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OPENING THE DOOR: IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS IN VANCOUVER, 1947-1970

On 16 November 1997, with the debut of the exhibit “Open Hearts, Closed Doors,” a group of Holocaust survivors marked fifty years since they, as part of the War Orphans group, arrived in Canada. After fifty years they were telling the story of their journeys to a new life in a country that had rejected, then welcomed them. Those children who first arrived in Vancouver were the harbingers of the arrival of many more survivors who would make Vancouver their home.

“Baruch Ha-Ba” (“Welcome”), read the headline in the Vancouver *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 1947:

Who is there among us who has not wished to be able to help Europe’s unfortunate? Who is there that will not rally to the call that is now being made? Who is there who will refuse to take advantage of the opportunity to help AT LEAST ONE CHILD?¹

Frustrated in their attempts to have Jews included in the government-sponsored immigration group plans, even as labourers or housemaids, Canadian Jewish Congress and Jewish labour and business groups had created the Orphans, Tailors, Capmakers, and Furriers Group Plans. By creating a need for garment workers and appealing to humanitarian instincts of rescue for war orphans, the Canadian Jewish host

community created a strong tie to the refugees. Therefore, restrictions placed by the Canadian government to keep out Jewish displaced persons actually were crucial in forging initial links between the Canadian host community and survivors.²

How did the survivors fare in their new country? What were their hopes and dreams? It has been argued that Holocaust survivors who entered Canada after the war were—and remained—alienated from the host Jewish community.³ However, by documenting the Vancouver Jewish community's response to the survivors, and tracing their residential and occupational patterns and their affiliation with community organizations, we can see how they integrated into that host community and whether or not they remained alienated from it.⁴

I

Vancouver's Jews knew of the conditions in the refugee camps and shared the anxiety of the rest of Canadian Jewry over the fate of the survivors. While a few survivors had reached Vancouver through family sponsorships before 1947, the arrival of groups of survivors challenged the community to integrate a host of newcomers in a very short period of time.

The first children arrived in January 1948.⁵ They were followed by tailors and others.⁶ Suddenly the suffering Jews of Europe became real people; the destruction of families, kinship networks, and whole villages became tangible when names and faces of survivors appeared in the local press⁷ and neighbourhoods. Early stages of the resettlement were divided between men's and women's tasks. Women were assigned to settling the orphans and establishing and maintaining contact with refugee women; to the men was assigned the task of job-finding. Jewish factory and business owners gave the newcomers their first jobs, and families adopted the orphans.

Throughout the next several years the community would read personal stories of the newcomers, making them known to people who had no personal contact with survivors.

In April 1948 the *Bulletin* featured twenty-three orphans and a Seder held at the home of Sam Tenenbaum who was instrumental in settling many of the newcomers. The picture of forty guests crammed into his living room was captioned:

Here we see a truly Jewish tradition at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Tenenbaum...Guests were a group of nine Jewish Refugees, recently from DP camps and who are now working as "section hands" on the CPR at Penticton, Princeton, and points. ... Others in the group are tailors and artisans who were recently brought to Canada also from DP camps and who are gainfully employed in Vancouver and vicinity. While in Vancouver for Passover, the men from Penticton were taken care of in Congress House, 2953 Ontario Street.⁸

The next issue of the paper carried not only a list of new arrivals for the Tailors' Project, but a thank-you letter from one of the CPR employees:

Thanks to brotherly attitude of a number of Vancouver's Jews whom we had the opportunity to meet. After this I feel very hopeful about our future which seemed very dark to us for the first four months in Canada.⁹

Women—who during the war had sent clothing to Europe and hosted Jewish troops passing through Vancouver—now invited survivors to join an array of women's organizations. For example, beginning in December 1948 the National Council of Jewish Women created a special program for newcomers that included not only a brief synopsis of "How to Become a Canadian Citizen" but a series of events designed to bring host and newcomer together to talk about "Food," "Dress and Makeup" (for women), "An Evening of Television" (for both sexes) as well as movies and cards. Whatever the participants thought of the assumptions behind these efforts to Canadianize survivors, in every subsequent account of post-war activities, resettlement of survivors was cited as an indication of

the strength and cohesiveness of Vancouver Jewry's institutional networks.¹⁰

II

An important factor in integrating any new population into a host community is a shared neighbourhood. The main Jewish residential areas were located between Fraser and Granville Streets (east to west) and south of Fairview slopes. Survivors moved quickly into geographic proximity to the host community. Both on their own initiative and with the help of the host group they found housing immediately, near the west side Jewish facilities along the Oak Street axis.

In 1951, 55.2 percent of the survivors lived in the areas west of Fraser Street and east of Granville Street, versus 44.5 percent of the total Jewish community. Only 13.8 percent of survivors—versus 8.1 percent of the total community—lived in the low-rent downtown east side, the location of the earlier Jewish community, or east of Fraser. Despite their less favourable economic position, survivors immediately favoured the west side. One survivor described her rationale in moving into the host community neighbourhoods:

We wanted to be close to the community. If you feel Jewish, we wanted to be close... When we bought a house, we wanted to be close to the Talmud Torah [day school]. It was much cheaper in the east [side]...but...I wanted to, not because I wanted to keep up with them, but because I wanted to be there.¹¹

Survivors entered Vancouver at a propitious time in the housing market. In the post-war period the area between Cambie and Granville, and Forty-First and Marine Drive, was opening up to modestly-priced single family dwellings, while retaining older apartment housing. This area included both survivor newcomers and local Jewish families who had taken responsibility for the newcomers:

We were living amongst ourselves, between Cambie and Oak, Eighteenth, Seventeenth, Sixteenth Avenues. We'd get together, most were living in rooming houses. Some people were very kind, used to help us integrate, so we used to gather at the houses to have a little dance, a party, whatever it was.¹²

The host community also facilitated entry to the west side by the acquisition of Congress House at Eleventh and Ontario Streets as temporary housing.¹³ Public transportation carried both host and survivor to work, so they did not have to seek housing near the factories or businesses where they found employment.¹⁴ Rather, they echoed the prevalent tendency to separation of home and work place.

By 1971 survivor and host communities had roughly the same percentages of residence in each concentration of Jewish settlement. The west-side corridor between Granville, Main and Fraser streets held 58 percent of the total Jewish population and 65.4 percent of the survivors. Five percent of all Jews, but only 0.8 percent of survivors lived in the significantly lower income area east of Main and Fraser. The more expensive areas west of Granville Street housed 20 percent of the survivors, compared to 29 percent of the total population. The one place survivors had not followed the community was into the suburbs: 23 percent of the total Jewish population lived outside the City of Vancouver, but only 8 percent of survivors.

III

Residence is influenced not only by the availability of local ethnic or religious communal services, but also by economic achievement. Whether they came from the Polish-speaking acculturated Warsaw Jewish community, genteel Budapest society, or the traditional orthodox world of the Carpathian mountains, the survivors' home communities had undergone sharp economic (and other) transformations in the inter-war

period, changes by which they were influenced. In Europe by 1933 the Jews already occupied a disproportionate percentage of business, professional and managerial positions.¹⁵ With some exceptions these were highly urbanized communities. Even in the small towns of more traditional areas, Jews were landless shopkeepers, peddlers or craftsmen, if not grand entrepreneurs. Jews attended secular schools, spoke the languages of the countries in which they resided, and were therefore more likely to be linguistically flexible, accustomed to a high degree of educational or entrepreneurial achievement in an urban environment, and well aware of strategies for economic and social mobility. Fortunately, in Canada they entered a post-war economy that was expanding, where these traits stood them in good stead.¹⁶

They came from, and to, a community which valued education, professionalism, and business acumen. Survivors were encouraged from the first to emulate the host economic structure. Mutual eagerness led to rapid integration.

Initial jobs for most men were modest. They worked in the clothing trade, as casual labourers, clerks, even junk peddlers. The railroad proved amenable to recruiting Jews, as one survivor recalled:

The CPR were looking for strictly single people, after the war there was a labour shortage in Canada, and they contracted people to work for the CPR... finally my brother, being a healthy young man, signed a contract for one year. He came and worked for the railroad near Penticton, and the Jewish community got ahold of them. There was nine Jewish boys in that railroad gang, so the Jewish community of Vancouver got permission, and they brought them down for Pesach and they had a Seder for them. And he decided when his contract expired that he's going to come to Vancouver and settle. Being a tailor by profession it was very easy for him to get a job here.¹⁷

The tailors, of course, were not all tailors by choice. One partisan had become a tailor by necessity. Escaping from both Nazis and the Red Army, he waited in Austria:

I waited for three solid years. Affidavit after affidavit came from the US giving guarantees for me, but they still wouldn't let me in.¹⁸ An opening came to go to Canada...so I became a tailor, when I did not know anything about it.¹⁹

Settled in a tailoring job, he struggled with the intricacies of the pocket and the seam until rescued and sent to a third Jewish businessman who employed him in his wholesale warehouse. Less than two years later he had started his first business.

Table 1 illustrates the entry categories for 311 of the 376 survivors traced for this study whose positions can be documented in the city directories.²⁰

TABLE 1
ENTRY POSITIONS OF SURVIVORS, 1948-59²¹

CATEGORY	MALES (%)	FEMALES (%)
Unskilled	33.0	5.8
Skilled	38.0	24.1
Clerical/Sales	11.5	14.6
Manager	4.0	—
Professional	9.7	5.8
Proprietor	2.9	3.6
Student	11.1	—
No occ/housewife	—	45.3
Total	100.2 (n=175)	99.2 (n=136)

Jewish employers hiring survivors were concentrated in certain areas: clothing manufacturers and retailers accounted for one-third of the nearly 100 Jewish-owned businesses that

took survivors. Light manufacture, furniture and appliance retailers accounted for another 20 percent, wholesale, scrap, meat packing and lumber for another 25 percent. Not all survivors worked for Jewish employers, but they did find work in similar niches: nearly one-third of the non-Jewish employers headed light manufacturing companies; another ran wholesale or retail businesses.

Ingenuity was a prime criterion for female survivors. Many brought with them new families started after the war. Wartime losses had made these children precious. Few mothers remained in the workforce after their children were born, and some had to combine work with child-care and home-care. However educated, they were handicapped by language and other restrictions. One woman washed dishes in a restaurant;²² another found work through the relatives who had sponsored her. Boarding, which brought in money and allowed women to care for their families at the same time, was an integrating experience for survivors as it had been for earlier immigrants.²³

We had rented an apartment, but then when we wanted a family and we had saved a few dollars, then we started to look around for a house; because we couldn't afford a house, so we bought a rooming house that would help us with the mortgage payments. And I could stay home and look after the children, maybe eight years.²⁴

Another woman trained as a practical nurse, a skill which had saved her when she was deported to Siberia. In Vancouver she found there were plenty of nurses, so "I took in two refugee boys who come and nobody wants them... and I had a job as a nurse at Camp...and made \$100 which was a nest egg for our first house."²⁵

For women who had to stay home the experience combined home-centred work with language acquisition and friendship:

We came in April and on November 7th we moved into [a boarding house] and my English improved so fast that maybe within two months I

learned to type and right after that I typed essays for university students. [My landlady] took the job for me because my English, my accent was so bad that I felt nobody would bring work for me. She answered the phone and I had a huge dictionary and I learned to type and I typed master's theses and everything; and they asked me to correct their spelling! They really did. And I typed for seven years at home so I didn't have to go out and leave my daughter. I made enough money during those seven years that it was enough to live on.²⁶

Those who came to Canada young enough to enter school, and with the support of their adoptive families, had a chance to enter the professions. Education, however, was not a foregone conclusion. The national guardians of the Orphans' Group could display a paternalistic and patronizing attitude towards the refugees. Congress Director Saul Hayes had been tireless in his efforts to bring Jews to Canada before, during and after the war. Yet even he wrote regarding a shipment of orphans:

Occasionally we make plans for certain children and we find they make other plans. The most difficult thing in the world is to convince these orphaned children that the plans they have made will not be accepted. Let us hope these children have not set ideas.²⁷

The children did have set ideas—they wanted an education, a good job, and their own families. Most managed to acquire all of these. Yet those survivors who arrived in Vancouver already educated in a profession found that professional associations had erected barriers to newcomers well before 1945 and did not lower these barriers after the war. One woman who had been a pharmacist was told bluntly that her chances of certification were slim. "I cannot blame them," she admitted, "because we did the same thing in Poland before the

war. We didn't want outsiders in the association." But "if I didn't get something easy I just gave up and did something equally successful."

I decided to take a course in medical technology and I applied to several hospitals which they would give training while you work and I was accepted immediately to...[one] Hospital. The course was two years but after one year I was ready to take my exams. I wrote my exams and I passed them very well and I started to work in the lab...Then I was asked to take over the ECG department and consequently I was in charge of the Neuro-Physiological Laboratory for over twenty-five years.²⁸

However, most survivors started their new lives in Canada on a much lower occupational level. For those wanting to start their own business there were community supports—not only the help of their hosts, but also a Free Loan Society, the *Achdut*, which provided small interest-free cash allowances to anyone wishing to start a business. It is not surprising that many chose an entrepreneurial route to self-sufficiency. Using, as one survivor described it, "a little money, a little brains," survivors became an entrepreneurial class.²⁹

In Vancouver there was no systemic and continued economic distinction between the survivors as an immigrant working class and a native-born middle class. By 1970 both survivor and host sold wholesale and retail in the areas of clothes, furniture and real estate, as well as pharmaceuticals, meat and food products, scrap and junk. They manufactured clothes, furniture, and other light wares. They were building contractors as well as owners of retail shops. Members of both host and survivor groups worked in offices and shops as managers, or had attained professional degrees. Women's work cannot be easily quantified, but there were women survivor entrepreneurs who, either with their husbands or on their own, ran businesses or

managed family assets.

Table 2 compares the occupations of male survivors and male native-born Canadians in 1970.

TABLE 2

MALE SURVIVOR OCCUPATIONS 1970 COMPARED WITH NATIVE-BORN SAMPLE WITH FEMALE SURVIVORS FOR COMPARISON (BY PERCENT)³⁰

	MALE SURV.	MALE NATIVE BORN	FEMALE SURV.
Proprietor	52.8	38.0	19.6
Professional	13.1	26.0	8.2
Clerical/Sales	10.8	13.0	7.6
Unskilled	10.3	7.0	1.9
Skilled	8.2	3.0	6.3
Managerial	4.6	11.0	1.3
No occ/housewife	-	2.0	55.1
Total	99.8	100.0	100.0

The entrepreneur, wrote a student of free enterprise, “needs the kind of education that prepared him for surviving in the open. Very often this means that his first education comes from being shoved into the open at a very early stage and learning how to survive by his wits...”³¹

Men and women who had marched for days in the snow, escaped crematoria, remained alive in the midst of starvation or survived death squads and forced labour, had little fear of starting a business. One description:

Then I worked for a very well-known Jewish personality here....And when we got our first child, we decided my wife should stay home and raise the children. So I told my boss, listen, I would like to try on my own. And he say by all means, there’s always an open door here for a good job. We said shalom to each other and I

never looked back.³²

IV

Participation of the survivors in the institutional life of the Jewish community tells us much about the interplay between survivor and host communities and the complexities of the postwar Jewish community in Vancouver. Survivors in Vancouver integrated into what Daniel Elazar calls the “Jewish polity,”³³ a “set of institutions supported mainly by voluntary contributions and fees raised within the Jewish community,” providing its governance in matters of defence, education and social services.

In Vancouver survivors joined existing organizations, rather than creating their own *landsmanshaften* based on old world affiliations. (The orphans had been encouraged to create a social club named after Ralph Moster, a Canadian Jew killed in the Israeli War of Independence. Its existence was short-lived.) Survivors joined non-Jewish organizations such as the Vancouver General Hospital Auxiliary and the Red Cross,³⁴ a variety of professional organizations³⁵ and sports clubs.³⁶ These affiliations, however, have not been quantified. Therefore, it is to Jewish affiliations we look to see the integration of host and immigrant.

Initially, it is true, survivors experienced feelings of rejection. The first years were difficult. Language was a big barrier; another was the tension survivors felt between the normalcy of daily life in Canada as contrasted with their still-fresh memories of war-time experiences. As one survivor described it:

There was a custom here, to have Yom Kippur dances after the fast, so I remember going to dances at the Commodore....I was there with my friend and some of the older people brought their children over to introduce them to us. The children spoke English and we spoke Yiddish. They wouldn't talk to us, we were completely rejected because of our lack of a language. This was about a

month after we arrived. I would say it took us less than a year, we started going out with local girls.³⁷

“I found a community that was cold and rejecting,” claimed another survivor. But on reflection “maybe the fault lies with us too because we were too reserved. [In Europe] we were somebodies and here we were nobodies. All of a sudden, finding ourselves at the lowest level, and to have an uncertain future, it made us feel very insecure.”³⁸

Even joining a synagogue was not without pain. One woman went to High Holiday services “to be with other Jews,” yet

when I looked down and I’ve seen all the families, all of a sudden it was such as shock to me, I couldn’t take it. I felt that we had nobody, that I’m a piece of sand somewhere on an island, like no past. And I went out. I said ‘Am I jealous? No, I’m happy for the people.’ but I couldn’t take it. Then I said, ‘I have to deal with it.’ I bought some records of the famous Chazzanim. I took a few friends who didn’t go to the holidays and we could sit at home and listen. I couldn’t face it for a very long time.³⁹

Some could not speak about their experiences; others were not asked. Survivors confronted people who spoke about sugar-rationing while they talked about starvation. Washing machines idle during war-time for lack of parts were no match for stories about slave labour in underground factories. “My auntie asked me what happened during the war but I couldn’t tell her” said one. Others were bolder. One confronted his employer:

After a month I went and knocked on his door... and I walk in and say ‘Can I talk to you? ‘Sure.’ So I sat down and said, ‘I had a very nice dad, I had a very nice mother ... I wasn’t born by some animal somewhere in the bush... I’m a Jew, you’re a Jew, you never came out and said, What happened in Europe, I would like to know’....He was a short man but he shrunk in the chair and final-

ly he stood up....I expected to be fired there and thenHe said, 'I'm sorry, you're absolutely right.'⁴⁰

Rabbinic leadership was not always sensitive to the survivors and this misunderstanding alienated some survivors from formal religious observance. One woman survived disguised as a Catholic. Some years later she had a visit from the Rabbi.

For some reason my husband brought the Rabbi to the house for a cup of tea...and this Rabbi was interested in my life...I did tell him that in order to survive I was a Catholic. And he proceeded, oh stupid man, to quote a passage from God knows what that it is better to die than take on a different religion. That was the most horrendous turn-off. To hell with Rabbis and their outlook.⁴¹

Gradually, however, survivors began to date local youths. They joined synagogues. They married and began new families. Whatever the survivors *thought*, what they *did* was to make common cause with local institutions. Out of the 376 names traced for this study, by 1970 at least 115 had affiliated with one organization; 79 had two affiliations and 68 had three or more—a total for the sample of 70 percent affiliation level.⁴² (In the following Table the percentages do not add up to 100 percent since some people belonged to more than one organization.)

TABLE 3

SURVIVORS' AFFILIATIONS (1970)

ORGANIZATION	NUMBERS	% OF SURVIVORS
Orthodox Synagogue	161	43.0
Jewish Community Centre	95	25.0
Ethnic press subscription	87	23.0

Conservative synagogue	46	12.0
Reform Synagogue	5	1.3
Country Club	22	5.9
Other Jewish	33	8.8

Women's affiliations are harder to trace than men's. Often the husband's name appeared on the membership list although both husband and wife were members. We do know from membership lists that at least one-quarter of the female survivors belonged to Hadassah-Wizo. Oral evidence shows that others belonged to Pioneer Women and congregational Sisterhoods.

From membership to leadership was a natural step. Survivors began to occupy leadership positions in communal organizations. By the late 1950s they appear as representatives of, contributors to, and canvassers for Canadian Jewish Congress, the Combined Jewish Appeal (CJA), and the Jewish National Fund (JNF), respectively. Their names appear on lists of donors to local teas and dinners, such as B'nai B'rith Youth, the annual JNF dinner, and others. By the mid-sixties they were approximately 10 percent of the CJA's top givers and canvassers, and they sat on the boards of the Jewish Home for the Aged, both the Orthodox and Conservative Synagogues and the Talmud Torah Day School.

Why did they act as they did? Partly because the absolute numbers were small. The 376 individuals represented here were part of at most 400-500 survivors who passed through Vancouver. There was no one group large enough to form a separate entity and no existing *landsmanshaften* to absorb newcomers from a particular area. Polish-speaking Jews from Warsaw and Hungarian-speaking Jews from Budapest had rubbed shoulders in the camps with Hassidim from Poland and the Carpathian Mountains. Yiddish-speakers were marrying Russian-speaking assimilated Jews. The mixture the war had precipitated eased survivors' participation in the host communal life.

When it came to Jewish education, survivors depended

on the host schools to teach their children the practices and history of Judaism, as well as the language of the new Israeli State, a further integrating factor. Of survivors' children whose school registrations could be traced (176 out of a possible 300), 68 percent went to the Talmud Torah Day School, 20 percent more to congregational schools. Another 12 percent attended the Yiddish-based Peretz school. The first principal of the Talmud Torah as well as some teachers were survivors; survivor mothers headed its Parent Teacher Association.

Despite the presence of survivors and their families at the Talmud Torah Day School during these years, the Holocaust was not taught nor talked about in depth. Students knew the children of survivors had family stories quite different from their own, even though they did not know those stories in detail. One student's recollection:

We knew about the Holocaust. We knew that the Nazis killed Jews....I think it was basically [that] the whole world was coming to grips with the horror of the Holocaust, especially Jews who didn't want to talk about it really....S.E. was a good friend of mine and...his family had been in hiding...during the whole war years....We knew a lot of Jews had been killed but we certainly didn't know the extent....I have relatives who came from concentration camps in the late 1940s. My family brought them in, but we didn't talk about it....I only knew that Hitler was bad. The Nazis were bad. They killed Jews and it was very bad for the Jews during the war, but further than that I didn't know.⁴³

It would be many years before the school was ready to mount an explicit study of the Holocaust. First knowledge came through informal contact with friends' stories.

On the other hand, the existence and security of Israel was a common cause shared by survivor and host. Affiliation with Zionist causes was the paramount way in which the survivors identified with the new Jewish State, as it was for the

host community. Many survivors had wanted to go to Israel but had been thwarted by the British blockade. Some had family or friends who had made it there after the war. Survivors recounted how they waited in vain to escape the DP camps to Israel. No matter how committed they were to settling in Israel, they ended up in Canada rather than in Israel as they had planned. Reported one:

We lived in what had been a bathroom [in the DP camp] I was sick—I lost a baby. One day my husband came home and said, ‘Come on, we’re going to Canada.’ ‘Wait a minute, I said, ‘that’s not in the plan.’ ‘Look at you,’ he said, ‘We can’t live like this’....So he was chosen to come as a tailor and we came.⁴⁴

“I raised money for my Hadassah Chapter, for Pioneer Women, they gave me awards and everything!” exclaimed one survivor. Did Israel influence her life?

I don’t understand very well the word influence....But the life! The people! to me it’s very important. And yet, I have nobody in Israel, I have no relatives at all. But when I come to Israel, I come home. I don’t mean home home, it’s a special home. It’s full of life, full of energy, full of promises. That’s how I see it.⁴⁵

Joining the community gave survivors a sense of belonging; work for Israel made them feel part of the larger Jewish community on both sides of the ocean. Israel remained the homeland of the heart for many survivors, but they almost universally chose Canadian citizenship. By 1961, 93.3 percent of all foreign-born Jews were citizens of Canada, the highest of all ethnic groups including those of British origin (83.3 percent).⁴⁶ By 1971, 99 percent of all Jewish foreign-born adults in British Columbia spoke English as their home language. Survivors equipped themselves with the political and linguistic attributes of other Canadians and expected Canada to reciprocate with recognition and respect.

V

The survivors were also searching for a way to explain and communicate their uniqueness. From the time of their arrival, certain survivors insisted on the introduction of a Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial event. Founders were from Warsaw. Some had arrived in 1940 on the last boatload of refugees via England; others had been trapped in Poland during the war. In Vancouver they soon formed a memorial committee sponsored by Canadian Jewish Congress, joined by members of the community at large. The first event was held in 1948.⁴⁷ There is little evidence of rabbinic leadership in the accounts of early observances. Rather, a secular spirit of heroic resistance was featured. An essay contest invited youth participation and the venue at the community centre made it non-sectarian.⁴⁸ That event continues to be a central annual Holocaust commemoration for the community, although now it is held in synagogues. In the 1970s an annual Kristallnacht Lecture and Commemoration was organized with a local synagogue and later, Canadian Jewish Congress. All Holocaust commemoration events are now under the auspices of the Holocaust Education and Remembrance Centre. The final act in the circle of remembrance was the erection of a memorial at the Schara Tzedek cemetery in the 1990s. This memorial has become a place where, at appropriate times, survivors and their Canadian families can remember those they lost in the Holocaust.

Memorials were the first reaction to the Holocaust, gratitude the second. When a Righteous Gentile from Holland was discovered living in Vancouver in the mid-1960s, survivor entrepreneurs and six local businessmen created a trust fund for the family.⁴⁹ The same group of survivors honoured Sam Tenenbaum in 1968 to mark the twentieth anniversary of their arrival in Canada. They made a donation to the Talmud Torah Day School and established a bursary at the University of British Columbia School of Social Work in honour of Mrs. Jean

Rose, surrogate mother to many of the orphans' group.⁵⁰ In 1973 survivors dedicated an ambulance to the local rehabilitation hospital.

While involving host members in memorial, charity and appreciation efforts, survivors were developing a framework to express their own place within the Jewish polity in Vancouver. They became secure enough to take on responsibilities for future refugee crises. During the Boat People emergency in the late 1970s, survivors were among the initial organizers of Jewish sponsoring groups that eventually brought twelve families to Vancouver.

Memorials were the first, gratitude the second, and education the third step in the survivors' assertion of place. The Holocaust Education Symposium for public high school students, a first for Canada and inaugurated in 1976, was created by the Standing Committee on the Holocaust. The committee blended survivors with members of the Jewish and non-Jewish communities under the sponsorship of Canadian Jewish Congress. In a few years the Symposium had grown to a two-day event reaching over one thousand public high school students. Soon survivors were travelling all over the province and beyond to speak to students and teachers. A Holocaust documentation project began under the auspices of the Canadian Jewish Congress in the late 1970s and later was adopted as a project of the national Jewish community. Finally, in the late 1980s survivors created the Holocaust Education and Remembrance Centre, which now sponsors all educational activity relating to the Holocaust. A recent exhibition, "Open Hearts, Closed Doors," documented the arrival and lives of the orphans.

VI

Irving Abella and Frank Bialystok report that the chasm between survivor and host communities was evidenced by "the separation of neighbourhoods, communal organizations, and,

most importantly, ethnic identification.”⁵¹ They argue that perceptions of the survivors by the host community contributed to this alienation, the survivors being viewed as no different than earlier immigrants from the *stetlach* of Europe.⁵² We have seen that in Vancouver separate neighbourhoods did not develop. We have also shown that occupational networks brought the two groups together, and that survivors followed quickly on the heels of their hosts to take their places as middle-class entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals. Affiliation with communal institutions and participation in the polity of the community show that, whatever their initial reservations about their acceptance, they overcame them relatively quickly. Both survivor and host identified with the State of Israel and with a clear sense of purpose in memorializing, and then teaching and documenting the Holocaust, not just for the Jewish community but equally importantly, for the wider community.

Fifty years after the arrival of the first displaced persons in Canada, exhibits like “Open Hearts, Closed Doors” are a legacy for the Canadian community. The child survivors documented there revealed the ambiguities of their lives, and the harshness of their memories. As Canadian Jews and participating members of the Vancouver Jewish community, their stories educated the hundreds of school children who visited the exhibit, as well as members of their own community who may learn for the first time how the orphans perceived the community’s effort.

“We were treated like lepers,” says one. Yet the speaker became an active leader in a local congregation. “Put your welcome into words”, says another. A third concludes: “We all worked very hard. We are lucky to be here. To come here and have our families and be able to enjoy them. We certainly made a new life here.” Gradually, as each story unfolds, the blending of survivor and host community becomes clear.

While elsewhere in Canada host and survivor communities may have remained separate and uneasy with each other, in Vancouver the two groups have co-mingled and comple-

mented each other, to the benefit of today's Jewish community. Shared ideologies of destruction and redemption, Holocaust and a reborn State of Israel, a commitment to local Jewish institutions and to issues of social justice, meant that survivor and host community grew together.

ENDNOTES

¹*Jewish Western Bulletin*, 17 October 1947, p. 2.

²Memo, 22 April 1950, Bird to Smith, RG 76, Vol. 855, File 55418, Pt. 1. Also see such records as RG 76, Vol. 653, File 29300, Pt. 11, cable dated 3 March 1949. Careful counting of religion occurs in each plan, and overt references to exclusion of Jews are legion.

³Leslie Hulse, "The Emergence of the Holocaust Survivor in the Canadian Jewish Community," (Master's Thesis, Department of Religion, Carleton University, 1979).

⁴I have used a variety of sources to collect my data. By compiling a list of survivors who had come to live in Vancouver by 1960, using immigration files, community lists and key informants, the names of 376 survivors (170 women and 206 men) were identified. City directories yielded information on their residential and occupational patterns. Community records were consulted (including membership lists, school records, donor lists, and a card file which recorded names of children and spouses, addresses, and affiliations for hundreds of households). Cross-referencing this objective data with the subjective accounts of survivors themselves gives a lively and unique perspective on the period and the participants. Tamara Hareven uses this procedure in her landmark study, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York, 1978), pp. 29-33. The tapes of interviews with survivors are in the possession of the author or in the archives of the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society.

⁵*Jewish Western Bulletin*, 2 January 1948.

⁶More survivors came in 1956-57 after the Hungarian Uprising.

⁷*Vancouver Province*, 18 December 1948.

⁸*Jewish Western Bulletin*, 29 April 1948, p. 4.

⁹*Jewish Western Bulletin*, 6 May 1948, p. 5.

¹⁰*Jewish Western Bulletin* for 17 October, 14 November, 21 November, 28 November, 1947 and 2 January, 16 January, 23 January, 13 February, 27 February, 25 March, 8 April, 3 June, 2 July, and 30 September, 1948.

¹¹Interview with ED (survivor accounts will be listed with initials only).

¹²Interview with LK.

¹³Canadian Jewish Congress operated a temporary rooming house for the immigrants from 1948 to 1951.

¹⁴Most businesses of the host community were located in the downtown core.

¹⁵Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington, Ind., 1983).

¹⁶Norbert MacDonald, *Distant Neighbours: A Comparative History of Seattle and Vancouver* (Lincoln, Neb., 1987), Chapter 8.

¹⁷Interviews with BF and IF.

¹⁸An added irony was that many survivors escaped Russia through Poland by claiming Polish citizenship. They then became subject to the Polish quota from the United States which kept them out, since the number of "Poles" far outstripped the spaces in the quota.

¹⁹Interview with LK.

²⁰Source: *Vancouver City Directories 1948-1959*.

²¹Unskilled includes work in the railroad, sawmills, lumber or junk yards, warehouses and meat plants, "labourer," or peddlers. Skilled includes machine operators, hand-tailors (largely women), plumbers, metalworkers, barbers, jewellers and shoemakers. Professionals were engineers, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, religious school teachers.

The professions for women were hard to trace. Many housewives by oral accounts took in boarders, did piece work, or travelled with their husbands in the peddlers' cart.

²²Interview with SB.

²³Robert Harney, "Boarding and Belonging," *Urban History Review* 2 (1978): 8-37.

²⁴Interview with ED.

²⁵Interview with MZ.

²⁶Interview with KF.

²⁷United Jewish Relief Agency papers, Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, File Orphans, letter from Saul Hayes to Henry Walfish, 5 March 1948.

²⁸Interview with SW.

²⁹For a description of the making of a Jewish business class see William Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations* (New York, 1982).

³⁰Source: *Vancouver City Directory* for 1970. The total number of survivor males for this table was 195, with 11 unknown, and 158 females, with 12 untraceable. The native profile was created by drawing a random sample of males from the *Jewish Community Telephone Directory* and tracing them through the City Directory.

³¹A. Etzioni and L. Halevy, "The Jewish Ethic and the Spirit of Achievement," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 19,1 (June 1977): 49-66.

³²Interview with IF.

³³Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity: the Organizational Dynamic of American Jewry* (Philadelphia, 1976).

³⁴Interview with RF.

³⁵Interviews with RW and SW.

³⁶Interview with ZL.

³⁷Interview with LK.

³⁸Interview with EF.

³⁹Interview with MZ.

⁴⁰Interview with LK.

⁴¹Interview with CL.

⁴²Affiliation designates a voluntary membership in a community organization as well as evidence of subscription to the ethnic press and donations to local and Israeli-based charities.

⁴³Rozanne Feldman Kent, *Educating Vancouver's Children: the Vancouver Talmud Torah 1913-1959* (Vancouver, 1995), p. 117.

⁴⁴Interview with MZ. It was the speakers' impression that they were sent to Vancouver rather than a larger centre because they had no children, and Vancouver was considered an outpost of Jewish civilization. No children meant they would not be seeking a Jewish school. In fact, the first day school opened in 1948.

⁴⁵Interview with SB.

⁴⁶Canadian Census, 1971, Vol. 1.3.

⁴⁷Canadian Jewish Congress Plenary Report, Pacific Region, 1974, "The Past Twenty-Six Years of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial" and Warsaw Ghetto Committee files in the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia Archives Box 15.

⁴⁸In 1961 it was held at the Park Theatre and both survivors and local speakers were featured. It is currently held in a local synagogue.

⁴⁹Canadian Jewish Congress Box 13, File Hulstein Fund, Jewish

Historical Society of B.C. Archives. 176 names appear as donors; 27 were survivors, their gifts totalling 25 percent of the amount raised. Average survivor gifts were \$96.00 as against \$57.00 for non-survivors.

⁵⁰File, Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes 1978, Box 19, Jewish Historical Society of B.C. Archives.

⁵¹Irving Abella and Frank Bialystok "Canada," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore and London, 1996), p. 768.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 767.