, the cultural transmission between the generations has been negligible and assimilation has been considerable (this is discussed in the next chapter), but invariably strong attitudes concerning 'the war' have been passed on. The common element in the experience of the people in this study is that directly or indirectly they are survivors of the Nazis' attempt to exterminate Jews. Sometimes, the more indirect and distant the experience, the greater is the urge to probe its meaning and implications. George Steiner, who was eleven when he reached the safety of the United States, wrote in the essay in which he describes himself by its title 'A Kind of Survivor':

Due to my father's foresight (he had shown it when leaving Vienna in 1924), I came to America in January 1940, during the phony war. We left France, where I was born and brought up, in safety. So I happened not to be there when the names were called out. I did not stand in the public square with the other children, those I had grown up

²Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, pages 238-239.

with. Or see my father and mother disappear when the trains were torn open. But in another sense I am a survivor, and not intact. If I am often out of touch with my own generation, if that which haunts me and controls my habits of feeling strikes many of those I should be intimate and working with in my present world as remotely sinister and artificial, it is because the black mystery of what happened in Europe is to me indivisible from my own identity. Precisely because I was not there, because an accident of good fortune struck my name from the roll.³

How was this 'black mystery' dealt with by the families in which the children in this study grew up? What were their attitudes to Germany and the Germans? Which of the parents' other attitudes to the past influenced their children? Were parents and children able to talk to each other about the past? The enormous diversity of experiences and responses to these questions needs stressing. Attitudes also changed over time. It usually became easier to face the past the further it receded, but in some families past and present were always inextricably linked.

Talking about the Past

In many families, the difficulties in talking about the past were enormous. Sometimes the survivors, whether adults or children, did not talk about their experiences because they perceived, sometimes rightly and sometimes mistakenly, that other people did not really want to listen.⁴ Mary, when she arrived in New Zealand to join her grandparents, had the impression that she was encouraged to talk as little as possible about her wartime experiences. She is uncertain now whether she would have liked to have the opportunity to talk more then and whether the enforced partial silence was a good thing or a bad one.

My grandparents asked questions to a limited extent, but they didn't want to probe. They didn't want to reawaken too many memories. I

³Steiner, 'A kind of Survivor', in *Language and Silence*, page 140.

⁴Some first generation interviewees in Berghahn's study held this view; Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, page 235.

think we were encouraged to push it all under. They deliberately tried to spare us going over events of the war. Possibly some of it was lost through not being told and perhaps we in our minds glossed over the most unpleasant parts of our experiences. My brother can remember different things from what I remember. In later years, we have tried to compare notes. He can remember some things, I can remember others. But we have had far too much else to do than to go over those early days again. Even when we went back to Hungary it didn't happen.

In Hungary, Mary visited one of the women, Eva, with whom she was closely associated during the war after her mother's deportation but 'when I talked to Eva, she said very little. We talked very little about those very old times. They were taken for granted between us'.

While this kind of understanding was possible between people who had been through similar experiences, there was a strong need 'to bear witness' to the others, to those who had not themselves experienced the Nazi atrocities at first hand. However, some doubted that the people they came in contact with were interested, while others believed it unlikely that those who were not there would ever understand.

The barriers to talking freely about the past, as well as the compulsion to do so, were especially powerful between the generations. Many parents were very reticent about the painful experiences they or relatives had undergone.⁵ Some were primarily protecting themselves by remaining silent. They wanted to forget the past and resented the young who were interested, 'stirring up' what was in their view best forgotten.

The reticence of other adults was motivated in part by reasons similar to those of Mary's grandparents. To some extent, remaining silent arose out of a wish to protect children. Hannah: 'Relatives perished, but we children, didn't know. They told us so little about what was happening. It was a huge trauma for them which they hid from us. They protected us all and took it on themselves'.

Not only were many parents silent about the past, but children often did not ask questions. They interpreted their parents' silence, sometimes correctly, sometimes incorrectly, as a wish to forget and to put the past behind them. Tom found that probing for details, for example about what had happened to certain relatives, caused his parents

⁵Parental reticence about the Holocaust is discussed by Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, pages 235-236. Some of the issues highlighted by her respondents are similar to the ones raised in this study.

grief. It was only from books and by talking to people other than his parents that Tom acquired the information he wanted:

The missing people in the family were not discussed when I was a child. When I asked about them they either said they didn't know or they would change the subject. I didn't push it. It was clearly an area that was taboo. My parents were also very reluctant to discuss what was happening in Europe. They certainly wouldn't discuss it when I was young and in later years it was very difficult, especially for my mother, to talk about such situations. The happier and lighter side of the past was talked about from time to time, but I could never ask questions such as, 'why did you leave it so late to leave Germany' or press them for details of what really happened to their families. There are still things which I would like to know about (but have no way now of finding out) because they are part of my past.

There was also very closed communication in Vivienne's family about such matters. Although she was aware that her grandparents had died in one of the concentration camps, she did not know until a few years ago that they had died in Auschwitz. Julia too knew only a few very basic facts. 'My mother was a liberal, for example about sex, unlike the mothers of my peers. The taboo subject for her was not sex, but Judaism and the Holocaust. She never talked about her experiences. One of the prices of that was that I never felt I had the right to ask'.⁶

Parents were not necessarily successfully protecting children by their reticence. Peter and Annette were aware of their father's past and present sufferings but without really understanding their cause. Annette: 'My father used to have the most appalling nightmares. I could never understand why. It was never talked about'. As a child, Peter

⁶The Canadian study by Morton Weinfeld and John Sigal, 'Knowledge of the Holocaust Among Adult Children of Survivors', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 18, 1, 1986, pages 67-76, discusses issues concerning communication with parents about the Holocaust and the degree of knowledge and information-seeking about the Holocaust by a random sample of Jewish adult offspring of Holocaust survivors and a control group. The authors arrive at no firm conclusions but note some differences between the behaviour and attitudes of the children of survivors and the controls. Given the small numbers in the New Zealand study, such comparisons between children of survivors and others was not possible.

slept on the other side of the wall from his father's room and can remember him talking and shouting in German in his sleep.

He didn't talk about it [his experiences in Dachau] very much. My grandmother used to talk a lot more about the Holocaust than he did. She had to leave her mother behind and her mother was killed. My grandmother used to keep pictures of war criminals after they had been hung. She had pictures of the Nuremberg trials from *Life* magazine. Father returned to Dachau on a recent trip and after that he spoke a lot more about his experiences there.

Anthony's father too tried to protect Anthony by remaining silent, but it was a strategy that failed.

Very little would have been needed to be said for me to recognize all the horrors. The reality was that I knew what had happened, about all the destruction and why his life was such a mess because of it. He wanted to put it behind him and he did his best, but there was always that cloud ... It was almost impossible to talk to Dad about it, but I would read avidly books about Hitler and the war and Dad was always very unhappy about this. I can't blame him. I guess he didn't want me to have the feeling I still feel. One knew implicitly about the horrors and this [knowledge] has shaped my life.

Anthony's father shared only fragments, just the odd anecdote, about the past. On one occasion when Anthony tried to press him for more information, he did not like it. Anthony felt 'mean'. It was clear to him that his questions were hurting his father. He did not try again.

David and Anne were discouraged from asking questions about their father's background and the troubles he went through. It was only in the very last years of his life that he opened up a little about the past. When David and Anne were young children, their father became ill and lost most of his hair. The illness was associated with receiving the news of his family killed in Europe, including the death of his mother in the gas chambers. Neither their father's illness nor its cause was discussed with the children. Anne recalled

that it only really came out when she and David were adults. David believes that 'it would have been better for a few things to come out into the open a lot earlier than they did. In some ways children are able to absorb things and cope with things better if the information is made available in a matter of fact kind of way'.

A number of interviewees attributed their parents' inability to communicate about the past to strong feelings of guilt and shame. Much has been written about survivor guilt. Certainly, in many cases it was guilt about the past which made thinking and talking about it so painful for both parents and children. Karen Gershon, who migrated as a child from Germany to England, has written many poems about the Holocaust. One of her poems, 'I Was not There' expresses the profound grief and guilt of the survivor.

The morning they set out from home
 I was not there to comfort them
 the dawn was innocent with snow
 in mockery - it is not true
 the dawn was neutral was immune
 their shadows threaded it too soon
 they were relieved that it had come
 I was not there to comfort them

One told me that my father spent
 a day in prison long ago
 he did not tell me that he went
 what difference does it make now
 when he set out when he came home
 I was not there to comfort him
 and now I have no means to know
 of what I was kept ignorant

Both my parents died in camps
 I was not there to comfort them
 I was not there they were alone
 my mind refuses to conceive
 the life the death they must have known

I must atone because I live
 I could not have saved them from death
 the ground is neutral underneath

Every child must leave its home
 time gathers life impartially
 I could have spared them nothing since
 I was too young - it is not true
 they might have lived to succour me
 and none shall say in my defence
 had I been there to comfort them
 it would have made no difference⁷

Jane and her father did not discuss the war years. The sole surviving member of her father's family, a great aunt who reached New Zealand in 1948, was the focus for some discussion about the war. She told amusing anecdotes about her experiences in the concentration camp.

Neither my father nor my great aunt talked [to me] about their experiences. My great aunt, who had lost her husband and all the rest of her family, felt that it was so important that she make the best of what she had in New Zealand. She didn't look backwards.

In Katherine's family, there were two conflicting attitudes to the past:

I was getting two messages during my growing up years - the 'always remember' message and the 'start from now' message. I can't remember anybody ever discussing this but I do remember people being very different in the way they approached things. If anybody ever asked my father where he came from (as they did because he had a very broad accent), he would say 'New Zealand'. As far as he was concerned, his life started again when he came to New Zealand. He

⁷Karen Gershon, *Selected Poems*, London 1966, page 11.

didn't want to talk about what had happened to him before the war. What I know about him I know from other people, not from him. He just didn't want to talk about it. Two of my aunts (who survived the war in Europe) were the total opposite. It was always: 'you must remember, you must never forget'.

As an adult, Katherine has tended to follow that injunction to 'always remember'. Before her mother's death, she began to explore aspects of the past with her mother by looking at old family papers together.

I didn't even know what the papers were about and I thought it terrible that the family's history could be lost. So we started to go through them. There were among the papers Red Cross letters⁸ from my mother's parents that I wanted to have translated. But she did not want this done. It was too painful for her even after all those years. These are the letters from her parents before they went into the camps. They are her last contact with them. I think she never got over her own sense of guilt that she had survived and they didn't. Towards the end of her life she talked about this. I suppose she felt she ought never to have left without them. I think she, like so many people, suffered from this enormous sense of needing an explanation for why she survived. My aunt had this totally clear. She survived so that she could always remember and remind people so that they too would never forget.

Katherine's parents are now both dead and some of the family history has died with them. Although the parents of a number of the interviewees were more prepared to talk about the past as the years passed and their children grew up, for a number of the people in

⁸Red Cross letters were the only means of communication with relatives in German-occupied Europe. These brief messages stopped when people were taken to concentration camps. Usually the last contact that refugees in New Zealand had with relatives in Europe was a Red Cross message.

this study death intervened before the right time for talking ever eventuated. Jane regrets that her father died before more of the past could be discussed.⁹

Cathy, born in New Zealand in 1946 to a New Zealand mother and a father who was a refugee from Austria, has similar regrets. She has no memories of her father ever talking about his background. Nor did Cathy ask him questions, in part because her own interest in such things came only after her father's death. He died at a relatively young age (fifty-six) when Cathy was only seventeen. The little that Cathy does know about her background has been pieced together from the small amount of information provided by an aunt, Lotte, who came to New Zealand in 1962 from Kenya (where she had immigrated before the war to escape Hitler). Cathy recalled that Lotte had a big suitcase under her bed, but Cathy and her sister and mother were never allowed to look inside it. When Lotte died in 1983, Cathy went through the suitcase and wished that Lotte had shared while she was still alive all the interesting photos and relics of the past that it contained. Why she had not done so has always puzzled Cathy. The pervasive impression conveyed by Cathy is of the sadness associated with having so few links to the past. What is left are remnants and fragments: the few words of a German song her father sang to her in the bath, odd pieces of furniture and ornaments her father had made and rat-chewed papers belonging to him (including his school reports from the age of six), written in a language Cathy cannot read and which she rescued from total destruction in the nick of time.

Helen's father was also generally very 'closed' about the past. However, Helen recalled one exceptional incident. One day while helping to clear out a kitchen cupboard, he accidentally hit his head. To Helen's astonishment, he started crying. Later he explained that he had once been hit on the head by the Nazis and tossed over a fence.

Like Jane and Cathy, Helen believes that one day she might have been able to talk to her father about the past. She too was prevented from doing so by his sudden death. As a child and teenager she was not particularly interested. She used to think: 'Here is our country. What does it matter about a place thousands of miles away?' Did her father not talk about his background, she wonders now, because he did not wish to do so or because he was aware of Helen's lack of interest?

⁹It is important to acknowledge that such regrets are not confined to children of the Holocaust. Perhaps the difference, in some cases, is in depth, degree or level of guilt.

Regarding the more horrific aspects of their parents' experiences, being told only a little suited some children. This was not because of detachment or lack of interest on their part but the wish to protect themselves from realities too unpleasant to face. Jonathon:

Some of the relatives certainly met their ends in concentration camps, one committed suicide and I suspect that when the Russians invaded East Prussia those who were still alive then probably had some bad experiences. I don't think my parents talked about it much in my hearing. I don't know much of the details. I didn't ask a great deal. I knew as much as I wanted to know.

However, it was exactly the details that others wanted, those crucial details which were so often missing from their parents' accounts. They recalled being told about their parents' narrow escape from death, but some how could not grasp, absorb and in the end remember what they had been told. The difficulty of absorbing such stories is in part to do with the incredible world of horror that is portrayed in them, but is also a reflection of the way parents tried to talk about the Holocaust to their children. What many parents tried to do was to talk in generalities, avoiding making explicit or individualizing the particularly gruesome details of their own experiences or those of their friends and relatives. But without knowing the specifics, without the birthdates, names, occupations, personalities and some detail about the deaths of these men, women and children, it was difficult for the second generation to conceive of them as real people who used to be part of their large, sprawling families.

Howard's father tried to speak to his children about the Holocaust:

He wanted us to fully appreciate the horrendous nature of it. But he wouldn't talk much about specific areas relating to him and his family. I know very little about his early years because it is not an area he has talked about a great deal. He wanted to talk in generalities. What I wanted was specifics about our family, not generalizations about the Holocaust. I felt I could go to the history books for that.

Howard, who was born in 1958, is the youngest person in this study. In part because of his age, but also because of his father's unwillingness to provide the details he was interested in, his view of the Holocaust was to a large extent a historical one.

We were aware of it as we were of any major piece of history of our time but we saw it in the sort of terms you do when you learn about it at school, very much as a New Zealand kid would see it.

Howard grew up thinking of himself as a New Zealander. When he read about Hitler's persecution of Jews, he did not make the connection between this historical event and his father's background or his own part-Jewish one. This attitude, which approximates the detachment of Berghahn's respondents, referred to earlier, was very difficult for his father to deal with.

My father couldn't quite grasp that we couldn't feel it to the same extent that he did. Over the years he has seemed to be very obsessed with the subject. His reading was and is almost all books that are to do with the Holocaust and that period. He has talked about a great guilt that he has felt all these years. He feels guilty because he survived so easily and so many others didn't.

Howard's father wanted his children to be as fascinated and as concerned about these events as he was himself. He wanted Howard to read the books that he was reading: 'but I had my own books that I wanted to read'. This conflict led, not surprisingly, to some family arguments. One occurred when Howard was about fifteen years old.

I remember there was a series on television called 'The Holocaust'.¹⁰ I saw some of it. It was graphic and balanced. My father was very excited to be able to watch this program - to fill in gaps, to immerse himself in this background of his and he wanted me to be there watching it and taking it in with him. On one occasion, I didn't want

¹⁰This was shown on New Zealand television in June 1979, *New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979.

to be there. I remember telling him that I felt a much greater tie with or sense of awareness of Maori culture because I grew up as a New Zealander side by side with Maori, who were the main minority race that I was aware of. I very rarely came into contact with Jewish children (or those with a refugee background like mine). My father was very upset when he heard this. There was a big block between me as a New Zealander and my father as a non-New Zealander. I think he wanted us to be good Kiwi kids just as he wanted to be a good Kiwi bloke but at the same time he wanted us to hold this great awareness of the Holocaust and its place in history. I can see now that it is possible to do both, but at the time it was very easy just to be a Kiwi kid.

Primo Levi (himself a survivor of Auschwitz) voiced in *The Drowned and the Saved* (his last book before his death in 1988) fears shared by many of the first generation refugees in this study (but not borne out by the comments of second generation interviewees) that the experiences of survivors of the Holocaust would become 'ever more extraneous as the years pass'.

For the young people of the 1950s and 1960s these were events connected with their fathers: they were spoken about in the family; memories of them still preserved the freshness of things seen. For the young people of the 1980s, they are matters associated with their grandfathers: distant, blurred, 'historical' ... For us to speak with the young becomes ever more difficult. We see it as a duty and, at the same time, as a risk: the risk of appearing anachronistic, of not being listened to.¹¹

Up till now the discussion has focused on the difficulties of communicating about loss, suffering, guilt. However, not all families found it equally hard. In part, this is because some people had more losses to face than others. In one family where the majority of close members had survived, there were no problems with talking about the past,

¹¹Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York 1986, pages 198-199.

though there were attempts to shield children from particularly horrifying books about Nazi war criminals.

Some families were able to look back with a degree of equanimity and without overtones of guilt. In one family, for example, the experience of emigration - 'the escape, the arrival, the miracle of it all' - was recounted often to the children, the stories accompanied by pictures in the photo album. At bed time, prayers were said for all the absent relatives.

John remembered being told stories of hiding and of escaping from the Gestapo. In one story, he, a child of three, was the hero because he saved his father's life. On various occasions in the late 1930s, John's father had to 'disappear' in order to avoid arrest by the Gestapo. On the occasion when John saved his father's life, the family were travelling by train and the Gestapo entered the carriage they were sitting in. His father hid behind the door and his mother laid John down on the seat. When the Gestapo looked into their compartment, they saw only a mother and a sleeping child and searched no further.

In other families, talking about the past was not an issue because the past was so closely and explicitly interwoven with the present. In Ernie's family, the anniversaries of relatives who had died were commemorated. Prayers were said and candles were lit in their memory. Miriam can remember a great deal of talking about concentration camps in her family. During the post-war years, letters would arrive bringing news of deaths. Later, a few relatives who had survived the camps joined the family in New Zealand.

Jenny's family was also reunited in the post-war period with relatives who had survived. Sometimes the presence of survivors in a household encouraged a greater degree of openness. Certainly, the past was talked about in the family often, though not excessively, Jenny believes: 'Mum talked about anything we asked. She was glad to talk. She got very upset and she cried. Sometimes that made us not ask because we didn't want to get her upset'.

There were also children who did feel that the past was talked about excessively in their families.¹² They would have preferred to read about these events instead of hearing about them first hand from their parents. The stories some children were told 'were too much to bear'. The worst ones were about the separation of parents and children. Hearing the details was excruciating but they did not know how to block out what they were being

¹²'Not a day went past for me when the war wasn't brought up', commented Gerald Friedlander, interviewed by Marcia Russell in 'Refugees' Children', *New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979, page 14.

told. A young man in one of the American studies of the children of survivors had this to say:

I couldn't cover my ears or turn away my face or even still the turmoil the words created in me. When my mother talked, her words came at me in wave after wave of pain and rage. It was as though her voice and face, driven by energies that did not belong to everyday were disembodied and filled all the air around me. I would have pushed them away with a huge physical thrust of my arms, to make a cool, quiet space for myself. But I couldn't. I sat immobile. Not until I was well into High School did I tell my mother that I couldn't listen any more, and, then, not seeing the pain I had suppressed, she accused me of not caring about her and left the room.¹³

Occasions when the burdens of the past were inflicted on the next generation in so extreme a fashion were rare among the refugee families in this study. Much more common were parents who were either reticent about the past or those who combined a degree of openness with silence about particularly horrific aspects of it. The behaviour of first generation refugees in this regard provides further example of the strength and resilience of refugee families highlighted in earlier chapters. Parents, scarred by the events of the past as they inevitably were to some extent, struggled, nonetheless, to create a secure world for their children and, above all, tried to shield them from learning too much of human depravity.

For some children, however, too great a silence was as much a burden as too much information. Most were aware, without a great deal needing to be said, that the past was overwhelmingly painful for their parents. Their responses to this pain ranged from apparent detachment to considerable involvement. Many children tended to be as protective of their parents as their parents were of them. They avoided asking questions about the Holocaust. A mutual avoidance of painful discussion had unfortunate consequences. In some families, the Holocaust experience became something to hide, as one would a shameful family secret.

¹³Mostysher, 'The Weight of the Past', Steinitz ed., *Living After the Holocaust*, page 5.

Legacies

In some families there was an extra closeness, which may or may not have been accompanied by relatively open communication about the past, but which was perhaps connected to a strong feeling of all being survivors together. Annette's recollection is of values in the family which reflected that merely being alive was something to be thankful for.

There was the feeling that there is nothing so terrible that can happen that there isn't a solution for it. After all dying is so much worse than anything else. I always felt very special as a child. I was the future. We children were precious and quite indulged.

While children as tangible evidence of one's survival were regarded as incredibly precious in most of the families, the value system that Annette believed operated in her family was by no means as general. Although it may have been expected that close encounters with suffering and death would have guaranteed for parents a clear sense of what was important in life and what was not, this did not necessarily happen. The young man in the American study, referred to earlier, observed that in his family the exact opposite occurred:

Appearances clogged our life space. My parents expended inordinate amounts of emotional energy on furniture, dinnerware, crystal, jewelry; on my and my sister's clothing, make-up, hair-styles, complexions, and weights - things that other people could see and measure them by.¹⁴

A sometimes excessive urge toward material security to compensate for the many losses suffered by refugees, referred to in earlier chapters, further illustrates that life and death experiences did not necessarily lead survivors to conduct the rest of their lives on a heroic plane different from other mortals.

¹⁴ibid., page 13.

The particular closeness in the family could also have a negative side, in the form of varying degrees of distrust and dislike of the world outside the family. Children were aware of such attitudes, whether or not they were made explicit. Not surprisingly, Germany and Germans were the most usual focus of bitterness, anger and suspicion. German goods were boycotted by refugees and other Jews for many years after the war. When individuals failed to observe this unwritten rule, there were private and public expressions of strong disapproval. For example, a letter in the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle* in 1954 ran:

Deep concern has been felt by members of the community because German goods are being bought in the shops by Jews and because many Jews are importing and selling German goods to the retailers. It is felt that Jews have no right to forget or forgive the atrocities that were perpetrated against them by the Germans and which resulted in six million brethren losing their lives. It is really deplorable that the practice of buying German goods needs to be brought to the attention of any right-thinking Jews.¹⁵

The following year, this transgression was brought even closer to home because it happened at the annual picnic of the Wellington Jewish social club. Another correspondent wrote:

I would like to use your journal to mention quietly a matter which is upsetting me today. I was yesterday with my family at the Jewish picnic. There my daughter has received a little toy which was given out at the picnic. My worry is that this clockwork toy is made in Germany. It says so on the container. Up till now I have been avoiding having German goods in my home. I do not like to take away from the child the toy, of course. I think it best, if Jewish people, but specially Jewish congregation bodies, do not patronize German

¹⁵*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, August 1954, page 19.

manufacturers unnecessarily. Also I myself avoid giving to Jewish couples, wedding presents from the same country.¹⁶

Katherine remembered that her parents were very definite about not having German products in the house. Nor would her father socialize with Germans. As a member of the New Zealand Football Association, it was his job to look after visiting soccer teams. When the German soccer team came to New Zealand, he refused to have a party for them at his house as he did for other visiting soccer teams. Katherine:

The day the team arrived, the officials came to the house to meet with my father. He met them at the door and put his hand out and said in German: 'How do you do. My name is Rose [not his real name]; I was born Rosenheim [not his real name]; I am a Jew'. He threw it in their faces! That was the first time I realized that my father felt threatened, threatened because they were Germans.

What was the impact on the children of such attitudes? Without a great deal needing to be said, some acquired strongly negative attitudes towards Germans. These attitudes have sometimes lasted well beyond childhood. Anthony even now finds it 'bloody hard to think about what the Germans did'. Eva has retained over the years the dislike of anything German that she brought with her to New Zealand, but can now be quite friendly towards individual Germans 'who are quite nice people sometimes'.

While, as has been mentioned, some of the second generation have tried to avoid knowing too much about the past (even documentaries and films can be too painful to watch), others as adults have reacted by immersing themselves in it. John's main response has been a strong urge to try to understand how the Holocaust could have happened.

A lot of my reading is about the 1930s and 1940s and World War Two. I am fascinated by the subject. I am perpetually rereading the same facts. When I buy new books, you can rely on the fact that there will be something in the latest bundle of books about that time.

¹⁶*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, February 1955, page 17.

Among the questions John grapples with concern the puzzle of his father not realizing sooner that the 'writing was on the wall'.

Of all the things that my father told me about those days, this is the one that haunts me the most. One of my father's customers at Ford's [where he worked] was a diplomat at the British Embassy, a fellow named, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes. As I remember the story, he knew my father was Jewish and he came to him one day in 1938 and said, 'Schlesinger, it is time to go. You have got to get out of here'. And my father said, 'why?' He often used to tell that story and I used to lie awake at night - because I had read the books, I knew the history - I simply could not understand how an intelligent, cultured, civilized human being could ask such a damned fool question.

There are a number of other questions which baffle the second generation. These concern resistance to the Nazis, rebellion and escape from their oppressors. As Primo Levi observed, the questions are 'formulated with ever increasing persistence, and with an ever less hidden accent of accusation'.¹⁷

Renate was aware of how utterly surprised her parents were by what happened in Germany. They, in fact, did see the way events were heading and left Germany in 1935. 'Even though they saw it coming, they couldn't properly believe it'. Renate believes too that they were never able to come to terms with the betrayal by their professional colleagues and others. It is this sense of utter betrayal by people among whom they felt they truly belonged which partly explains the attitude of mistrust held by many refugees, even in the relative security of New Zealand. These attitudes were communicated to their children either explicitly or implicitly. Not only could Germans, Austrians and other Continental Europeans (who may have been Nazi supporters) not be trusted, neither could New Zealanders. It was a mind-set which cautioned that: 'we were thrown out of our country before, be careful, it can happen again'. Such anxieties were fuelled by anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner attitudes encountered by refugees in New Zealand especially, but not only, during the war years.

¹⁷ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, page 150.

In an article in the *New Zealand Listener*, based on her interviews with six Holocaust survivors, journalist Helen Paske wrote that the people she had spoken to felt generally safe in New Zealand but some fears remained. Usually these fears were on behalf of the next generation. 'They desperately do not want their children to be different'.¹⁸ One of the survivors interviewed admitted to feeling permanently anxious about her children and revealed that this feeling 'shadows' her life.¹⁹

The anxieties of the first generation were sometimes translated into warnings for the second. John: 'What was conveyed was the idea that we Jews should try to be as invisible as possible when we are living in someone else's country. I was infected by this attitude too. I still am to some extent'.

Katherine was given this type of warning. At first, her father was opposed to her joining a Zionist youth group because this meant open identification as a Jew. But later, he was no longer opposed to her participation in the group and in fact became actively involved in support of Israel. The explanation for this change in attitude that he offered Katherine was: 'Israel must always exist. There must always be somewhere that Jewish people can go freely and belong, because anti-Semitism will always exist'. Evidently his purpose had not changed. What was driving him was the need to protect his daughter, whether by assimilation or by Zionism.

The message that Renate received from her father was also a warning. 'You have to trust people, but just be a bit careful; just watch it because you will always be a bit different. We always trusted everybody and in the end we couldn't trust anybody'.

Renate was influenced by, but could not entirely accept the advice her father gave her:

He and I eventually worked as doctors together. Most days we talked about the patients and other matters. We went to Medical Association meetings together. As we drove home he would say: 'Well, you see, these are the same people who wouldn't let me in [to become a member of the Medical Association during the war years]. And then they invited me to be President. No, thank you very much. You can't in

¹⁸Helen Paske, 'Life after Holocaust', *New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979, page 12.

¹⁹*ibid.*, page 15.

one lifetime say, no, we won't have you, and then twenty or thirty years later want me to be President'.

My father also taught me something which, I think, is quite wrong, which is why I don't do it. He told me: 'Don't speak out. Don't say what you think. If you are the first to speak out at meetings, you do not know if you are out of line with everybody else. Go with the flow'.

And he didn't speak out ever, although he was a very good speaker generally. At the point of speaking out, he always felt the distrust which warned: 'they might be quick enough to say again, "Jews out"'. That is really sad. It means that someone who is intelligent isn't questioning something that everyone agrees with. I've noticed that sometimes if you are the first to say: 'No, I don't see that this is right', ten others in the room will follow and say: 'No, I don't either'.

I am a New Zealand graduate and if I do not speak out here, in New Zealand, where am I going to speak out? So I do. And as I speak, particularly if the subject is controversial and I cannot tell if others will agree or not, sometimes I hear my father over my shoulder saying: 'Be careful'.

The attempts of first generation refugees to shield their offspring from exposure in the family to the lingering effects of the past were not entirely successful. The transmission of a particular world view was inevitable and the children's lives have to some extent been shaped by damaging knowledge. A degree of insecurity, a sense of anxiety, a perceived need for a certain amount of invisibility in 'someone else's country' were some of the lasting consequences of persecution and dislocation for the next generation.

The legacies of the past were various. Those considered in this section include the increased closeness, the excessive concern with material security and the mistrust of the outside world of some refugee families. However, the most significant legacy, perhaps, in terms of the themes explored in earlier chapters, is the way that memories of the Holocaust, whether talked about or not, sharpened the tension between the different worlds of second generation refugees. While burying the past helped some children to assimilate, as adults, a number of interviewees have attitudes to the Nazi past that are derived, to some extent,

from their assimilation. The efforts of John and others, for example, to try to understand the Holocaust, may be regarded as a way of overcoming the earlier burial and distancing from the past which were the consequences of assimilation.

Connecting Past and Present

Eva:

I have recently seen some letters which I wrote when I first came to New Zealand. I read those letters and they were just like reading the letters of a strange person. I could not identify with the writer of those letters at all. Firstly, this is because I wrote in German and I just do not identify with the German language any more. Secondly, the letters sound so strange. I just have no memory of being like the person who could write such letters. The letters read as though they were written by a stranger because there was no continuity between what I am now and what I was then. There must have been some sort of cut-off point which left me feeling that what I had been before was totally strange.

Eva was fourteen when she arrived in New Zealand. Most of the people in this study, whatever their age on arrival and including the New Zealand-born, remarked on a similar sense of discontinuity which war, migration and also assimilation had brought to their lives. Child refugees experienced severed roots, those born in the new country spoke of difficulty making connections between their own lives and the grim world of their parents' memories.

A major theme in Judith Kerr's trilogy about the experiences of the young refugee Anna, is the search for wholeness and continuity in disrupted lives. The book is filled with the tension between the half remembered and the half suppressed memories of Anna, struggling with her new life yet trying to connect with the 'small person she once was'. One day, she hears on the news that a part of the neighbourhood (the *Grunewald*) where she and her family used to live has been set on fire by bombing. Something 'stirs' in Anna:

The *Grunewald* was a wood near their old home. Long ago, when she and Max were small in the past which she never thought about, they had tobogganned there in the winter. Their sledges had made tracks in the snow and it had smelled of cold air and pine needles. In the summer they had played in the patchy light under the trees, their feet had sunk deep into the sand at the edge of the lake - and hadn't there once been a picnic ...? She couldn't remember.

But that was all before.

The *Grunewald* that was burnt was not the one she had played in. It was a place where Jewish children were not allowed, where Nazis clicked heels and saluted and probably hid behind trees ready to club people down. They had guns and fierce dogs and swastikas and if anyone got in their way they beat them up and set the dogs on them and sent them to concentration camps where they would be starved and tortured and killed.

But that is nothing to do with me now, thought Anna. I belong here in England.²⁰

Paradoxically, many of the people in this study were simultaneously aware of being bound by the past (as we have seen in earlier chapters and in earlier sections of this chapter) as well as feeling they were without tangible connections with it. Visiting Europe was one way of trying to connect with the past. What did those who embarked on such journeys expect to find? Karen Gershon writes:

I did not want to feel at home
 of what importance was the town
 my family were driven from
 how could I still have thought it mine
 I have four children why should I
 expend my love on stones and trees
 of what significance were these
 to have such power over me

²⁰Kerr, *The Other Way Round*, pages 247-248.

As stones and trees absorb the weather
 so these had stored my childhood days
 and from a million surfaces
 gave back my father and my mother
 my presence there was dialogue
 how could I have refused to answer
 when my own crippled childhood broke
 from streets and hillsides like a dancer²¹

Anita Brookner, in *Latecomers*, writes that 'a hunger for absent knowledge' had coloured Fibich's life. It was 'a longing, a yearning, not for those losses to be made good - that, he knew, could not come about - but to be assuaged by fact, by circumstantial detail, by a history, by a geography'.

He longed to know what his life had been before he could remember it. He longed to walk a foreign street and be recognized. He imagined it, the start of wonder on an elderly person's face. Is it you, Fibich's boy? You used to play with my children. That was what he longed for. That, and the suddenly restored familiarity of the foreign street, that cafe, that theatre, that park.²²

The experiences of those who went on return visits were very diverse. Mary:

We went back to Hungary in 1969 with four children and a baby. We were there for two weeks and stayed with one of the women, Eva, who had been with us in the war. My brother met us there too. I was surprised [by my reaction]. I went back to Hungary expecting to feel sentimental and had expected that what homesickness I had felt would develop into an 'ah, home!' feeling. But I didn't feel like that at all. It was just a strange place. This was possibly because of having a baby

²¹Gershon, 'The Town', *Selected Poems*, page 175.

²²Brookner, *Latecomers*, page 147.

who was four months old whose needs came above sightseeing or anything else. But we did go sightseeing and we visited places like the house we used to live in. It looked very war-torn and grey and drab, not much different from what I remembered. I felt nothing, no emotion. Possibly there was not much emotion left from looking after the baby and the other children and meeting Eva and the others. But even apart from that, the place didn't evoke the emotion that I expected. I just felt Hungary was a foreign country in which I just happened to understand the language.

For the New Zealand-born, and especially for those without familiarity with the languages and cultures of the countries where their parents used to live, such visits were even more bereft of any sense of homecoming. This is one of the costs of assimilation. Miriam had a good time in Prague and in the Tatra Mountains 'which are superb', but concluded that for her Czechoslovakia was a foreign country. She found 'no connection with it whatsoever. There are no relatives in Czechoslovakia; there is nothing'.

Jane has no relatives left in Czechoslovakia either. She found the trip to Czechoslovakia a disturbing experience.

Because of my father's descriptions and photos, I was familiar with the environment - with bridges and squares - but it was strange not to be able to communicate, while having a name which is distinctly Czech. I do really regret that I wasn't able to visit Czechoslovakia with my father. That would have been very important to establish some linkage with these places.

By contrast, Annette and Peter who visited Austria in the company of their father, found more meaning in the journey. Annette: 'Being there in the flesh, you could see how much the culture had been implanted into your family'. Both Annette and Peter found it interesting to see the places where their father and grandparents had grown up, but both also felt a sense of unease in being among Austrians.

Others, particularly those who visited Germany, spoke of a similar discomfort. It is significant that even those in the study who seemed most distanced from the past and most assimilated to New Zealand spoke of becoming aware of strong feelings about what

the Nazis had done in the course of their travels in Europe or when encountering visiting Germans in New Zealand. This is in contrast with the majority of the respondents in Berghahn's study, especially the younger ones, who, while feeling a 'little odd' towards Germany, enjoyed travelling through that country, or living there temporarily, 'unperturbed by the ghosts of the past'.²³ Lisa was relieved to leave Germany and Austria after her visit in 1962. 'It felt oppressive in those countries. It seemed as though the air was fresher in Denmark'. Hannah, while visiting Germany, could not help wondering what the people she encountered had been doing during the war. 'I did meet one woman who apologized for everything all the time, which was dreadful, quite dreadful'.

When Sonny first went back to Germany in 1972, arriving in mid-winter in Munich, she thought, 'my God, what am I doing here?' She wanted to turn right round and come back.

I felt very uneasy. I spoke German well enough. No one said, 'Where do you come from?' I visited some of my sisters' contemporaries who were not Nazis and it was wonderful meeting them again. I went back to Karlsruhe (where we used to live). Our house was not there. It was bombed. I have got no relatives there - they died in the camps or were dispersed. [The survivors have not chosen to resume their life in Germany after the war and live in different parts of the world.]

On a subsequent trip, Sonny felt less uncomfortable. However, it is quite clear to her that she could not live in Germany again.

For some interviewees, the unease with being 'back', especially in Austria, was connected with an awareness that the wrongs that had been committed had not been righted and that many of the wrongdoers had gone unpunished. As George Steiner observed: 'On the court benches sit some of the judges who meted out Hitler's blood laws. On many professorial chairs sit scholars who were first promoted when their Jewish or socialist teachers had been done to death'.²⁴ Only in West Germany has there been some attempt to reinstate property confiscated from Jews and to pay adequate compensation. One man in

²³Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, page 237.

²⁴Steiner, 'The Hollow Miracle', in *Language and Silence*, page 108.

this study spoke ruefully of the experience of returning to the Austrian village from which his family was ousted to see the family farm with its 'sloping meadows going down to the Danube' now owned by someone else. And of course, for the other losses - for sufferings and for the dead and dispersed relatives - how can the survivors ever be compensated?

When Eva returned, involuntarily, to Germany, she did not 'let on' that she came from there or that she could speak German. 'I was driven through Germany by an uncle and I submitted to it because I didn't want to be difficult and say, "no, I'm not going to set foot in Germany"'. However, returning to Italy was a very different experience.

For the first time I let myself feel my attachment to Italy which must have been formed without my realizing it in those years between the ages of nine and thirteen when I lived there. I suppose they are very formative years and the fact that I had cut them off so completely on leaving Italy probably made them reappear in a much stronger form. Nowadays, I am quite surprised at the strength of my feeling for Italy.

Agnes has sometimes felt very much at home while travelling in certain parts of Europe. She has found herself in places with ways of life which have 'conjured up' memories of her childhood before the war. But she does not want to go back again to Hungary for 'it is a different world there now'. Jonathon, too, when he went back to Germany for the first time as an adult, discovered an affinity for that country, but it was not with its way of life or with its people, but with the fondly remembered landscape of his childhood.

Not all were willing to make such journeys back. For John, flying over Germany on his way to Israel was sufficient.

I looked out the windows of the plane and saw the country of my birth. Day was just breaking. We were heading eastwards. I could see hills, villages, cows. It was a very odd feeling - creepy, disorienting - not necessarily because it was Germany, but because it was the country of my birth which I could not remember and here was I, in air-conditioned comfort, looking down on it.

But John has chosen not to visit Germany. His parents had avoided doing so and he is not sure that he would have the 'courage' himself. To explain this, he talked of his reluctance, on one occasion, to go on board a visiting German ship that his children wanted to visit. John could not overcome his aversion to 'the young, blonde gods on sentry' and did not board the ship.

Renate has also avoided the trip back.

Our parents were very worried about people going back to Berlin and always said, no, they would never go back; you should never go back; who knows what might happen. I would say to myself, that is ridiculous, that can't be right. After I qualified, I worked in England for four years. I travelled in France and Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe, but I didn't go to Germany. Two years ago, I went back to England again and I went to Israel, but I didn't go to Germany. And when I am in Europe, I really get the creeps when I hear somebody next to me speaking in German.

The reasons preventing others from returning are various, but generally there is a strong disinclination to go back only to be a tourist like any other. This is Fibich's distressing experience in *Latecomers*.²⁵ A number of interviewees considered there was no point in going back to places which had in some cases been virtually razed to the ground and from where the relatives or other familiar people were missing.

However, those second generation refugees who do have some relatives left in Europe or elsewhere, consider that establishing or renewing family connections is very important. Ernie, with his wife and three children, went around the world in order to do this.

Other people have flash cars and beach houses. I put everything I could into this trip. We did a tour in such a way that we established our roots and the names of people in the family letters and in the family conversations became real people. We looked up family all over the world and now we write to each other.

²⁵Brookner, *Latecomers*, page 223.

What kind of connections can be established, across continents, between the scattered remnants of families? As Jane observed, 'you grasp at straws'. On her way to Europe, she visited third cousins (her only surviving relatives on her father's side) living in Mexico. They had left Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In spite of formidable language barriers, Cathy has tried to make and maintain links with her relatives (also on her father's side) around the world. But as the elderly people she has met become ill and die, Cathy sees with sadness the faint connections she has made fading out again.

Howard was 'very much an ordinary tourist' in Germany, but he did visit an uncle and aunt of his father living in an old peoples' home. The two had emigrated to Chile during the Nazi era but had subsequently returned to Germany. 'He was blind; she was sick. They both died not long after my visit. He remembered with great fondness my father as a little boy at his wedding and a few things like that. It was all very strange and very hard for me to see myself as part of all that'.

Discovering remaining family is also very important for Vivienne. She has not yet travelled the world to meet them, but would like to do so very much.

About eighteen months ago, there was a gathering of my relatives in a hotel in Zurich. I arranged a conference call and got us all hooked up together, including my daughter in Auckland and my son in Dunedin. It was very interesting. I talked to people I did not even know about and others I had heard about. I have never met any of them. I have a cousin in Lexington, U.S.A., who apparently really looks quite like me.

The search for family connections ruptured by war and migration has led many to Israel. It is in Israel that Chaim's links with his family were most unexpectedly reestablished. After Chaim reached New Zealand as a young boy in the late 1930s, he received only two letters from his family. He heard after the war that his mother, father and sister had been killed. However, a few years ago he found out that he had uncles and aunts living in Israel. Meeting them again after fifty years has been an 'interesting' experience.

It was my son who found them in Israel. He rang one night and said, 'I want you to speak to your aunt'. And then a lady gets on the phone and in beautiful learned English she says: 'I'm Thea; I'm your aunt, for sure. And there is also Judith here who is your aunt and there is also Rachiel here who is your uncle and Gimpel in America who is your uncle'.

When I went to Israel to meet them, I found out that my grandfather took his family to Israel in 1932, except for my father who was already married with two children.

It is quite fascinating to have a new-found family. I constantly think of them. But when you have lived alone for fifty years, you cannot just pick up [the pieces]. [But] there is now a drawing closer, slowly but surely, from both sides.

When Julia (who is in some ways particularly removed and disconnected from her background by an upbringing that had above all emphasized forgetting) visited Israel, she went to *Yad Vashem*, a museum concerned primarily with the history of the Holocaust. She went to the museum to find out where her relatives came from and where they had died. She now plans to visit the concentration camps where they died. 'I feel I need to do this. It has to do with their going through hell and the least I can do is cope with the pain of acknowledging that'.

What is conveyed, again and again, in the accounts of children of refugees, is distance from the past, the urge to connect with it and the need to make sense of it. George Steiner writes in *Language and Silence*:

In the Warsaw Ghetto a child wrote in its diary: 'I am hungry, I am cold; when I grow up I want to be a German, and then I shall no longer be hungry, and no longer cold'. And now I want to write that sentence again: 'I am hungry, I am cold; when I grow up I want to be a German, and then I shall no longer be hungry, and no longer cold'. And say it many times over, in prayer for the child, in prayer for

myself. Because when that sentence was written I was fed, beyond my need, and slept warm, and was silent.²⁶

What is also present in the accounts of those who are not just children of refugees but refugees themselves is sadness about the past. There is the sadness of grasping at straws in search for roots and lost families, there is the sadness of visiting countries with which the connection has been all but totally obliterated and there is the sadness of the sense of 'what might have been if only'. This mood is most often revealed in recollections of returning to the half-forgotten places of childhood and is described most poignantly by Judith Kerr's Anna in a number of sequences in the trilogy already referred to several times. For example, of Anna's return as an adult to Berlin, Judith Kerr writes:

She did not remember the streets, only the feel of them. She and Max walking home after dark, playing a game of jumping on each others' shadows as they slid and leapt between one street lamp and the next. Herself thinking, this is the best game we've ever played. We'll play it always, always, always.²⁷

The secure world of childhood disrupted, ended. Once powerful parents helpless to protect children. The loss of the sense of belonging. The feeling of being excluded. The lasting effects of persecution, of dislocation, of discontinuity and the costs of assimilation have been explored in this section. The earlier chapters concerned with childhood, school and adolescence focused on children and young adults struggling to find a sense of belonging in the new country, trying to fit in, battling to put aside the past. What has been examined here is facing that past, reconnecting with the losses of that past.

What did the Holocaust mean for second generation refugee children and adolescents? What was it like to face a past of persecution and uprooting? How did interviewees reconnect with that past? The answers to these questions are complex and in attempting to answer them this chapter has raised more questions than it has answered. An immense diversity in the attitudes and in the experiences of the interviewees is revealed.

²⁶Steiner, 'Postscript', in *Language and Silence*, page 168.

²⁷Kerr, *A Small Person Far Away*, page 51.

For many, the Holocaust was an ever present and inescapable fact of their growing up years. Others came to a more gradual realization that the war that everyone talked about was also a war particularly against Jews. Others still heard the stories about Jews and Hitler and the war, but did so without identifying with the Jewish victims.

Connections with the past were severed by persecution, war and migration, but also by the need to bury the Holocaust in order to assimilate. Visiting Europe was one way of reconnecting. For some interviewees, such visits simply brought home the enormity of the losses that had taken place. Others, overcome by a strong sense of unease in Germany or Austria, also became aware that despite the earlier burial and despite feeling in many ways as New Zealanders, they were still bound in significant ways by the past. The cultural losses of assimilation were revealed too as interviewees, travelling in Europe, searched in vain for links and connections with the places they or their parents had once fled. For the people in this study, facing the past meant facing the Holocaust, but also the costs assimilation.

Are there patterns evident in the ways that the second generation faced the past? There is little, in terms of their background, to distinguish those interviewees who appeared very bound up with the past from those who seemed more detached from it. There is nothing to indicate a simple connection between, for example, the degree of traumatic experiences suffered by the parents, their later adaptation in New Zealand and the attitudes and responses of the next generation. Parents were haunted in different ways by the past and the fears, anxieties and hopes that they had on behalf of their children were expressed in diverse ways. 'Forget the past', 'always remember the past' - second generation refugees had to integrate both injunctions. The lives of children were shaped by the ways they responded to the explicit and implicit attitudes encountered in their families as well as by the variety of other influences (some of which were discussed in earlier chapters) which determined what it was like to grow up in New Zealand for those who were refugee children or the children of refugees from Hitler.

For the interviewees as adults, attitudes to, degree of interest in and preoccupation with the past still varies, but there are certain common concerns and assumptions arising out of a shared heritage of war and persecution. These are discussed in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 8

AMBIGUITIES OF ASSIMILATION: THE SECOND GENERATION AS ADULTS

Michael:

People have always assumed, although I have lived in New Zealand all my life, that I am not quite a New Zealander. This is perhaps because I have a slightly different accent and I probably talk about different things, but it is mysterious, this perception, because I don't think of myself as anything other than a New Zealander.

Julia:

As I am not a Maori, or obviously of a minority race, I am not a target for racism in the way I would be if I had a brown skin. I have a different problem. This is that I am identified as part of the majority which I do not feel part of at all. There is now increasing sensitivity towards those obviously from another cultural group. But if you are not obviously from another cultural group, then there is an expectation that you will be like the majority. One of the reasons why I wear the Star of David is to affirm the difference. I am a Jewish person of Polish, German, Portuguese, Spanish extraction. I do not feel I belong to the majority culture. I was born here. I feel an attachment to New Zealand and a sense of familiarity, yet I do not feel I belong here.

Jenny:

Now as an adult, I feel completely assimilated, completely a New Zealander. I feel an affinity with Hungarian culture, but New Zealand is my country. I am proud of New Zealand; I am comfortable in New Zealand; I do not want to leave New Zealand. Nonetheless, however

well I have assimilated, and however well accepted I am by friends and neighbours, I know that if there was a wave of anti-Semitism, if a bomb was dropped on a synagogue or if there was some other peril against Jews, very few of my non-Jewish friends would stand up and be counted. If it was a case of Jews against non-Jews, they would not put themselves at risk. All the friends who are quite overwhelmingly kind and helpful if I need help with illness or sorrow or for any of the acceptable situations, would not necessarily want to be lined up with me.

As these very different statements suggest, the sense of their own identity held by the people in this study is very diverse. Chapters 2 to 7 explored some aspects of the lives of refugee children and adolescents as they moved between the refugee worlds of home and the New Zealand worlds of school and neighbourhood. Over these worlds loomed a past of persecution and uprooting. The pressures and urges of second generation refugees to assimilate and their relative success in doing so have been emphasized, as have the various ways that many of the children and adolescents remained distinctive and to some extent outsiders in spite of their sometimes fervent efforts to fit in and be accepted. A new set of questions are raised by the transition of interviewees to adulthood, especially regarding their Jewish identity and their ethnic distinctiveness. This chapter explores these and other questions. In particular, it is concerned with ethnic identification, cultural transmission and assimilation.

Jewish Identity

Since the Enlightenment, Jewishness has been defined in widely different ways. For the people in this study, the Jewish identity of their adult years had a variety of changing meanings. For a few, following Jewish religious traditions was or became important; for others, the historical and cultural aspects of Judaism predominated. Many regarded Israel as a special place. A number considered that it was some elusive, indefinable element that made them Jews. While there were interviewees who were very preoccupied with their Jewishness, however defined, others regarded it as a remote, distant part of their background.

Eva, for example, belongs in the latter category:

I don't feel Jewish - my so-called Jewishness was brought home to me by Hitler. We had not been brought up in the Jewish religion but rather in a broad humanists tradition. Also, owing to my (widowed) mother's remarkable foresight and courage, my brother and I were removed from Germany within two months of Hitler coming to power. Our only relative who perished under Hitler was my grandfather, and even he is alleged to have died in hospital. We were thus saved from the great personal tragedies which served to unite many people in Judaism even without being religious. I do not look at people as belonging to a particular race or religion - I think of them as individuals. Nevertheless, when asked, I always say I am Jewish as I wouldn't want to be thought of being ashamed of it.

As during their childhood and adolescence, occasional incidents of anti-Semitism were encountered by many of the interviewees in their adult years. Those respondents who were aware of their Jewishness as only a remote part of their background, sometimes had it abruptly brought to their attention on leaving New Zealand. In Europe, especially, they became aware that their Jewish names and appearance were noticed and sometimes occasioned negative comments.

In New Zealand, many considered that Jewishness was less likely to be noticed. Jews had a choice: to reveal or not to reveal their background. David: 'In my working career, I sometimes hear snide comments about Jews. But it isn't very prevalent'. Anne has heard such comments too. 'I think, well, should I tell them I'm a Jew?' She has tended not to tell: 'I think, let sleeping dogs lie. But perhaps that is the easy way out'.

Renate has adopted a different approach. She usually tries to forestall any possible anti-Semitic remarks.

If I meet new people, I am quick to make a comment about my origins, mainly to save them some embarrassment. It is easier. It saves people being hurtful. Socially, it can be most unpleasant if someone drops some dreadful comment or disparaging remark.

Ernie has met anti-Semitism in his teaching career.

I would sometimes hear kids using the word 'Jew' as a verb as in 'you jewed me'. Then some kids would say, 'sh, sh, he is (within earshot)'. And the other kid would say, 'so what?' I did also get some baiting at the college I was teaching at. There was a period when I got some anti-Semitic flak from some nasties who went through the school. 'Jew boy' and 'pork chops' were favoured jibes. And bottles thrown at my house and malicious phone calls with an anti-Semitic streak.

In view of such incidents, however rare, it is not surprising that some interviewees have come to feel secure only in assimilation.

By contrast, a number of other interviewees who had been ashamed and furtive about their Jewishness as children, generally felt secure enough to assert their Jewishness as adults. By late teens, Walter had overcome the negative image of Jewishness of his childhood and was able to become openly Jewish and active in the Jewish community. John was able to express his Jewishness, even to the extent of wearing in public a sweat shirt with a *Magen David* on it. His confidence was confirmed by his experience of running for political office and encountering little direct anti-Semitism in the process. As an adult, Jenny was able to feel proud of being Jewish in a way she could not as a teenager. She now feels a bond with Jewish people even when she has little else in common with them in terms of interests or values apart from Jewishness.

Some interviewees had reclaimed as adults the Jewishness that was absent in their families when they were children. Katherine observed that Jewishness 'came through strongly' in her in spite of her parents' attempts to underplay this side of her background. Julia made similar comments: 'I am not prepared to hide who I am'. David, who has felt 'a lot easier' about saying he was a Jew in 'recent years' because of support he has had from his non-Jewish wife, decided a few years ago to have Hebrew lessons: 'I think I should have learned Hebrew as a child. I would like to have learned more about the Jewish religion as a child. I now regret that I don't know more about it'.

A study carried out in the United States investigated the following question: 'because their parents were confronted by the threat of death and of cultural dissolution, would survivor children express a concern for ethnic survival through an enhanced

sensitivity to culture and ancestry?' (Culture in the study is defined as concepts, habits and institutions of the Jewish people.) Children of concentration camp survivors (high stress group) were compared in their responses with children who had at least one parent who had resided in Europe until at least 1935 (low stress group). The latter group included people whose parents had lost relatives during the war but had not themselves been in concentration camps, although some had spent the war in hiding or in other precarious situations. The conclusions of the study are that both groups of second generation respondents showed a heightened sensitivity to culture and ancestry and to the importance of ethnic survival. The children of concentration camp survivors showed this reaction more vehemently than the other group. However, the responses differed more in degree than in kind.¹

The background of interviewees in the present study closely approximates that of the 'low stress group' of the United States' study. However, the attitudes of the people in the New Zealand study were more mixed, though quite evidently many of them did feel more 'Jewish' because of the events in the Nazi epoch. (Some of the implications of this are discussed in the next section.) Jenny, for example, has chosen a lifestyle more observant of Jewish religious traditions than she used to have as a child. This decision was to a large extent based on a feeling of debt to those who had died in the Holocaust.

All those people were persecuted, punished, and lost their lives just for being Jewish. We have the freedom to take up our Jewish option without any fear. It seemed very cowardly and tame not to exercise my right and privilege to live a full Jewish life.

As an adult, Ernie has retained the strong Jewish identity he had as a child. For him, Jewishness definitely includes a religious affiliation. Ernie works very hard for the Jewish community, which he considers has a very uncertain future because so many members have either left Judaism or New Zealand or both, and there are few newcomers to make up for the departures.

¹David Heller, 'Themes of Culture and Ancestry among Children of Concentration Camp Survivors', in *Psychiatry*, vol. 45, August 1982, pages 247-260.

I feel quite angry towards people I have known who have left the faith. Sometimes I feel despondent and want to toss it all in myself. I'm one of the few leaders still left here and I am constantly asked to do my bit. I am forty-four years old now; I want to have a bit more relaxation. I've done my share. But I feel a duty to my own community, which is dying. You can be a Jew even if there are only three others in the community. You can retain your Jewishness as Jews did in the concentration camps. You can still be a Jew in Pahiatua if the gut feeling is there.

Chaim is one of those who has 'left the faith'. However, this does not mean that he no longer feels Jewish.

When you are born Jewish, you are Jewish from within and a part of you will always remain Jewish. The influence of those first eleven years is everlasting. [These were the years of Chaim's childhood in Poland.] The music, the chanting, the synagogue, the communal baths. Walking down the street on a Friday night, smelling the cholent [traditional Sabbath meal]. Your mother blessing the Sabbath candles; the beautiful clothes you put on for the Sabbath; the type of thinking that is ingrained in a Jewish young man in a place where everybody he knows is a Jew. When you go to another country, those first years will never be lost. You will love the Jewish type of food and music. You will look at a Jewish girl and think, 'that's a nice looking girl'. You will have a feel for Jewish jokes, ways, attitudes. I have moved away from the traditions of Judaism, but I will always be Jewish.

A number of people spoke of feeling Jewish without being able to explain what their Jewishness consisted of. Sonny: 'I don't know why I call myself a Jew. I am not religious. I can't approve of everything they do in Israel at the moment, yet, if you asked me, I would say, "I am Jewish"'. Sonny's identification is definitely connected with the 'German thing'. Katherine spoke of being 'bound' by her Jewishness. She too attempted to define the type of Jew she was: 'how can you be Jewish if you are not religious? It is very hard to explain. For me, it is an inner sense of identity. It has nothing to do with

whether I choose to attend synagogue each week or observe the details of the [Jewish] Laws'.

The perception of Judaism as other than a religion meant that even those who had been brought up as Christians continued to feel in some ways Jewish. The Jewish part of her background was considered 'quite important' by, for example, Marei. Marei, who abandoned her Catholicism as soon as she started university, recalled the 'powerful' experience of playing Anne Frank in 'The Diary of Anne Frank' for Unity Theatre in Wellington, which required her to do a considerable amount of background reading. Playing 'Anne Frank' was for her far more than just a 'part'.

Although Mary has retained her Catholicism, she has similar feelings about her Jewish background. Regarding Israel, she commented:

It is a special place. When we got some compensation money from the Germans, we bought some trees in Israel in my parents' name. I have the feeling that Israel is a place that has something to do with my people. And I would like to go there to see the trees.

The Jewish identification of a number of the interviewees was emphatically secular. Peter spoke of liking the association with the intellectual and artistic success Jews have had. Jane has a particular interest in the works of Jewish writers: 'There is a strength and vitality in the Jewish cultural heritage'.

Vivienne identifies with the tradition of the 'non-Jewish Jew'.² She is particularly attracted by the rationalist, internationalist, independent, humanitarian outlook of eminent 'Jews' such as Spinoza, Marx, Freud and many others who, from a marginal, outsider's perspective, provide a particularly insightful analysis of society.

When I wrote my thesis (for a Masters in Sociology) I dedicated it in part to my parents who have bequeathed to me a valuable cultural tradition - that of the non-Jewish Jew. This is someone who has rejected Judaism as such but who had something to offer from his/her Jewish background which enabled him/her to make a special kind of contribution.

²This is the title of an essay by Isaac Deutcher. See Bibliography for details.

Peter Gay, who discusses this notion in his biography of Freud (*Freud: A Life for Our Time*), observes that Freud was 'doubly alienated'. He was 'a stranger to the faith of his fathers' but was also obliged to work amidst the 'powerful anti-Semitic elements' in Austria. According to Gay, Freud saw himself as a marginal man, 'a godless Jew' and thought that this position gave him 'an inestimable advantage'. He quotes from a letter Freud wrote in 1926:

... I owe only to my Jewish nature the two characteristics that had become indispensable on my difficult life's way. Because I was a Jew, I found myself free from many prejudices which limited others in the employment of their intellects, and as a Jew I was prepared to go into opposition.³

It is significant that a number of people in the study spoke with some pride of the Jewish background they had wished to hide as children. Having sought security in assimilation during their childhood, they have become secure enough as adults to identify as Jews and openly express their Jewishness. What, in fact, distinguishes those interviewees who as adults have to some extent embraced Judaism, whether as secular or as religious Jews, from those who are unable or unwilling to identify with any aspect of the Jewish world? A complex mixture of interrelated influences are in evidence. Whether or not interviewees had directly encountered anti-Semitism in New Zealand is probably significant, although in unpredictable ways. Practices and attitudes in families were quite clearly a strong influence, but in complicated ways. Interviewees' accounts suggest that second generation refugees did or did not adopt certain practices and attitudes regarding Judaism sometimes in spite of and at other times because of what their families did or did not do. Also, although memories of the Holocaust have affected the way adult offspring of refugees and refugee children view themselves as Jews, it is not possible to make simple connections between, for example, a family's attitude to the past or degree of loss and suffering during the Holocaust and the subsequent attitudes of second generation refugees regarding Jewishness. Although a number in the study were aware of feeling more Jewish because of events in the Nazi period and there is probably some connection between 'the

³Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, London 1988, page 603.

threat of death and of cultural dissolution ... and a concern for ethnic survival ...', some interviewees chose to turn away from Judaism in part because of their family's experiences of persecution. Additionally, it is difficult to find patterns in the behaviour of those in the study with strong Jewish identification. These interviewees have tended to express their Jewishness in varied and unpredictable ways. For example, some have chosen to continue or expand the religious observances of their childhood, while others have renounced religious traditions and belief in God altogether.

Victims or Survivors

'We must show the world we are not victims but survivors', urged Dr Edith Eger, the key note speaker at the Fortieth Holocaust commemoration held in Wellington.⁴

If the 'spirit of defiance'⁵ which pressed Freud to proclaim his Jewishness in times of troubles is one aspect of Jewish identity, the identity of Jews as victims and/or survivors of persecution and the impact of such a history on the Jewish identity of the post-Holocaust generation interviewed in this study, is another. Both aspects, including the crucial role of Israel, are examined in this section.

The following joke appeared in the 'Humour Album' of the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle* in October 1952.

A Jew was drowning in a river. He cried for help and two Nazis came running up. When they saw it was a Jew, they said: 'Let the Jew drown' and began walking away.

When the drowning man saw this, he began shouting with all his might, 'Down with Hitler! Down with the Germans!

Hearing these words, the Nazis jumped in, pulled the man out, and arrested him.⁶

As shown in earlier chapters, a feeling of loss, a sense of guilt, some insecurity, suffering, pain, alienation - were all elements closely associated by respondents with a

⁴*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, June-July 1985, page 5.

⁵Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Time*, page 604.

⁶*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, October 1952, page 23.

Jewish identity. A number of the United States and Canadian studies of children of refugees and children of Holocaust survivors have focused on showing the 'scars' left by such a background.⁷ As an interviewee in one of these studies said: 'I feel very Jewish because of what happened to my parents, but I don't do anything Jewish, I'm not religious, its just a feeling I have'.⁸ Jewishness, perceived as a bond among the persecuted, is a pervasive theme in second generation literature.

The young men and women whose parents lived in Hitler's hell do more than just remember - they feel the pain. When they see their mother's or father's arm reach across the kitchen table for the bowl of sugar and a tattooed number of Auschwitz or Buchenwald passes before their eyes, they feel the pain. And they recognize at these moments, a common bond with all children of survivors. Being born into a family whose grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins were all slaughtered is to be born with scars that do not heal.⁹

Some people in this study spoke of feeling that they were themselves indirectly survivors, while others mentioned the consequences of having a self-image formed by a history of persecution. Julia commented on the effects of belonging to a people that have been under threat repeatedly throughout history. Renate acknowledged that she had internalized, to some extent, her father's injunction to 'be careful' because your colleagues cannot always be counted on to stand by you. Anthony made observations concerning his 'defensive reaction' to being a child of a German-Jewish refugee. From his school days on, he developed a strategy of 'knowing his enemy'.

However, children of survivors and children of refugees in New Zealand were far less likely to develop common bonds with each other than children of refugees were in the United States or Canada. It was, in fact, very easy to grow up meeting very few people with a similar background. This is what happened to Howard, among others. Even if he did meet someone with a similar background, the war was not something that was talked

⁷For example, Marilyn I. Ludzki writes in these terms in 'Children of Survivors', *Jewish Spectator*, vol. 42, no. 3, Fall 1977, page 43.

⁸Bella Savran, Eva Fogelman, 'Psychological Issues in the Lives of Children of Holocaust Survivors: The Children as Adults', Steinitz, ed., *Living After the Holocaust*, page 155.

⁹Ludzki, 'Children of Survivors', page 41.

about. In the United States and Canada in the 1970s, organizations were formed for children of Holocaust survivors which helped to bring the issue of the Holocaust into the open and to eliminate the isolation which so many children of survivors had felt in their youth even in those countries with considerable populations of refugees from Hitler. Recently, Howard was told by an American Jew he had met about these second generation groups.

For the first time it occurred to me that there must be a lot of people out there with the same background as me and that in actual fact we had a common thread that shaped us - this particular event in our parents' history. I have now started to get very interested in this history.

The notion of being shaped by a common thread of persecution, and the determination to be not victims but survivors, is particularly pertinent when attitudes to Israel are looked at. Regardless of the extent of parental communication with children about the Holocaust, virtually all the second generation received messages about the importance of Israel.¹⁰ Ties with Israel were also strengthened by the fact that many families had relatives who had settled there.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Jewish youth group *Habonim* was also responsible for fostering an allegiance to a Jewish homeland. The youthful leaders of *Habonim* were merely reflecting attitudes prevalent in the established Jewish community. A subject analysis of the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle* in the late 1940s, during the fifties and the sixties reveals both the commitment to Israel's existence and the strong links between Israel and New Zealand Jews. There were many reports, not only of the struggle to establish the state of Israel and of its military, social, economic and political life over the years, but of the comings and goings between the two countries. Many New Zealand youth left during those years to settle in Israel.¹¹ The *Chronicle* reported on their life in Israel. A special

¹⁰This is also the finding of a number of the United States studies, for example, Robert Krell, 'Holocaust Families: the Survivors and their Children', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, vol. 20, no. 6, November/December 1979, page 566.

¹¹It is difficult to find accurate figures to quantify this migration. The picture is complicated by the fact that departing youth sometimes settled in other parts of the world before immigrating to Israel. Others went to Israel but did not settle there permanently. Although anecdotal evidence suggests a considerable migration of New Zealand Jewish youth to Israel in the period of this study, a 1974 national youth group survey referred to by R. M. Jaffe in, 'Social Conflicts and Changes in the Auckland Jewish Community',

section of the magazine was, in fact, devoted entirely to news about New Zealanders in Israel.

There was also a great deal of space in the *Chronicle* concerned with fund raising for Israel. Although this activity tended to be a substitute for actually going to the country, it nonetheless reinforced the idea in young people of the importance of supporting Israel either by immigration or by sending money to support those who had gone.

Trials of former Nazis, stories about Jewish sufferings in the aftermath of the Holocaust and reports of incidents of anti-Semitism in various parts of the world, including New Zealand, filled up the spaces which remained in the magazine which were not taken up by local social concerns such as weddings, births and so on. All in all, the picture depicted in the *Chronicle* was a grim one. It would have reinforced the notion in young peoples' minds of a community of victims and survivors, of a community of the persecuted.¹²

Except that there was Israel. As George Steiner observes: 'There is not a Jew in the world who does not hold his head higher ... because Israel exists'.

The status of the Jew everywhere has altered a little, the image he carries of himself has a new straightness of back, because Israel has shown that Jews can handle modern weapons, that they can fly jets, and turn desert into orchard. When he is pelted in Argentina, or mocked in Kiev, the Jewish child knows that there is a corner of the earth where he is master, where the gun is his. If Israel were to be destroyed, no Jew would escape unscathed. The shock of failure, the

University of Auckland M. A. thesis in Sociology, 1976, page 31, found that of the ninety-three persons aged between nineteen and twenty-three who had been members of the youth group, thirty-three percent of those surveyed had assimilated (no community contact); thirty-five percent still identified with the Jewish community in New Zealand; twenty-one percent were overseas (not Israel); eleven percent were living in Israel. However, these findings do not relate to young people who had not been members of the youth group (the assimilation figures would probably be higher for those who had not been members of the youth group and the numbers living in Israel would probably be lower), they do not show the numbers among those surveyed who were children of refugees and they do not reveal how permanently the people surveyed were located in New Zealand, Israel or elsewhere.

¹²There were also a few reports of a kind not already mentioned: the Coronation and the Waterfront strike of 1951. This latter event held up the shipment of *matzos* and other supplies needed by New Zealand Jews for Passover; *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, April 1951, page 2.

need and harrying of those seeking refuge, would reach out to implicate even the most indifferent, the most anti-Zionist.¹³

Tom was one of those Jewish young people, referred to earlier, who left New Zealand permanently for Israel. He left at the age of twenty-two, convinced that he could never belong in New Zealand.

I decided when I was about twelve or thirteen that I was going to go to Israel because I saw that country as a refuge, as a place where Jews would have a home, a place without anti-Semitism. Israel is my only home. I come to New Zealand now only to visit my family. The only links I have left with New Zealand apart from the family are the very pleasant memories of times I have spent in the mountains and in the bush. I still remember those, and for many years had books of photographs of the places I had been to in the South Island, in the Tararuas, in the Ruahines. When I come back for a visit, I maintain some sort of contact with some of the people who I used to go climbing and shooting with. But I haven't been back to the New Zealand bush since I left in 1959.

The notion of Israel as a place of refuge was also very important for those who did not, in fact, decide to settle there. George, who immigrated to Australia, describes himself as a critical Zionist:

If you understand what happened in the Holocaust, Zionism becomes very important, very logical. When I was a child, my mother talked a great deal to me about the Holocaust. It was all too much to understand. I had no family in New Zealand because they were all dead or scattered around the world. When all this sank in gradually over the years, naturally Zionism appealed. It offered a place where Jews could be safe. But I did not seriously think of going to live in Israel.

¹³ Steiner, 'A kind of Survivor', page 143.

John also did not seriously think of settling in Israel. Nor does he think a place like New Zealand could ever become a country to run away from. 'But, like every other Jew, I know Israel is there if I need it'.

The notion of Israel as a place of refuge in case the world in which Jews were living collapsed again, was very pervasive. This insecurity about Jewish life in the Diaspora is the 'core' of the message that Primo Levi wished, in the last book before his death, to leave for the next generation:

... we have collectively witnessed a fundamental, unexpected event, fundamental precisely because unexpected, not foreseen by anyone. It took place in the teeth of all forecasts; it happened in Europe; incredibly, it happened that an entire civilized people, just issued from the fervid cultural flowering of Weimar, followed a buffoon whose figure today inspires laughter, and yet Adolf Hitler was obeyed and his praises were sung right up to the catastrophe. It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say.

It can happen, and it can happen everywhere.¹⁴

Some believed 'it' could even happen in New Zealand. Sometimes, young people tried to convince their elders that it was not possible for a Jew to live outside Israel. A correspondent, signing himself as 'a young Jew', wrote in 1966 to the *Chronicle* describing his reaction to an earlier report of anti-Semitic incidents that had taken place:

All this brings home to us one fact that things aren't so cosy for Jews even in comfortable, easy, affluent New Zealand ... Perhaps New Zealanders will be forced to leave New Zealand (God's own country) and go to Israel (our own country) as is occurring to other Jewries in the world.

It may be worthwhile for all of us to think about this. Perhaps it is better to leave now before anything occurs ... The Germans,

¹⁴ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, page 199.

Austrians, Poles and Czechs all said: 'Impossible, it can't happen to us'. And it did.¹⁵

Anthony made the following comments:

I have often thought that Israel is equal to New Zealand as my own country. Should the roof fall in here on my life, I would go and live in Israel. The only reason I have not had that thought the last ten years is because I have been so successful in coping with being just an ordinary New Zealand person, with a lovely New Zealand wife and a great New Zealand home and a great set of principles about life here. But if an anti-Semitic world were to fall on me, I would go and live in Israel. This is what I think I would do, but whether now in my forties, I could emotionally and practically do it, I don't know.

I am a fairly nationalistic New Zealander and a nationalistic Israeli. Israel has my emotional support, though also my strong political criticism for its behaviour. But it is my home, although I have never been there. It is a home I don't need because I contribute to and participate in this society and I do so with a vengeance.

Those interviewees who had strong ties to Israel did not consider that an allegiance to that country was in any way incompatible with being a New Zealander. Ernie has always wanted to live in Israel, but was prevented from doing so by the need to stay in New Zealand to look after his elderly parents.

I feel very easy and at home in Israel when I go on visits. I have a very strong bi-national identity and there is no conflict at all. I have a very strong Kiwi identity. New Zealand is part of me, yet I could leave tomorrow. I have a feeling that one day, when I retire, and our children are in Israel, my wife and I could very well go there too.

¹⁵*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 4 July 1966, page 12.

Katherine also has a strong sense of Israel being where she belongs, yet at the same time, she also feels that she is a New Zealander. The problem for some is that while they are perfectly comfortable with their dual allegiance, other people have difficulties with it. Katherine has sometimes been aware that there are New Zealanders who regard her as less of a Kiwi because of her attachment to Israel.

In the 1960s, when Israel was a country that attracted left-wing support, Michael found that university was a place where he could feel integrated as a New Zealander and yet be strongly Jewish and a supporter of Israel. In the 1970s, when accused by former Prime Minister Norman Kirk at a Labour Party conference that he was more pro-Israel than a New Zealander had a right to be, the response of the conference audience was to boo Norman Kirk - who later apologized to Michael for making such an allegation. In recent years, however, as Israel has increasingly been the target of left-wing protest, Michael has occasionally been attacked for his pro-Israeli views by those who consider these incompatible with active Labour Party membership. He has also been criticized by New Zealand Jews for questioning the rightness of Israeli policies. But he himself cannot conceive of any conflict between being a New Zealander and a supporter of Israel. As others, Michael regards Israel as a refuge - just in case:

I think I would be almost under any circumstances a supporter of the right of Israel to exist, and for the need for a Jewish state to exist. I think it does provide a critical safeguard for people around the world where anti-Semitism has by no means ceased and where the historical pressures against Jews continue. They are by no means the only scapegoats, but they are certainly a potential target.

Many Jewish young adults in New Zealand and elsewhere were aware of a strengthening of their Jewish identity and of their bond with Israel when Israel was perceived as being threatened during the events of the Six Day War.¹⁶ According to the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, twenty-nine young people in New Zealand between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six 'responded to Israel's call to the Diaspora to provide an

¹⁶This was also the finding of Jaffe, 'Social Conflicts and Changes in the Auckland Jewish Community', page 30. In Jaffe's view, the war provided the Zionist movement with a 'new, vibrant impetus'.

effective force of non-combatant volunteers'. Twenty of the twenty-nine were or had been active members of *Habonim*. Among them were children of refugees from Hitler.¹⁷

The war broke out in the first few days of June. By June 10, the first group of New Zealand volunteers were already on their way to Israel.¹⁸ The *Chronicle* wrote:

We are very proud of these young people who left their comfort and security at short notice to take the place of those mobilized in the Armed Forces and essential occupations in Israel. The members were a good cross-section of our young folk and included two nurses, a radiographer, two teachers, an electrician, a toolmaker, a watchmaker, a horticulturalist and many university students.

The notion of dual identity was stressed in the article. These people were going to Israel as Jewish New Zealanders:¹⁹ 'We are sure that they [the volunteers] will be a real help to Israel and represent New Zealand well'.²⁰

Michael and Katherine were among the volunteers. Katherine has recollections of the huge crowd of Jewish people, singing *Evenu Shalom Aleichem* ('We bring you peace'; a Hebrew song of arrival and farewell) at the airport to farewell her group. The memories of those involved and the pages of the *Chronicle* reveal a community mobilized - emotionally and practically. Headlines of 'Wellington responds to Emergency' and 'Emergency Call' appeared. A leaflet circulated within the Jewish community by community members ran:

Nasser has sworn to exterminate the people of Israel. We pledge ourselves that this will not be so! His success would be the destruction of two thousand years of dreaming, and twenty years of reality. It is indeed possible that we would be unable to rebuild again, and once more we would walk with our heads bent, our pride gone, our safety

¹⁷*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 26 June 1967, page 1.

¹⁸Although the fighting had ended, the volunteers were needed for non-combatant duties.

¹⁹There were also at least two non-Jewish New Zealanders in the group of volunteers. They were partners of the Jewish volunteers.

²⁰*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 26 June 1967, page 1.

and that of our children perhaps in jeopardy because every country in which a Jew lives has a common border with Israel.

Wars are won by courage and money! The people of Israel have the courage and it is our bounden duty to supply their economic needs.

The Israelis are offering their lives. What have you got to offer?

This is not only an appeal to your emotions. It is an appeal to your intelligence - an appeal for survival.²¹

Sonny recalled going down to the local Post Office, drawing out all her child allowance for the month and giving it to Israel: 'This was a totally irrational act, but I would do the same again. For me, the existence of Israel is essential. I am totally against Israel's present government but absolutely believe in Israel's right to exist'.

For other young people, the Yom Kippur War produced the same effect as the Six Day War.²² A respondent in one of the United States studies commented:

... the Yom Kippur War was pivotal for me. The '67 war had been short; Israel had gone in and come out on top. In 1973, the war was protracted and the outcome uncertain. I saw Israel as small and vulnerable, surrounded by enemies, and quickly deserted by Europe, as in previous wars against Jews. The death toll was mounting, and I felt as though my relatives were dying.

The passion of my response shocked me. I was amazed by the completeness of my emotional involvement. My general outlook and political opinions notwithstanding, I didn't give a shit about the shades of grey, about the ethics of Zionism, American imperialism in the Middle East, or the problems of the Palestinians. I cared about

²¹*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, 12 June 1967, page 1. In other parts of the world, reactions and responses were similar. For example, the Six Day War is described as a 'watershed in Australian Jewish life' by Suzanne D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*, Sydney 1988, page 358.

²²One interviewee considered that the Yom Kippur War did not have the same impact in New Zealand as the Six Day War. It is possible that by the time of the Yom Kippur War, New Zealand Jews felt more assured of Israel's ability to survive. Regarding Australian reactions, Rutland in *Edge of the Diaspora*, page 360 observes, 'Perhaps ... there was a slightly lower level of feeling and sense of urgency than in 1967'.

survival, the life and death of my people, and of myself. To me, the war was a war of survival, nothing short of that.²³

The passionate attachment to Israel of some second generation refugees is connected with the rejection of a Jewish identity of passivity in the face of adversity. A number of respondents alluded to this, despite the guilt associated with being critical of their parents and others who had escaped death against all odds. Ernie, for example, rejected strongly the identity of victim: 'If I had been in Europe, I would have fought like hell. I wouldn't have been a passive Jew who walked into the concentration camp'. Questions about the past - such as, why did you not escape, why did you not rebel, why did you not avoid capture, why did you not leave sooner - put to survivors of the Holocaust by succeeding generations, are inextricably connected with their notions of their own Jewish identity. The determination to be not victims, but survivors, is a key component of this identity and was manifested in diverse ways.

A Canadian study of socio/political attitudes of adult children of survivors and others is relevant here as a point of reference. In that study the attitudes of the respondents to issues concerning 'the largely undeserved image of passivity by Jews' and to questions regarding the defence of the state of Israel are examined. The writers conclude that those more affected by the Holocaust, that is the children of survivors, are more likely to be in favour of stronger measures in support of Israel in the face of any perceived threat to that country.²⁴

A further point about the connection between Israel and Jewish identity is relevant here. The place of Israel in the lives of the interviewees as adults parallels to a certain extent the role that *Habonim* played in the lives of Jewish teenagers. Both (the Jewish youth movement and the adult's support of Israel) provide a solution to conflicts about Jewish identity and to tension between different worlds, and are a means of reconciling Jewishness with assimilation.

Finally, on the subject of Israel, it needs to be pointed out that there were a few exceptions and dissenting voices among the interviewees in this (the New Zealand) study. There were those who stressed that Israel was not for them in any sense a special place,

²³Mostysser, 'The Weight of the Past', Steinitz ed., *Living After the Holocaust*, pages 16-17.

²⁴Weinfeld, Sigal, 'Effects of the Holocaust on Selected Socio-Political Attitudes of Adult Children of Survivors', *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 23, 3, August 1986, page 379.

and others whose political and social philosophies are anti-nationalistic and therefore anti-Zionist. Vivienne made this point strongly:

I would feel quite uncomfortable going to Israel. I feel very unhappy with its politics. I don't think Zionism is the way to deal with anti-Semitism. The way to deal with it is by affirming Jewish identity wherever we are. We have the right to be at home where we are born.

In Vivienne's view, Zionism does not address the fundamental issue of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Other 'dissenting voices' in the study observed that Jewishness for them was not connected with Zionism.²⁵ However, there is little in terms of their background or in terms of the kinds of experiences they had growing up in New Zealand to distinguish the small number of interviewees who for one reason or other did not regard Israel as a special and necessary place for Jews from those who did so. It is evident that, whether by affirming the rights of Jews in the Diaspora or by affirming the right and necessity for Israel to exist, all interviewees were in different ways reacting to a history of persecution by asserting the right to Jewish survival.

Social/Political Values

Is the Central or Eastern European Jewish refugee background linked to other (than those just discussed concerning Jewish survival) commonly held social/political values? Anthony posed some crucial questions regarding the significance of such a heritage: 'The riddle in my mind is does the German-Jewish background of persecution contribute to a sense of the [wider] public good; does it lead to an identification of the ones at the bottom of the heap or is it only to do with self-preservation and advancement?'

The Canadian study,²⁶ referred to earlier, which investigated the socio-political attitudes of adult children of Holocaust survivors and compared their attitudes with those of children of immigrants and children of native-born Canadians, has some relevance to this question. Attitudes to civil liberties for dissenting views, tolerance for minorities and

²⁵Some Orthodox Jews are opposed to Zionism on religious grounds, but no one in this study objected to the State of Israel for such reasons.

²⁶Weinfeld, Sigal, 'Effects of the Holocaust on Selected Socio-Political Attitudes of Adult Children of Survivors', *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 23:3, August 1986, pages 363-379.

views on immigration policy are examined in this Canadian study. The writers hypothesized that the respondents more affected by the Holocaust through the experiences of their parents would be more committed to principles of democracy and civil liberties, would be more tolerant of minorities, would be more sensitive to injustices against minorities, including Jews, and would be more likely advocates of militant action to oppose those injustices. 'Our theory is that previous victims might have more compassion for other victims, and that victims (or descendants of victims) might undertake actions which would prevent a repetition of such episodes of victimization'. The writers do also admit the possibility of an alternative, though less likely, hypothesis which is that 'those more affected by the Holocaust ... might turn inward and become less concerned for the civil liberties of other groups'.

The tentative results of the study indicate that there is a relationship between 'a historical event experienced by one generation and the political/social attitudes manifested by the adult children of that generation born after the event'. Although the results can be interpreted in various ways, the writers conclude that 'children of survivors are more likely to claim to be affected by their parents' experiences during World War Two, to be more knowledgeable about those events and to have attitudes affected in hypothesized directions' (that is, in the directions offered in the first, not the second hypothesis).

Children of survivors, as they are defined in the Canadian study, more or less approximate the children of refugees of the New Zealand study. What observations did the New Zealand interviewees make about the connections between their background and their current social/political attitudes? A number spoke in general terms of the enriching dimension provided by a culturally diverse background. Mention was made (although very tentatively by some) of the possession of a broader vision and a more questioning perspective than their contemporaries. Others were more specific, drawing a link (with hesitation at times) between their background and a concern with the plight of other minority groups and with under-privileged people generally. An empathy with and an interest in people who are different was attributed by some to their refugee background. Renate (who became a medical practitioner) spoke of a 'bond of sympathy with Sri Lankan doctors', a number of whom have been coming to New Zealand as refugees in recent years. Ernie's current job in the teaching profession, which he finds 'very fulfilling', involves working with newly-arrived immigrants and refugees.

I can relate well to people who have gone through what my parents have gone through. This is evident even in the way I speak. Many newcomers have said to me, 'you speak more slowly than Kiwis. You don't mumble and swallow your words'. A woman from Korea told me that there were only two people she could understand in New Zealand and one of them was me.

A number in the study felt strongly about human rights issues in New Zealand. One interviewee drew parallels between 'the blood-stained economy' of Austria which profited from the expulsion and killing of the Jews, and Pakeha New Zealanders profiting from the colonization of New Zealand and the status of Maori as second class citizens in their own land. Yet, compared to Austria, in his view New Zealand was an 'innocent' country, and there was hope that through the work of the Waitangi Tribunal, the wrongs done to Maori people could be remedied.

Miriam considered that hearing and reading about the concentration camps certainly formed the basis of much of her political thinking in relation to racism, inequality and probably sexism as well. Miriam, along with some of the other interviewees, has chosen to be an active, outspoken fighter about social issues of various kinds. According to Michael, the two motives, Jewish self-preservation and the struggle for social justice, offered as alternatives by Anthony at the beginning of this discussion, were, in fact, in harmony. He has been active in movements which promote social justice because in his view, 'Jews have only prospered in just societies which don't look for scapegoats'.

Anthony, who is New Zealand-born, commented that he was entirely comfortable with assuming a socially responsible/politically active role: 'the second generation do not have the constraints that the first had. I haven't just come from a country that is at war with this country. I don't have those disadvantages. I've got it really good here. It is very easy to be public spirited'.

By contrast, for Sonny, aged eleven when she arrived in New Zealand, social activism is not quite so easy. As an adult, she has wanted to fit in and to belong just as she had done as a child. Also, she sometimes feels afraid, but:

In spite of the fear, I speak out. I feel you cannot keep silent when there is a wrong. My own experience and memory and what I have been told about living in Germany has formed my attitudes about

speaking out against wrong. You can't let the fear stop you speaking out.

The occasional lack of a 'common denominator' perceived by Sonny between herself and some New Zealanders (not her close New Zealand friends) is, she believes, related to attitudes derived from her background.

Although on the whole I react like a New Zealander, there are certain assumptions that my generation with a refugee background would make. We have similar reactions, particularly in political situations.

The similarity Sonny is speaking of has been highlighted for her particularly over human rights issues of various kinds. When human rights are threatened even in a small way in New Zealand, she is reminded of similar developments in Germany and in such situations she becomes afraid. The erosion of human rights under the Nazis was a gradual process. It is this memory of fear that New Zealand acquaintances cannot share.

I say to them that what is proposed is just like what happened in Germany. They reply that they understand my reaction but do not share it. Their attitude is 'why worry?', while I feel strongly that if you accommodate the wrongs, if you don't say 'no' and act now, it will be too late.

A number of others in the study also expressed strong social commitment. John spoke of being sufficiently 'agitated' about New Zealand and where it was heading to become politically involved. Eva expressed with vehemence the views which drove her involvement in a number of causes concerned with social justice and the environment.

Although we could be better than we are, New Zealand is still a lot better than most other countries for ordinary people. I think we are foolish for not making New Zealand the paradise it could be.

Such sentiments are shared, of course, by many New Zealanders. However, for the people in this study, there was sometimes an additional notion involved. A socially-

committed outlook appeared, to an extent, to be a legacy of their parents' gratitude for sanctuary in New Zealand. The desire to work hard to make New Zealand 'the paradise it could be' was sometimes expressed in terms of this being an obligation owed particularly by children of refugees. Jane: 'I think, there is a continuation of this feeling of 'serving' New Zealand and the wish to contribute something to New Zealand'.

However, some respondents strongly disclaimed any suggestion that a refugee background was linked to their current concerns and ideas about social and political issues. Eva: 'My basic value system derives from my mother's cosmopolitan/socialist/pacifist outlook on life and my leaning towards the social sciences stem from her'.

Jonathon doubted that his background affected his attitude about social issues:

I wouldn't claim that refugees have a stronger adherence to concepts of justice or minority rights. It would be tempting to say, 'yes', but I don't think there is any foundation for it really. I imagine my background is some help in understanding the position of people from minority groups or refugee situations (Jonathon is in the legal profession), but I doubt it plays any significant part. One becomes used to putting aside any personal involvement, although it is helpful from time to time to reach understanding of a particular situation or a particular person's point of view to have had a particular background. So I have got that advantage, but might lack something another person has. Everyone comes from a different background.

Anthony was uncertain what could be attributed to his background and what could not. Although he did consider that his work with Pacific Island migrants drew on his background, he was cautious about making explicit connections. He had some difficulty considering his own desire to fight 'tenaciously' as being related to his background when the facts about the past showed (although there were exceptions) that the refugees from Hitler 'had run like scared hens from the persecutors'. On the whole, Anthony concluded, he owed much to the environment he encountered at university in the 1960s, and above all to people like John Rangihau, Jack Shallcrass, Michael Noonan, Steve Whitehouse and others.

One further point regarding social and political values and their connection to a refugee background needs to be made. This concerns the ambivalent attitude of some of

the respondents to certain labels in the political arena. Compared to their New Zealand peers, they are more likely to be wary of simple identification of issues in terms of 'left' or 'right'. For example, Jane's views about communism were influenced by the mixed attitudes of her generally left-wing father about the post-war fate of Czechoslovakia.

Michael's comments provide further illustration. Although actively involved in the protest movement at university against New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam war, in some ways his views and behaviour were different from his fellow protestors. For example, Michael's refusal to 'confuse injustices of utterly different levels' could be attributed to his background. 'I never believed it was legitimate to call out "Sieg Heil" to members of the National Party [just] because I didn't agree with their policy in Vietnam'.

Attitudes to such labels and to the use of words generally show a small, though significant difference in perspective that some of the children of refugees from Hitler have from their contemporaries. A child of an Auschwitz survivor in Marcia Russell's article on refugees' children commented:

If someone says to me, 'this is horrible', I think, well, as far as they are concerned, that may be the case, they have nothing more savage to relate it to. But I feel people devalue words like tragedy and miracle. These words to me have a meaning.²⁷

The participation of interviewees in New Zealand life is informed in diverse ways by their past experiences. However, this study did comprise a large proportion of socially and politically committed individuals. (Perhaps this can be regarded as an example of constructive assimilation.) A significant number of interviewees shared the perception that threats to human rights, whether from the right or the left, have to be dealt with promptly before it is 'too late'. The connection between such concerns and a background of flight from Nazi persecution seems very likely, whether or not it was seen in this light by individual interviewees. However, the generality of these characteristics in the population of second generation refugees as a whole will need to be determined in a different study.

The complexities and diverse manifestations of Jewish identity in second generation refugees have been examined in the first part of this chapter. The questions raised

²⁷*New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979, page 15.

regarding the sense in which the interviewees as adults have remained Jewish still are complex ones. As children and as adolescents, their Jewishness, however manifested, was a significant component of their distinctiveness. This has remained true for the majority of the adults. However, it is also evident that in some cases only a very fragile thread from the past still binds interviewees to their Jewish background. What does this thread consist of? The question is best answered by George Steiner who wrote nearly twenty years ago that when he listened to his children breathing in the stillness of his house, he would grow afraid: 'That has not changed. I am utterly trying to teach my children the sense of vulnerability ... and keep them in training for survival'.²⁸

'Not Quite New Zealanders'

Cultural Transmission and Assimilation

A distinction, though not a clear one, may be made between external and internal assimilation. External assimilation is concerned with behaviour regarding food, language, lifestyle, social contacts, outlook and attitudes. Internal assimilation refers to psychological identification and perception. Both aspects of ethnicity are considered in the following discussion.

Earlier chapters have dealt with interviewees' attempts to negotiate between the different expectations of the refugee/Jewish and New Zealand worlds and their struggles to fit in with and find acceptance in the New Zealand world. Although these efforts were often relatively successful, the effort to assimilate, whether successful or not, brought doubts, new problems and costs.

The costs of assimilation become apparent when the following question is considered: apart from a Jewish refugee background of widely differing significance to the individuals concerned and perhaps also some shared attitudes arising from this, what distinguishes the people in this study from others of the same generation and socio-economic background? This is a complicated question to answer and interviewees groped to define in tangible terms what had usually been during their childhood and adolescence

²⁸Otto Friedrich, 'Teaching the Grammar of Hell', review of *The Portage to San Christobal of A. H.* by George Steiner, *Time*, 29 March 1982, page 68.

and continued to be during their adult years an innate sense of difference perceived with varying strength and clarity. Their answers to this question reveal both the persistence of 'psychological' ethnic identification with the Continental European/refugee background (even when 'external' assimilation to the New Zealand world is very prevalent) and the cultural losses of assimilation.

It must be pointed out first of all that for a few of the respondents, such as Helen (the only interviewee with a wholly Christian background), even a perception of difference was missing. The cultural transmission in her family was negligible. Helen, as an adult, speaks only a little German and until recently, has had little social contact with anyone of a similar background to her own (although a number of her friends have an immigrant background, they are not the children of Continental European refugees). She is unaware of any significant ways in which her background has made her different from a 'typical' New Zealander. A love of Central European cooking remains a legacy of her childhood, but Helen has not inherited recipes. If she wishes now to make apple strudel, she turns to Alison Holst, as do other New Zealanders.

In families with only one refugee parent, cultural transmission also tended to be very diluted. Cathy's childhood was 'almost' an ordinary New Zealand one. Only fragments of her father's culture were passed to her - she has memories (but no recipes) of potato pouffles (mashed potato in choux pastry), potato salad, Viennese cabbage and kohlrabi, which she still grows every year. Her father married into an established New Zealand family and it was her mother's family of numerous brothers and sisters who predominated in Cathy's life. If the opportunity now arises, Cathy is pleased to admit to being half-Viennese, but such occasions must be rare as there are few outward indications of Cathy's part-foreign origins.

The same can be said of Jane: only her name reveals her background. Jane's refugee father married a New Zealander and, as for Cathy, it was her mother's large, closely-knit family which was probably the decisive influence in her life. However, although specific instances of cultural transmission were almost non-existent or are difficult to nail down, Jane, as discussed in earlier chapters, grew up with and has retained some sense of belonging to a minority cultural group.

This perception is easier to explain in Annette's case. Although Annette's background is also only part-refugee, the presence of her grandmother introduced Austrian culture into family life in a way that was absent in other similar households. However, it was still a very fragmentary introduction. Annette heard German conversation often, ate

Austrian food and experienced some different customs such as pinching of small children's cheeks by adults as a sign of affection.

Howard, with a part-refugee background, considered himself by and large 'untouched' by the immigrant part of it. He acquired merely a very superficial appreciation of Central European culture. He considered that this was because his father:

... tried very hard to fit into the New Zealand way. I think he desperately wanted to adapt, to assimilate, to be a New Zealander. He didn't go out of his way to steer us towards European things, except for music, which was his special love, but unrequited due to his lost teenage years.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the pressures and urges of first and second generation refugees to assimilate were very strong and some families showed great skill and adaptability at fitting in with their new surroundings. Some New Zealand-born children of refugees adapted to the culture of their parents' adopted country so completely that, as Howard commented, 'you don't know their origins unless they tell you'. Very often even that last indication of background, the foreign name, was lost through marriage or by deed poll. Indeed, for some women, marriage provided a welcome release from names which had caused embarrassment or unhappiness in childhood.

Language is usually regarded as central to culture and identity, reflecting and influencing the way we think, see, feel about ourselves and relate to others. The fate of German and the other languages of the people in this study was discussed in Chapter 6. The legacy of an appalling past, the resulting ambivalence towards German language and culture, and the assimilationist tendencies in New Zealand society meant that many of the second generation acquired or have retained only a broken, inadequate knowledge of the language.

However, although clearly assimilated in significant ways, a number of interviewees nonetheless found particular characteristics - outlook, interests and attitudes - deriving from their Continental European background, which they considered distinguished them from other New Zealanders. The strictness and regimentation of some interviewees' lives during their childhood was discussed in Chapter 3. Jonathon, searching for remnants of his foreign background in his adult self, was aware of traits which derived, he believed, from this regimented, typically German upbringing.

I guess all Germans at heart have a greater sense of regimentation than New Zealanders, a greater orderliness, perhaps a greater sense of the importance of attention to detail and to thoroughness. I think I lack the more relaxed and gung-ho attitude that New Zealanders have.

Others spoke of the negative side of such traits and attributed a rigidity in their personalities to their upbringing. A positive feature mentioned by some was a fostering of interest in classical music, literature and the arts generally. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the children's need to pursue interests that would enable them to fit in with their New Zealand peers sometimes conflicted with their parents' expectation that they attend concerts or read certain books, for example. Such conflicts were a stressful feature of their childhood and adolescence. For the adults, however, an appreciation of classical music and the arts has remained, perhaps, one of the most important legacies of a Continental European background. Jonathon:

I think it has been an advantage to be brought up in a home which had its roots in a European culture. Now I say straight away that there must have been thousands of New Zealand homes where a child would have been brought up with a similar advantage. My parents had a great love of the classics; they had grown up in a society where it was taken for granted that you had a higher education and that the music you listened to was classical music. It is a difficult thing to say without sounding pretentious or immodest. I feel that perhaps a little bit of European culture rubbed off on me. It has influenced my tastes and lifestyle now.

Mary is also aware that her tastes have been similarly affected by her background. However, while her commitment to *Kultur* is strong, her lifestyle does not always reflect her values and beliefs. For example, while she would like to go to concerts, she does not make the same effort to attend that her grandparents had made in spite of their poverty and daily routine of very hard work during their early years in New Zealand. In comparison with the first generation, her energy for classical music, literature and the arts is diluted by numerous other interests.

Shared cultural interests of a similar kind have kept Sonny in touch with a small group of former refugees (although she stressed that such interests are not exclusive to her refugee friends - her New Zealand friends have them too): 'They [the former refugees] belong to the sorts of things I belong to - chamber music, orchestra. We share an interest in paintings'. However, the common ground she feels she has with such friends is broader than this. It includes also a different taste, perhaps in furniture or in food.

Some of the strengths of refugee families - adaptability, energy and determination to succeed were discussed in earlier chapters. As adults, a few interviewees identified in themselves such characteristics as strength, energy and ambition - and considered that they owed them, perhaps, to the example of their parents who had survived and succeeded in life in spite of persecution, war and emigration. Renate, for example, attributed to her background 'her ton of energy' and her many interests. Publisher, writer and former student leader Alister Taylor knew a number of children of refugees who were at university in the 1960s. In an article in *City Magazine* two decades on he wrote of their 'thirst for culture' and 'drive for success'. He saw them as a 'major force' at university: 'the cultural clubs were sprinkled with Jewish names, the end of year results often topped by them'.²⁹ Michael King too wrote in his book *Being Pakeha* of 'the disproportionate level of involvement of Jewish students' in cultural clubs at university.³⁰

Some interviewees attributed an enjoyment of discussion and debate to their Continental European origins. George: 'What I derive from my background is that I am excited by concepts and I like to convince others of my point of view. I like to mix with people I can talk and argue with, exchange ideas with. This is very important to me'.

The difficulties with peer relationships that some interviewees had during their childhood and teenage years did not always lessen or disappear as the years passed. Peter offered the illustration that he often felt an outsider at New Zealanders' social gatherings. For him, as for George, having a good time meant the opportunity for lively debate. For

²⁹Alister Taylor, 'Peace, Power and Politics: Wellington in the Sixties', *City Magazine*, Spring 1987, page 53.

³⁰King, *Being Pakeha*, pages 67-68. The writer examined a random sample of two Victoria University of Wellington student publications, *Salient* and *Spike*, from the fifties and sixties and did find that some Central and Eastern European students appeared to be prominent in student journalism, in student politics, in music and in fencing. Others wrote reviews, poetry and articles on a variety of subjects. However, it is difficult to come to firm conclusions about the extent of their involvement from such an incomplete investigation.

example, at a party, he would like to sit and discuss politics, but his New Zealand friends tended to say: 'hey, don't talk about that; we are here to have a good time'.

Not unexpectedly, those interviewees who had met congenial New Zealanders at teachers' training colleges, at universities, at work and elsewhere, made very different comments. Michael, for example, described himself as a 'happy New Zealander' because of his 'remarkable luck' in his New Zealand friends:

I have in Wellington an enormously rich social/cultural life. Nearly all of the New Zealanders I know are strongly internationally oriented; it has been possible for them to travel at reasonably frequent intervals. They are all world conscious, rather than simply narrowly New Zealand oriented.

The gap that other interviewees perceived between Continental Europeans and New Zealanders was not so much in interests or outlook as in styles of communication. John described his impression of becoming 'more alive and intellectually sharper' when socializing with Continental Europeans.

Put me at a dinner table with Europeans, and I am a different kind of person from the one I am when I am with New Zealanders. There is no doubt about that. A different set of brain cells come into operation - I'm more excited and I'm livelier. When I am among New Zealanders, I can merge and seem to be like a New Zealander, but then in the company of people from Europe, I revert to something that is buried inside.

These impressions were echoed by many others in the study who also spoke of their transformation into livelier, more animated, freer persons, more able to 'be themselves' in the company of people with a Continental European background. For those interviewees whose German, Hungarian, Czech or Polish was fluent enough, just speaking in these languages usually brought about the change into more vivacious and excitable people.

Marei spoke of the way Continental Europeans shared feelings, reflected on life and expressed themselves 'passionately'. Julia described the type of lively debate - outspoken, people talking over each other - which strikes her as particularly 'European', but which is

not acceptable among the New Zealanders she has met. Very often in her interactions with New Zealanders, Julia has found that she has to 'check' herself and 'tone down' her personality in order to conform.

Sonny too feels that with New Zealanders she has to keep herself 'in check'. She often feels guilty of 'interrupting' when she joins in the conversation before the last speaker has finished. She is also more emotional than New Zealanders - she cries, gets angry and is more physically demonstrative than her New Zealand acquaintances, who are sometimes embarrassed by her openness and spontaneity.

Hannah has also had to learn how to 'hold back' and 'not to jump in too quickly' in order to 'manage life in New Zealand' and to be 'acceptable' to others. In her view, the necessity to 'tone down' applies not only in social relationships but to other forms of self-expression - for example to the style of clothes or amount of jewelry worn.

The findings of this study concerning assimilation and cultural retention are very mixed. Berghahn's findings are somewhat clearer. She found among her respondents a 'tacit acceptance of the Central European heritage' and concluded that elements of German-Jewish ethnicity had survived. In Berghahn's view, the children of refugees had integrated these surviving elements with aspects of the majority culture to forge a new ethnicity. Some of the characteristics of German-Jewish ethnicity identified in her book are similar to those in this study: 'a high regard for the work ethic, for conscientiousness, perfectionism, perseverance and strong urge for *Kultur*'. Such characteristics, she goes on to argue, are of course not unique, that is not completely different from other cultures:

Rather it is the frequency and evaluation of these elements, their normative force and position within the total set of values and the combination of these various traits which distinguishes German-Jewish culture from other cultures. It might be helpful in this context to think in terms of clusters of cultural traits ...³¹

The small groups of Central and Eastern European refugees in New Zealand were much more exposed to the pressures of conformity and assimilation than were similar communities in England, in the United States or in Canada, where they formed much larger groups. Earlier chapters have discussed the responses of children and adolescents to

³¹Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, pages 251-252.

being different in the very monocultural society that New Zealand was between the 1930s and the 1960s, and their struggles to find ways of fitting in and being accepted. The mixed and uncertain attitudes of first generation refugees regarding the benefits of cultural maintenance as opposed to assimilation, the children's need for belonging and the prevailing social climate of hostility to cultural differences all helped to ensure that cultural transmission in families and the retention of cultural traits by the second generation as adults would be limited. In terms of objective, external criteria of ethnicity, only a very diluted version is evident in New Zealand. However, in terms of the consciousness of the respondents themselves of being in some ways still Continental Europeans, the findings of the two studies coincide.

Belonging

In *A Small Person Far Away*, Judith Kerr describes Anna's thoughts on her return 'home' to Britain after a visit to Germany, the country she fled with her parents as a young child.

They dived through the cloud, and below it was raining. Everywhere was wet, and there was mud on the airport floors from the passengers feet.

'U.K. passports to the right, others to the left'. She went through the gate on the right with more than the usual feeling of having conned someone, but the man smiled at her as though she belonged. 'Not very nice weather to come home to', he said.³²

Having almost lost, or having acquired only a meagre, superficial awareness of their Continental European cultural heritage, did interviewees consider that they had instead gained a firm place in the New Zealand world? Did the people in this study feel at home, as adults, in the country in which they were born or where they spent most of their formative years? Did they feel they belonged in New Zealand? The following section returns to the notion of marginality (a characteristic often attributed in the literature to children of immigrants) which was introduced in earlier chapters. Marginality is also regarded in some

³²Kerr, *A Small Person Far Away*, page 189.

Jewish writing as the very essence of the Jewish experience of life in the Diaspora since the Enlightenment.³³

Although Tom formed strong links with the New Zealand landscape - particularly with the mountains, rivers and bush (see earlier quotation), in other ways his connections with New Zealand remained insubstantial. In Tom's view, one of the main problems of children of immigrants is that

they do not identify with, nor are they fully accepted in the country which their parents have adopted on their behalf. Yet if they go back to their previous country, they can't settle there either because it is so different from what they are used to. So they are at home nowhere. They are in limbo. It is only the children of the children of immigrants, the third generation, who will finally be accepted and feel part of the country they are living in. My generation do not belong. We were not permitted to feel we belonged. Some may have tried very hard to belong, but we do not belong or feel that we do. I at least have Israel. Other children of immigrants do not have that.

This discussion is primarily concerned with those who do not 'have Israel', with those who chose to live in New Zealand. However, the comments of those who grew up in New Zealand, but as adults migrated to the United States, Australia or elsewhere are also included. Very diverse views were expressed.

Those who permanently left New Zealand had a variety of reasons for doing so. A number departed for the same sorts of reasons that other New Zealanders leave: that is, in search of the opportunities and experiences unavailable in New Zealand. They intended to return to New Zealand one day. However, their studies or their careers or a variety of personal reasons led them in different directions.

Others left and did not intend to return. For those interviewees, New Zealand had not become home in sufficiently significant ways during their childhood and adolescence. As one woman commented, 'when I left New Zealand for overseas, I never thought of or spoke of New Zealanders as "we" but always as "they"'.

³³Some of this literature is referred to in note 2, Chapter 2.

Lisa settled in the United States. When she left New Zealand she was 'pretty sure' that she was not coming back. Lisa attributed this certainty in part to her inability to feel like 'a hundred percent New Zealander'. But she also connected it to an awareness that her family reached New Zealand by chance, not choice. Hence, she was grateful to New Zealand for being the only country to give her family a permit and for providing her with a good education, but at the same time felt she had no roots here.

Now I am an American citizen and I feel very American. I have become more American than I ever was a New Zealander. It was easier to become an American because Americans are all from such hotch-potch places. New Zealand was just a British country when I was growing up.

George usually tries to avoid the subject of his nationality, but inevitably sometimes he has to reply to the question 'where do you come from?'

I usually say that it is very complicated, but if the questioner perseveres, I elaborate: 'I was born in Poland, educated in Austria, brought up in New Zealand, worked in England and now live in Australia'. People get a glazed look.

George left New Zealand as a young adult, seeking broader horizons and opportunities. In those days, the concept of internationalism appealed to him. As a matter of conviction, he did not wish to identify with any one country. More recently, he has thought more about the meaning of roots and has come to value being part of and contributing to the community in which he is living. Australia, where George has now lived almost as long as he did in New Zealand, is 'sort of' home. Is New Zealand also home?

I enjoy coming back. I enjoy meeting old friends and acquaintances. I used to have absolute disdain for college old boys' associations. But now I imagine I would enjoy making contact and seeing how time has changed people. So I would like to come back to that. What are roots really? A place with familiar people ...

What of the majority of the people in this study who have remained in New Zealand? How do they regard their identity in this country? A number spoke of still feeling that sense of difference that had dominated their growing up years. In spite of the near absence of cultural traits clearly distinguishing them from New Zealanders, they have remained, in their own estimation as well as in the eyes of New Zealanders, almost, but not quite, New Zealanders. Jonathon:

I guess it is a tendency for refugees to finish up without a complete sense of homeland in either place. I think this is certainly so in my case. While I regard myself as a New Zealander and am completely assimilated here, it is not quite the same as being born here. But on the other hand, I am sure I wouldn't feel comfortable living in Germany. To a certain extent home remains where you lived your childhood years.

Hannah :

Do I feel like a New Zealander? No. I still feel, to some extent, like a stranger here, which is really weird as I married a New Zealander and I have lived here for fifty-three years. I sometimes think about what it would have been like if I had grown up in Berlin. I am happy living in New Zealand but I do not feel like a New Zealander because I think differently and my background is different. Yet in Germany, I felt like a New Zealander - like a New Zealand visitor who happened to understand German.

Agnes:

The strange thing is that when you leave a country and grow up in another one, you lose the identity of the place where you come from and even though you try to become integrated into the new country, you never fully succeed. I certainly would love to have lost my accent, which I never managed to do. The first thing people ask is, 'where do

you come from?' That would be one of the most annoying questions people could ask me!

So you are a person in no man's land. No matter how hard you try, you are not a Kiwi. But in Hungary, you do not feel Hungarian.

Eva 'supposes' New Zealand is home because:

... here I feel comfortable and have friends, a home and family, and yet, somehow there is this very strong attachment to Italy. When I am in Italy or when I hear anything about Italy, the people and the scenery and the architecture and the art really strike a chord in me. Yet, I do not feel at home in Italy when I am there despite the strong emotional bond.

Also, I have a foreign accent which I have not been able to get rid of, yet English is the only language I speak with any kind of facility. My Italian is far from perfect and my German is very limited. If I meet someone new, sometimes I might be asked where I come from. I usually say Wellington. Although my foreign accent does not worry me that much, I tend not to get up at large public meetings to speak because of it. I also tend not to let myself in for speaking on radio programmes for fear of being labelled a Russian spy or something like that. But in many ways I do feel I belong in New Zealand because I am very much involved in politics and in grass roots movements of various kinds. Yet, unlike my son who feels himself to be a Pacific Islander, I feel myself to be a European.

A variety of things - foreign accents, being questioned about their foreign names, being asked, 'where do you come from?' - occasionally reminded respondents both that they are 'not quite New Zealanders' and that they remain a 'bit different' in the eyes of New Zealanders. For Mary, it was the mention of the war which brought an awareness that her experience was different from other New Zealanders'. Generally though, Mary sees herself as a Jewish/Catholic New Zealander. Her identity as a Hungarian is virtually non-existent: 'I was a refugee when I came, but I am very much a New Zealander now'.

However, you did not need to have a foreign name or a slightly unusual accent to seem somehow not entirely a New Zealander. There are also some other difficult to define, subtle ways in which some New Zealand-born children of refugees, in spite of striving to belong, have remained outsiders, to some extent. Strangers to a culture are forced, if they wish to become part of the mainstream, to learn cultural nuances by imitation. Consequently, their social behaviour may retain a curiously mechanical quality. It looks as though they are playing a part. One of the respondents in Berghahn's study spoke of this explicitly. 'I have a hell of a lot of Englishness in me, but I am not English. I play the Englishman sometimes ...'³⁴

Renate can sometimes almost forget that she is the child of refugees - it is not something she thinks about most of the time - until again someone reminds her: 'You become aware that you nearly are "one of us", a real New Zealander. In many ways you are, but you are not quite'. To illustrate, Renate recounted an incident which took place at a meeting she was attending with colleagues. During the course of a discussion on a controversial subject, she spoke out firmly, thereby putting herself 'out on a limb':

Later on, when we stood up to go, the most senior of my colleagues present said: 'Somebody had to speak out. I am glad it was you, Renate, because any of the rest of us New Zealanders would have found it very difficult'. I was absolutely floored. I thought: he doesn't even think I am a New Zealander! He is someone I have worked with for the last thirty years and he thinks I can actually stand up and say something because I am not local. He meant: 'it is good that you spoke out because you are not one of us, really, though you look a bit like one of us'. I found the whole thing totally beyond me.

Despite this incident and its implications, Renate was 'utterly stunned by that remark', because generally she does feel 'at home' in New Zealand. For Renate, belonging in New Zealand means that finally as an adult she is as familiar with the culture as anyone else.

³⁴Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, page 244.

I don't have to ask anymore what anything means. I know what Anzac Day is. I know what all those weird things are that I didn't use to know. I even know about Masonic Lodges.

Renate also feels she belongs because, having lived in New Zealand nearly all her life, what happens is that 'wherever you go you know somebody. Having been educated here gives you a network of friends, acquaintances and colleagues'. Yet at times, her father's warning, 'be careful, they might not stand by you', intrudes. The betrayal by their friends and colleagues was something Renate's parents never came to terms with. Her father's message qualifies Renate's sense of belonging in New Zealand. If it came to the crunch, would her colleagues stand by her?

Others also spoke of having a sense of belonging derived from familiarity with New Zealand culture and of an 'at home' feeling based on having established social networks. Jane lived for some years in England and returned to New Zealand with a firm conviction that she belonged in New Zealand: 'although there are all these undercurrents in my background, New Zealand is home because it is where I was brought up, and where I understand the nuances of the culture'.

Robert's comments echoed those of Renate. 'In all sorts of ways, yes, I belong here. I can walk down Lambton Quay [one of central Wellington's main streets] or go to a concert and I know half the people there'. However, this is as far as it goes for Robert. The sense of alienation he had as a teenager has not disappeared. He has adjusted to New Zealand, but that is all. As a Holocaust survivor, he came to New Zealand with a very strong sense of his own identity.

You could have put my parents down in any place, and probably me as well, no matter how inhospitable, and we could survive. We have our own set of values and feel pretty comfortable being who we are and what we are. We came here with no roots and didn't want to grow roots. I could pack up tomorrow and go away

Anne too believes she could 'live anywhere'. Similar comments were made by a number of interviewees, echoing the words of the respondent in the article about refugees' children in the *New Zealand Listener*:

There are things about me I know come from the war. I've got no

Vivienne spoke of a 'chronic discomfort' with being in New Zealand, despite having grown up here, working here and being politically involved here. At some level, she considers herself very much not a New Zealander. Vivienne described strong feelings of 'belonging nowhere'.

Since childhood, Lucie has had a similar perception. Her life has been shaped by a sense of herself as an outsider in almost every respect.

Contrary to common belief which is that these things get better as you get older, they get worse. Somehow the older I got, the more I came to the feeling that after all I didn't want to become part of this [New Zealand] tradition. I felt I did not belong, and the longer I tried, the more I realized I wasn't going to become part of it.

Even among the kindest and friendliest New Zealanders, Lucie has encountered barriers which could not be overcome. The slow realization that nothing is ever really going to change has been 'devastating' and 'demoralizing'. What Lucie has not been able to come to terms with is that:

... your problems stay with you; that adjustments you have tried to make pretty well all your life are never going to be completed; that no matter how hard you try certain things are never going to work out.

In the experience of trying to become a New Zealander, I must admit that I have failed. Years ago, I was prepared to go on battling. Nowadays, I am not prepared to do so.

The social, cultural and religious differences in the backgrounds of her parents increased Lucie's feelings of alienation.

I am not able to say: 'O.K., I'll toss in this business of becoming a New Zealander, retreat into my own four walls and go back to being a European, for what sort of a European am I? The differences between my father's background and my mother's were just too great. I'm neither the one or the other. The optimist would say: oh, aren't you lucky, you've got a whole series of traditions to pick from, to use, to

be a part of, to draw on. In some ways, that is correct. But it is the negative aspects that have affected me more powerfully.

Although rootlessness, alienation and the sense of belonging nowhere were frequently spoken of, other views were also expressed. Helen, for example, has never felt an outsider.

New Zealand is my home. I love this country. I had a good look round the rest of the world and loved the architecture, history, cultures, but I was happy to get back to New Zealand again.

John too commented positively: 'Yes, I do feel like a New Zealander. I certainly don't feel like a stranger or an outsider'. Like Robert, John is happy in the knowledge that when he walks twenty metres down Lambton Quay, he will meet someone he knows. 'This is my pond here and I swim around with the other fish and I am pretty comfortable with them'.

Sometimes a New Zealand identity was confirmed or consolidated by travel. This was so for Sonny:

After returning to New Zealand from my second trip overseas to Europe and Israel, I identified strongly with New Zealand and decided I wanted to be politically active to try to make New Zealand the way I think it ought to be.

A number of others made similar comments. Miriam:

Being overseas made me feel that it is extremely important that we fight for the land, for the environment of New Zealand. We have to preserve it because once it is gone, and a lot of it is already gone, it is gone for good. Those attitudes were confirmed by what I saw overseas - unswimmable rivers and so on. To me, New Zealand is a country worth fighting for.

Marriage to New Zealanders also sometimes helped to foster a sense of belonging. In *A Small Person Far Away*, Anna's ambivalence about belonging (described in the passage at the beginning of this section) is eased by the sight of her British husband, Richard, who has come to meet her plane.

... beyond the partition she could see Richard.

He was looking past her at a group of people just coming in, and for a moment she watched him as though he were a stranger. A slight, dark-haired man, carelessly dressed with a quick, intelligent face. English. Well - more Irish really. But not a refugee. He looked alone and unencumbered. He's lived here all his life, she thought. He's never spoken anything but English. Papa died years before I even met him. She suddenly felt weighed down with past words and places and people. Could she really belong with anyone so unburdened?

The customs officer made white chalk marks on her suitcase, and at the same moment Richard turned and saw her.

'Anna'.

She grabbed her case and ran towards him. As she reached him, she saw that he looked tired and worried. She dropped the case and fell into his arms.

'Darling', she said.

He said, 'Thank God you are back'.

For the first time since she had left him, she felt all of one piece. There were no more doubts. This was where she belonged. She was home.³⁷

In Tom's view, some of the children of refugees tried unsuccessfully to resolve the problem of rootlessness by marrying New Zealanders. 'This is possibly what I was trying to do when I married my first wife, but it doesn't work. Marriage is difficult enough as it is; when people come from different cultural backgrounds, it is all the harder'.

³⁷ Kerr, *A Small Person Far Away*, page 190.

Some of the first generation refugees (interviewed in *A Small Price to Pay*) spoke of marriages which had taken place not for 'self-enhancing' reasons but rather, perhaps, to recreate a sense of belonging to a family.³⁸ Marriage choices made by refugees who were in their teens when they arrived in New Zealand were similarly sometimes 'survival decisions'. Eva:

I think at the age of twenty when I got engaged, it was just another bid to belong and to get the security I had lacked throughout my childhood. This was not a very good reason for getting married and was in part responsible for the failure of the marriage.

I think what attracted me to him (my husband) in the first place was the fact that he was so happy-go-lucky and carefree, which was something so foreign to me with my background; and he probably didn't realize the insecurity of my previous life and the effect which it had had on my personality and development. So, as the years went by, I suppose we just didn't really understand each other's needs because our backgrounds had been so different.

The marriage choices of the more observant Jews in the study were influenced by additional factors. Marrying 'out' of the Jewish faith had been an issue either for them personally or because their parents had disapproved. Intermarriage has always been controversial for religious Jews because it has been widely felt that the transmission of Jewish traditions in the family was integral to the survival of Judaism. Since the Holocaust and the decimation of Jewry, the preservation of Judaism has been regarded as particularly crucial. This has implications not only for marrying 'out' but for the rearing of children.

There is also a degree of wariness regarding intermarriage that is shared by religious and non-religious Jews and arises from a belief that anti-Semitic feelings will surface at times of marital tension and that differences in cultural tradition and religious beliefs will be points of stress in intermarriages. Vivienne's mother, for example, before Vivienne's marriage to a Non-Jewish New Zealander issued the warning: 'One day he will throw it in your face, about being Jewish!'

³⁸For example, Ilse Macaskill's comment in *Beaglehole, A Small Price to Pay*, page 125.

Only a minority of the people in the study spoke of their marriages. No attempt will be made, therefore, to generalize from the few comments made. Some found partners with similar backgrounds to themselves, others did not do so. It is not possible to make sensible observations about the connection between interviewees' assimilation and choices made about marriage partners or about the relationship between marriage failure or success and cultural differences in the background of the partners. Where marriages broke down, there were usually a number of causes additional to cultural differences which could have been responsible. Sometimes, differences in background appeared to enhance the happiness of partners in already happy marriages.

The responses of interviewees to questions relating to belonging in New Zealand were as diverse as their responses to other issues raised in this study. As before, there is little to distinguish those interviewees who felt strongly that they have remained in some ways outsiders in New Zealand from those who considered that on the whole they belonged in that country. There is considerable continuity between childhood and adolescent perceptions of alienation and marginality and adult perceptions. The need to integrate a Jewish identity with other identities was a complicating factor for most of the interviewees as children, adolescents and as adults. It is probably no coincidence that Helen (with a Christian background) is one of a small group of interviewees who was aware of little or no feelings of alienation and marginality.

However, it is important not to overstate the extent of the alienation and marginality experienced by interviewees as adults. The majority of people in the study, in fact, spoke as much of their sense of belonging in New Zealand based on familiarity with the culture and on the possession of established social networks as of alienation and marginality. But they qualified their statements about belonging with comments that conveyed their awareness that in some intangible and difficult to nail down ways they have remained 'not quite', not 'real' New Zealanders.

The Third Generation

Julia is aware of a connection between her sense of obligation to have children and feelings of loss related to the deaths in Nazi Europe of many of her relatives. Jenny married a man with a similar background to her own. Their children have had a strongly Jewish upbringing.

As I got older, I definitely felt that I had a duty to reproduce and bring up children who knew what it meant to be Jewish, who knew what had happened in the past and who would carry on the traditions that people had died for. I always wanted a big family, but I also had a sentimental attachment to the fact that six million had died and I had produced six children, one for each million that died. It is silly but it is something that goes through my mind.

I felt a strong obligation to let the children know not only about the traditions of Judaism, but about the suffering, the wrongs, the anti-Semitism, the terrible things that other people had gone through ... The children's bed-time stories have often been stories of the war, of the Holocaust. These were not comfortable, easy, they-lived-happily-ever-after stories. Sometimes as we read to them, we would all sit crying about the things that had happened - children who had tried to join the Partisans and been killed. We grieved together with our children. We have felt that our children should be aware of the reality. Jewish history is full of tragedy. Our children have grown up with that, along with the nursery rhymes and the stories of the princess marrying the prince and riding off on a white horse.

Jenny herself did not have an observant (religious) upbringing. By giving her children both a religious education and one which is very focused on recent Jewish history, she aimed to give 'the Holocaust meaning, to ensure that the suffering was not in vain ...'

Another important reason for giving the children a Jewish identity was to ensure that if there was at any time an anti-Semitic wave or persecution of Jews, my children would be strong in their Judaism; they would be 'punished' for something that was part of them. One of the worst injustices, it seemed to me, happened to the people who were carted off to concentration camps and hadn't realized they were Jewish, or hadn't felt or identified with being Jewish at all. They were receiving the same fate as other Jews; they were losing everything for something which hadn't given them anything.

Such views were echoed by a number in the study. Although interviewees diverged on the extent of the Jewish education they had decided to provide for their children (and some wished to give a Jewish cultural/historical education, not a Jewish religious education), most concurred in acknowledging the importance of their children knowing about and having some understanding of their Jewish heritage. This was regarded as important particularly in the light of the occasional incidents of anti-Semitism the children had already been exposed to.

Some interviewees spoke of the problems of transmitting a Jewish identity to the next generation in a country such as New Zealand, with a small Jewish population and strong assimilationist tendencies. This was particularly problematic for those who wished to inculcate in their children a secular rather than a religious Jewish identity.

Those without Jewish partners spoke of the difficulties of teaching their children about Jewishness. Parents whose own upbringing had failed to provide a sufficient grounding in Jewish history and traditions mentioned similar difficulties. Miriam acknowledged that she simply did not know enough herself to pass on knowledge of Judaism to her children. 'I would like my children to know more about Judaism than they do, but I don't know the traditions very well and I haven't made an effort'.

Eva's attitudes are different from many in the study. Her views are closer to those of the first generation, which is not unexpected given her age on arrival in New Zealand. She did not talk very much to her son about the family history or about his Jewish background. 'It just doesn't enter into my scheme of things. We talk about politics, economics, tramping and things like that'. She had thought that he was hardly aware of his Jewish background until one day:

... he really surprised me by telling me that there were three Jews in his class. I asked who they were and he mentioned the names of two other boys and then said that one was himself. Well, I suppose he must have known that I was Jewish and that he was half-Jewish, but I hadn't realized that he thought about it. I had never expected him to feel Jewish. I had never talked about Jewishness.

The lack of emphasis given by Eva to background and family history is unusual among the interviewees in this study. A number of others were enormously interested in

just those things.³⁹ Apart from wishing to ensure their children knew something of Judaism and expressions of concern about assimilation from a few interviewees, this was the other significant thread in the second generation's aspirations and hopes regarding the third. It focused on roots, family connections, the sense of belonging to a wider group than the nuclear family. Fibich, in *Latecomers* cannot 'bear' to see his son's solitariness.

He wanted to give him roots, a family, an inheritance, more than he had ever wanted such things for himself. He wanted for his son to be a man among men, and not simply the terrified creature he knew himself to be.⁴⁰

The attempt to uncover the past for his son's sake provides the motive for Fibich's return journey to Germany. As a result of that trip, Fibich is able to leave his son a 'memoir', which contains his son's 'history' and as much of Fibich's as he can remember.⁴¹

Berghahn cites the case of a second generation refugee Peter, whose interest in the history of his family was triggered off when he first went to Germany to look at the district where a large part of his family had come from. He visited the houses and the cemeteries and decided to establish the family tree.

He has worked at it ever since and has been able to trace the family back for twenty generations to the fifteenth century ... His excitement over and enthusiasm for his discoveries was quite infectious and it was easy to feel what it means to him to see himself and his family so firmly rooted in history.

Peter justified his preoccupation with ancestry with the comment, 'Since I have so few family, I have created a family for myself'.⁴²

Determinedly setting about creating a substitute family is what a number of the interviewees did in various ways. Some accepted the losses and gave up with some

³⁹This interest is world-wide. In Tel Aviv, a computerized collection of family trees is helping Jews around the world trace their roots and locate family members who have survived the Holocaust; *Evening Post*, 27 April 1989.

⁴⁰Brookner, *Latecomers*, page 200.

⁴¹*ibid.*, page 247.

⁴²Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, page 242.

sadness on their Central or Eastern European Jewish heritage. Hitler had destroyed those roots by destroying their families. The huge gap was filled by focusing on their children's other roots - on their New Zealand heritage. Having a family, and in some cases a large family, was another way of trying to fill the gap. Mary who decided to have six children commented, 'I like the feel of having a lot of my people around me'.

As discussed in Chapter 7, finding scattered family around the world was also a solution for some. Cathy made contact with remnants of her family on her father's side and gathered information to pass onto her children to ensure that they have a sense of their European heritage which Cathy herself received only an inkling of.

Ernie took his children around the world to meet dispersed family and to look at places that had been significant to members of the family who had died.

I am very keen for my children to experience their heritage. We drove through Germany and I talked to the children, pointing out the affluence, the technology. And I said to them, 'you know where we are, don't you?' I pointed out that we were near Dachau. I said to the children, 'remember this country'.

Is the third generation interested in such matters? Is it easier for the second generation to talk to the third about the past than it was for the first to talk to the second? Are the third generation entirely New Zealanders? What do they owe to their background? A comprehensive study of the third generation is required to answer such questions. The brief comments which follow are based on the observations of second generation parents and reflect the preoccupations and aspirations of the commentators rather than convey the character of the third generation.

Very diverse views were expressed. Regarding talking about the past, Mary found that although she did not mind talking, her children did not ask questions. This is not surprising in view of the fact that, unlike most of the other interviewees, Mary directly experienced the horrors of the war:

When the children were a bit older, I found that they had deliberately not asked questions about my parents and the war because what I did tell them was told in such a way that they felt that it was upsetting me to talk about it. I remember finding one of my daughters in tears one

day. She was five or six at the time. I asked her, 'what is the matter?' And she said, 'I am so sorry about your mother'.

Some second generation saw the third as owing virtually nothing to their foreign or Jewish background. The process of assimilation seemed to be complete. Others observed only the very slightest remnants of a Central or Eastern European-Jewish background. Some regarded the children as firmly anchored in New Zealand whilst others expected that they would one day wish to emigrate. As Robert commented: 'The amazing thing is that my children feel no roots here either'.

Regarding interest in and awareness of their background, there was also great diversity. Some children appeared to show little interest, while others have travelled to Europe in search of information. Some have visited the concentration camps; others have searched through records in Europe and in Israel. Some children appear almost obsessively interested in the Holocaust while for others it has remained a remote aspect of their background. Some children have turned to Orthodox Judaism, while others have no or little connection with the Jewish religion. Some intend to emigrate to Israel, others have no links with that country.

Parental attitudes regarding the Holocaust, Judaism, Israel, a Continental European background and New Zealand have clearly influenced the third generation in complex ways. Further research is needed, however, before valid observations can be made about the ambiguities of assimilation in the children of the children of refugees.

Returning, in conclusion, to the second generation - to refugee children and children of refugees - given their evident diversity, is it possible to make sensible general comments about them in their adult lives? Do significant shared characteristics remain? Is there a bond between the adult offspring of refugees? Many interviewees were hesitant and cautious about claiming that their tastes, perceptions and attitudes were in any way common to other children of refugees. Certainly, some are aware of shared problems. But as one interviewee pointed out, 'having common problems doesn't always create a common bond. Sometimes they repel'. She feels uncomfortable with other children of refugees partly because they display some of her own problems.

Those who are aware of a common bond between themselves and other children of refugees had difficulty defining its characteristics. Others emphasized that whatever they shared with other children of refugees (interests for example), they shared also with their

New Zealand friends. There appeared to be little, apart perhaps from certain attitudes about politics and society, that was exclusively related to a common background.

What were these attitudes? This too is difficult to state with any precision. The most striking characteristic of many of the interviewees was their lack of adherence to dogma, whether of the 'right' or the 'left', and their reluctance to identify issues in terms of 'right' or 'left' of the political spectrum if this meant misrepresentation by oversimplification. That is not to say that interviewees lacked convictions, but their convictions tended to be less simple and less dogmatic than those of their New Zealand peers.

The ambiguous and contradictory feelings, the reservations and qualifications about religion, cultural heritage and ethnic identity expressed by many second generation refugees is also striking. Most remarkable of all is that their successful integration into New Zealand society in terms of work (many are skilled workers or professionals and a number of interviewees had held or were holding political office) and their relatively high socio-economic position notwithstanding, a number of second generation refugees showed mixed feelings and a degree of uncertainty about their place in New Zealand. While some among them feel firmly rooted in that country, others are very much aware of being marginal people.

There was no simple progression from Continental European refugee child to New Zealand adult with a Continental European, Jewish background. The 'ambiguities of assimilation' of the title of this chapter refer, therefore, to the complex, changing and ambivalent perceptions of interviewees about their Continental European background, their Jewishness and their identity as New Zealanders. These ambiguities are particularly apparent in the situation of those people in the study who have renounced most aspects of Judaism yet continue to identify strongly as Jewish, in those who are almost indistinguishable from other New Zealanders yet feel that they are in some ways Continental Europeans still, and in those who have moved away from their Continental European heritage (sometimes also their Jewish heritage) and struggled to fit into the New Zealand world only to become not 'quite', not 'real' New Zealanders.

The theme of 'belonging nowhere', especially for those who have lost or almost lost not only their Continental European but also their Jewish heritage and identity, has dominated this discussion of refugee children and children of refugees as adults. For a few, nowhere is quite a pleasant place to belong to. For others, it is the losses inherent in this condition which remain paramount.

CONCLUSION

'We made our children outsiders merely by being ourselves foreign'.

'We will be strangers all our lives but for the children it is different; they are completely New Zealanders'.

'The second generation have gained something both ways - they feel at home in New Zealand and yet we did give them something extra'.

'We also gave them trouble by being different'.

Some of the fears, doubts and hopes expressed by first generation refugees from Hitler about their children are reflected in the above statements.¹ This study, which has examined selected aspects of the life of second generation refugees, is a continuation of the writer's account in *A Small Price to Pay* of the early years of refugees from Hitler in New Zealand. It has focused on those who were children when they arrived in New Zealand and on the New Zealand-born children of refugees. (Both groups are termed second generation in the study.) The experience of growing up in New Zealand with a different cultural background, in families trying to rebuild shattered lives and come to terms with the losses of the past has been examined. What conclusions, if any, can be arrived at?

Firstly, the findings of this study contradict a common assumption that children usually adjust without difficulty to the stresses of migration and of being refugees, and are transformed with ease into indistinguishable members of the host population. Some interviewees did make the transition relatively easily, but others could not do so.

Secondly, this investigation of the lives of second generation refugees has shown that there are important differences between the migration experiences of adults and children, and between the first and the second generation. The adults who comprised the

¹They are the observations of four first generation refugees interviewed in Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, but the above comments are not included in that book; tape recordings of the interviews are in possession of the writer.

first generation, having survived and escaped against all odds from Nazi Europe and having succeeded through luck, contacts and money in obtaining entry to New Zealand, were faced primarily with a struggle to make all the major and minor adjustments necessary to live in a strange country. Worn down by persecution and homelessness, grateful above all for sanctuary in New Zealand, they tried (with varying success) to put aside the calamities of the past in order to make a new life in New Zealand.

The second generation, by contrast, took the notion of New Zealand as sanctuary almost entirely for granted. No longer grateful merely for having a country, they were preoccupied with other matters. These have been explored in this study. The second generation grew up with a foot in several worlds - the refugee, the Jewish and the New Zealand worlds. These were explored in Chapter 2. The efforts of children and adolescents to move between different worlds and adjust and fit into the New Zealand world were examined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. A few interviewees felt enriched by the resulting cultural diversity, while others felt odd and were confused by their situation. For a number of people in the study, the implication of being located between different worlds was a feeling of being outsiders in all of them. A sense of marginality and alienation arising out of such perceptions has been one of the themes of this study.

Linked with the sense of being out of place was uncertainty about how to behave in and connect with the world outside the family. A number of the interviewees found themselves unable to integrate adequately the social norms of either the New Zealand world or the refugee/Jewish one. For some, such uncertainties have persisted. As adults, although they eventually learned to imitate the behaviour taken for granted by other New Zealanders, a slight but pervasive discomfort regarding their bona fide status as New Zealanders has remained. As discussed in Chapter 8, being a New Zealander has, to an extent, become a role that is assumed rather than a fully integrated aspect of their identity. It is partly in this sense that some interviewees have remained 'not quite New Zealanders' in their own eyes and sometimes also in the estimation of the 'real' New Zealanders.

Another issue which affected the second generation differently from the first was the connection between past and present. For the parents, the effects of dislocation were more straightforward. Their formative years having been spent in Europe, they either looked back to their earlier lives or decided to try not to look back. By contrast, the Continental European world for the second generation was for the most part an imaginary world filtered through the recollections, behaviours and attitudes of their families. They observed as children the adults' love-hate relationship with their former countries. They

saw their parents yearning for the people and landscapes of their youth, but came to understand that these feelings were inseparable from the harsh reality that the beloved countries (especially in the case of Germany and Austria) were the lands of murderers. What children of refugees had to come to terms with in respect of the past contrasts strongly with the experiences of other immigrant groups as portrayed in the literature. In Amelia Batistich's autobiographical novel, *Sing Vila in the Mountains*,² for example, Dalmatia is a secure and comforting dream for the protagonist Stella, who is finding her immediate New Zealand world puzzling and contradictory. There was no such comfort or security to be derived from the past for children of refugees.³

'Forget the past'; 'always remember the past'; 'New Zealand is a wonderful country'; 'New Zealand is lacking' - the second generation were given contradictory and ambiguous messages by the first. Nonetheless, whatever the attitudes encountered in their families, they needed somehow to integrate this background with their identity as New Zealanders. The need to do so was sharpened by the discontinuity and the severing of roots brought about by persecution, war and migration.

Relating to such a past, to a Jewish background and above all to a history of persecution culminating in the Holocaust, were crucial issues for many second generation refugees. Historical memory is central to group identity. Some of the shared assumptions arising out of belonging to a 'community' of the persecuted were looked at in Chapter 8, and Chapter 7 focused particularly on how perspectives of the past were transmitted in refugee families. An anecdote related by one of the interviewees serves as an illustration of the attitudes prevalent in such a 'community'. 'My father used to be very bitter about the past. He used not to buy anything German for many years. One day he finally bought some German shoes and said that this was O. K. because you walk on them'.

The diverse ways that attitudes to the past, however they were expressed, affected the relationship between parents and their children have been examined in this study. This relationship, never simple, developed additional complexities in small, enclosed, stressed refugee families. Guilt and resentments arising out of earlier losses were sometimes very strong in these families. The unfocused, irrational sense of responsibility for events beyond their control that some of the children developed in relation to their parents is referred to by one of the characters in Judith Kerr's *A Small Person Far Away*. On one

²Amelia Batistich, *Sing Vila in the Mountains*, Auckland 1987.

³ Margot Schwass's review of the novel is relevant to this discussion; Margot Schwass, 'Dalmatia in Dargaville', *New Zealand Listener*, 20 February 1988, page 69.

occasion, in response to Anna's guilt and anxiety in the face of her mother's post-war struggles to cope with the effects of the past, a friend of Anna's mother says to the young woman: 'Anyway, what can you do about us? Make the Nazis not have happened? You going to put us all back in 1932?'⁴

The relationship between the generations was also complicated and sometimes undermined by language barriers. These were discussed in Chapter 6. The inability of parents and children in some of the families to communicate, not only about the Holocaust but about anything other than mundane household matters, inflicted pain and created burdens. The lack of a common language with which to express ideas and unusual experiences was combined with the fact that the knowledge of immigrant parents was largely irrelevant in the new country, or at least considered so by their children. This meant that parents could not help the next generation in their struggles with getting on in the New Zealand world. As discussed in Chapter 5, these patterns became particularly marked during adolescence, giving rise to a uniquely painful kind of generation gap.

The themes of this study - the need of children and adolescents to belong, of refugees to put down new roots, the relationship between parents and children, the experience of being Jewish in a Christian country, the self-image and self-perceptions of marginal people with a background of persecution - have been considered in relation to a particular location, New Zealand. Three points need to be stressed about this. First, as described in Chapter 2, the pressures to assimilate were very strong in New Zealand and the impact of these pressures was increased by the smallness of the refugee communities affected. Second, New Zealand was not a perfect haven for the refugees and their children. They encountered a country intolerant and suspicious of cultural differences. Such attitudes were particularly prevalent in the thirties, forties and fifties but continued also into the sixties and early seventies. However, the third point which needs emphasis is that New Zealand was also a country in which the children of Jewish refugees grew up almost free from anti-Semitism.

For many, parents and children, the assimilationist pressures in New Zealand were in line with their own inclinations. The first generation were usually disinclined to perpetuate their Central or Eastern European languages or other aspects of their former way of life. They wanted the differences between themselves and New Zealanders to become as invisible as possible. Parents were motivated by the wish to ensure their children

⁴ Kerr, *A Small Person Far Away*, pages 179-180.

belonged in New Zealand in a way they themselves could never do, as well as by insecurity arising out of their earlier experiences in Hitler's Europe. Assimilation, they believed, would best ensure their children's safety.

How assimilated have second generation refugees in this study in fact become? How well adapted and adjusted are they to life in New Zealand? What kind of New Zealanders are they? These questions were examined in Chapter 8. It is evident that most second generation refugees have become assimilated to the extent that they are almost invisible as a distinct minority group. In terms of their occupations and the extent of their participation in New Zealand's political, economic and cultural institutions, it is clear that they are in no sense marginal people located outside the mainstream of New Zealand life. However, in their own estimation, some have remained to an extent outsiders.

There were costs associated with assimilation, whether successful or not, and these have also been considered in this study. For some of the second generation, as for the first, the privilege of living in a country which gave them refuge and in which the incidence of anti-Semitism was low was a small price to pay for the loss of a cultural identity that had brought mainly pain and suffering. Others, however, have regrets as adults. They mourn the Jewish childhood they did not have and the knowledge of Jewish religion or culture they did not acquire. They expressed sorrow at the loss of the languages, the customs, the recipes, and other symbols of a different way of life. They struggled to find, sometimes entirely without success, visible manifestations in their current attitudes and way of life of that different background which had so embarrassed them as children. What has remained of it, for the most part, is an internal, invisible, intangible perception of difference.

For the people in this study, what is of paramount significance: the gains or the losses inherent in the second generation immigrant/refugee experience? How have they been affected by them as adults? Although gains exist, the scars of the past have not entirely healed. A sense of loss, often buried, pervades the lives of the adults. A reviewer of a recent book by immigrant writer, V. S. Naipaul, wrote that 'anger animates' much of his work - 'the anger of the displaced and dispossessed'.⁵ To a certain extent, anger of the same kind, sometimes mild, sometimes strong, smoulders in the recollections of the people in this study. It is, however, anger that is mixed with a greater sadness.

⁵*Evening Post*, 4 February 1989, Eric Brenstrum reviewing *The Enigma of Arrival*, by V. S. Naipaul.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES¹

The European-born

Chaim (not his real name)

Chaim gropes for clear memories of his Polish childhood, but although the details continue to elude him, he has a strong sense that those years have remained part of him. Certain memories are particularly ingrained: the music, the gestures of the people and the smells of the food: 'I was in someone's home for dinner in Israel a few years ago. When I tasted some jellied marrow and two or three other foods that I have never had in New Zealand, tears came into my eyes because this was what my mother used to make'.

Chaim was born in 1927 in a small village on the border of Poland and Russia. His mother's family was very religious - his maternal grandfather was a rabbi - but his mother's brothers became strong communists. Pervasive anti-Semitism made his life difficult as a young school boy. Towards the end of the 1930s, it became even harder for Jewish people in Poland. Chaim: 'Then, in 1938, a most unusual thing happened. A man, a Jew, came from New Zealand looking for children to bring out to his country. He had brought out twelve children in 1935. In 1938, he brought out another group of children and I was one of them'.

The New Zealander was looking for orphans but because one of the boys who was supposed to go was not able to do so, Chaim was offered his place. 'My mother said, "I want you to go. This is an opportunity". She saw the situation in Poland. I remember kneeling down before my grandfather and him placing his hands on my head, blessing me. Then I was on the boat with eleven or twelve other children. I was ten years old, almost eleven'.

In New Zealand, Chaim, along with the other children from Poland, grew up in a home for Jewish children established by Annie and Max Deckston, a couple who came to New Zealand from Lithuania in 1897. The home was in Newtown, Wellington. The Deckstons had intended to arrange for the immigration of more children but New Zealand's restrictive policies prevented this.

¹Three interviewees preferred not to be included in these notes.

Chaim received only two letters from his family once he was in New Zealand. 'Then the war came and I never heard from my family again. My mother, my father and my sister were killed during the war'.

At the age of fifteen, Chaim left school, left the Deckston Home and became apprenticed as a toolmaker. Marriage and children came later and a change of profession from tradesman to businessman.

Eva

Eva was born in Chemnitz, Germany in 1925. She came to New Zealand with her mother and brother at the age of fourteen.

When Hitler came to power, the family left Germany and settled in Florence. 'We rented a beautiful villa, probably from the eleventh or twelfth century and my mother started taking in paying guests - singers, artists, poets, writers. It really was a most interesting life for everybody. I went to a German speaking school. There were Nazis at that school, but I wasn't singled out as a Jew. The headmaster was very good and certainly not anti-Semitic.

When in 1939 the family was told that they had to leave Italy in six months because they were Jews, Eva can remember no feeling about the situation at all. 'I just accepted the fact. I must have suppressed all my feelings about it because when we came to New Zealand in 1940, I never gave Italy another thought. I stopped taking any interest in the war or in anything that went on overseas. Yet years later I began to feel a great nostalgia for Italy and things Italian which has never left since it first welled up in me. This happened only when I allowed myself to feel after my retirement. Until then I had been too busy to feel anything much'.

In New Zealand, Eva completed her schooling (in Christchurch), went to university, trained as a librarian and later as a social worker. She has one adult son.

George

George was born at Przemyśl, in Poland, in 1944 during the German occupation. His father had a Greek Orthodox background, his mother an Orthodox Jewish one. 'My father saved my mother from deportation to concentration camp and is essentially responsible for her and a number of other Jews being alive today'.

George's earliest memories are of Vienna where his parents fled before the Russians' advance. He was then two to three years old. He has later memories of the displaced persons' camp in Austria where the family lived for three years. He remembers going to the local school outside the camp: 'If you are brought up in a refugee camp, that is all you know. You don't know you are a refugee, you don't know the meaning of the word. You think living in a camp is the most normal thing in the world'.

His parents, however, were desperate to leave the camp and emigrate. Finally, New Zealand accepted the family in 1952. George was eight years old when they arrived. His New Zealand life began at yet another camp - the refugee camp at Pahiatua.

Although as a child he hated moving from one place to another, George became a dentist in part because that was a career that ensured mobility. In his early twenties, he left New Zealand permanently. Currently, George lives with his wife and children in Australia.

Hannah and Renate

Hannah and Renate's parents came to New Zealand in 1935 with their two little children. Hannah was born in Berlin in 1932; Renate in 1934. Their father's family was originally from an area known as the Polish corridor, while their mother was a fifth generation Berliner. Both parents were doctors.

By 1934, their father was frequently treating people who had been beaten up by the Gestapo - homosexuals, Jews and socialists. Although the rest of the family still hoped in 1935 that Hitler was a passing phase, Hannah and Renate's parents disagreed and decided to leave Germany. They were very relieved to be able to come to New Zealand. Arriving with ten dollars in their pockets, they settled in a small rural community near Wellington.

In the thirties and forties, there was little understanding in that community of what it was that Jewish refugees had been escaping from. Hannah: 'In 1940 when Paris fell, the commander of the nearby army camp, who was one of my father's patients, came to him and said: "Congratulations! Paris has fallen"'.

Their father's struggle to earn a living and at the same time requalify in medicine was the family's major preoccupation during their early years in New Zealand. However, as a child, Hannah was not aware of the difficulties her parents were facing regarding language, the need to make ends meet and the certain amount of anti-foreigner prejudice in the small community where her father established his practice. Hannah: 'They enjoyed

what they could of their life in New Zealand. They were not discouraged by the bigotry and prejudice they sometimes encountered and eventually won people over. My father worked hard for that community and was the best doctor you could imagine. Most people appreciated him eventually. If you have a child who is very sick, and the doctor comes up with the right diagnosis, which he did, you don't care where he comes from'.

Hannah trained as a physiotherapist and is currently in private practice. She is married to a New Zealand journalist and has four adult children. Renate is in the medical profession. She has two adult children.

John

John was born in 1935 in Berlin. His parents were originally from two small towns in Westphalia, which, in relation to their size, had considerable Jewish populations. In the early 1930s, John's parents moved to Berlin where his father worked as a service manager in a motor car company and his mother was a housewife. In John's view, his parents were typical German Jews, sensing no conflict between simultaneously being patriotic Germans and practising Jews.

By the time John was born, a good deal of the anti-Semitic legislation in Germany was in place. He has no memory of those years in Berlin during which the situation of Jews rapidly deteriorated. His first recollection, in 1939, is of the heaving of the Tasman Sea as the family crossed over from Sydney to Wellington on the *Awatea*.

In Wellington, John's father worked in the motor trade, eventually becoming self-employed. John's impression is that his parents truly tried to become fully-fledged New Zealanders, as a duty to be discharged in exchange for the safety New Zealand extended to them.

John has had a varied career, mainly in business. He has also been active in politics. Currently he is a self-employed businessman and part-time student. He has two adult children.

Jonathon (not his real name)

Jonathon was seven when he came to New Zealand with his parents in 1938 from Königsberg, Germany. His father, a lawyer, had a Jewish background. His mother was not Jewish.

In Wellington, Jonathon's father, like other refugee lawyers, had a struggle to become established. As it was not possible to requalify in his former profession, he did labouring work during the war years. Eventually he made a good career in the public service. Jonathon's mother ran a cottage industry from home, baking rye bread. Jonathon remembers that 'the house was forever full of the smell of rye bread and of yeast rising'.

Before he left Germany, Jonathon had been to school for about a year and a half. 'I was in a mixed school, not a special one for Jews. Anti-Semitism bewildered me. We had never been a Jewish family and I didn't feel any particular Jewishness. It surprised me when people did occasionally call me "Jew" in the pejorative way that was becoming fashionable in Germany then. I can remember one incident specifically. It is still quite vivid in my mind. A large group of children at school were having a snowball fight and they were all pelting me with snowballs. A whole lot of children sat on me. Then, an adult came and picked me up and dragged me away, but not in any sort of good samaritan way. He swore at me and said something about "blasted Jew" or words to that effect'.

Jonathon recalls liking New Zealand from 'quite early on'. 'There were things I missed, certainly: ice-skating and tobogganning. But, by and large, New Zealand suited me. I liked the outdoors as a child and I still do. I liked it that in New Zealand as a small child you could go out into the street to play'. In Konigsberg, the family had lived several floors up in an apartment: a small child could not just simply go outside to play as children could in New Zealand.

Looking back, Jonathon's predominant memory is of the ease with which he assimilated. He attributes this in part to the fact that his parents did not mix exclusively with other refugees. 'Because it was a mixed marriage and my father was not a practising Jew, they weren't part of a tight-knit refugee circle. Perhaps that helped me to assimilate easily. I think that this was a good thing. There was never any question of going back, so assimilation was really the objective'.

Jonathon has pursued a career in law. He has three children.

Lisa

Lisa was born in Trieste in 1938 to an Austrian mother and Hungarian father. The family left Italy in 1939 on the last ship departing from Genoa and arrived in Wellington three days before the outbreak of war.

Lisa's parents had a hard time adjusting to New Zealand. Her father, an engineer, had considerable language and employment difficulties. Lisa remembers her childhood as a difficult one. As a teenager, she was already saving up for her 'trip to the rest of the world'.

Lisa grew up in Wellington. She trained as a teacher at Wellington Teachers Training College (which was a very positive experience), and soon after graduating from Victoria University she left New Zealand. She has lived in Europe, Africa and the United States. At the time of interview, she had returned to New Zealand for the first time in six years to visit her remaining family in that country.

Currently, Lisa lives with her husband and children in the United States. She is a teacher and also works in the field of insurance.

Lucie

Lucie was nine years old in 1940 when she arrived in New Zealand with her parents. Before emigrating, the family had lived in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, where her father had been technical director of an oil refinery.

'The background that I come from was a very mixed one. My father's family were Viennese Jews and were extremely well off. My mother is not Jewish. Her background is lower middle-class to upper working-class from Sumperk, a small town in Czechoslovakia'.

Lucie recalls even as a small child feeling that she did not belong clearly to either her mother's or her father's side. Migration to New Zealand reinforced her perception of belonging nowhere. 'This is something that anyone who comes from a mixed marriage knows and understands but it is accentuated if you then find yourself transported into a third environment where there are additional difficulties of language, social custom, of just about everything, including encountering a certain amount of prejudice. Then you find that you haven't got a single cultural background to retreat to and to feel comfortable in'.

Lucie completed her education in New Zealand (in Wellington) and established a career as a historian and university teacher.

Marei

Marei was born in 1935 in Cologne, where her father, originally from Berlin, was a magistrate. Her mother, also a Berliner, was an actress. Marei's mother was of Jewish origin (although converted to Catholicism); her father was not. Nonetheless, because he was married to a woman with a Jewish background, he was 'relieved' of his position soon after Hitler came to power. Marei's mother's career was also brought to an end by the advent of the Nazis.

The family encountered many difficulties in getting permits to come to New Zealand. South America was also considered by them for a while as a possible destination. Marei remembers that there was talk of finding her mother a job in Brazil as a cook: 'I always laugh at this because my mother couldn't even boil an egg'. The family, which also included Marei's brother and the children's nanny, was sponsored by the New Zealand Catholic community and eventually received permits to come to New Zealand. They settled in Wellington.

During Marei's childhood, her mother's work of giving speech and drama lessons dominated the lives of the members of the household: 'it meant sitting in the dining room at the back having our tea and that's where my mother's pupils waited too'.

Later, with her 'larger than life personality' and her poetry readings, Marei's mother developed a 'cult' following in New Zealand. Her father's work opportunities were at first very limited. When he first arrived, he worked in a woodwork factory and later at the Rehabilitation League, making artificial arms and limbs for soldiers. After the war, he joined the National Orchestra, playing the double bass. In Germany, he had been part of a small string quartet as a hobby. In New Zealand, he found he was good enough to play professionally.

Marei recalls that her parents were 'immensely grateful' because New Zealand had opened its doors to them. They felt generally well accepted and came to be treated as 'interesting foreigners' and sometimes almost as 'celebrities'.

Marei's predominant impression of her childhood is that, compared to her New Zealand peers, she was 'incredibly carefully brought up'. Her main difficulty as a child was not that she had a foreign background but that she lacked the freedom that other children had.

Marei continued her education to tertiary level. Marriage to a New Zealand writer and left-wing social activist was a 'liberating' experience. Later, after travel and bringing

up children, she worked as a probation officer for many years. She has recently qualified as a lawyer.

Mary

Mary was born in Hungary in 1935. In her Wellington home, there is a photo of a young mother with two young children in her arms. This is the last photo of Mary and her brother together with their mother. Mary is four years old; her brother is a baby. It is 1939, Budapest, Hungary.

Mary's parents were killed during the war - her mother in a concentration camp, her father in Kiev, where he was deported as part of a labour squad of Hungarian Jews. The two children aged eleven and eight arrived in New Zealand in 1947, among the very first immigrants permitted to enter New Zealand after the war. They came to live with grandparents who had reached New Zealand before the outbreak of war.

Mary's parents had decided not to emigrate while it was still possible to do so in the late 1930s. They had hoped that the family would be safe enough in Hungary. In fact, the situation looked reasonably secure between 1939 and 1942. Hungary during this period was able to resist the worst of the Nazi policies of Jewish persecution.

Mary has only a few memories of her life when the family was still together. She recalls a family holiday in the mountains when she was about six and family gatherings at which there was music performed late into the night. Mary's mother was a violinist; her father a lawyer. The family was Jewish, but not particularly observant. In 1939 they were baptised Catholics. 'It was done in the hope that being officially non-Jewish might avert problems'.

From 1942, repressive measures against Jews began to be introduced. Baptism provided no protection. It was at this time that Mary's father was drafted into a labour squad and sent to the Soviet Union. By 1944, life for Hungarian Jews was becoming very difficult. At this time every Jew over the age of seven had to wear a yellow star and Jews were forced to move into specially designated Jewish houses, marked by yellow stars. With the German occupation of Hungary, the situation of Hungarian Jews further deteriorated. The deportations to death camps began in 1944. At this time, in an attempt to save themselves, families split up, some members going 'underground'. People got false papers and went to live elsewhere, passing as non-Jews. In such cases, the children were sometimes placed in Red Cross 'homes' or hidden elsewhere. It was virtually impossible

to go 'underground' as a family. Mary remembers her mother asking her if she and her brother would go into a 'home'. 'I said, "no, I'd rather not". Obviously I'd rather not. I guess my mother decided that it was more important for us to stay together. In November 1944 there was a dawn raid. All women under forty in our building had to go down into the courtyard where they were told: "you're all coming with us. You have ten minutes to pack". I can remember my mother coming up, taking a few things and saying goodbye. That is the last we ever saw of her'.

Subsequently, Mary and her brother were placed for a while in a Red Cross home - 'a ghastly place with insufficient food'. They were eventually removed from there by a former housekeeper and friend of the family. For the remainder of the war, while Budapest was under siege, and until the children's departure for New Zealand, this woman hid them, fed them, cared for them. 'We were supposedly her illegitimate children. She organized false papers for us and for dozens of other people'.

When the war ended, the survivors of the deportations started to return. 'The worst things were kept from us children. Nobody really told us about concentration camps. Nobody said what happened there or that people had died. People dying was very seldom mentioned. This has stayed with me ever since. I never actually mourned my mother because it was always that she might yet come back. And people did. Other people. It took years and years to accept that she was actually dead. My father was "officially" dead in 1943 - we received a telegram. Yet, later on, I would dream that they both came back - my mother and my father, and that the "official" information had been wrong'.

When the war was over, the friend who had cared for Mary and her brother during the war 'moved heaven and earth' to arrange for them to join their remaining family in New Zealand. The children eventually left Hungary late 1946 aboard a military aeroplane. Bad weather delayed them in Vienna and resulted in their missing the boat for New Zealand which left from London. This meant a wait of two months in England until the next boat left. When the children reached Auckland they were met by their uncle and brought by train to Wellington. 'Finally we arrived at the house. As we drew up in the taxi, I was horribly sick. That is my first memory of Wellington. I had been air-sick on the aeroplane, sea-sick on the ship, and finally car-sick'.

Mary's Hungarian friend, who had hoped one day to join the children in New Zealand, died of tuberculosis six months after their arrival in their new home. 'She had ignored her illness while looking after us. Shortly after we left she went into hospital and did not recover'.

Mary completed her schooling in New Zealand. On leaving school, she went to university, became a teacher, brought up six children and has pursued many interests - political, artistic and academic. Her current job is in the area of social policy research.

Robert (not his real name)

'My early life was very greatly influenced by the war'. Robert was born in Budapest in 1934. He was ten years old when the Germans occupied Hungary. Together with his brother, grandparents and aunt he survived the Holocaust in the Budapest ghetto after his parents were taken to concentration camps. Robert's parents survived the camps and the family was reunited after the war. They planned to leave Hungary as soon as they could. 'My father had already wanted to come to New Zealand before the war. He could see the writing on the wall, but he didn't have any of the skills that New Zealand required and was declined a permit. So we were trapped in Hungary for the duration of the war. After the war, my parents felt they couldn't live among murderers'.

Robert, however, was ambivalent about emigrating to New Zealand. As a result of his war experiences, he had become a Zionist and wished to settle in Israel. But this was not to be. The family came to New Zealand in 1948.

In New Zealand (in Wellington), Robert completed his education. On leaving school, he went to university and subsequently to teachers training college. In recent years, he has pursued a business career. He is married to a woman with a similar background (Central European Jewish) to his own.

Israel for Robert remains a kind of a dream, a dream of a home. 'I am absolutely convinced that I would feel at home in Israel. It is nice to think that there is a place in the world where I would be really at home. But if I went there and the dream turned sour, I would have no dreams left'.

Sonny

Sonny was born in Karlsruhe, Germany in 1928. She was eleven years old when in 1939 she came to New Zealand with her parents and sister. Before the rise of Hitler, it had been a comfortable upper middle-class existence for Sonny and her family. Her father was an architect, her mother a housewife. Sonny's life was a sheltered one.

To some extent, this sheltered existence continued even after the advent of Hitler: 'I didn't really suffer very much personally from Nazi persecution'. What she does remember very clearly is 'how that German propaganda really got to you. When I was a little girl, I had fairish hair and a little snub nose and I was terribly proud of being a fair-haired little child [Aryan looking]. I didn't think much about being a Jew. Although my paternal grandmother was Orthodox and my father was president of *B'nai B'rith* [a Jewish welfare organization], our household was not religious'.

The other clear memory Sonny has retained is of fear. 'When I said I wasn't personally affected, I meant I wasn't deprived or beaten up by anybody. But you don't forget fear. There is one incident which happened when I was about five years old. I had been to play with my cousins. I was put on a tram and I had to go three stops to get home and the maid or my nanny picked me up. I remember that somebody on the tram started chatting to me because I was a "cute" little girl. She asked me my name and then said "Can you say, 'Heil Hitler' nicely?" I replied, "No. My Daddy doesn't say 'Heil Hitler'". Then the tram driver and this woman had a conversation about me. We lived about ten minutes walk from the tram stop. By the time we got home, the Gestapo were there. The other incident I remember happened when I first started school in 1933. I was at the local German school which was walking distance from our house. At this time, German propaganda such as, "Jews are an inferior race; we must rid ourselves of Jews and purify the German race", was being propounded. I was stood out in front of the class and people were pointing to me as an example. I didn't have the faintest idea of what it was about, but I remember wetting my pants and running away in sheer terror. Shortly afterwards, the situation of Jewish children at the school became impossible and I stopped going'.

Sonny subsequently attended a Jewish school until the building was burnt down in 1937 or 1938. In November 1938, during *Kristallnacht*, her father was taken to Dachau. The family were fortunately able to arrange the visas for England and New Zealand on which his release from the camp depended.

For Sonny, those years were a time of great confusion. 'I really wasn't aware of what was going on. I was afraid of some Germans, for example the chauffeur's son upstairs who used to go round in his little brown shirt and obviously pimp on everybody, and I was afraid of Hitler's fanatical voice on the radio and of Goebbel's voice, screaming. Although I hadn't a clue what they were talking about, I was affected by the atmosphere of fear at my parents' house'.

However, the preparations to leave Germany were exciting for Sonny. 'I wasn't aware of the terrible splitting up of the family that was occurring. I do remember my poor grandmother waving goodbye to us at the station. She was farewelling one son who was going to France with his family, another son who was going to England and then to New Zealand and another relative who was going to Brazil. But for me it was an enormous adventure and I wasn't aware of the agony until later'.

Before he left Germany, Sonny's father flung the Iron Cross he had been awarded for serving his country during the First World War into the Rhine. Ironically, in wartime New Zealand, he was unable to serve in the Home Guard because he was an enemy alien. Although he tried very hard to put the past behind him, he was not happy in New Zealand. The long periods of unemployment he experienced contributed to this. He died just after the war, at the age of sixty. It was Sonny's mother who was the survivor. She adjusted more easily to New Zealand.

As for Sonny, once in New Zealand, she set about becoming a New Zealand child as quickly as possible. 'I was young enough to adapt very quickly. My sister who was seventeen had a much more difficult time. I was just at an age when it was easy for me to accept the way New Zealand kids were. I tried to be like them. I wanted to belong'.

When she finished her schooling (in Wellington), Sonny went to university and also trained as a teacher. She is married to a New Zealander and has four adult children.

Tom

Tom was born in Berlin in 1937. His parents were originally from Leignitz, a small town with a small Jewish community in which everybody knew each other. Tom's mother was a teacher; his father an engineer. On his mother's side, it had been a fairly traditional religious home; on his father's, a less observant one.

The family left Germany very late (in 1939) and with great difficulty. 'The only country that would give us a visa at that time was New Zealand. We arrived here shortly before the outbreak of war'.

The family first settled in Palmerston North but after a short time moved to Wellington where Tom's father had obtained his first job. Later, he established an engineering practice which became the sole producer of bakelite at that time. Tom's first New Zealand memory is of the garage in Tinakori Road where his father's business was based.

Tom's predominant recollection is of a lonely childhood during which he felt different and an outsider. He completed his schooling in New Zealand to tertiary level and then left that country permanently. He has worked in England, Australia and Israel, most recently specializing in the field of computer security. Currently, he lives in Israel. He has three adult children.

Walter

Walter was two years old when he arrived in New Zealand from Germany with his parents and older brother. Having suffered harassment by the Nazis, his parents wanted to get as far away from Germany as possible. The family settled in a small South Island town where Walter's father, whose former occupation had been in accountancy, had found a job in the local woollen mills. Jewish traditions were maintained in the family, his father later becoming lay preacher and spiritual leader of the Dunedin Hebrew congregation.

Walter's main recollections of his New Zealand childhood are of life in a small town where his foreign background and Jewishness were a source of embarrassment and shame. Being different was easier to cope with when the family moved to a bigger city, Dunedin, after the war.

As an adult, Walter has played an active part both in the Jewish and in the wider, public communities. His work has been in education and in the field of minority rights, ethnic affairs and race relations. He has three adult children.

The New Zealand-born

Annette and Peter

Annette and Peter's father came to New Zealand in 1940 at the age of twenty. He was born in Vienna. At the age of eighteen, he had been taken to Dachau by the Gestapo as he was Jewish and a member of a left-wing group. Released after several months because he had a permit for England, he eventually reached New Zealand with the assistance of a group of students in Christchurch who became his sponsors.

In Christchurch, he continued his education at Canterbury University, studying chemistry and mathematics. It was at university that he met his future wife, a New

Zealander. After completing his education and serving in the RNZAF, he became a teacher in technical education. His parents survived the war in Bolivia and joined him in 1947.

Peter was born in 1946; Annette in 1948. They grew up in Wellington. Their grandmother, who came to join the family, lived and worked in New Zealand and established friendships mainly with other immigrants. This world impacted on the children and combined with their father's Central European Jewish, though not religious, background to give them a vaguely defined but nonetheless real, sense of their difference from New Zealand peers. The death of their New Zealand mother while they were still in their early teens increased the influence of the European side of their background.

On leaving school, Peter completed a university education; Annette completed hers while raising a family. Currently, Annette is a computer specialist in the public service and Peter has a business career in computing.

Anthony

Anthony was born in 1944 in Pahiatua. His mother is of British origin; his father came to New Zealand as a refugee from Karlsruhe, Germany in 1937. Before emigration, his father, from an established legal and political family (his father had been a parliamentarian, lawyer and editor in the Weimar Republic), had studied law. In New Zealand he bought a sheep and cattle farm near Pahiatua, naming it Salem after his old school.

Since the completion of his university education, Anthony has had a career in publishing, consultancy and journalism. He has worked for governments, international organizations, businesses and publishers throughout Asia and the Pacific. Anthony is married to a New Zealander of Irish-Catholic descent.

Cathy

Cathy's father, the youngest of eight children, was born in Eger (Bohemia),

The family later moved to Vienna where he grew up.

The family was dispersed around the world by the war. Cathy's father, at the age of thirty-two, escaped to New Zealand. Many years later, not long before his death, a sister who had escaped to Kenya joined him. She was the only member of his family he ever saw again.

Cathy's father had been a cabinet maker before emigration. He continued this occupation in New Zealand, becoming highly regarded as a skilled craftsman. In the early years of the war, he married a New Zealander.

Cathy was born in 1946 and grew up in Wellington. Her childhood differed little from that of other New Zealanders. The Central European-Jewish influence was almost entirely non-existent. This was of no concern to Cathy until some time after her father's early death when Cathy was seventeen. As an adult, as she travelled and met some of her father's relatives, Cathy has come to regret that she did not know her father better. She is fascinated by the background she grew up knowing little about, and has put considerable effort into finding information to fill in the many gaps about that past.

Cathy trained as a nurse and is currently nursing part-time. She has two children.

Ernie

Ernie was born in Wellington in 1943. His two older sisters were born in Trieste. For other details, see biographical information provided earlier for Lisa.

Ernie went to university and teachers' training college, and became a secondary school teacher. Currently, he is a teacher specializing in the administration of a wide range of community-oriented Polytechnic courses. These include the provision of English courses for new immigrants and refugees. Ernie is also an active member of the Jewish community. He is married to an Australian of similar Austro-Hungarian background and has three children.

Helen

Helen was born in Wellington in 1945. Her parents were Sudeten-Deutch refugees from Aussig, Czechoslovakia who arrived in New Zealand in 1940. Before emigrating, her mother had been a tailoress and her father a cabinet maker. He had been an active member of the Czech Social Democratic party and had worked for the anti-Nazi underground. His father had been a member of the Prague Party senate.

In New Zealand, Helen's father soon found work as a carpenter and cabinet maker. Later, he taught woodwork and carpentry for many years.

Helen's father was very happy in New Zealand. Helen's mother, however, adjusted with more difficulty. According to Helen, her mother suffered bouts of

depression and homesickness throughout the years of Helen's childhood. She was inclined to look backwards and wish for her life the way it had been before the war.

On finishing her schooling, Helen went nursing. Later, she did clerical work at the National Health Statistics Department. Currently Helen assists her husband (an immigrant from Holland) in his business and cares for their four children.

Howard

Howard was born in 1958. In many ways, Howard could be classified 'third generation', as his father was only fourteen when he left Germany. Howard's father's parents managed to arrange for the emigration of their three children - one to the United Kingdom, one to New Zealand and one to Israel - before the outbreak of war, but did not survive themselves.

Howard's father spent the war years in England and came to New Zealand after the war to join his brother. He attended university and training college and became a teacher. He married a New Zealander, Howard's mother, and worked very hard to make a new life.

When the war was over, Howard's father started to search for information about his parents. Howard: 'Eventually, he found a woman who had been very friendly with his mother at the concentration camp at Riga. He learned that his mother had been a very popular, tireless figure there. She had been a real support to a lot of people. One day, her husband (my grandfather) didn't come back from work detail. After that, she got very sick and finally decided to let the authorities know how sick she was, though she realized what the cure was. For my father, the actual date that this happened was quite ironic because it was the day that he landed at Normandy with the Allied Forces'.

The effect on Howard's childhood of his father's German-Jewish background was in many ways negligible. However, as an adult, Howard has become increasingly interested in this background and in the characteristics he shares with other children of Jewish refugees.

Howard grew up in Auckland and has worked widely as a journalist.

Jane

Jane's mother is a New Zealander; her father was a refugee. He was born in Plzen (Pilsen), Czechoslovakia into a Jewish, though not religious, family. He completed his

qualifications as a lawyer in 1937. His parents hoped that he, their only child, would leave Czechoslovakia and then they would follow later. He had obtained a visa for New Zealand and arrived in 1938.

In New Zealand (in Auckland) he found it very difficult to find a suitable job. Jane: 'His entire family were killed in concentration camps with the exception of one aunt who survived Theresienstadt and she came to New Zealand in 1948'.

Jane's sister was born in 1944; Jane in 1948. By this time, Jane's father had a secure job in the public service. What most impressed Jane about her father and aunt as immigrants was the amount of energy they put into making the best of their lives in New Zealand: 'they felt they had to contribute something; they felt they owed something to New Zealand. My father was restless but after he had been back to Europe, he realized he was really so lucky to be in New Zealand. After that he would say, "New Zealand is the best country in the world"'.

Jane grew up in Wellington. She went to university, became a teacher and went to London. During the years she lived and worked in London, she felt that London was where she wanted to be. It was a difficult decision to return to New Zealand, but having made it, and since her return to New Zealand, Jane identifies as a New Zealander more strongly than before. Currently, she is employed in the public service.

Jenny (not her real name)

Jenny's parents, both from Hungary, reached New Zealand in 1939. As other refugees who escaped from Europe before the war, they left comfortable well-to-do lives and their entire families to go to safety on the other side of the world.

Jenny's father was a mechanical engineer whose skills transferred relatively easily to New Zealand. Her mother was a language teacher. The two differed in their adjustment to New Zealand. Her father was very positive about New Zealand, while her mother found it harder to settle.

Jenny's brother was born in 1940; Jenny in 1944 and two younger sisters during the post-war years. In 1948, surviving members of the family came from Hungary to join them. They were Jenny's grandmother, an aunt and an orphaned cousin. Jenny: 'It was very difficult to get their entry visas. My mother wrote letters to everyone important that she could think of pleading their case. In the end she wrote a direct letter to the wife of

Walter Nash and made it a very personal, heart-rending appeal. Shortly after that the visas were posted out'.

Jenny's Wellington childhood was in many ways dominated by the horrors that had taken place in Europe. The victims of the Holocaust were not faceless individuals, but members of her family.

Jenny has had a university education. When this was completed, she trained as a nurse. Currently she is bringing up six children.

Julia

Julia's mother, a refugee from Germany, came to New Zealand in 1940. She had tried to convince others in the family to leave but they were not prepared to, continuing to hope that the situation would change for the better. In New Zealand, Julia's mother's first job was as a domestic. She later studied, eventually becoming a psychotherapist. As many other refugees who were grateful above all to have found a refuge, Julia's mother was determined to put the past behind her and make a new life in New Zealand.

Julia was born in 1953 in Wellington. The need to know her roots, to know about the past and to find a Jewish identity for herself within the New Zealand environment and in the context of a Jewish refugee background has been of real importance for her. Although Julia's Jewish identity has been strong, her ability to express this as an integrated part of her life continues to be an issue for her as an adult. 'All my life I have had this notion of only half belonging, although, unlike for my mother, New Zealand is my country'.

Julia has had a university education. She has worked in a variety of fields, including photography, public relations and social work. Currently she is working in the social policy development area. She has one son.

Katherine

Katherine was born in New Zealand in 1946. Her father, who was born in Austria, had settled in Czechoslovakia. In 1939, he escaped with his brother to England, hoping to arrange for the escape of the remainder of the family later. As industrial chemists, he and his brother obtained temporary permits to come to New Zealand to fulfil a contract to recycle oil and grease for the New Zealand Railways. When the two had fulfilled their

contract, they were told by the government that if they wanted permanent residence in New Zealand, they should go back to Europe and apply from there. They fought this decision and were eventually permitted to stay in New Zealand.

Katherine's mother, a medical student, escaped to England together with her sister and the two also made it to New Zealand. In New Zealand, Katherine's mother became a nurse. Katherine's father, with his brother and another refugee, started a factory manufacturing oil and grease, an enterprise which was one of the first to be declared an essential industry during the war years. After the war, surviving relatives joined the family in New Zealand.

Katherine's impression of her parents is that they involved themselves very much in New Zealand and its way of life. 'They never complained about New Zealand; they flung themselves wholeheartedly into being New Zealanders. If anybody asked them about their origins, they said they were New Zealanders'.

Katherine went to university. Marriage and travel followed. She has combined motherhood with the pursuit of a profession.

Michael

Michael, described by his mother as a ninety-nine percent New Zealander (in contrast to his elder brother and sister who were not New Zealand-born and never came to feel that they belonged in New Zealand), was born in Wellington in 1944. His parents were active Zionists in their youth in Vienna and had been certain, many years before the rise of Hitler, that there was no future for Jews in Austria.

Michael's mother had lived as a child in a working-class district of Vienna and on her way to school was very often molested by other children throwing stones and calling names such as 'dirty Jew' or worse. She met her future husband at a Zionist youth group. The two did not believe in studying but in learning skills to work with their hands in Palestine (she became a kindergarden teacher, he a metal worker). They were both in their early twenties when they left Austria in 1926 for Palestine. Although they were very happy there, for a mixture of political and personal reasons, they decided to leave that country and immigrated to New Zealand in 1940.

Earning a living was at first difficult for them in New Zealand. Michael's father lost two jobs because he was a foreigner and was unemployed for almost a year.

Eventually, with a partner, he started a small business which developed into a metal importing company.

Michael completed a university education and has had a business career. Parenthood, politics and travel have also played a major part in his life.

Miriam (not her real name)

Miriam's mother, originally from the Sudeten part of Czechoslovakia, escaped with her family to Prague when the Germans annexed that area in 1938. In Prague, she worked in a home for Jewish refugee children whose parents were in concentration camps. A year later, when the Germans occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia, the family fled again. In 1940, at the age of twenty, she came to New Zealand with her mother. Her brother, aged fourteen, was sent to England as part of the children's transports (groups of Jewish children sent to England to escape the Nazi regime) and reached New Zealand three years later. About eighty relatives were left behind in Czechoslovakia, none of whom survived.

Miriam's mother found starting a new life in New Zealand very hard. Her upbringing, which completely lacked training in practical skills, had not prepared her well for migration. Every sort of household chore was a riddle. Her first job in New Zealand was in a children's home, where she learned to sweep the floor by secretly watching the children to see how they did it. After a few years in New Zealand, she met and married Miriam's father, also a refugee from Czechoslovakia, who was a former lawyer. The two struggled to make a living and raise a family. They both rapidly acquired the practical skills they had lacked when they first arrived and eventually established successful businesses.

Miriam was born in Wellington in 1945. She has combined being a mother with a professional career. Her involvement in politics has been extensive.

Vivienne

Vivienne's parents left Prague the day Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia. 'They were very lucky to get out. They went first to England, but my mother was sure she did not want to stay in England because Hitler could easily get across the channel'. They eventually received permits to come to New Zealand and arrived with many anxieties about what the country might be like. Vivienne: 'My mother thought New Zealand was going to be the

end of the earth [that is, totally removed from the amenities of civilization]. She always said she was so grateful when she saw trams going up Queen Street [Auckland]'.

Vivienne's father, who had been an architect in Czechoslovakia, worked at first in a factory. Later he became a draughtsman and eventually resumed his career in architecture. Both parents, but especially Vivienne's father, had grown up in well-to-do families. Vivienne considers that her mother felt keenly the loss of an affluent lifestyle, a lifestyle the family never succeeded in regaining in New Zealand.

Vivienne was born in 1941 and her brother in 1943. She has worked for the trade union movement and has taught sociology and trade union studies. Her current work is in the field of equal employment opportunities for women and minority groups. She has two adult children.

LIST OF APPENDICES

- 1a The main topics covered in the interviews with refugee children and children of refugees
- 1b The main topics covered in the interviews with teachers
- 2a Birthplaces of persons born in New Zealand and overseas, 1936-1966
- 2b Total New Zealand population, 1936-1966
- 3 Major religious professions in New Zealand, 1926-1966

APPENDIX 1a

The main topics covered in the interviews with refugee children and children of refugees were as follows:

- 1 Biographical details and selective life history of interviewee and his or her family.
- 2 Childhood: family characteristics and aspects of family life, including lifestyle and values, the extended family, religion, language, meals, recreation, social life; family attitudes to the past, to the Holocaust; the family's way of coping with grief, anxiety and insecurity.
- 3 School: being different, the experience of being Jewish at school, friendships, relationships with teachers, sport, family attitudes to education.
- 4 Adolescence: friendships, youth groups, relationship with parents, talking with parents about the Holocaust and about the European past.
- 5 Adult attitudes and perceptions: about the Holocaust, attitudes to Israel, reflections about cultural and ethnic background, about belonging and feeling at home in New Zealand, visiting Europe, cultural transmission, what is derived from background, attitudes concerning social justice issues and towards other minority groups.
- 6 Work history, partners, children.

APPENDIX 1b

The main topics covered in the interviews with the five teachers who taught refugee children and children of refugees in the forties, fifties and sixties were as follows:

- 1 Some details about teaching career, focusing on past experiences teaching refugee and immigrant children: where, when, for how long and in what circumstances did the teacher concerned teach these children.
- 2 The teacher's impressions of refugee/immigrant/Jewish pupils: their appearance, behaviour, their interaction with other children in class, their interaction with teachers, the children's behaviour in the playground, attitudes and behaviour of the children's parents (where relevant).
- 3 Philosophy of the school and of the teacher being interviewed regarding cultural differences: treatment of foreign names, treatment of other cultural differences in the classroom, provisions made at the school for teaching English as a second language, provisions made by the school for children who withdrew from religious instruction in primary schools and from prayers and bible readings at secondary schools.
- 4 Discussion in the classroom of the Nazi treatment of Jews and the struggle to establish a Jewish state.
- 5 Attitudes of New Zealand children towards their culturally different peers: bullying, teasing, anti-Semitism, the responses of teachers to these behaviours if they occurred at school.

APPENDIX 2a

Birthplaces of persons born in New Zealand and overseas, excluding those born at sea and those whose birth places are not specified in the census, (drawn from the *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1966*, Department of Statistics, Wellington 1969).

CENSUS	NEW ZEALAND	OTHER COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES	NON-COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES
1936	1,279,917 81.43 %	251,593 16.01 %	39,491 2.51 %
1945	1,456,067 85.59 %	218,234 12.83 %	26,379 1.55 %
1951	1,672,962 86.32 %	234,181 12.08 %	30,651 1.58 %
1956	1,863,344 85.75 %	261,860 12.05 %	47,362 2.18 %
1961	2,074,509 85.97 %	280,570 11.62 %	57,876 2.40 %
1966	2,279,994 85.24 %	326,583 12.21 %	68,215 2.55 %

APPENDIX 2b

Total New Zealand Population 1936-1966 (drawn from the *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1966*, Department of Statistics, Wellington 1969).

1936	1,573,810
1945	1,702,298
1951	1,939,472
1956	2,174,062
1961	2,414,984
1966	2,676,919

APPENDIX 3

Major religious professions, (drawn from the *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1966*, vol. 3, Department of Statistics, Wellington 1968).

Religion	1926	1951	1956	1961	1966
Church of England	575,731 40.9 %	726,626 37.5 %	780,999 35.9 %	835,434 34.6 %	901,701 33.7 %
Presbyterian	331,369 23.5 %	446,333 23 %	483,884 22.3 %	539,459 22.3 %	582,976 21.8 %
Roman Catholic	181,922 12.9 %	264,555 13.6 %	310,723 14.3 %	364,098 15.1 %	425,280 15.9 %
Methodist	125,278 8.9 %	156,077 8 %	161,823 7.4 %	173,838 7.2 %	186,260 7 %
Baptist	21,979 1.6 %	31,518 1.6 %	33,910 1.6 %	40,886 1.7 %	46,748 1.7 %
Other Christian	71,338 5.2 %	122,201 6.3 %	166,444 7.6 %	190,284 8 %	225,505 8.3 %
Atheist	1,079 0.1 %	5,520 0.3 %	2,977 0.1 %	3,359 0.1 %	5,474 0.2 %
Agnostic	804 0.1 %	2,083 0.1 %	1,748 0.1 %	2,288 0.1 %	4,960 0.2 %
Hebrew	2,602 0.2 %	3,661 0.2 %	3,823 0.2 %	4,006 0.2 %	4,104 0.2 %
Hindu	353	1089 0.1 %	1,597 0.1 %	2,074 0.1 %	3,599 0.1 %
No religion	3,217	11,475	12,651	17,486	32,780

SOURCES

The principal source for this study was information gathered from interviews with former children of refugees and refugee children. Information obtained from refugees interviewed in *A Small Price to Pay* was also a useful source. This oral material was supplemented by a variety of other sources - both primary and secondary.

The main primary sources used to provide background information about New Zealand society were newspapers, journals and magazines. Attitudes towards foreigners, the different worlds of men and women, heroes and heroines, diet and many other aspects of New Zealand way of life in the forties, fifties and sixties are depicted in the pages of, for example, the *New Zealand Listener*, *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, *Parents Centre Bulletin* and the *School Journal* of the Department of Education.

Regarding Jewish life in New Zealand, the main primary source used was information gathered in an informal way by the writer over the years from members of her family, from friends and acquaintances. Additionally, the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, which articulated some of the concerns and preoccupations of New Zealand Jews during the years that the people in this study were growing up, was a most useful source. The Jewish social climate as portrayed in New Zealand's Jewish newspaper is, of course, particularly relevant to those who participated fully or partially in the Jewish community and less so to others who did not.

Among the recurring subjects in the *Chronicle* are anti-Semitism (in New Zealand and elsewhere), Israel, the Holocaust, the Jewish education of New Zealand youth, fears about the assimilation of New Zealand youth, proposals to prevent assimilation occurring by improving Jewish education and anxious deliberations about the future of the Jewish community in view of dwindling numbers due to emigration and assimilation. The preoccupations of the *Chronicle* bring to mind the notion of 'siege mentality' which was found by Kwen Fee Lian¹ (see Review of Literature in Chapter 1) to be a characteristic of Chinese people in New Zealand. The ethos of the *Chronicle* also shows evidence of the dual ethnicity discussed in a number of ethnic studies. New Zealand Jews, for the most part, saw themselves as loyal British subjects, Jewish New Zealanders as well as supporters of Israel.

The secondary sources used in this study are drawn from diverse bodies of literature. Information about New Zealand society during the period of this study was

¹Kwen Fee Lian, 'A Study of Identity within the Chinese Community in Wellington'.

obtained from two main sources - *The Oxford History of New Zealand*² and Nancy Taylor's *The Home Front*.³ The major work about Jews in New Zealand remains L. M. Goldman's 1957 book, *The History of the Jews in New Zealand* but other works discussed in the Review of Literature were also a useful source of information about aspects of Jewish life in New Zealand.

Of the many studies of ethnicity, Marion Berghahn's study⁴ of three generations of German-Jewish refugees in England was the most useful. It is difficult to single out particular books or articles from the many studies about children of Holocaust survivors. However, Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* stands out because of the particularly vivid way that the major themes of the literature about children of Holocaust survivors are conveyed in Epstein's book.

Finally, the contribution made by drama, poetry and novels to the understanding of the lives of refugees and their children needs mention. In particular, poems by Paul Celan⁵ and Karen Gershon,⁶ Anita Brookner's novel⁷ and Judith Kerr's trilogy,⁸ provided a wider context for this study.

²Oliver ed., with Williams, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*.

³Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War : The Home Front*.

⁴Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*.

⁵Celan, *Poems*.

⁶Gershon, *Selected Poems*.

⁷Brookner, *Latecomers*.

⁸Kerr, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit ; The Other Way Round ; A Small Person Far Away*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Unpublished

1 Interviews

Interviews with thirty-two former refugee children and children of refugees, tape recordings in possession of the writer.

Interviews with three first generation refugees, tape recordings in possession of the writer.

Interviews with five teachers who taught refugee children or children of refugees, tape recordings in possession of the writer.

2 Refugees' letters and photographs

In private collections.

3 Official Papers

National Archives, Labour Department file, L1 22/1/27, part 5.

4 Private Papers

Bruce Mason, 'Birds in the Wilderness', Playmarket Inc., 1957.

Published

1 Newspapers

Auckland Star

Christchurch Press

Dominion

Evening Post

Salient

2 Journals

Bulletin of the Parents' Centre

Here and Now

New Zealand Jewish Chronicle

New Zealand Judean Bulletin

New Zealand National Review

School Journal, Department of Education, School Publications Branch

Tomorrow

3 Magazines

New Zealand Listener

New Zealand Woman's Weekly

New Zealand Radio Record

Spike, Victoria University College

4 Reports

Mahzengarb Report: *Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents*, Wellington 1954.

5 New Zealand Population Census for the period 1936-1966, compiled by Census and Statistics Departments, Wellington.

6 Books

Binswanger, Otti, *'And How Do You Like this Country?': Stories of New Zealand*, Christchurch 1945.

SECONDARY SOURCES

1 Books

- Arendt, Hannah, *The Jew as Pariah: Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, edited and introduced by Ron H. Feldman, New York 1978.
- Ausubel, David, *The Fern and the Tiki*, Sydney 1960.
- Bauer, Yehuda, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, Seattle 1978.
- Bauer, Yehuda, Rotenstreich, Nathan, eds., *The Holocaust as Historical Experience: Essays and a Discussion*, New York 1981.
- Beaglehole, Ann, *A Small Price to Pay: Refugees from Hitler in New Zealand, 1936-1946*, Wellington 1988.
- Batistich, Amelia, *An Olive Tree in Dalmatia and Other Stories*, Auckland 1963.
- Batistich, Amelia, *Sing Vila in the Mountains*, Auckland 1987.
- Barrington, J. M., Beaglehole, T. H., *Maori Schools in a Changing Society : An Historical Review*, Wellington 1974.
- Bauman, Janina, *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond*, London 1986.
- Berghahn, Marion, *German-Jewish Refugees in England: The Ambiguities of Assimilation*, London 1984.
- Bergmann, Martin S., Jucovy, Milton E., eds., *Generations of the Holocaust*, New York 1982.
- Bierman, John, *Righteous Gentile*, London 1981.
- Bittman, Karl ed., *Strauss to Matilda: Viennese in Australia, 1938-1988*, Wenkart Foundation, Leichardt, New South Wales 1988.
- Blank, Marino, *The Max Family: Jewish People in New Zealand*, Multi-Cultural Families Studies Series no. 5, Auckland 1982.
- Bollinger, Conrad, *Grog's Own Country: The Story of Liquor Licensing in New Zealand*, Auckland 1959.
- Bott, Elizabeth, *Family and Social Network: Roles Norms and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families*, Tavistock Publications, second edition, London 1971.
- Brookner, Anita, *Latecomers*, London 1988.
- Bunkle, Phillida, Hughes, Beryl, eds., *Women in New Zealand Society*, Auckland 1980.
- Campbell, Alistair, *Island to Island*, Christchurch 1984.

- Celan, Paul, *Poems*, selected, translated and introduced by Michael Hamburger, bilingual edition, New York 1980.
- Colless, Brian, Donovan, Peter eds., *Religion in New Zealand Society*, second edition, Palmerston North 1985.
- Dakin, J. C., *Education in New Zealand*, Auckland 1973.
- Dawidowicz, Lucy, S., *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*, London 1975.
- Deutcher, Isaac, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, edited and introduced by Tamara Deutcher, London 1968.
- Dinnerstein, Leonard, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, New York 1982.
- Douglas, Mary, ed., *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*, New York 1984.
- Du Fresne, Yvonne, *The Bear from the North: Tales of a New Zealand Childhood*, London 1989.
- Edmond, Lauris, ed., with Milward, Carolyn, *Women in Wartime: New Zealand Women Tell their Story*, Wellington 1986.
- Eitinger, Leo, Schwartz, David, *Strangers in the World*, Bern 1981.
- Elbogen, Ismar, translated by Moses Hadas, *A Century of Jewish Life*, Philadelphia 1944.
- Eldred-Grigg, Stevan, *Oracles and Miracles*, Auckland 1987.
- Elton, G. R., *The Practice of History*, Sydney 1967.
- Encyclopedia Britanica*, vol. 10, fifteenth edition, Chicago 1985.
- Epstein, Helen, *Children of the Holocaust*, New York 1979.
- Fairburn, Miles, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900*, Auckland 1989.
- Foster, John, D., *Community of Fate: Memoirs of German Jews in Melbourne*, Sydney 1986.
- Frame, Janet, *Living in the Maniototo*, New York 1979.
- Frank, Anne, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Pan edition, London 1954.
- Frisch, Max, *Andorra*, translated by Michael Bullock, Eyre 1964.
- Gay, Peter, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, London 1988.
- Gellner, Ernest, *Culture, Identity and Politics*, Cambridge 1987.
- Gershon, Karen, *Selected Poems*, London 1966.
- Gershon, Karen, *We Came as Children: A Collective Autobiography of Refugees*, London 1966.
- Gershon, Karen, *The Bread of Exile*, London 1985.

- Gifkins, Michael, selected and introduced, *Through the Looking Glass: Recollections from Childhood of Twenty Prominent New Zealanders*, Auckland 1988.
- Gilman, Sander, L., *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*, Baltimore 1986.
- Glaser, B. G., Strauss, A. L., *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago 1967.
- Glazer, Nathan, Moynihan, Daniel, Patrick, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City*, second edition, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1970.
- Goldman, L. M., *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*, Wellington 1958.
- Goody, Jack, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge 1982.
- Hersey, John, *The Wall*, London 1950.
- Hirsh, Walter ed., *Living Languages: Bilingualism and Community Languages in New Zealand*, Auckland 1987.
- Johnston, Ruth, *Future Australians: Immigrant Children in Perth, Western Australia*, Canberra 1972.
- Keneally, Thomas, *Schindler's Ark*, Coronet edition, London 1983.
- Kerr, Judith, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, London 1971.
- Kerr, Judith, *The Other Way Round*, London 1975.
- Kerr Judith, *A Small Person Far Away*, London 1978.
- King, Michael, *Being Pakeha: An Encounter with New Zealand and the Maori Renaissance*, Auckland 1985.
- King, Michael, ed., *One of the Boys?: Changing Views of Masculinity in New Zealand*, Auckland 1988.
- Koopman-Boyden, Peggy, ed., *Families in New Zealand Society*, Wellington 1978.
- Laqueur, Walter, *The Missing Years*, London 1980.
- Levi, Primo, *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York 1988.
- Lewitt, Maria, *No Snow in December*, Melbourne 1985.
- Lineham, P. J., Grigg, A. R., *Religious History of New Zealand: A Bibliography*, Palmerston North 1984.
- Lochore, R. A., *From Europe to New Zealand: An Account of our Continental European Settlers*, Wellington 1951.
- Lovich, Sean D., *German and Swedish at Auckland: A History of Germanic Languages and Literature at the University*, Auckland 1983.

- Luel, Steven, A., Marcus, Paul, *Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Holocaust: Selected Essays*, New York 1984.
- Martin, Jean, I., *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses, 1947-1977*, Studies in Society 2, Sydney 1978.
- Martin, Jean, I., *The Ethnic Dimension : Papers on Ethnicity and Pluralism*, Sydney 1981.
- Mathias, Bernard, *The Caretakers*, translated by Freeman G. Henry, Penguin, Ontario 1988.
- McGill, David, *The Kid from Matata: Memoirs of a Post-War Pakeha Childhood*, Wellington 1987.
- McIntyre, H. M., Spoonley, P., *Immigration and Immigrants: A New Zealand Bibliography*, revised by H. M. McIntyre, second edition, Wellington 1985.
- McLaren, I. A., *Education in a Small Democracy: New Zealand*, London 1974.
- Metford, J. C. J., *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, London 1983.
- Middleton, Sue ed., *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, Wellington 1988.
- Mikes, George, *How to be Seventy: An Autobiography*, London 1982.
- Miserez, Diana, ed., *The Trauma of Exile*, Dordrecht 1988.
- Murdoch, J. H., *The High Schools of New Zealand: A Critical Survey*, Education Research Series no. 19, Christchurch 1943.
- Myerhoff, Barbara, *Number Our Days*, New York 1978.
- Novitz, David, Willmott Bill eds., *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, Wellington 1989.
- O. E. C. D., Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, *Immigrants' Children at School*, Paris 1987.
- Oliver, W. H. ed., with Williams, B. R., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington 1981.
- Openshaw, Roger, Mckenzie, David, *Reinterpreting the Educational Past: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*, Wellington 1987.
- Ornauer, H., Wiberg, H., Sicinski, A., Galtung J., eds., *Images of the World in the Year 2000: A Comparative Ten Nation Study*, New York 1976.
- Orru, Marco, *Anomie: History and Meanings*, Boston 1987.
- Pearson David, *A Dream Deferred: The Origins of Ethnic Conflict in New Zealand*, Wellington 1990.
- Phillips, Jock, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History*, Auckland 1987.

- Pitt, David, Cluny Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in New Zealand*, Auckland 1974.
- Plummer, Kenneth, *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method*, London 1983.
- Prince, Robert, M., *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation*, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1985.
- Reinharz, Jehuda, Schatzberg, Walter eds., *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover 1985.
- Ritchie, Jane and James, *Growing Up in New Zealand*, Sydney 1978.
- Ritchie, Jane and James, *The Dangerous Age: Surviving Adolescence in New Zealand*, Wellington 1984.
- Rubinstein, W. D. ed., *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, Sydney 1987.
- Rutland, Suzanne, D., *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*, Sydney 1988.
- Salinger M. J., Esterman, D. B., Young, L. F., *Wellington Jewry 1983: A Survey of the Jewish Community in the Wellington Area*, Wellington 1985.
- Sherwin, Byron, L., Ament, Susan, G., *Encountering the Holocaust: An Interdisciplinary Survey*, Chicago 1979.
- Sinclair, Keith, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for a National Identity*, Wellington 1986.
- Spoonley, P., Carwell-Cooke, K. A., and Trlin, A. D., *Immigration and Immigrants: A New Zealand Bibliography*, Wellington 1980; (supplement), 1982.
- Spoonley, Paul, Pearson, David, Shirley, Ian eds., *New Zealand: Sociological Perspectives*, Palmerston North 1982.
- Steiner, George, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman*, New York 1967.
- Steinitz, Lucy, Y. ed., with Szonyi, David, M., *Living after the Holocaust: Reflections by Children of Survivors in America*, revised second edition, New York 1979.
- Sutch, W. B., *The Quest for Security in New Zealand 1840-1966*, Wellington 1966.
- Taylor, Nancy M., *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*, vols. 1 and 2, Wellington 1986.
- Texidor, Greville, Smithyman, Kendrick ed., *In Fifteen Minutes You Can Say a Lot*, Wellington 1987.
- Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford 1973.

- Trlin, A. D., *Now Respected Once Despised: Yugoslavs in New Zealand*, Palmerston North 1979.
- Trunk, Isaiah, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation*, New York 1972.
- Uhlman, Fred, *Reunion*, London 1977.
- Wald, Alan, M., *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, Chapel Hill 1987.
- Webb, Stephen, D., Collette, John, eds., *New Zealand Society: Contemporary Perspectives*, Sydney 1973.
- Weisstein, Ulrich, *Max Frisch: The Plays 2*, New York 1967.
- Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven 1982.
- Zweig, Stefan, *World of Yesterday*, London 1943.

2 Articles

- Beaglehole, Ann, 'Jewish Refugee Immigration to New Zealand, 1933-1953', *Menorah: Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, June 1988, pages 55-66.
- Beaglehole, Ann, 'Refugees from Central Europe in New Zealand', Max Abbott ed., *Refugee Resettlement and Wellbeing*, Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, Auckland 1989, pages 145-155.
- Blaikie, Norman, W. H., 'Religion, Social Status, and Community Involvement: A Study in Christchurch', *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 5, no. 1, April 1969, pages 14-31.
- Brenstrum, Eric, 'Change and Belonging', a review of *The Enigma of Arrival* by V. S. Naipaul, *Evening Post*, 4 February 1989, page 31.
- Buchanan, Keith, 'The Stranger in our Midst', *Comment*, 6, vol. 2, no. 2, Summer 1961, pages 25-29.
- Cegledy, S., 'The Fight', *New Zealand Listener*, 21 June 1968, page 10.
- Chapman, Robert, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern: Some Implications of Recent New Zealand Writing', *Landfall*, vol. 7, 1953, pages 26-58.
- Chung Chi-Ying, 'Chinese Students - Model Students: A Myth or Reality?', *New Settlers and Multicultural Education Issues*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1988, Department of Education, Wellington, pages 17-19.

- Else, Anne, 'Edmonds Cookery and Bernadine', *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, August 1986, pages 70-78.
- Epstein, Helen, 'The Heirs of the Holocaust: The Lingering Legacy for Children of Survivors', *New York Times Magazine*, 19 June 1977, pages 12-77 (non-consecutive).
- Fogelman, Eva, Savaran, Bella, 'Therapeutic Groups for Children of Holocaust Survivors', *International Journal Of Group Psychotherapy*, April 1979, 29, 2, pages 211-236.
- Freyberg, Joan, T., 'Difficulties in Separation-Individuation as Experienced by Offspring of Nazi Holocaust Survivors', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 50, 1, 1980, pages 87-95.
- Friedrich, Otto, 'Teaching the Grammar of Hell', a review of *The Portage to San Christobal of A. H.*, by George Steiner, *Time*, 29 March 1982, pages 67-68.
- Heller, David, 'Themes of Culture and Ancestry Among Children of Concentration Camp Survivors', *Psychiatry*, vol. 45, August 1982, pages 247-261.
- Hunkin, G. A. L., 'Being Samoan Means Knowing My Language', *New Settlers and Multicultural Educational Issues*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1987, pages 28-34.
- Kestenberg, J., 'Psychoanalytic Contributions to the Problem of Children of Survivors from Nazi Persecution', *Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, 1972, 10, 4, pages 311-325.
- Knight, C. A. F., 'Race Hatred Continues in Europe', *New Zealand Listener*, 17 October 1947, pages 20-22.
- Krell, Robert, 'Holocaust Families: The Survivors and their Children', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, vol. 20, no. 6, November/December 1979, pages 560-567.
- Ludzki, Marilyn, I., 'Children of Survivors', *Jewish Spectator*, Fall 1977, vol. 42, no. 3, pages 41-43.
- Murphy, John, 'The Voice of Memory: History, Autobiography and Oral Memory', *Historical Studies*, University of Melbourne, vol. 22, no. 87, October 1986.
- Paske, Helen, 'Life after Holocaust', *New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979, pages 12-15.
- Pitt, Maurice, 'Origins of the Deckston Home', *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, June-July, 1985, page 6.
- Ranasinghe, Anna, 'To Heal the Soul', *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, June 1989, pages 1-2.
- Rich, Adrienne, 'Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity', in Rich, Adrienne, *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985*, New York 1986.

- Russell, A., 'Late Psychosocial Consequences in Concentration Camp Survivor Families', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, July 1974, 44, 4, pages 611-619.
- Russell, Marcia, 'Refugees' Children', *New Zealand Listener*, 16 June 1979, page 14.
- Schwass, Margot, 'Dalmatia in Dargaville', a review of *Sing Vila in the Mountains* by Amelia Batistich, *New Zealand Listener*, 20 February 1988, page 69.
- Solkoff, Norman, 'Children of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust: A Critical Review of the Literature', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 51, 1, January 1981, pages 29-42.
- Special Investigation Reporter, 'Twenty-Four Little Victims of European Savagery Find a Refuge in New Zealand', *New Zealand Radio Record*, vol. 12, no. 50, 26 May 1939, pages 1-2.
- Tamatea, 'Most Refugees Come to Stay: Are We Helping Them?', *New Zealand Listener*, 26 May 1944, pages 12-15.
- Taylor, Alister, 'Peace, Power and Politics: A Personal View', *City Magazine*, Spring 1987, page 44-62.
- Weinfeld, Morton, Sigal, John J., 'Knowledge of the Holocaust Among Adult Children of Survivors', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 18, 1, 1986, pages 66-78.
- Weinfeld, Morton, Sigal, John, J., Davis, B. Mortimer, 'The Effect of the Holocaust on Selected Socio-Political Attitudes of Adult Children of Survivors', *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 23, 3, August 1986, pages 365-383.

3 Unpublished Theses, Papers and Reports

- Beaglehole, Ann, '"A Small Price to Pay": Refugees from Hitler in New Zealand, 1936-1946', Victoria University of Wellington M.A. thesis in History, 1986.
- Beaglehole, Ann, 'Children of Refugees at New Zealand Schools, late 1930s to 1960s', paper presented at the annual conference of the Stout Research Centre, Wellington, 30 June - 2 July 1989, publication of the proceedings of the conference forthcoming.
- Burnley, I H., 'The Greek, Italian and Polish Communities in New Zealand: A Geographical Contribution to the Study of Immigrant Settlement and Adjustment', Victoria University of Wellington PhD thesis in Geography, 1969.
- Gillis, Willie, Mae, 'The Poles in Wellington, New Zealand', Victoria University College, Publications in Psychology no. 5, 1954.
- Jaffe, R. M., 'Social Conflicts and Changes in the Auckland Jewish Community', University of Auckland M.A. thesis in Sociology, 1976.

- Kasanji, Lalita Vanmali, 'The Gujaratis in Wellington: The Study of an Ethnic Group', Victoria University of Wellington M.A. thesis in Sociology, 1982.
- Kroef, Alberdina, P. M., 'The Use of Language in a Three Generation Group of Dutch Immigrants in New Zealand', University of Auckland M.A. thesis in Linguistics, February 1977.
- Lian, Kwen Fee, 'A Study of Identity within the Chinese Community in Wellington', Victoria University of Wellington M.A. thesis in Sociology, 1980.
- May, Helen, 'Post-War Women 1945-1960 and their Daughters 1970-1985: An Analysis of Continuity, Contradiction and Change in Two Generations of Pakeha Women as Mothers, Wives and Workers', Victoria University of Wellington PhD thesis in Anthropology, 1988.
- McCreary, J. R., 'The Modification of International Attitudes: A New Zealand Study', Victoria University College, Publications in Psychology, no. 2, 1952.
- Pitt, M. S., 'Early History of the Wellington Jewish Community, 1840 to 1900', Victoria University College M.A. thesis in History, 1953.
- Sawicka-Brockie, Theresa, 'Forsaken Journeys', Victoria University of Wellington, PhD thesis in Anthropology, 1987.
- Spoonley, Paul, Cox, Helen, 'Anti-Semitism in New Zealand since 1945', Report no. 11, New Zealand Jewish Council, 7 June 1982.

4 Miscellaneous

- Abbott, Max, ed., *Refugee Resettlement and Wellbeing*, papers delivered at the First National Conference on Refugee Mental Health, held at the Wellington Clinical School, May 1988, Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, Auckland 1989.
- 'Child Survivors of Holocaust', two cassette tapes of panel discussions held at the conference on Jewish identity in the 21st century, UCLA, Los Angeles, 27-30 December 1987.
- Diaries, written by the author, 1959-1969.
- National Radio, 'Directions', interview with Shirley Smith, January 1989.
- National Radio, Alfred Hunkin interviewed by Kathryn Asare, 21 January 1989.
- Papers delivered at the First National Conference on Community Languages and English as a Second Language, 31 August-3 September 1988, Wellington College of Education, Wellington.

Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies at Yeshiva University of Los Angeles, 'Second Generation Children of Survivors of the Holocaust: A Bibliography', August 1980.