

**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MONTREAL HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR
ORGANIZATIONS TO JEWISH COMMUNAL LIFE**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the contributions of Holocaust survivors to Jewish communal life through 20 organizations which they formed and/or resuscitated in Montreal. Although the maladaptations of survivors have been documented, their achievements have not. The stigma associated with Holocaust survivors was illustrated in clinical research. Maslow's motivation theory, immigrant adaptation, and social support theory explain the adaptation of survivors. The organizations enabled them to re-establish surrogate families, mourn and perpetuate the memory of their murdered families, and preserve and transmit the cultural heritage of their destroyed communities. The activities of these organizations reflected pre-war Jewish eastern European communal life: mutual aid, social and cultural activities, burial provisions, philanthropic endeavours, support for Israel, and cooperation with other Jewish institutions. Distinctly aware of racial hatred and genocide, most organizations have remained vigilant with respect to Holocaust remembrance, anti-Semitism, and threats to Israel's survival. Thus, survivors and their organizations have impacted significantly on Jewish communal life.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude qualitative analyse l'apport des survivants de l'holocauste à la vie de la communauté juive montréalaise grâce à 20 associations qu'ils ont créées ou réanimées. Jusqu'à présent, les recherches ont porté davantage sur les problèmes d'adaptation des survivants et leurs stigmates que sur leurs réalisations.

Toutefois, la théorie de Maslow sur la motivation, l'intégration des immigrants et le soutien social explique le processus d'adaptation des survivants. Les associations, leur ont permis d'établir des familles de substitution, de pleurer leurs morts, de perpétuer leur mémoire, et de transmettre l'héritage culturel de leurs collectivités disparues. Les activités de ces associations rappellent la vie collective des Juifs d'Europe de l'Est avant la guerre : entraide, activités sociales et culturelles, obsèques, oeuvres philanthropiques, soutien à Israël et collaboration avec les autres institutions juives. Pour contrer les dangers de racisme et de génocide, la plupart des associations ont entretenu le souvenir de l'holocauste, et restent vigilantes face à toute forme d'anti-sémitisme et de menace à l'endroit de l'État d'Israël. En ce sens, les survivants et leurs associations ont considérablement influencé la vie collective juive.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my maternal grandparents, paternal grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins, and the six million Jewish people who perished in the Holocaust. They will never be forgotten.

It is also dedicated to my loving parents, Fela and Moishe Grachnik, survivors of the Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz, and my beloved husband Simcoe, a child survivor born in Russia. My parents have taught me the preciousness of life, the importance of family, respect for my rich heritage, sensitivity for humanity, and the inherent dangers of blind obedience to authority. These are values and ideals which I am presently passing on to my own three children. My husband's personal strength and thirst for life have been truly stimulating. It is their vitality and affirmation of life that inspired the subject matter of this thesis.

The most admirable tribute belongs to the survivors who immigrated to this country. Many have adjusted remarkably well and have created productive and constructive lives which have enriched their communities.

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Finally, I wish to extend my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the survivors interviewed from the different organizations. Although they remain anonymous in this thesis, each has contributed to the spirit of this project.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT AND IMPETUS FOR RESEARCH

My entire life has been permeated by the events that occurred in Europe between the years 1933 and 1945. I was born in a displaced persons' camp in Germany, in 1947, to parents who are the survivors of one of the most insidious acts of genocide perpetrated against mankind, the Holocaust. My maternal grandparents, my paternal grandmother, and most of my aunts, uncles, and cousins were killed in the Lodz ghetto, in Poland, and in the gas chambers of Auschwitz concentration camp.

I became particularly conscious of my painful heritage after viewing the four-part television mini-series "Holocaust," in April, 1978. Shortly thereafter, I became a member of a consciousness-raising group for children of Holocaust survivors. This experience changed my life. For the first time, I encountered the pain of my own personal losses and began the process of coming to terms with my roots. I voraciously read books and articles pertaining to the Holocaust. I also attended a Second Generation conference in New York City, in November, 1979, and was one of the organizers of the first Canadian Children of Survivors conference, held in Montreal in November, 1980.

At the New York conference, the first two panels included prominent psychiatrists and psychologists Leo Eitinger, Hillel Klein, Vivian Rakoff, Yael

Danielli, Henry Krystal, and William Niederland. The members of this international panel of mental-health professionals had distinguished themselves in their work with survivors and their children. All presented papers based on their research. The overall focus of their presentations was one of traumatized and impaired individuals. After the Montreal conference, many of the participants, myself included, were actively pursued by mental-health professionals who wished to conduct research on the transmission of the Holocaust trauma to the second- and third-generation offspring.

What I saw emerging was a common theme: a focus on the pathology of survivor families. This particular focus was confirmed when I returned to university, in 1982, after having raised three children, to complete the degree I had commenced 20 years before. I was accepted into the social work program at McGill University. In one of my classes, as so often occurs in small faculties, we were asked to introduce ourselves to our fellow classmates. In addition to my identity as a woman, wife, and mother, my identity as the daughter of survivor parents is a very important one, and one of which I am proud. As soon as I presented this part of my identity, the professor informed the class of approximately 25 potential social workers that the research shows that the effects of the Holocaust on the survivors have been transmitted to, and as a result have created psychological problems in, their children.

As I familiarized myself with the considerable body of psychological and psychiatric research literature on survivors, I began to question the assumption that all survivors are traumatized victims. My own experiences and relationships with survivors over the years were not congruent with the clinical research literature. I had grown up in survivor communities in both Israel and Montreal, and had witnessed their resilience and strength as they rebuilt their lives out of the ashes of Europe by finding new homes in strange environments, learning new

languages, new trades and professions, starting new families, and creating new organizational institutions. My own parents became actively involved in the activities of the Lodzer Society of Montreal.

Survivors' vitality and affirmation of life were further confirmed through my active involvement and membership in the Holocaust Remembrance Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Quebec Region, which began in 1982. Since then, I have worked with survivors on numerous committees, including for the past five years holding the chairwomanship of the Montreal Jewish community's Holocaust Commemoration Service, which is under the auspices of the Canadian Jewish Congress. I have become familiar with the issues that are near and dear to survivors' hearts, particularly anti-Semitism, support for the State of Israel, oppressed Jewry, Holocaust commemoration, and the Holocaust-denial movement. The conclusion I have come to is that survivors did not just survive, they sought to give meaning to their experiences by preserving the memories of their beloved murdered relatives and friends and by ensuring that the obliterated pre-World War II Jewish civilization of eastern and central Europe continues in present-day Jewish communal life. Indeed, as they worked hard to establish themselves in a world that did not and could not comprehend the tragic abyss from which they had emerged, many have become useful and productive members of the communities in which they settled.

The focus of this study came into being out of this recognition of survivor strengths and capabilities. This study has been undertaken to explore and draw attention to a neglected research area: the contributions of Holocaust survivors to Jewish communal life, in part expressed through the organizations they formed. This view proposes that the adaptive capacity of survivors has been both positive and community enriching.

One might ask why such a study is necessary. One would expect that such a large group of people, the majority of whom came from the cradle of Jewish civilization in eastern Europe (Rosenberg, 1957), would make significant contributions to society. After all, it is a well-known fact that the Montreal Jewish community was enhanced by the mass migration of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, Poland, and Russia in the late 19th century and the early 20th century following persecution and pogroms (violent riots against Jews). Why would one think otherwise for Holocaust survivors? Several reasons come to mind. The first concerns the media's attraction to abominable events, particularly gore. Conventional photos of the Holocaust depict corpses in mass graves, nude people awaiting execution, and emaciated survivors behind barbed-wire fences. Although these photos presented to the world important evidence of the depths of depravity to which a large segment of mankind once sank, they also had the negative impact of searing into our minds the indelible mental image of a victimized group of people bereft of human identity.

The second reason one would think otherwise is the clinical research literature, which has focused on the survivor as a traumatized victim suffering from psychological, physical, and social maladaptation. The clinical label "concentration-camp survivor syndrome" describes the long-lasting effects of the Holocaust on the lives of survivors: "... persistence of symptoms of withdrawal from social life, insomnia, nightmares, chronic depressive and anxiety reaction, and far-reaching somatization" (Krystal & Niederland, 1968, p. 327).

The trauma of the Holocaust produced many such effects among survivors. It is not my intention to negate the clinical research findings. Nor do I wish to minimize the suffering survivors endured by denying that there have been long-term consequences. However, much of the clinical research literature pertaining to survivors is focused almost exclusively on people who applied for

help, that is, to the German government for restitution payments and/or to private mental-health professionals to relieve stress and anxiety. Therefore, it is not surprising that clinical research would focus on the pathological aspects of their behaviour. In fact, Eitinger, Krell, and Rieck (1985), in a research bibliography, acknowledge this obvious slant in the research literature. They state:

There is a great amount of literature in many languages. The medical and psychiatric damage of incarceration is well documented. The remarkable adjustments by many survivors are not. (Eitinger, Krell & Rieck, 1985, p.1)

Since the clinical research literature has constituted the basis for most of our information on and perceptions of survivors, one of the images associated with survivors within the community has been that of emotionally and mentally crippled individuals who are unable to function normally. My own experiences of over eight years as an active laywoman in the Montreal Jewish community and a social work intern during 1986 and 1987 at Jewish Family Services Social Service Centre, Community Services to the Elderly Unit, where I worked exclusively with Holocaust survivors, have prompted a number of observations and conclusions. I have seen the dysfunctional victimization paradigm pertaining to survivors reinforced by laypeople and professionals in various communal organizations, by practitioners in the field, by members of the general Jewish community, and by newspaper accounts.

By focusing only on a narrowly defined area, the psychosocial one, what is implied is that survivors were the needy recipients of services from the community, rather than contributors to it. Although this may be true for some, for the vast majority it was not. In fact, right from the time of their arrival in Montreal, the vast majority of survivors became self-sufficient. One study on Jewish displaced persons served at Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS),

conducted in the Montreal area during a two-year period in 1948 and 1949, confirms this fact. Weiner (1950) found that the majority of people seen at the agency were able to become self-sufficient in the six-month period during which JIAS offered services to immigrants. Of a total case load of 441 people, only 9% returned for additional services, including for unemployment issues and child care during a mother's hospitalization.

It is hoped that the present research, by demonstrating the capabilities and documenting the contributions Holocaust survivors have made, in spite of the trauma, will provide an alternative image to the distorted one which currently predominates. The pathological focus that had dominated the mental-health literature must be transcended. Instead, researchers must examine more closely the remarkable adjustments survivors have made in their adopted environments. This new view will provide an important corrective balance by rounding out the perception of the survivor in the community. Above and beyond what was expected of them, many survivors have responded positively and have adjusted to a strange environment, and have had an enriching impact on Jewish communal life.

ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The present thesis is organized in six chapters. The second chapter is reserved for a methodological account of the research process. My reasoning for giving priority to an explicit explanation of the research process as it actually occurred is as follows. This research, which is of an investigative nature seeking to explore a neglected area, is relatively new research pertaining to the survivor community. An on-line computer search of five data bases between the years 1963 and 1987 revealed no other studies of this type. Quite by accident, though, through personal correspondence (April 20, 1988) with Professor Helmreich of the City

University of New York, wherein he sent me a recently published article pertaining to the post-war adaptation of Holocaust survivors in the United States (Helmreich, 1987), I did learn of one other study pertaining to United States *landsmanshaftn*, fraternal self-help organizations of a group of people from the same geographic area. Hence, if additional research in this particular area is just beginning to emerge, an explicit recounting of the methodology employed, which includes research procedures as well as experiences, will serve as a guide for making the replication process an easier one.

In chapter three, I have attempted to inform the reader about the historical background of the Holocaust survivors in this study, which also reflects the experience of thousands of people. This chapter does not attempt the formidable task of presenting a comprehensive history of their wartime and post-war experiences, which is beyond the scope of the present study. However, historical considerations are important for several reasons. Survivors' lives are intricately interwoven with their pre-Holocaust European experiences in communities that are now extinct. The values, belief systems, and ideas about communal involvement which they brought with them to their new environments are based on old-world life experiences. As well, in the post-liberation period, they encountered crises and upheavals which have impacted on their lives. There were economic, political, and social imperatives, all of which affected the character of thinking and behaviour of the new immigrants. Proponents of the "survivor syndrome" label have presented an image of the Holocaust survivor as a person devoid of a historical background, whose entire personality has been formed by the trauma of the Holocaust (Marcus & Rosenberg, in press).

I concur with Mills (1973), who explains that in order to understand a social situation one must possess a sociological imagination, which must include a consideration of the interplay of the history and biography of the individual, as

well as the economic and political institutions of the society in which she or he lives. Such a perspective has guided my thinking during the writing of the present thesis.

Chapter four examines in general terms characteristic processes and experiences of immigrant adjustment. These themes are related to some of the specific experiences of Jewish immigrants who migrated to Canada from eastern Europe in the post-1881 period. Holocaust survivors experienced these same processes upon arrival in Canada. Their adjustment was compounded by specific Holocaust trauma, the “conspiracy of silence” about the Holocaust, and the very negative “survivor syndrome” label conferred upon them by the mental-health community. In view of these factors, the organizations they founded and/or created assumed monumental importance in their lives.

Chapter five explores the tremendous importance to its members of the organizations Holocaust survivors created and/or resuscitated upon their arrival in Montreal.

Chapter six delineates, in detail, the activities of the organizations and their impact on Jewish communal life.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

INTRODUCTION

The present thesis takes as its starting point an explicit descriptive methodological account of the research process in the same vein as reflexive sociology (Bell & Newby, 1977; Whyte, 1955). Such an approach serves to demystify the research process, as well as to recognize the interactive relationship between the researcher, the research process, and the people studied. The format of inquiry employed, particularly in the initial stage of the research, contained elements of qualitative research, the hallmarks of which are an understanding by the researcher of the empirical social world from the perspective of the subjects being investigated, rather than the imposition of an outsider's view of what they are about (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Filstead, 1972); an understanding of the part played by the researcher in the research process, including self-criticism and self-awareness as a relationship is formed with those who are studied (Burgess, 1982a); the descriptive nature of the research, with its focus on an understanding in narrative form, including direct quotes from participants rather than numerical symbols (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982); and theory development that emerges from the data, rather than the proving or disproving of hypotheses held before conducting a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

INITIATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

When I began this study, it was divided into two major areas of contribution. The first concerned the perpetuation of the memory and culture of the pre-Holocaust years, which organizationally has been expressed through the creation and activities of Holocaust survivor associations and *landsmanshaftn*. The second area consisted of contributions survivors have made through their general involvement in Jewish communal life.

In order to identify major categories of contribution, I employed the qualitative research method of conducting lengthy unstructured interviews with five key informants from the survivor community, as well as with two members of the non-survivor community who knew survivors well. An informal, unstructured interview technique was chosen during this part of the study, due to its exploratory nature. Such a technique allowed the following consistent patterns of contribution to emerge: Yiddish culture, Jewish education, religion, involvement in communal organizations, and areas of finance, particularly the construction trade.

After the major fields were identified, I then proceeded to interview well-known individuals who were actively involved in each field. Some of the individuals were recruited through a second party, and I have known others personally for many years through my involvement in the Montreal Jewish community. These interviews were supplemented by different types of documentary evidence, such as organizational letters and newspaper accounts, as well as chapters in several books detailing the history of the Jewish community in Canada (Baron, 1963; Orenstein, 1981; Rosenberg, 1970). These additional materials helped to authenticate the story.

THE UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The type of unstructured interview conducted consisted of varying degrees of directiveness. Initially, a non-directive approach was utilized, whereby the individual was asked a very broad question in order to elicit her or his perception and description of the particular area I was interested in at the time, for example, the cultural, educational, and religious experiences. As Burgess (1982c) explains, such a non-directive approach allows “informants to take the subject of discussion in whatever direction they prefer” (p. 108). I became more directive with my questions when they touched upon a particular theme that I wanted to develop. In order to immerse myself completely in the interview process by listening attentively and formulating questions as I went along, I employed a tape recorder.

THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

The outline of my interview guide, below, consisted of only two items. The points discussed under the first item are adapted from Lofland (1971, pp. 86-87):

- 1) Introduction of myself and the research project:
 - a) The explanation of the purpose and nature of the research. This was an important aspect of the interview process, particularly with the survivors who were familiar with the negative focus of the clinical research literature and were suspicious of my motives for conducting this research. In some instances, suspicion abounded, and rightly so, when I identified myself as a master’s student at the McGill University School of Social Work. Therefore, at the beginning of these interviews, some time was spent in sharing my background as the daughter of survivor parents, my communal involvement, and the reason for my involvement in this particular

research area. This approach served two distinct purposes. First, I was able to establish a rapport and gain the trust of the prospective interviewee. Second, it helped to diffuse some of the suspicion that may have prevented an honest and open dialogue. As well, I encouraged each interviewee to ask me any questions she or he wished, thereby making it a reciprocal process based on mutual respect.

- b) I ensured anonymity and confidentiality.
 - c) I gave the interviewee permission to interrupt, ask for clarification, and refuse to answer specific questions.
- 2) The broad general question asked for each of the identified categories was: "What, in your opinion, has been the impact of Holocaust survivors in the area of Yiddish culture (education, religion, etc.) in Montreal?"

EMERGENCE OF AN IMPORTANT RESEARCH THEME

At the beginning of the research project, a primary theme I wished to pursue was the ramification of the debilitating pathology theory which had labelled survivors according to a syndrome (Krystal & Niederland, 1968). The sole theoretical framework I envisaged employing was primary and secondary labelling (McPherson, 1983): the survivor syndrome as a social judgment; the internalization of the label within the survivor's self-concept. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the "survivor syndrome" label was transmitted to their offspring. The consequence of such labelling was the stereotyping and stigmatization of two generations of Jews.

However, during the course of several interviews, a theme emerged that forced me to re-evaluate my initial theoretical framework. In retrospect, I now realize that I was focused solely on the perception of the community toward

survivors. I had neglected to consider the perspective of survivors as they immigrated to their new surroundings. This perspective, gleaned from several interviews at the beginning of this study, caused me to refocus the theoretical framework for the present thesis. A synopsis of how this occurred follows.

MAJOR ANALYTIC THEME OR CATEGORY

Mrs. U. had lived in the northeastern Polish city of Vilna, known as the Jerusalem of Lithuania because of its cultural importance as the cradle of the 19th-century Jewish Enlightenment and as a major centre of Hebrew and Yiddish cultural movements and Jewish religious thought (Dobroszycki & Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, 1977). It had also been the home of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, an important institution, founded in 1925, which housed an impressive library and archives. As Mrs. U. explained:

Coming from Vilna and being subjected to YIVO—there were so many things going on. I was very young at the time when the war broke out. I was only 16. But still you were so involved. If we had to do some work we were running to the YIVO for material for study, for notes, for research. I feel very privileged of having been a member of that society, of having been raised in that society, of having been able to partake in this richness. To me it was very precious.

There were tears in Mrs. U.'s eyes as she spoke appreciatively of her rich and diverse cultural background in Europe. It was evident that there was a great sense of sadness, as well as perhaps a longing for the past. However, the world she once knew no longer existed. The thousand-year-old civilization of Polish Jewry had been completely erased from existence in only twelve short years. In a way, only memories have survived.

During the course of the interview, as Mrs. U. kept comparing what life had been like in Vilna to what it was that she had found in Montreal, it became

clear that she was not only longing for the past, but also felt a great disappointment with what existed here. The following comments illustrate this point:

When we came here in the first years I felt, and I think some of our people felt, that cultural life here was on a much lower level than we left in Europe, especially with regard to lectures, theatre. There was no theatre here. Only on occasion actors came from the United States. No theatre in a city of 100,000 Jews, which was an impossibility living in Poland. The one paper published here, the *Kanader Adler*, couldn't be compared to a city like Vilna, with 75,000 Jews. There were three daily papers except for magazines and daily papers coming from Warsaw. It was a big difference.

When we came here, it was a big disappointment. People were so provincial at that time—the people whom we found here. You couldn't compare the Jewish society as a whole to what was in Europe.

In my eyes, ordinary people looked to me so backward.

When I met some people, friends, who had come a year or two before me and I met a man who was a friend of my father's. He was a school principal, and I told him, "I hear you worked in a school here." He said to me, "It's not Vilna. You'll come, you'll see what's going on. It's not what you think." It was a poor substitute, not the same.

Mrs. U. channelled her disappointment with what she found in Montreal by getting involved in areas that were important to her in order to upgrade the existing standard. "People wanted to bring in something that was in them and that they knew of and that they recognized there was a lack of."

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As Mrs. U.'s case reveals, rather than being permanently damaged and dependent, survivors enriched Montreal communal life. Thus, a theoretical framework relating to concepts of recovery and adaptation emerged. During the process of conducting interviews in the preliminary stage of the research, it became apparent that these survivors had remained spiritually connected to their

roots. And even though there was the trauma suffered during the Holocaust years, which, as one person said, "broke our wings," they were not immobilized by their horrendous experiences. Instead, resilient human resources enabled them to recover from the trauma. During the process of recovery, they adapted to their strange environment much in the same way as other waves of immigrants have, became useful and productive members of the community, and transmitted their cultural heritage, thus establishing a continuity with the world of their ancestors.

MAJOR AREAS OF CONTRIBUTION IDENTIFIED DURING THE COURSE OF INFORMAL, UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Yiddish Culture

Survivors rejuvenated Yiddish culture in Montreal. For example, survivors founded a Yiddish theatre; expanded and enhanced the activities of the Jewish Public Library with reading groups and public lectures; developed a Yiddish committee at the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1969 (Orenstein, 1981), which aided in the publication of the now defunct Jewish newspaper, the *Kanader Adler*; initiated the teaching of Yiddish in Hebrew day schools; and promoted the establishment of Yiddish courses in universities.

Education

Survivors had an impact on enrolment in Jewish schools by virtue of their numbers. When they arrived, the Jewish day schools were operating at minimum capacity. Many of the Jewish immigrants who had come earlier in the century had assimilated and were sending their children to Protestant public schools. Survivors such as Mr. T., Mr. S., and Mrs. U. brought with them a passion for Jewish education, which they instilled in their children by transmitting an obliterated way of life. The following comments illustrate this point:

Because these children came in with such a vigour, knowing Yiddish. I know our generation, when we had children, we wanted to pour into them everything we knew or everything that we brought from before. Everything that I learned from my parents in terms of songs and stories and whatever, I tried to pour it out. And the children came with a baggage at school that they knew a lot more than other children.

In the post-war era, the Jewish day schools grew tremendously.

Congregations included Adath Israel, Shaare Zion, and Young Israel, initiated classes during the day. As well, the United Talmud Torahs, the Jewish People's Schools, and the Peretz Schools expanded and developed afternoon and evening classes in addition to their day schools. Hebrew high schools were also established. Talmud Torah's Herzliah and Adath Israel were two examples.

Survivors also reconstituted their European institutions of higher learning known as yeshivas, which emphasized Jewish religious instruction. In 1942, a group of yeshiva students from Vilna arrived in Montreal via Japan and Shanghai (Baron, 1963). Eventually they formed two yeshivas: the Merkaz Hatorah, fashioned in the Lithuanian yeshiva tradition, and the Tomchai Tmimim Lubavitch, which includes a Chassidic rabbinical college. As well, several Orthodox schools were established for girls only: Beth Jacob and Beth Rivkah. Secular Yiddish institutions, such as the A. Reisen Jewish Sunday School of the Workmen's Circle and the Morris Winchevsky Schools, also opened.

Survivors also had an impact as professionals, teaching in the Jewish day schools. Although the foundations for Jewish education in Montreal were laid by earlier immigrants, Holocaust survivors, trained in Europe, revitalized and replenished the ranks of the teaching profession, particularly in the teaching of Yiddish and Hebrew subjects.

Religion

Survivors also involved themselves in reconstituting their religious institutions. In the Montreal area, several synagogues were created by survivors: the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol and the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs Beth Hazichoron Congregation, in the Côte des Neiges area, and the Beth Israel in western Côte St. Luc. As well, survivors serve on the board of management of prominent synagogues such as the Shomrim Laboker Beth Yehudah Shaare Tefillah and Zichron Kedoshim congregations, and are employed as rabbis, cantors, and sextons in synagogues throughout the city.

Involvement in Jewish Communal Organizations

Many already existing communal institutions were invigorated by the influx of survivors. Some even experienced a resurgence or growth as new branches were formed. The Workmen's Circle and the Labour Zionist Alliance (Farband) were two such examples. Other organizations survivors joined include Na'amat Pioneer Women, Hadassah-Wizo Organization of Canada, B'nai B'rith Canada, Emunah Women (formerly Mizrachi), and the Canadian Association for Labor Israel (Histadrut).

THE AGONY OF OMITTING

Having identified major areas of contribution during the course of my preliminary research, it was evident to me that the impact of survivors had been immense and their contributions significant. However, I was faced with the dilemma of incorporating all of this material into one master's thesis. Adhering to the helpful advice of several professors at McGill, I decided to narrow down the focus of my study to the following area of contribution: the organizations Holocaust survivors resuscitated or created upon their arrival in Montreal. These

organizations served as adaptive mechanisms to a new and strange society, as well as perpetuated a continuity with the obliterated pre-World War II Jewish civilization of eastern and central Europe.

PROCESS AND METHODS EMPLOYED DURING THE SECOND PHASE OF RESEARCH

The starting point for examining the contributions of Montreal Holocaust survivor organizations on Jewish communal life was the compilation of a historical inventory of these organizations. This was necessary because a comprehensive list did not exist. I did have in my possession a 1984 list of survivor organizations that I had compiled during my tenure as chairwoman of outreach to the Montreal survivor community just prior to the Canadian Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Children, held in Ottawa in April, 1985. This list, however, was not of a historical nature. That is, it consisted only of those organizations in existence in 1984; it did not include organizations that no longer existed. A historical inventory was compiled in the following manner:

- 1) A search was conducted of the archives at the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Public Library.
- 2) Names of organizations and contact people were obtained from communal institutions that come into direct contact with Holocaust survivors. These were the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre of Allied Jewish Community Services, the Holocaust Remembrance Committee of Canadian Jewish Congress, the Zionist Organization of Canada, and the Jewish Community Council of Montreal (Vaad Hoir).
- 3) Paperman and Sons, a funeral home serving the Jewish community of Montreal, provided a list of cemeteries in the Montreal area where survivors may

have purchased cemetery land. In all, four cemeteries were visited: Mount Pleasant, in Duvernay; Baron de Hirsch Incorporated, on de la Savanne; Kehal Israel, in Dollard des Ormeaux; and Eternal Gardens Memorial Park, in Beaconsfield. Monuments to the Holocaust erected by survivor organizations were found at the first three cemeteries only. In all, the names of 15 organizations were obtained in this manner.

4) During the process of conducting the interviews, I asked interviewees for the names of organizations survivors may have founded and/or revived upon their arrival in Montreal, and for the names of contact people. As the survivor community is a tightly knit one, many people seemed to be aware of each other's existence and provided me with names of organizations and of contact people, as well as phone numbers.

The list of organizations I began to compile included the name of the organization and the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of potential interviewees. This information was gleaned from the various other lists in my possession. As well, some names of executive members of the organizations were procured from the monuments at the cemeteries, where they had been chiselled into the stone, and from interviews I had done. (These organizations are listed in Appendix A.)

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

Concurrent with the compilation of the historical inventory was the process of setting up interviews. As I began the process of contacting potential informants by telephone, I realized the urgency of this project. Countless people on my list had died. Many others were either too old or too sick to participate in a lengthy interview. Taking these factors into consideration, I decided to arrange interviews as soon as I learned the name of an organization and a person to contact.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

In all, 49 people, 15 women and 34 men, between the ages of 60 and 86 years, belonging to 20 organizations, were interviewed. The interviews were tape-recorded, and a verbatim transcription was made of 17 organizations. (The organizations are listed, along with the dates of the interviews conducted, in Appendix B.)

The majority of interviewees were survivors of ghettos, concentration and labour camps, and death camps. Some had survived as non-Jews, with false identity papers, in hiding and as partisans. Still others survived the war in Russia and in internment camps in Canada.

The organizations survivors became associated with were of two types: newly created ones and those which were already in existence in Montreal. Membership in these organizations varied. At the height of their activities, smaller organizations comprised between 30 and 80 members. In medium-sized organizations, membership varied between 100 and 200 people. The larger organizations comprised 220 to 300 members. The largest organization, the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression, had a membership of 1,500 in Montreal, and of approximately 5,000 in branches across Canada. (The organizations, categorized into the above two types, and indicating dates of foundation and membership, are listed in Appendix C.)

METHOD OF INQUIRY: SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to compile a questionnaire soliciting relevant information about the organizations that survivors founded or resuscitated upon their arrival in Montreal, it was important to familiarize myself with these organizations. The following methods were employed:

- 1) The translation from Yiddish into English of the minute books of two organizations found in the archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress. These organizations were Czenstochover Society: minutes of September, 1961, to January, 1971 (Czenstochover Papers); and Sosnofzer, Bendiner, Zaglembe organization: minutes of May 6, 1945, to February 20, 1949. The latter organization amalgamated with the Association of Zaglembe Jews of Montreal: minute books at archives from April 13, 1958, to April 21, 1964 (Zaglembe Papers).
- 2) An examination of a Yiddish questionnaire that had been used by the Yiddish literary scholar Isaac Rontch (1938) to conduct a survey of the different *landsmanshaftn* in existence in New York.
- 3) An examination of the Souvenir Jubilee books of several organizations, found at Canadian Jewish Congress archives.

The questionnaire was designed with two purposes in mind: to elicit information about the organization and the reasons people joined, and to learn about each interviewee's pre-war and wartime organizational affiliation as well as her or his contribution to Montreal Jewish communal life. My aim in the latter part of the questionnaire was to examine if involvement in community prior to and during the Holocaust was a factor in communal involvement in the post-war period. I was also interested in the type of communal involvement these survivors had in Montreal.

The first part of the questionnaire (see Questionnaire, Appendix D) consisted of four parts: early history; structure; activities; and present-day status. Although the questions were fixed, the interviewee was not restricted in the reply she or he gave. The replies to question 7 (Why did people feel it was important to form or join an organization?) generated the themes discussed in chapter five of the present thesis. The section dealing with structure was the least important,

because the focus of the present study was on the contributions of these organizations, rather than an organizational analysis of the operational structure of these organizations. In the “activities” part of the questionnaire, certain probes were introduced. Lofland (1971) explains that the purpose of such questionings is “to probe for items that might not be mentioned in the interviewee’s spontaneous account” (p. 82). Since I realized that it may have been difficult to remember the different activities of each organization over a span of approximately forty years, I used probes to stimulate memory (see Appendix E).

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

Prospective interviewees were contacted by telephone. The purpose of initial contact was threefold. First, I wanted to find out if the organization of which the potential interviewee was or is a member fit my criterion for a Holocaust survivor organization, that is, any new organization founded by survivors or one which they joined and revived, often with a different focus. Second, I wanted to introduce myself, the daughter of survivor parents, as well as the proposed research, thus developing a rapport with each individual. Third, I wanted to find out the official position the potential interviewee held in the organization and if she or he could put me in touch with other members. The success of my approach was evidenced by the willingness of people to participate in the present project. Only one organization requested an official letter of introduction. Access to key informants was facilitated because, in most instances, the key contact person arranged the location of the interview, which usually took place in a member’s home, and suggested which people should be present.

On the issue of the basis upon which prospective interviewees should be selected, Honigman (cited in Burgess, 1982b) states that “the selection of key informants can be based upon the judgement of the field researcher, or on

opportunism when the selection and use of key informants does not follow a strict logical plan, but when the informants are utilised [sic] for the special knowledge which they possess" (p. 77). As previously mentioned, many members of the organizations had died, and others were too sick or too old to participate in the present study. During the course of the year in which this research was conducted, three potential interviewees died. Therefore, I could not be too stringent in the criteria I used to choose key informants. In several instances, I interviewed only one surviving member of an organization who possessed any knowledge of its history. However, as much as possible, an attempt was made to interview a diversity of people. Factors taken into consideration in constructing the sample were different positions held (president, secretary, general member), which may reflect different status levels (Burgess, 1982b); a woman's perspective; and length of time spent in the organization, so that details of its history could be provided.

THE COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

At the initiation of the present project, when I conducted a search of archival material at the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Public Library, I was struck by the dearth of material available. This factor caused me briefly to reflect upon the focus of this research. My apprehensions were soon dispelled. As I entered people's homes, I found out why the archives were empty. The documentary evidence was housed in their private homes. Some was stored in boxes in basements, and others were kept in neat folders and fireproof boxes. One man had reserved half of one room for documentary material in the form of minute books, photographs, invitations to organizational functions, receipts, correspondence, and projects. Interviewees were encouraged to bring whatever documentary evidence they possessed to the interview sessions. In many

instances, they referred to this evidence in order to prod their memory and/or to substantiate a recollection.

PRETEST OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE:

UNSTRUCTURED OR STRUCTURED APPROACH

A pretest, consisting of two separate sessions, was conducted with three members of the Lodzer Society. During the first session, an unstructured interview technique was utilized. Palmer (cited in Burgess, 1982c) explains that the aim of such an approach "assumes the appearance of a natural interesting conversation. But to the proficient interviewer it is always a controlled conversation which he guides and bends to the service of his research interest" (p. 107). During this session, the questionnaire that had been compiled was followed as a guide, rather than being used as a set of questions with a fixed order. Although this session provided rich anecdotal data, the interviewees were often sidetracked. This first session, which covered only approximately one-half of the questions, was a lengthy process, lasting three hours.

During the second session, I decided to utilize a more structured approach and to follow the questionnaire. Even though I allowed the interviewees to digress and to pursue themes that they found important, this interview technique was a more efficient one. When I asked the group members which method of interviewing they preferred, they all chose the second, more structured one. As well, the second session lasted only one hour. The first session, which had lasted three hours, had been too tiring for them.

In view of the fact that I intended to interview as many representatives of organizations as possible, I opted for the structured interview approach.

GROUP INTERVIEWS

Of the 20 interviews conducted, 14 were group interviews ranging from two to six persons. Interviews ranged between two and three-and-a-half hours each. Due to circumstances such as a diverse membership, some people's recollection of only part of the organization's history, attrition due to death, and failing memories, as often as possible group interviews were conducted. The benefits of such an approach were that diverse perspectives provided a wider range of information about the organization, and members stimulated each other's memories. The drawbacks were that some information was censored, and some interviews were long and exhausting.

NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWEES' COMMENTS

The quotations presented in the present study are a verbatim transcription of the interviewees' comments. I have allowed survivors to convey their thoughts in their own voices, without perfecting the grammar to make their comments more intelligible. The aim of such an approach is to reflect and preserve the manner, essence, and mode of survivor expression.

NOTE ON INTERVIEWEES' IDENTITIES

When I initiated the interviews, most people expressed the desire to remain anonymous. Therefore, I decided early on not to refer to them by name in the text of the present thesis. However, as I proceeded to conduct interviews, I soon realized that some people wished to be remembered and to see their names in print. However, most stipulated that they wished to be consulted before a quote was attributed to them. These wishes presented conflicted demands. Therefore, for the purpose of consistency, I decided that everyone would remain anonymous.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTS

The process of conducting this research has been a long and emotionally laden journey, as I experienced a wide gamut of feelings ranging from pride and joy to despair and sadness. As I listened to survivors' descriptions of their ordeals, I was struck by their tenacity and resilience in overcoming considerable obstacles and crises in the course of their lives. In spite of having experienced so much suffering, most exhibited an old-world ethic, which Howe (1976) refers to as a "code of menschlichkeit" (p. 645), a humaneness of existence, as exemplified by the following remarks of a survivor from the Polish city of Radom:

We didn't do anything which was against the law. We didn't do anything to harm anybody. Quite the contrary, we did everything to help somebody if somebody needed help. . . . And we are proud of it. I wish we could do more.

At times, though, the experience was a very emotionally draining one. As survivors recounted prewar communal experiences, in most instances there was much sadness and pain in their recollections. Some people cried as they described communities that no longer existed. I shared their sadness and pain, and had to work very consciously at not being overwhelmed by their sadness.

It is hoped that the finished product will do justice to all the people who shared their time and memories so that the record of some of their contributions to the Montreal community can be documented and preserved.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The term “Holocaust” refers to the planned, systematic destruction by the German state of nearly six million Jews, approximately two-thirds of European Jewry, between the years 1933 and 1945. The destruction of European Jewry was unique because governmental policy was enacted in order to purge from society an entire “inferior race,” that is, all people with Jewish blood flowing through their veins, going as far back as three generations. Jewish people were killed regardless of their economic circumstances, political views, or religious beliefs.

Social, political, and economic circumstances in the inter-bellum years had made Hitler’s ascent to power possible. These years can be characterized as a time of bitter resentment due to the humiliating and punitive Versailles Peace Treaty, which Germany had been forced to sign upon her defeat in 1918. As well, the economic situation fluctuated between periods of inflation, relative stability, and finally the depression starting in 1929. By 1932, there was a severe economic recession in Germany, with six million people unemployed. Hitler promised to solve Germany’s problems.

Hitler’s war against the Jews consisted of three distinct stages (Rabinowitz, 1979). With the National Socialist (Nazi) Party’s accession to power, in 1933, began the first stage of “The Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” the code name utilized by the German bureaucracy for the destruction of the Jews. This stage of persecution lasted until the onset of World War II, in 1939. In a series of

government-sponsored boycotts and virulent anti-Jewish legislation, Jews were deprived of their livelihood, ousted from civil-service positions, prevented from attending public schools, and disenfranchised. In 1938, they were subjected to massive violence in the pogrom, most commonly referred to as Kristallnacht (night of broken glass), during which synagogues and Jewish institutions, businesses, and homes were destroyed. In addition, nearly one hundred Jews were killed and another 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and interned in concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen (Dawidowicz, 1975). Thereafter followed a policy of forced emigration and confiscation of Jewish property and assets. Of the 500,000 Jews who had lived in Germany in 1933, 300,000 had fled by 1939 (Dawidowicz, 1975).

The second phase of the destruction of the Jews of Europe began with the Nazi conquest of Poland on September 1, 1939, and lasted until the German invasion of the Soviet Union, in 1941. During this period, marked by incidences of wanton violence and murder, Jews were turned into the outcasts of society and interned in ghettos, where they were isolated from the rest of the population. As a result of being overworked as forced slave labour for German war industries, indescribable overcrowding, constant hunger and starvation, substandard sanitary conditions, and diseases, thousands died daily.

The third and final phase of the "Final Solution" began in 1941, after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and lasted until the end of the war, in May, 1945. This time frame was marked by mass executions, liquidation of the ghettos, and deportations to death camps of Jews from all countries in Nazi-occupied Europe. Millions of Jews perished in the death camps at Auschwitz, Chelmno, Treblinka, Maidanek, and so on. While some people met their deaths in the gas chambers, others died from starvation, slave labour, medical experiments, infectious diseases, beatings, and torture. During the Holocaust, approximately

5.9 million Jewish people were killed, out of an estimated pre-war European Jewish population of 8.9 million (Dawidowicz, 1975).

On May 7th, 1945, Nazi Germany surrendered to the Allied forces. Only a small number of Jews remained alive to be liberated. According to an article published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council from the International Liberators Conference ("Liberation of," 1981), "of the more than four million Jews in Eastern and Western Europe who were deported to concentration camps, only two percent remained alive to be liberated by the Allied forces" (p. 4).

At the onset of the war, in 1939, three-quarters of the Jews in Europe were concentrated in eastern Europe. At the end of the war, of the approximately 3.3 million Jews who had lived in Poland before the outbreak of the war, three million had been killed (Dawidowicz, 1975). With their destruction came the demise of the thousand-year-old east European Jewish civilization. Gone forever were Jewish homes, synagogues, communal and educational institutions, and a whole way of life.

DEFINITION OF A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

The issue of the definition of a Holocaust survivor is a varied and, at times, contentious one. Dr. Michael Berenbaum, executive director of the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington and former deputy director of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, explains, "There is no single universally held definition ("Ten opinions on," 1983, p. 14).

Various definitions exist, ranging from a broad, metaphorical one that argues that in a sense all Jews are survivors because the "Final Solution" was meant to destroy all world Jewry, to a more stringent one that considers only those who survived the ghettos, concentration camps, and death camps to be

“true” survivors. Still others define the Holocaust survivor as a person who was physically present in Nazi-occupied territory in Europe. This latter definition excludes several categories of people: the approximately 300,000 Polish Jews who sought refuge in Russia in order to escape the Nazi onslaught (Dawidowicz, 1975); some war refugees who, despite world-wide indifference to their plight, managed to find safe haven in countries such as the United States, Palestine, Britain, Argentina, Brazil, China, Bolivia, Chile, and Canada (Abella & Troper, 1982); and German and Austrian Jews who emigrated between 1933 and 1939, prior to the implementation of the “Final Solution.”

Benjamin Meed, president of the largest survivor organization in the world, the American Gathering/Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, utilizes the following broad definition:

Everybody who is a victim of the Nazi regime in Europe is a Holocaust survivor. To define a Holocaust survivor is to define the hell of the Holocaust. Those who left before 1939, who had a chance to come to this country, omitted the last chapter of the Holocaust. (“Ten opinions on,” 1983, p. 14)

For the purposes of the present research study, the following distinct categories were utilized to define a Holocaust survivor:

- 1) a person who survived in Europe, as in the following ways:
 - a) living in a ghetto, a labour camp, and/or a death camp;
 - b) hiding in such places as an attic, a cellar, an underground bunker, a forest, a stable, a pig sty, a haystack, a grave, and so on;
 - c) posing as a Christian with forged identity papers;
 - d) living in the woods as a partisan, fighting with small guerrilla groups;
- 2) a person who fled to Russia when Germany invaded Poland;
- 3) a war refugee who fled to a safe haven;

- 4) German and Austrian Jews who emigrated between 1933 and 1939.

POST-LIBERATION: THE QUEST TO REBUILD SHATTERED LIVES

Above all, my greatest debt is to all the residents of the Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp during the period I was there. They brought home to me, despite the deepest inhumanity suffered, that the spirit of a people to survive and recover cannot be crushed. (Heymont, cited in Marcus & Peck, 1982, p. vi)

At the end of the war, approximately eight million displaced persons (D.P.s) found themselves living on German soil. By 1947, all but one million of these foreign nationals had been repatriated to their countries or origin. Jews comprised 25 per cent of this total number of D.P.s (Shapira & Keynan, 1985).

For most Jews, though, particularly those from Poland, repatriation was not a viable option, and they rejected the notion. Many did not want to reconstruct their lives in Poland, which had become a vast graveyard (most of the extermination camps had been constructed on Polish soil) where their families had been annihilated by mass murders and their homes and religious, educational, and communal institutions had been destroyed. Others were met with great hostility and violence as they returned to Poland to search for family members and reclaim property and possessions. During the first year of liberation, more than 500 Jews were killed in Poland (Shapira & Keynan, 1985). Finally, in 1946, the brutal massacre in the Polish city of Kielce, in which at least forty Jews were hacked to death, created the impetus for the Jewish exodus from Poland (Peck, 1988).

As Jews fled westward, they settled into two of the four Allied occupation zones that divided Germany and Austria after the war: the American and British zones. Of the 210,000 Jewish D.P.s in Germany, about 175,000 were to be found in the American zone, where living conditions were superior to those in the other

zones (Shapira & Keynan, 1985). By 1947, sixty D.P. camps existed, of which the most important were Bergen-Belsen, in the British zone, and Landsberg, Feldafing, and Foehrenwald, in the American zone (Peck, 1988).

As survivors waited to emigrate to new countries, they vacillated between periods of hope and of despair as they encountered new difficulties. Countries around the world, including Canada and the United States, set up stringent immigration quotas, which effectively barred entry (Abella & Troper, 1982; Wyman, 1984); many D.P. camps were located on or near former concentration-camp sites (Peck, 1988); the British had closed the gates to Palestine, the hoped-for destination for many; and they found themselves in dire living circumstances, which included substandard wooden barracks that provided a lack of privacy, sanitation problems, food rations, overcrowded conditions, and a shortage of clothing (Marcus & Peck, 1982).

And yet, in spite of these obstacles, camp life was characterized by a “vitality” and “affirmation of life” (Mankowitz, 1988, p. 1114). The following excerpt by recently deceased Montreal Holocaust survivor Paul Trepman (1957) graphically describes post-liberation life in the Bergen-Belsen D.P. camp:

Looking back, I don't know myself how we survived and where we took our strength from. The fact is that a new people had arisen on the graves of the martyrs and we found untapped sources of spiritual and physical strength to carry through an incredibly difficult task. Teachers created excellent schools from nothing; editors published papers. God knows how, but they were good, readable papers. Some actors amongst us even created a theatre. The ordinary day-to-day duties and chores connected with the complex life of a newly created Jewish community were executed.
(p. 134)

Leo Srole, the director of the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency in the Landsberg D.P. camp, reinforces these observations: “The Jewish refugees

have an almost obsessive desire to live normal lives again" (Srole, cited in Shapira & Keynan, 1985, n.p.).

The Partisan hymn "Zog nit keyn mol as du geyst dem lestin veg" (never say that you have reached your journey's end) became a rallying cry for the survivor community. The last sentence particularly confirmed their existence: "mir zainen do" (we are here).

Reconstructing their lives, literally out of the ashes, often with the help of Jewish and international relief organizations, took many forms. Survivors reconstituted families by marrying other survivors, usually someone who had some link to their past. As well, some formed intimate relationships with individuals who originated from their former cities and towns. They gave birth to a new generation which "had the distinction of having the highest birthrate of any Jewish community in the world" (Peck, 1988, p. 1149). Cultural activities flourished. Newspapers were published. Two such newspapers were *Techiyat Hametim—Resurrection*, published in Buchenwald in May, 1945 (Mankowitz, 1988), and *The Landsberger Zeitung*, in October, 1945 (Marcus & Peck, 1982). As well, there was a network of schools, including elementary, vocational, and a "people's university," which provided cultural and leisure activities (Marcus & Peck, 1982). Youth movements flourished that provided educational and cultural activities, preparing people for eventual emigration to Palestine (Shapira & Keynan, 1985). Camp committees were formed that linked up with the Central Committee for Liberated Jews, in Munich (Marcus & Peck, 1985). Religious institutions, sports clubs, political parties, theatre groups, choirs, and orchestras proliferated (Ferderber-Salz, 1980). The long process of reconstructing shattered lives had begun.

support; anti-Semitism, particularly in Quebec, where it was fuelled by anti-Semitic politicians and the silence of the Catholic church.

Even with stories of atrocities that were released in 1945, Canada was not about to open its doors. The reason the government had been so unrelenting on the refugee question was that it believed that public opinion in Canada did not favour the absorption of large numbers of Jewish refugees. The government was afraid that it would have to face a backlash once the displaced people arrived. An October, 1946, poll confirmed this perception: 49% of those polled felt that Jews were undesirable immigrants (Abella & Troper, 1982).

In spite of adverse opinion, early in 1947, the door into Canada opened slightly. In 1948, there was an extraordinary turnaround in government policy. The switch had nothing to do with compassion; the key to change was, in the words of Abella and Troper (1982), "national economic self-interest" (p. 239). C.D. Howe, the powerful minister of reconstruction and supply, became the outspoken advocate of increased immigration, including that of displaced persons. Howe saw immigration, even of Jews, as "the simplest, cheapest, and quickest way to find labor, skilled and unskilled" (Abella & Troper, 1982, p. 242).

Through a series of special programs, including the war orphans scheme, which allowed approximately 1,000 Jewish war orphans into Canada, the needle trade, furriers, milliners, domestics, and dressmakers schemes, and the first-degree relatives scheme, persons from D.P. camps of Europe gained entry into Canada. Through March, 1948, approximately 65,000 refugees were allowed into Canada. Of this number, only 15% were Jewish (Abella & Troper, 1982, p. 274).

In conclusion, after liberation, eastern European survivors, particularly those from Poland, were beset with numerous new obstacles. Uprooted from their countries of origin, they languished in D.P. camps for several years until they were granted permission to emigrate to receptive countries. Survivors

POST-WAR SETTLEMENT: THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION

After languishing in D.P. camps in Europe, finally, in 1948, survivors immigrated to various countries around the world, particularly Israel, the United States, and Canada. Since the present study is focused on Canadian survivors, only the Canadian experience will be briefly described.

Abella and Troper (1982) provide a devastating indictment of Canada's immigration policy toward the Jews of Europe who were seeking a place of refuge from Nazi persecution. The authors demonstrated that the Canadian government had no intention of rescuing the threatened European Jews, and deliberately introduced and followed policies that obstructed possibilities for rescue.

Many factors were responsible for ensuring that only a handful of Jewish refugees found a home in Canada before the onset of World War II. The key factor was the unyielding opposition of certain key officials, the most outspoken of whom was Frederick Charles Blair, director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources. Blair mirrored the anti-immigration spirit of the times. Since 1928, Canada had restricted the flow of east European immigrants, of whom substantial proportions were known to be Jewish. It was no secret in Ottawa that British and American immigrants were preferred. Other factors responsible for closing Canada's gates to European Jewry prior to the war were the Depression, which had left one-third of Canadians jobless and Canada reluctant to admit job-hungry immigrants; the general apathy in English Canada; the outright hostility of Quebec, which was vehemently opposed to the admission of Jewish refugees; Prime Minister Mackenzie King's concern for votes, wherein he feared that any move to allow Jewish refugees in would cost him political

allowed into Canada after 1948 were subjected to the apparatus of the immigration process, that is, the different government policies and schemes which granted them entry.

NUMBER OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS IN CANADA

It is not known exactly how many Holocaust survivors reside in Canada. Estimates vary from 20 per cent to 40 per cent of the Jewish population, depending on the definition of Holocaust survivor. Some considerations are essential in determining a statistical count. The term "Holocaust survivor" is a fairly recent one, used to describe the aforementioned categories of people. However, in past years, different designations were employed. For example, between the years 1933 and 1945, fleeing persecution, they were referred to as refugees. Abella and Troper (1982) explain that during this period Canada admitted approximately 5,000 Jewish European refugees seeking a safe haven. This figure did not include the approximately 2,300 German-Jewish refugees who were interned in prison camps in Quebec and the Maritimes between 1940 and 1942 because they were suspected of having been Nazi spies (H. Troper, personal communication, September 29, 1988).

In the post-war years, specifically from 1945 to 1960, Holocaust survivors who gained entry into Canada were referred to as displaced persons, immigrants, and refugees. Rosenberg (1957) points out that of the 45,713 Jews who immigrated to Canada between 1946 and 1956, approximately 48 per cent had been born in Poland and Russia. Kage (1962) documents that between April, 1947, and March, 1950, 11,064 Jewish displaced persons arrived from Europe. Also, between 1948 and the end of 1960, about 10,000 Israeli immigrants came to Canada. Kage explains, "It should not be assumed that these immigrants were born in Israel, but rather that Israel was their last place of permanent residence

before coming to Canada" (p. 150). It can be safely assumed that a substantial number of these immigrants were Holocaust survivors who had initially emigrated to Israel because that was the only place that had unequivocally welcomed them. Other immigrant groups during this period included Jews from Italy, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. In 1957, in the aftermath of the Hungarian revolution, approximately 4,500 Jewish refugees came to Canada (Kage, 1962). A significant number had survived the war.

In all, between the years 1933 and 1960, the Canadian Jewish community grew from 193,063 to 262,422 people, an increase of 26.4 per cent. Much of this increase can be accounted for by Holocaust survivors. While survivors settled primarily in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, Montreal was the largest centre of settlement; its Jewish population grew from 58,032 people, in 1931, to 102,724, in 1961—an increase of 44,692, or approximately 44 percent (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1978, Vol. 5, p. 105).

CHAPTER FOUR

IMMIGRATION, ADAPTATION, AND RESILIENCY: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter develops a theoretical context within which to understand the role of immigrant organizations in general, and survivor organizations in particular, in promoting immigrant adaptation to new and strange environments. Theories of immigrant adaptation and research related to the stresses of the immigration process are presented first. Due to particular circumstances encountered by survivors, such as the specific Holocaust trauma, the “conspiracy of silence” about the Holocaust in the post-war years, and the negative “survivor syndrome” label conferred upon them by the mental-health community, the organizations they founded and/or joined assumed unique importance in their lives. It was there that they found the warmth, companionship, friendship, and sense of belonging they yearned for. In these organizations, survivors were able to mourn their monumental losses. It was there, too, through various social and cultural activities, that they were able to preserve the cultural heritage of their destroyed communities and transmit it to their new environment.

THEORIES OF IMMIGRANT ADAPTATION

Adaptation of immigrants to their new surroundings can best be understood by applying Maslow’s (1954) theoretical framework of human motivation for

growth. According to this theory, individuals are instinctively self-motivated toward self-improvement. He identified five basic human needs, in the following hierarchical levels: (1) physiological needs; (2) safety needs; (3) love and belonging; (4) esteem needs; and (5) the need for self-actualization. Maslow believed that as needs on the lower level of the hierarchy are met, then the individual strives to satisfy those at the upper levels. If we apply this theoretical model to the adaptation of immigrants, it would appear that once the most urgent physiological and security needs, such as housing, employment, and food, are secured, then the immigrant strives for love and belonging through social relationships in a variety of forms. An important vehicle for the establishment of new friendships among immigrants has been the creation of organizations to meet their specific needs.

In his landmark study of immigration, Handlin (1973) studied the effect of the emigration process on the lives of immigrants during the mass migration from Europe in the 19th century. Consistent themes throughout the book were alienation and crises due to uprootedness and displacement from traditional and familiar environments. Handlin refers to the history of immigration as a history of alienation, as people are separated from familiar and traditional surroundings and become foreigners in a strange environment where they do not feel that they readily belong. He posits the thesis that during the transplantation process, the immigrant lives in crisis, which, in many instances, persists for years.

These crises concern all aspects of life. Things taken for granted in the immigrant's country of origin become formidable tasks in the new environment. Kage (1962) outlines eight categories of problems immigrants face in the adjustment process: reception, physical adjustment, employment and employment adjustment, economic adjustment, education and educational

adjustment, social adjustment, psychological and emotional adjustment, and cultural adjustment.

As an immigrant arrives in a new country, she or he is baffled by the bureaucratic immigration procedures, the foreign language, and the strange surroundings. The severity of the shock endured upon arrival can be buffered by the cordial reception given the immigrant by relatives, friends, or the representative of a social service agency.

For newly arrived immigrants, who are usually poor and have meagre funds, an immediate concern is the location of adequate and affordable shelter. For the displaced persons of Europe, this was a major problem because there was an acute housing shortage in Montreal in the post-war era (Kage, 1962). In many instances, people had to pay "key money," sometimes in excess of \$500, to obtain a lodging. Others rented rooms in other people's lodgings, often under dense conditions in small and overcrowded flats.

According to White (cited in Kage, 1962), the most important criterion in the newcomer's adjustment is the finding of employment:

Without a job he feels lost, unwanted, even hopeless. Give him a job and he becomes a man among men—one who is wanted, who belongs and is the breadwinner with all that means in terms of self-respect, position in the community, and status at home. (p. 189)

As newcomers struggle to adjust themselves economically and to find employment, they encounter a maze of new tribulations, the most important of which is the learning of a new language, a vital tool in the adjustment process.

Handlin (1979) found that those who had an industrial skill or trade "had little difficulty in adjusting to the economic conditions of their new world" (p. 55). The same cannot be said for all immigrants. Some soon realize that the skills learned in the "old country" are not transferable to the new environment. Hence, new vocational skills must be learned. Other experience a loss of socio-economic

status as they are forced to accept low-paying jobs that no one else wants. Still others are subjected to discrimination, long working hours, and abysmal working conditions.

Weinfeld, Sigal, and Eaton (1981) discuss some of the particular issues that affected the economic achievements of survivors:

Survivors have experienced interrupted education and training, the erosion of skills, and the destruction of careers or business in full bloom, all of which could adversely affect subsequent life chances. This is quite apart from the obvious physical and mental strain of the experience, which might also affect economic achievement. (p. 9)

Maslow (1954) believed that individuals focus their energies on the need level, which remains ungratified. However, as soon as lower-level needs are satisfied, the individual proceeds up the hierarchy to satisfy additional needs. Proponents of theories of social networks and social support (Gottlieb, 1981; Hirsch, 1981) have emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships in satisfying basic human needs. With regard to levels of need such as friendship and sense of belonging, immigrants have developed their own organizations. These organizations were, in fact, exchange mechanisms through which people developed reciprocal relationships, intimate friendships, and a continuity with their past communities in order to emotionally adjust themselves to a new environment. Immigrants in general, and Jewish immigrants in particular, especially those who came to Canada during the mass migrations from eastern Europe after 1881, developed a host of organizations that met their emotional, cultural, religious, and educational needs. In so doing, they created for themselves a sense of belonging in a strange and often hostile environment. One important type of communal organization that developed in Jewish communities

was the landsmanshaft. Its significance in the lives of its member will be discussed below.

THE CREATION OF LANDSMANSHAFTN

In his social and cultural history of Jewish migration to America in the post-1880 era, Howe (1976) describes the significance of the landsmanshaftn in the lives of the masses as they adapted to a new environment:

The old persisted, stubborn, rooted in the depths of common memory. As if to re-create in miniature the very world from which they had fled, the immigrant Jews established a remarkable network of societies called landsmanshaftn, probably the most spontaneous in character of all their institutions, and the closest in voice and spirit to the masses. While the Jews had seldom felt much loyalty to Russia or Poland as nations, they brought with them fierce affections for the little places they had lived in, the muddy streets, battered synagogues, remembered fields from which they had fled. The landsmanshaft, a lodge made up of persons coming from the same town or district in the old country, was their ambiguous testimony to a past they knew to be wretched yet often felt to be sweet. (Howe, 1976, pp. 183-184)

Landsmanshaftn developed for social, economic, and psychological reasons. Upon arriving in a new country, the east European immigrant sought out landsleit, friends from the old country, who eased the transition in the strange environment. These landsleit banded together to form landsmanshaftn, which, according to Howe (1983), provided important functions: a link to the old country of origin; a continuation and replication in modified form of communal services which had existed in eastern Europe; a setting for the sharing of nostalgia for the old country; and the opportunity for partial adaptation.

The landsmanshaftn were characterized by a "social inwardness," which provided for the immigrant a sanctuary from family problems, economic difficulties, and political ideology (Howe, 1976, p. 184). Some landsmanshaftn

provided services such as sickness and burial benefits and financial aid for unemployed members. Others sent money and parcels of food and clothing to help out landsleit left behind in the old country.

THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

Integration is a process that reflects both the adaptation of the immigrant to society and the impact on her or him made by the new society and environment.

Kage (1962) states that:

. . . integration must be viewed as a gradual process by which new residents become active participants in the economic, social, civic, cultural and spiritual affairs of a new homeland. It is a dynamic process in which values are enriched through mutual acquaintance, accommodation and understanding. It is a process in which both the migrants and their compatriots find an opportunity to make their own distinctive contributions. (p. 165)

Thus, Kage addresses several issues that are germane to understanding the integration process. The first concerns the capacity of the immigrant to adapt to her or his environment. Important factors to consider are the age of the immigrant, her or his education level, vocational skills, and "a willingness to accommodate himself to certain environmental and psychological differentials in his new homeland" (Kage, 1962, p. 166).

Interactive relationships of the immigrant with the environment and community characterizes the integration process. An important concept in an interactive, reciprocal relationship is the attitude of the host community which influences the immigrant. Studies on immigrants have stressed the importance of the attitudes and behaviours of the host community toward the immigrant in the process of adjustment (Jones & Lambert, 1971). In order to bring this issue, which pertains specifically to survivors, into sharper perspective, it is necessary to probe more deeply into the attitudes that greeted them as they immigrated to different

parts of the world. It is to these attitudes, exemplified by the “conspiracy of silence” about the Holocaust and the “survivor syndrome” label, we now turn to in describing the unique experiences of Holocaust survivors that were substantially different from those of other immigrants.

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

When survivors immigrated to various countries around the world, they were plagued with numerous new problems and difficulties. Coupled with the stresses of the immigration process and immigrant adjustment and the multiple traumas endured during and after the war as they found their families and friends murdered and their communities destroyed, was a “conspiracy of silence” about the Holocaust.

In their study of 25 survivor families on several Israeli kibbutzim, Klein and Reinharz (1972) identified supportive communal environment as an important variable influencing the post-war adaptation of survivors. Through the embodiment of a collective spirit, survivors were able to rebuild their pre-war communities and family networks, as well as to have the opportunity to mourn their losses through the creation of rituals.

The reception survivors who immigrated to other parts of the world received was in sharp contrast to the Israeli kibbutz experience. The literature is replete with examples of the negative and often hostile attitudes that greeted them. As well, there was a pervasive silence about and denial of the horrors of the Holocaust. Danieli (1981) describes how these negative attitudes and societal taboos about the Holocaust served as a deterrent to their integration:

Their war accounts were too horrifying for most people to listen to or to believe. They were, therefore, easy to ignore, avoid and/or deny. Bystander's guilt led many to react to survivors as if they were pointing an accusing finger at them. Survivors were also

confronted with negative reactions, expressed in such comments as "That is the past; let bygones be [sic] bygones," in the myth of their having contributed to their victimization by "going like sheep to the slaughter," and by the suspicion that they had performed immoral acts in order to survive. Such reactions led most survivors, in their interactions with non-survivors, to become silent about the Holocaust.

The resulting "conspiracy of silence" proved detrimental to the intrapsychic well-being of survivors and to their familial and socio-cultural integration. Not only did this conspiracy intensify the survivors' sense of isolation and mistrust of society but it also formed yet another obstacle to mourning. The silence imposed by others proved particularly painful to those who had survived the war determined to bear witness. (p. 7)

Different theories have been posited to explain this conspiracy of silence, as well as the ambivalent feelings toward survivors in the post-war years. Hamburg (1980) states that scholars and the general public avoided the painful topic of the Holocaust in the hope that such an occurrence could not happen again. Eitinger (1980) comments on this silence as an attempt to forget the horrible and painful events: "As is the case with every unpleasant experience, war and victims are something the community wants to forget; a veil of oblivion is drawn over everything painful and unpleasant" (p. 159).

Des Pres (1977) discusses several reasons for the non-survivor community shunning survivors. He explains that to acknowledge the survivors' experiences, the embodiment of "hell on earth," would cause psychic imbalance. Hence, it is easier to deal with these abysmal experiences by suspicion, rejection, distance, and denial. In addition, the survivor is made to feel guilty for undermining "the validity of existing norms" (Des Pres, 1976, p. 45). Des Pres' analysis is congruent with the concept of "death taint" put forth by Lifton (1968) in his studies of survivors of Hiroshima and Nazi persecution. This concept relates to the "notion of psychological contagion," wherein people will turn away from the survivor

because she or he “threatens various mechanisms of denial of death as well as related issues about death symbolism” (Lifton, 1968, p. 187).

The societal taboo about the Holocaust was also associated with the guilt the Holocaust trauma conjured up in non-survivors. Terry (1984) points out that the discomfort felt by the person listening to a survivor’s experiences may be “partly explained by the activation of guilt for having remained passive and silent” (p. 143).

Srebrnik (1982) posits that survivors received an unfriendly reception from Jewish natives in Quebec because the fear of anti-Semitic forces operating in the province would create a backlash against all Jews. For example, he explains, in 1944, the St. John Baptiste Society, supported by many Montreal city councillors, had gathered a petition with 100,000 signatures requesting the government to ban the entry of Jewish immigrants. Moreover, anti-Jewish sentiments were fuelled during the 1944 provincial elections, when Maurice Duplessis spoke “of an international Zionist conspiracy to settle 100,000 Jews in Quebec after the war” (Srebrnik, 1982, p. 14). As well, the province “had an ultranationalist semi-fascist party, the Bloc Populaire, which had managed to win some seats” (Srebrnik, 1982, p. 14).

THE CONCENTRATION-CAMP SURVIVOR SYNDROME

The “conspiracy of silence” about the Holocaust and its survivors ended in the late 1950s and early 1960s, because of two central events: the German legislation known as *Wiedergutmachung*, or reparation payment, which provided compensation for the survivors to redress injustices suffered, and the Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, in 1961. The trial of Eichmann, who headed the Bureau for Jewish Affairs at the Reich Security Headquarters in Germany (Lang von, 1982/1983), was reported in detail in newspaper accounts around the world.

This trial, which was internationally televised, catapulted the atrocities of the Third Reich to a generation of people who had never heard of the Nazis.

The consequences of the German legislation heightened the pathologization of survivors. The psychiatric and psychoanalytic literature, on the whole, is focused almost exclusively on those cases of survivors of Nazi oppression who applied for help, that is, either to private mental-health professionals, to relieve stress and anxiety, and/or to the German government for restitution payments. In order to apply for restitution, survivors were required to submit to both medical and psychiatric examinations so that a causal relationship could be established between their present-day health problems and their years of persecution.

The term “concentration-camp survivor syndrome” was coined in 1961 by Dr. W.G. Niederland, a psychiatrist. The symptomatology of the syndrome is as follows.

Chronic Anxiety

Krystal and Niederland (1968) identified this complaint as the most predominant in the clinical population observed. Present in this condition are fear of renewed persecutions befalling spouses and children; phobias associated with current situations that re-awakened past terrors, as well as with persons in positions of authority (e.g., uniformed policemen, doctors, and other officials).

Sleep Disturbances

This included insomnia and recurring nightmares of the traumatic incarceration experience (Krystal & Niederland, 1968).

Disturbances of Cognition and Memory

Included under this condition are confusion of past and present; amnesia; disturbances of orientation; dreams merging into hallucinations; daytime dreamlike experiences in the waking state (Krystal & Niederland, 1968).

Chronic Depression

The depression of Holocaust survivors can be classified into three major components: repressed mourning, survival guilt, and psychic closing off.

Repressed mourning. Several mental-health professionals have commented on the problems associated with the unresolved mourning process. As Meerloo (1968) states, "I was amazed and surprised to hear from people who had gone through the horror of concentration camps that their greatest complaint was that they had not been permitted to mourn over their dead, those they had lost in these very camps" (p. 74). In the normal course of the mourning process, a person deals with one death at a time. By participating in mourning rituals, one is able to work through the grieving process. Many survivors, however, did not have the opportunity to work through the mourning process. First, there was no opportunity to bury their dead, as the corpses were either buried in mass graves or their ashes scattered over the fields of Europe. Second, most survivors, particularly those from eastern Europe, had no homes to which to return. There remained no tangible evidence of their pre-war existence. Their families, homes, and religious, communal, and educational institutions were all gone. Bychowski (1968) posits the thesis that because survivors had no way of life to which to return, there was no opportunity to rebuild a world of objects. As he explains:

For this very reason, the normal mourning period has never been completely worked through. The failure to work through the loss causes their cathexes to remain attached to the lost objects, as a

result of which their lives are experienced as empty and totally lonely. (Bychowski, 1968, p. 82)

Repressed mourning has lead to increased mourning when a friend or relative dies, severe depression, suicidal tendencies (Meerloo, 1968), and the loss of self-esteem (Danto, 1968). Szatmari (1968) points out that because there is no grave the death of a loved one is not accepted, thus rendering the mourning process incomplete.

Survivor guilt. A variety of explanations has been posited to explain why survivors' depressions are saturated with guilt. Carmelly (1975) identifies two types of guilt carriers: the active and the passive. The active guilt carrier may feel guilty because she or he committed "morally unacceptable acts" (p. 140) that endangered the lives of others. The passive guilt carrier feels guilty to have survived when so many others perished.

Chodoff (1981) discusses "guilty feelings which are not related to particular misdeeds, fancied or real, but which are experienced as non-specific, vague and pervasive conviction of having done something wrong and shameful even though this feeling cannot be attached to a remembered episode" (p. 5).

Krystal and Niederland (1968) discuss manifestations of survivor guilt which include repressed rage against parents for having failed to protect them, unconscious identification with the aggressor, and "a form of pathological mourning in which the survivor is stuck in a magnification of the guilt which is present in every bereaved person" (p. 343).

Psychic closing-off. This term was coined by Lifton (1968) to describe the psychic numbing or closing off of feelings, an essential survival skill which enabled prisoners to live through the experience without going insane. The consequence of such "lack of affect" is that "one remains closed off or constricted

emotionally throughout one's life" (p. 184). Related to this is the reduced vitality and fatigue that so often characterize the survivor syndrome.

Personality Changes

Chodoff (1975) describes two types of personality distortions that typify survivors: one in which there is a tendency toward reclusiveness, social isolation, helplessness, and apathy, and another in which the survivor regards the world with suspicion, hostility, and mistrust. Also prevalent is anhedonia, the inability to experience pleasure and joy.

Physical Disabilities and Psychosomatic Symptoms

Survivors have suffered severe health damage as a result of their maltreatment. Matussek (1975) found that those inmates involved in severe work situations most often suffered head injuries, as a result of beatings, followed closely by pulmonary and bronchial disorders.

In his review of literature pertaining to the after-effects of Nazi persecution, Hoppe (1971) delineated the following psychosomatic symptoms in survivors: cardiac and gastric disorders, disturbances of the spine and urinary tract, peptic ulcers, vascular diseases, hypertension, and headaches.

Eitinger (1981), in an exhaustive study of Norwegian camp survivors, notes their higher mortality rate in the post-war years.

Although the extensive compendium of research relating to the survivor syndrome served to enlighten the mental-health community about the long-term consequences of persecution, its pathological focus has had severe ramifications on the lives of both survivors and their children.

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE "SURVIVOR SYNDROME" LABEL

Since the clinical research literature has constituted the basis for most perceptions of and information about survivor families, the image one has is that of traumatized individuals who have difficulty coping with life. Although this may be true for a segment of the survivor population, most survivors, according to Rakoff (cited in Russell, 1980) did adapt quite well after their agonizing experiences: "... the majority of survivors have normalized their lives, achieved prosperity—even happiness—obviously an extraordinary achievement for survivors" (p. 183).

The negative perception of survivors conceptualized by the "survivor syndrome" label has, however, served to stereotype and unnecessarily stigmatize thousands of people. The devastating effects of the label on the lives of survivors are exemplified in the following statements by Epstein (1979):

... it also made their condition appear to be an insidious disease contracted in equal measure by every Jew who had survived the Holocaust. ... The term set Holocaust survivors apart from other "normal" people. (p. 202)

The "survivor syndrome" label has had important consequences for the survivor community. It represented a social judgment which was internalized within the survivors' self-concept and was transmitted to second- and third-generation offspring.

THE "SURVIVOR SYNDROME" LABEL AS A SOCIAL JUDGMENT

In his discussion of labelling theory, McPherson (1983) notes the implications of labelling as a social judgment. According to this theory:

... primary labelling occurs when significant others perceive an individual's behavior to differ in quality or type from normative standards. As a result of this perception, an individual is labelled as

'delinquent', 'unstable', 'eccentric', 'senile', or 'charismatic'. That is, the labelling is a social judgment. (McPherson, 1983, pp. 134-135)

This primary labelling, applied to Holocaust survivors, was reinforced when survivors immigrated to different parts of the world and encountered many negative reactions and attitudes. Some people reacted with remarkable ignorance about survivors' experiences. The following excerpt summarizes an incident related to me by a leader in the survivor community:

Mr. K. was asked to relate his experiences of having worked as a slave labourer to a communal leader active in labour unions. When he explained to him that in addition to 11- and 12-hour working days, approximately four hours per day were spent marching to and from work, the communal leader asked him why a union had not been organized to demand better working conditions. Realizing that this person knew nothing about the history of the Holocaust, Mr. K. pledged never to discuss his experiences again with a non-survivor.

Often, Jews regarded survivors as greenhorns and referred to them as "greeners," thus according them inferior social status. Mrs. G. explained that native-born Canadians did not deem survivors to be emotionally and intellectually equal. Some were even ashamed to be seen in the company of a survivor. Mrs. G. rationalized their behaviour as follows:

Maybe our roots were not up to par, maybe the suffering was still in our faces and in our eyes. Maybe they were going around with the guilt they could not work out with themselves that they left us over there. They didn't put up here a big fuss.

Furthermore, they were regarded as somewhat of an oddity. As Mr. K. explained, "We were survivors, and you know everyone looked at survivors like being people from another planet." Suspicions about them abounded. Mrs. W. was accused by her landlady of having brought over gold and diamonds from Germany. According to Mrs. W., the insulting behaviour of native-born Montrealers was very painful, and created a chasm between survivors and the rest of the community.

In addition to these ambivalent and, at times, negative attitudes, the psychiatric community bestowed upon survivors the "concentration-camp survivor" label. As a result of this clinical perception, which was generalized, some members of the non-survivor community ascribed to survivors the following labels: "paranoid," "mistrustful," "sick," "crazy," "traumatized," and "mentally and emotionally crippled."

Several anecdotes from among many illustrate this point. An elderly Holocaust survivor sought low-cost housing in the Jewish community. This woman, who had lost her entire family during the war, and her husband and son in the post-war period, lived alone, isolated and alienated from the Jewish milieu. After having received her letter of acceptance, ultimately she decided to refuse the apartment because of a rash of robberies. One official, enraged upon learning of her change of mind, called to berate me for having taken on the cause of a Holocaust survivor "who was paranoid." The official refused to acknowledge the lax security precautions in the development as the factor for her sudden change of heart. It was easier to focus blame on the "paranoid" survivor.

In another example, the son of survivor parents wanted to marry the daughter of native-born Montrealers. Upon learning of their prospective son-in-law's background, the girl's parents attempted to put a halt to the relationship, claiming that their daughter was in for "a pack of problems" because her fiancé was the son of survivor parents.

THE INTERNALIZATION OF THE "SURVIVOR SYNDROME" LABEL WITHIN THE SURVIVOR'S SELF-CONCEPT

In his discussion of secondary labelling, McPherson (1983) explains that if the labelling process is persistent, then it is "internalized within the individual's self concept" (p. 135). In short, the individual accepts society's negative image of

herself or himself. The most direct result is the gradual loss of self-respect and self-esteem.

In April, 1985, I presented a paper at the Canadian Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Children, which was held in Ottawa. My presentation included the positive aspects of survivors' lives. Afterwards, a former Jewish teacher approached me. With tears in her eyes, she shared with me the self-doubt she had lived with for many years. As an educator within the Jewish community, she had felt the stigmatization of being a survivor. After having read the clinical research literature, she doubted her capabilities as a parent, especially in view of the fact that researchers were now saying that the trauma survivors had endured had now been transmitted to their children. She had appreciated the public acknowledgment of survivor capabilities and accomplishments. This example indicates that, as McPherson observed, this internalization can be very deep and can persist for years. The labelling process can also be transmitted to subsequent generations.

TRANSMISSION OF THE LABEL TO SECOND- AND THIRD-GENERATION OFFSPRING

Beginning in the late 1960s, and intensifying throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a deluge of research literature emerged regarding the transmission of the psychopathology of parental trauma to not only the offspring (Rakoff, Sigal & Epstein, 1966; Trossman, 1968; Barocas & Barocas, 1973), but also to the grandchildren (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1980). Eitinger et al. (1985) delineate 164 studies regarding the effects of the Holocaust on subsequent generations.

There can be no doubt that many survivor families have suffered from psychological, physical, and social maladaptation. The clinical research literature too replete with examples to deny that there have been long-term consequences

of severe persecution. The most direct consequence of the focus on the pathology of survivor families has been the stereotyping and stigmatization of two, possibly three, generations of Jews. Many children of survivors, seeking to avoid being labelled, have distanced themselves from the experiences of their parents.

As a founding member of Montreal Second Generation, a subcommittee of the Holocaust Remembrance Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, I have helped to organize, as well as to facilitate, several discussion groups for children of Holocaust survivors. Over the years, I have spoken with many daughters and sons of survivor parents. Many of my peers have expressed apprehension about openly identifying with our group. A major reason given was the fear of stereotyped behaviour being attributed to them. The fear of a "children of survivors syndrome" label has served as a deterrent to membership.

PATHOLOGY OR RESILIENCY:

RECENT RESEARCH AND CURRENT DIRECTIONS

The clinical research, through the utilization of small samples, has focused on the pathological aspects of their behaviour. As Porter (1981) states, "Too often, psychiatrists have emphasized the pathological and they have done so using clinical samples that are too small and unrepresentative of the range of adaptations and coping mechanisms that survivors utilize" (pp. 50-51).

It has only been in recent years that some researchers have begun to recognize the resiliency of survivor families. This recognition of the more positive survivor attributes has come about as the result of surveys in which the sample population has been drawn from the general community, rather than exclusively from clinics to which individuals have turned for help.

The following studies, in both the psychological and sociological domains, suggest that survivor families have coped quite well with the trauma of the

Holocaust. In a Montreal study which sought to identify the effects of the Holocaust on the attitudes and behaviours of Jewish survivors compared with two Jewish control groups, Weinfeld, Sigal, and Eaton (1981) found insignificant differences on "measures of perceived anti-Semitism, economic and political satisfaction, social segregation, economic achievement and propensity to migrate from Quebec" (p. 1). They caution against over-generalization of the survivor-syndrome construct, and "point to the need for further research into the remarkable capacities of human beings to overcome the most severe forms of victimization" (p. 1).

In a study conducted by Leon, Butcher, Kleinman, Goldberg, and Almagor (1981), in which 52 survivors were compared with a control group in order to evaluate their present-day functioning, the authors found that even though 81% of survivors still ruminate about their war experiences, these experiences have not affected their moods. In fact, they were psychologically similar to the control group. In addition, the study questioned the earlier notions of survivor guilt, the manifestation of emotional blunting, and the extremely maladaptive psychological influence on the lives of children of survivors.

Porter (1981) describes the socio-political adaptation of the survivor community of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He concludes that survivors tend to live in closely knit communities apart from other Jews; carry on the same customs and traditions of the "old country"; donate their energies to their synagogues, Israeli causes, and the lives of their children and grandchildren.

A randomly selected Montreal community-wide study conducted in 1982 by Sigal and Weinfeld (1985; 1987) found no overwhelming differences in the functioning levels of children of survivors, children of immigrants, and native-born Montrealers in the areas of control of aggression and excessive family enmeshment or alienation.

In his sociological study of the lives of survivors after the war, based on an analysis of 236 oral documentation tapes deposited at the Yad Vashem Institute, in Israel, Helmreich (1987) examined survivor friendship patterns, involvement in the Jewish community, and attitudes toward other minorities. He found that survivors tend to associate with those who shared similar experiences; are actively involved in the Jewish community, particularly in the area of the Holocaust and support for the State of Israel; and are liberal in their views toward other minorities.

Helmreich (1988), in an exploratory study of the impact of Holocaust survivors on American society, discovered the following: survivors settled in many different American communities; overcame vocational deficiencies and entered a wide variety of occupations and trades, in which they did quite well; have given more charity to Jewish causes than non-survivors; founded new and, in some instances, resuscitated dying communities, into which they transplanted and preserved traditional Jewish culture; formed survivor organizations; generously supported the State of Israel; and have raised the level of moral consciousness of the communities in which they settled.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted in very general terms to describe the process of the adaptation of immigrant groups, irrespective of the Holocaust. Adaptation takes time, and perhaps generations, before adjustment is completed. Given the awesome experience of the Holocaust, survivors, above and beyond striving to adapt, had to do so in light of circumstances whereby their entire history had been obliterated. As well, they were plagued with numerous new problems as they encountered many negative reactions and attitudes. Added to pervasive indignities was the very negative "survivor syndrome" label conferred upon

them by the psychiatric community. The effects of this labelling process were debilitating.

And yet, despite their ordeals, a number of recent studies demonstrate that many survivors have adjusted and lived a productive life in the post-war years. In other words, they followed the same kinds of routes and mechanisms as previous waves of immigrants. Jewish immigration throughout the 20th century has seen that when immigrants came to a new country, initially they met their instrumental needs, and then they set up organizations familiar to them, through which they passed on their traditional heritage and culture.

Given the stigma associated with Holocaust survivors and the loss of families and entire communities, the organizations survivors founded and/or created provided milieus of unique importance in their lives. It can be postulated that these organizations would have more importance than those of previous waves of immigrants. The importance and uniqueness of these organizations in the lives of their members will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SURVIVOR ORGANIZATIONS IN THE LIVES OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

INTRODUCTION

As I ascended the stairs of an upper duplex in the western part of Côte St. Luc to interview two members of the Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft and Environ, the following words greeted me: "I waited 30 years for someone like you to interview me about our organization." There seemed to be both disappointment and urgency in the interviewee's comments. As we began our conversation, I soon learned the reasons for his remarks. He had considered impact of the organization, as well as its activities, on the lives of its members to have been very important, and he was disappointed that it had not received proper recognition sooner. He felt that time was running out, and many members were already deceased.

Throughout this interview and subsequent ones, the monumental significance of these organizations in the lives of their members came alive and was told to me repeatedly. These organizations represented tangible evidence that survivors had persevered and had transplanted "old country" communities, personified in these organizations and most affectionately referred to in Yiddish as "*di heim*" (the home). Many survivors, even after having resided in Montreal for approximately 40 years, still referred to their old communities in Europe as their home.

This “tangible evidence,” transplanted and refurbished, was different from what most people would refer to as tangible evidence of the past. There were no pictures, heirlooms, or mementos of their pre-war existence. These “treasures” had been either taken from them upon their arrival at a death camp or pillaged from the homes they had left behind. Hence, the legacy they inherited is based on memories of the pre-war communities in which they had lived.

As I entered survivors’ homes, I was astonished by the wealth of documentary material I found in their possession. This material was of two types. Some people had collected and preserved every bit of information pertaining to their *heim*. For example, Mr. S., of the Zamosc Landsmanshaft, had an inventory which consisted of newspaper and magazine articles, maps, a *yizker bich* (memorial book), and numerous Yiddish books about his home town, Zamosc. Others had all the documents pertaining to the organization. For example, Mr. G., of the Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft, kept the documentary material in an iron box in case of fire. He had in his possession every piece of information associated with the organization, including membership-dues slips, donation receipts, flyers pertaining to the organization’s activities over the years, room-rental receipts, and receipts for advertisements, as well as notices that had been placed in the Yiddish newspaper *Kanader Adler*. He also had in his possession the minute books of the organization, handwritten in Yiddish. He referred to these books as “treasures” he was unable to part with.

The organizations survivors became associated with were of two sorts. One type was the newly created one. This category consisted of *landsmanshaftn* as well as larger associations. The distinction between a *landsmanshaft* and an association is as follows. *Landsmanshaftn* usually consisted of members from the same European city, province, and/or surrounding area. Associations comprised members from different countries of origin. For example, the association Les

Amis de France et de Belgique consisted of members from French-speaking European countries of origin. The largest association formed was the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression, which, at the height of its activities in the 1960s and 1970s, boasted a membership of 1,500 people in Montreal, and 5,000 members in branches across Canada. The members of this organization committed themselves to eradicating the doctrines of racial hatred from Canadian society.

Another type of organization survivors involved themselves with was the already existing *landsmanshaft*. As previously mentioned, the waves of immigrants who arrived in North America in the early 20th century created a host of communal organizations, including *landsmanshaftn*. Montreal was no exception. Shriar (1953), in his study of the philanthropic endeavours of the independent Jewish societies of Montreal lists 36 *landsmanshaftn* and sick-benefit societies in existence in 1949. Many of these *landsmanshaftn* continued on an informal basis. However, during the Holocaust, when word began to filter into Montreal about the dismal fate of Polish Jewry, some re-organized officially as relief organizations and concentrated their energies on co-ordinating aid for survivors from their home towns. The Kurower Hilfs Farein was one such organization. According to Mr. A., the organization was founded informally in the late 1920s, after a group of Kurower landsleit emigrated from the shtetl to Montreal. A flow of communication with the shtetl in the form of letters, parcels, and money continued until 1939, the outbreak of war in Poland. Anxious about the fate of their Kurower *landsleit*, in 1941, the wives of the most active members of the organization re-established the *landsmanshaft* as a relief organization. From 1941 to 1944, the members of the organization continued to collect money in the event that any Kurower landsleit remained alive. As soon as the Kurower Hilfs Farein found out about a surviving member, a parcel containing food and

clothing was immediately sent out. Mr. A. received such a parcel while he was still in Austria after the war. Accompanying this parcel was a heartfelt letter from one of the members of the organization:

This was the first letter which talked to you like a brother, like a family member. I felt the warmth one feels from a mother. I'm sure that all who received a letter from the Hilfs Farein felt the same. Right away we felt we are not alone. (Translated, from the Yiddish, by the author)

Upon his arrival in Montreal, Mr. A. was met at the train station by two members of the organization, who helped him get settled. Shortly thereafter, a meeting was called so that he would have an opportunity to meet the other members of the organization. Members were interested in receiving news about and learning the whereabouts of family and friends who were still in Poland. As well, they were interested in hearing about his experiences. In the light of such a warm reception, Mr. A. joined the organization, as did other landsleit from Kurow, upon their arrival.

In this way, other Holocaust survivors joined already existing organizations. In some organizations, such as the Kurower Hilfs Farein, survivors and non-survivors worked together to co-ordinate relief activities. Sometimes, the relief committee responsible for aiding survivors was dissolved after its mission was accomplished. This was the case for the Czenstochover Relief Committee, which was formed during the war. In 1948, members of this committee called a meeting for all immigrants from Czenstochov, Poland, at which the relief committee was disbanded and the Czenstochover Society established. In fact, the "old-timers," as the Canadian members were affectionately called, handed over to the newcomers eighty dollars left over from the relief fund to help them get started. After the dissolution of the relief committee, its members were invited to participate in the new society's meetings and commemorations, and many did.

In most instances, Holocaust survivors rejuvenated the ranks of these organizations. The previous members were advanced in years and welcomed an injection of a younger group of people with new ideas. Holocaust survivors, in turn, invigorated these organizations with dynamic energies. They also changed their focus by bringing in a *yiddishkeit*, a stronger traditional Jewish presence, the commemorative aspect, a strong affiliation with the State of Israel, and an active involvement in Montreal Jewish communal life in a variety of areas.

The organizations they created and/or resuscitated upon their arrival in Montreal served as adaptive mechanisms to a new and strange society. The organizations enabled their members to re-establish surrogate families, mourn their monumental losses, and preserve the cultural heritage of their destroyed communities. Continuity was established with the obliterated Jewish civilization of eastern Europe by these newcomers to Montreal. The organizations re-created, in a somewhat modified form, Jewish cultural life that had existed in pre-war Europe.

In order to understand the quality of life Holocaust survivors brought to their organizations, one must appreciate the milieu whence they came and the traditions of communal life that were already part of their experiences. The survivor community was unique. Its members survived; their institutions did not. Their eastern European traditions of Jewish communal life in the pre-war period were adapted to the post-war era in Montreal.

TRADITIONS OF EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNAL LIFE

The pre-war Jewish population of Poland, reflected in the sample of survivors interviewed in this study, was composed of dwellers of small towns and villages (*shtetls*), as well as of larger urban centres. In 1931, approximately 750,000 Jews out of 3.5 million, or 25% of the total Jewish population, lived in Poland's five

largest cities (Dobroszycki & Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, 1977). Twenty-five per cent of all Jews remained in rural villages (Mendelsohn, 1983).

In their anthropological study of the culture of the shtetl, Zborowski and Herzog (1962) discuss two central characteristics of shtetl life: a strong sense of identification with the Jewish community and a "core of continuity" with the traditions of the past. Shtetl inhabitants venerated the sanctity of the family, the Sabbath, the cemetery, the synagogue, and centres of learning. Important values inculcated from one generation to the next included obedience to the Torah, including observances of customs, rituals, and dietary laws; pursuit of learning; the performance of *mitsvas*, or good deeds, including the giving of *tsdakah*, or charity; obligation to not only one's extended family, but also to the entire Jewish community; and reverence for the dead. In fact, not only were the dead still considered part of the living family and community, but it was thought that they still influenced the lives of the living spiritually. Grave sites of dear ones were visited before holidays, especially Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, during crises, and before joyous occasions such as weddings.

At the core of shtetl culture was a *yiddishkeit*, or Jewishness,

. . . in which religion, values, social structure, individual behavior are inextricably blended. It means the way of life is lived among "us," and "us" means the shtetl. . . . We are "the" Jews, our way of life is "the" Jewishness, and the word for it is Yiddishkayt. (Zborowski & Herzog, 1962, p. 428)

In the large urban areas of Poland to which the Jews had migrated during the process of industrialization in the second half of the 19th century, a vibrant Jewish cultural life, both religious and secular, existed. The interbellum years can be characterized by somewhat of an erosion of religious traditions, due to the processes of acculturation and secularization, which was especially evident among the young generation. Adherence to Orthodoxy was much higher in the

shtetl and among old people (Heller, 1977). Although no standard typology of the typical shtetl or urban Jew exists, it can be safely said that they did share common beliefs and customs.

Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimlett (1977) describe the Jewish cultural life of the cities and towns: "Each town had its literary circles, drama groups, local library, sports clubs, educational facilities and political and social organizations" (p. 155). The wealth and depth of this culture sparked a strong desire by survivors to maintain the traditions of European communal involvement upon immigration to Montreal. The majority of interviewees for the present study had been involved in community prior to the war, and they spoke of this during the interviews.

ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION IN PRE-WAR EUROPE

The majority of survivors interviewed (86%) had been members of political and social organizations, particularly youth movements, in the interbellum years. Of the remaining 14% who had not been members, many were women who had had familial responsibilities. There were a diverse range of organizations. The most popular were those that had a Zionist orientation. Zionism, the strongest political movement among Jews in Poland, comprised a wide spectrum of groups, from capitalist to socialist and from secular to religious (Heller, 1977). This diversity was reflected in the types of organizations which Montreal Holocaust survivors had joined. The most frequently mentioned Zionist organizations were the Labor Zionist Movement, which included Poale Zion-left and Poale Zion-right; the General Zionists (democratic liberals); and Mizrachi. Youth movements, the majority of which were associated with parent political parties, included Hashomer Hatzair, Akiba, Makabi, and Hakoah sports clubs, Freiheit, and Betar. In these youth movements, members were educated about the history of Palestine

and infused with a genuine love for the land, as Mrs. S. of the Association of Zaglembe Jews remarked:

That was a Zionist organization, and natural they taught us about Israel and they gave us this initiative for, you know, to love Israel. When I came here, naturally I joined this organization.

Several interviewees had prepared themselves, just prior to the war, for immigration to Palestine by participating in a *hachshara*, a specific training period wherein they left home and lived on model kibbutzim that had been set up in Poland.

Survivors in the present sample belonged to numerous other organizations, including the Jewish Socialist Party, the Bund; the Orthodox Agudath Israel; different labour unions; and drama groups. These organizations provided opportunities to develop social relationships and to participate in activities. Several people had served as group leaders for the younger children.

In response to my question whether pre-war organizational involvement had been a factor in their wanting to create and/or join an organization upon their arrival in Montreal, the majority of the sample responded in the affirmative. The remarks of Mr. R., of the Canadian Federation of Lithuanian Jews, best typify the responses received:

People who had a past in social life, in organizational life, in Zionist work—so this was natural to continue.

SURVIVOR INVOLVEMENT IN MONTREAL JEWISH COMMUNAL LIFE

Given the numerous affiliations that people had before the war, they brought a wealth of experiences to Jewish communal life. To the question “Do you feel that you personally have contributed to the Montreal Jewish community? If yes, in

what way?," there was an initial reticence to respond because, according to my impressions, most were embarrassed by the question. To them, participation in community was a natural part of existence, as evidenced by Mrs. W.'s response:

Not specially. I did it. Only wasn't special. I wouldn't say it was a big thing to do. Just normal to.

After some prodding, it became evident that, in addition to involvement in their own organizations, these survivors had also been very much involved in many other aspects of the Montreal Jewish community, almost from the time of their arrival in Montreal. Many were involved in synagogues, as either general members, sisterhood members, members of the board of directors, choirs, social clubs, or executive director. Other survivors served as volunteers at communal institutions, such as Maimonides Hospital Geriatric Centre, Jewish General Hospital, the Jewish Public Library, the Golden Age Association, and the Jewish day-school system, particularly women, when their children were smaller. One French-speaking woman used to tutor children who were experiencing difficulty with the French language. Another man delivers meals-on-wheels to elderly shut-ins for the Golden Age Association. Several have given, and continue to give, lectures on a variety of topics, including famous musical figures, Jewish history, and Israel. One man has given courses to Christian theology students on the Jewish attitude to Christianity. Another assumed the role of a social activist and helped survivors make restitution claims to the German government. At the age of 85 years, he continues to write endless letters to the editor and newspaper articles on a variety of topics, particularly anti-Semitism.

On a more creative note, several have written articles that have appeared in the Yiddish and English press, as well as in journals and newsletters. Others have donated their paintings and sculptures to be sold as fund-raisers for communal institutions, such as the Golden Age Association.

HOLOCAUST-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Approximately one out of three survivors has been involved with communal institutions related to the Holocaust. Some were, and still are, active members of the Holocaust Remembrance Committee of Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), which initiated a community awareness about the Holocaust in 1973; others are members of the Yom Hashoah subcommittee (CJC), which plans the Montreal Jewish community's Holocaust commemoration service, or serve on the board of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, where they act as tour guides and speak about their experiences to hundreds of people a year. Some have participated in interviews, lectures, and dialogues, as well as helped establish Holocaust curriculums in schools, CÉGEPs, and universities, in order to create an awareness about their experiences in the hope of preventing additional genocides. The majority have participated at demonstrations and rallies pertaining to oppressed Soviet Jewry, solidarity with the State of Israel, issues of anti-Semitism, and Holocaust commemoration.

FUND RAISING AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Many of these survivors have been avid fund raisers for the State of Israel, as well as for the Montreal Jewish community. They have bought bonds, and encouraged others to do so. They have also raised money through local Zionist organizations such as the Canadian Technion Society, Jewish National Fund, the Labour Zionist Alliance, Na'amat of Pioneer Women, Hadassah-Wizo, and Histadrut, to name a few. They have also served as canvassers for Combined Jewish Appeal.

The types of projects and causes these survivors have supported, and continue to give donations to, can be categorized as follows: Israeli causes such as bond drives, local Zionist organizations, Combined Jewish Appeal, and local

communal Jewish institutions such as hospitals, synagogues, and schools, both religious and secular.

MORAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Many of the survivors interviewed felt that their contribution has been a moral and spiritual one based on old-world values and beliefs as well as their unique Holocaust experiences. Two members of the Radomer Mutual Aid Society felt that their contribution to the community has been the upbringing of responsible children who are active participants in Jewish communal life in their respective communities, and who are passing on their cultural heritage to their own children. Another survivor, a member of the Chelmer Society, felt that her impact has been the fact that she feels herself bound to the Jewish community. Over the years, she has invited many friends to partake of a variety of holiday rituals. Other survivors felt that that they have contributed to the community by caring about and being interested in it and involving themselves in its various activities. As one woman commented:

We are real Jewish people. We are interested in the Jewish community, and whenever the community call people we support them. . . . We are a part of the Jewish community. [We never say] *tzevet shoin gein a tzveiter* [another person will go in our place]. We know that we have to go. We have to take part. Although we're not so young anymore.

This particular woman saw, as did others, communal participation and involvement as a serious commitment. The majority of survivors interviewed were proud of the fact that they were members in good standing of the community, who have helped it in whatever way they were able to. Most said that whenever they were called upon to donate their time, they never refused.

Many saw their involvement as an obligation which can perhaps be best summarized by the following remarks of a survivor of a Russian labour camp:

You owe something to history or to the martyrs or to the luck what you stay alive. You have to contribute something, I think, in honest way to justify the miracle that you are alive.

ADDITIONAL THEMES IDENTIFIED

Expression of the important impact these organizations had on the lives of survivors was generated primarily through response to the following questions: "Why did people feel it was important to form/join an organization?" and "Do you think your life would have been any different had there not been an organization? If yes, in what way?"

Re-establishment of surrogate families

The most frequently given reason for the formation of or involvement in these organizations was the re-establishment of kinship ties for the purpose of interpersonal relationships with people who had originated from the same city or town. Most people were sole survivors of once very large European nuclear and extended families. The majority arrived already married but bereft of any immediate extended family, and were starved for social contact with people who had shared similar backgrounds and experiences. These factors created an immediate bond between people. In the words of one survivor who joined an already existing organization:

We thought that belonging to the *farein* will prevent us from being alone. We were all alone. We had no one. There was no father, no brother, no family at all. Therefore, belonging to a group of people from the same town instilled in us a sense of purpose in life.
(Translated, from the Yiddish, by the author)

Most people, especially those who had not been welcomed by an already existing *landsmanshaft* and/or relief organization, found out about each other's existence by congregating every Sunday in front of the former Jewish Public Library and on Fletcher's Field (commonly referred to as "the mountains"), in the Plateau Mont-Royal part of the city. As Mr. R., of the Czenstochover Society explained:

I came over in 1953. The very first day or the second day, I was looking, "Where are the Czenstochover?" I was looking for my *landsleit*. You could meet them by the mountains.

As new arrivals created kinship ties with fellow *landsleit*, belonging to the organization created a new extended family whom they were able to invite to share times of sorrow, as well as *simchas* (festivities).

We were young people in our twenties when we came to Canada. We were married and we started to raise families and we had *simchas*. And if we wouldn't have the organization, who would we invite. We didn't have parents. We didn't have anybody here.

Commemoration of Dead Martyrs and Perpetuation of Extinguished Communities

A most urgent concern for the survivors who formed or joined organizations was the commemoration of their family members who had been murdered in Europe. In most instances, this was the first activity of a newly formed organization or of an already existing one after survivors joined it. It was at these annual *haskarahs* and *yizkers*, as these services were called, that survivors were able to mourn their losses. Survivors saw these commemorations as sacred duties and obligations. The November, 2, 1986, invitation of the Czenstochover Society's annual commemoration service attests to this fact. In part, it reads:

You are cordially invited to participate in the 44th Yizkor Service of our beloved parents, brethren and sisters who were annihilated by Nazi tyranny in our home town of Czenstochov and vicinity.

It is our sacred duty to dedicate this day to the martyrs of Czenstochov.

The goal of perpetuating the memory of their murdered families and extinguished communities was accomplished in two ways. The first was through the erection of quite elaborate monuments on cemetery land which had been purchased. On the front of the monument were engraved the name of the organization and an inscription. On the back of the monument, chiselled into the stone or engraved on bronze plaques, were the names of the dead family members. The English inscription of the monument erected by the Radomer Mutual Aid Society in 1962 is encased in large brass tears and reads as follows:

An everlasting symbol of love and devotion to our brethren of the city of Radom, Poland and vicinity, victims of brutal Nazi annihilation.

THEY WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

The following inscription, translated from the Yiddish, explains the reason for the tears on the monument:

I am a stone
Which carries with it
Great sadness and tears
Of over 30,000 Jews
Who are from Radom and surroundings
Tortured and killed by the brutal Nazis

At the base of several monuments were found ashes brought from the Auschwitz crematorium, covered with a bronze plaque.

There are 20 monuments to the Holocaust in Montreal cemeteries. The names of the organizations that erected them, and their locations, are listed in Appendix F.

The second goal of perpetuating extinguished communities was accomplished by initiating various projects in the State of Israel. These projects were identified by a plaque with an inscription bearing the organization's name. For example, the Zaglembe Jews of Montreal raised money for a neutron-physics laboratory in the Israel Institute of Technology. The inscription in this laboratory reads:

The Association of Zaglembe Jews, Montreal

In memory of the Zaglembe Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust.

Many people considered the memorialization of the dead and the perpetuation of the memory of their pre-war communities the most important missions of the organizations they created. As Mr. W., of the Federation of Wolynian Jews, explained:

This is the whole mission of the survivors. In my point of view, this is all our missions, because who stay alive this means he's got a mission from God to not let the world forget what's happened to our people . . . because if you take the main driving words of our martyrs when they went to the graves. They forced them to dig their own graves, and the last word was: Remember us, don't let forget. And this we keep holy. And this we think we are living to preserve and to keep holy. Their last wish, to remember and not to forget.

(A more detailed description of the commemorative aspect will be given in chapter six.)

Preservation of the Memory and Culture of Obliterated Cities and Towns: The Continuity of a Heritage

Survivors were left with great sentimental feelings for their old-world cities. Their memories were saturated with a pervasive nostalgia. By getting together as members of the *landsmanshaftn*, they were able to rekindle old memories. A major

theme of their conversations was the old *heim*. As Mr. R., of the Czenstochover Society, reminisced:

We were very close, very, very close. We saw not only every house but every stone we saw, in front of us. We used to tell stories. Do you remember this? As I said before, familiarity [with the past] is a very, very touching thing, which you can't buy for money. And we enjoyed it immensely, all through the years, all through the years.

And Mr. G., of the Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft:

We always speak about the shtetl. Who was this and who lived here. You know how it is—memories.

The conversation kept the memory of the old city alive in a new and strange environment, and nourished and enriched their lives, as the following excerpt graphically illustrates:

I feel the closest to the people who came from the Zamosc roots. . . . It was very important for me, very important. Among these people, it was possible to reminisce about my home. This was a constant theme of our conversations. We used to remind ourselves of all the different things in our old home. This enriched my life very much. (Translated, from the Yiddish, by the author)

As survivors reminisced about their old communities, it was evident that the majority still harboured a profound appreciation for the richness of the quality of life of their youth and were still sentimentally tied to their roots. One elderly man, with tears in his eyes, recited by memory a Yiddish poem about his home town, Chelm.

In response to the void they experienced in their lives, through the creation of these organizations they transplanted their beloved communities to a new milieu. As Mrs. S., of the Chelmer Society, noted:

We created the shtetl, the town. It was a big town. So we created the Chelmer town here. . . . It's like a Chelm in Canada.

The activities of these organizations, which will be discussed in detail in chapter six, reflected the values inherent in pre-war European communal life: gatherings of a familial nature, the replication of a mutual-aid system, social and cultural activities, burial provisions, and emotional and financial support for Jewish communal institutions, as well as for the State of Israel. Through the medium of these organizations, its members transmitted the history and culture of their pre-war existence to their new milieus.

THE ORGANIZATION AS AN ADAPTIVE VEHICLE

Involvement in the organization helped to ease the transition of adapting to a new society in a number of ways. First and foremost, members found a sense of belonging among peers who spoke a common language. Many expressed the difficulty and embarrassment of the early years and the feelings of being handicapped because of not being able to speak the common language. In fact, the issue of a common language was one of the main reasons for the creation of the French-speaking association Les Amis de France et de Belgique. The following statements illustrate this point:

You must realize that when we came here—I came in 1952, some people came a year or two earlier—there wasn't a French fact like you have it now. If you were Jewish you were English. Now, these people didn't know English. Let's say my father came here. He knew Yiddish and he knew French. So even for a job he had to look for a French place. He had to look for people, friends, that spoke French, not English. So we created that association in order to find people with whom they could talk a common language.

In the beginning years of existence, members of the organization helped each other to integrate into their new environments. Those who were earlier members aided the later arrivals by helping them find dwellings and places of employment, and acquainting them with the local customs. They provided an

emotional-support network for each other in a variety of ways. For example, in the 1950s, male members of the Krakower Society used to meet once a week in a restaurant to discuss employment issues such as advising each other about companies that required workers. After a few years, as the organization grew and had some money in its possession, benefits and support were provided for its members.

One organization, Les Amis de France et de Belgique, helped to integrate assimilated members into the fold of traditional Judaism, that is, to be in touch with their Jewish cultural heritage. The organization consisted of a mixed membership. Some people were very traditional Jews who originated from Poland and adhered to its traditions and customs. Others were more assimilated Jews from France and Belgium. An interesting development was that the more traditional Jews helped educate the more assimilated ones about the rituals and customs of Judaism. As one person proudly announced, "We brought them back to the Jewish milieu." For example, *bar mitzvahs*, rituals signifying the adulthood of male children, were arranged for children who had never experienced them. As well, the importance of Jewish education was stressed, and children were enrolled in Jewish day schools. As one member, who had been an assimilated Jew in Belgium, remarked:

I know, myself, I married here, and my three children are born here. I sent them to Jewish People's School. I am positive, if I had gotten married in Belgium and had children in Belgium, I would never have sent them to a Jewish school. It wasn't done.

Belonging to these organizations also fostered a sense of camaraderie among its members; a camaraderie based on having shared similar traumas. One person described the acceptance and recognition she found in her organization. She felt secure in the company of people who had once seen each other in the most degrading situations but had somehow managed to survive with dignity

and to start new lives. She felt that the members of the organization validated each other's experiences and acknowledged each other as capable people. She did not feel understood and appreciated by Canadian non-survivors. Several people explained that in the organization they were able to find sympathetic ears to share each other's traumatic experiences. They felt that members of the general community did not want to know about or listen to their experiences. One woman, who was crying at a commemoration service in a synagogue in 1949, was told:

Enough is enough. Stop already. No more crying and no more talking about what happened. This is a new country and a new life.

However, within the association the members found the sympathetic ears they yearned for. As one person explained:

But amongst our group, if we felt like talking about something, we could. We were listening to each other's stories, and it was just fine. It was just fine.

The organizations also had an important impact on the self-concept of its members. It gave most people a tremendous sense of accomplishment. All were proud of the "good work" their organizations had done and the projects and causes which they had initiated and supported. The majority had stated that their lives would have been much emptier and lonelier had there not been an organization. The members of several organizations that are no longer in existence regretted their organizations' demise, particularly now that they were retired and had so much time on their hands. The Krakower Society is one such organization. Several of its members are beginning to think once again of re-organizing. As one of the founding members explained:

We don't exist as a Krakower Society anymore in Montreal. You understand, because the people didn't come. Now, we start to think again maybe we will start from the beginning. There are a few volunteers. They want to do something.

Some people expressed the feeling that organizational affiliation had enabled them to lead a more active existence, encouraged them to develop specific skills, and stimulated different topics of conversation, as well as ideas. Mrs. G.'s critical capacities were developed through her involvement in the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression. She became aware of the role of Jews in Canada and their contributions to society and issues of anti-Semitism.

In conclusion, the majority of people interviewed felt that belonging to their respective organizations had enriched their personal lives and given meaning and purpose to it:

We were poor and with families. Belonging to an organization enriched our personal life. When we had to make a bar mitzvah or a wedding for our children, we had somebody to invite to share our *simchas*. Even when we had bad days we had to whom to talk. Without the organization, we were alone. The organization gave meaning to our life, to our existence, to our social behaving.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, it has been seen that the majority of survivors in the present sample had experienced some sort of organizational involvement in the pre-war years. This positive organizational affiliation had been a reason to join an organization in the post-war period in Montreal. The organizations survivors created and/or resuscitated upon their arrival in Montreal served as mechanisms for adaptation to a new and strange environment. The organizations enabled their members to re-establish surrogate families, to mourn their monumental losses, to preserve the cultural heritage of their destroyed communities, and to transmit it to their new environment.

CHAPTER SIX

ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

Over approximately the last 40 years, Holocaust survivors have set up a wide network of organizations that reflected the values inherent in pre-war communal life. Through these organizational mechanisms, survivors transmitted the history and culture of their pre-war communities, in a somewhat modified form, to their new environments. Some of these activities have had a major impact on Jewish communal life in Montreal. The details of the different activities of these organizations over the years will be discussed below.

RELIEF WORK

Six organizations that were involved officially in relief work to help Holocaust survivors awaiting emigration from D.P. camps in Europe were already in existence in Montreal. In the sample of organizations that constituted the present study, the Radomer Hilfs Farein, the Sosnofzer, Bendiner, Zaglembe Organization (renamed the Zaglembe Hilfs Farein), Chelmer Society, Kurower Hilfs Farein, the Czenstochover Relief Committee, and the Pabianitzer Relief Society helped to facilitate the emigration of survivors.

Immediately after liberation, many of these organizations were overwhelmed with letters from people who were searching for relatives and former *landsleit* from their pre-war communities. Some organizations attempted to contact *landsleit* who were still in Europe. When contact was established with a

fellow *landsleit*, parcels of food and clothing were sent out. Money was also forwarded. In the Kurower Hilfs Farein, the lack of money never became an obstacle to giving help to fellow *landsleit* who were still in Europe. On one occasion, a member donated a gold watch to be traded for cash. These were his words:

Take this gold watch and get money. Money must not be a deterrent to the saving of young lives. (Translated, from the Yiddish, by the author)

In the Radomer Hilfs Farein, founded in 1941, financial aid took a variety of forms. In affiliation with the Jewish World Congress and the Federation of Polish Jews, it sent \$1,300 with a member on a relief mission to Poland; it donated \$1,500 for Radomer *landsleit* awaiting immigration to Palestine who had been interned in Cypress by the British; and \$500 was sent to help Jewish war orphans in France (Popper, 1963).

Individuals in these organizations also sponsored employment for fellow *landsleit*. One member of the Kurower Hilfs Farein, a manufacturer, personally sponsored ten tailors to work in his factory. Others helped *landsleit* get settled when they arrived in Montreal. For example, several representatives of the Radomer Hilfs Farein visited Mrs. C. in a reception centre, where she and her husband were housed upon their arrival in Montreal. One member eased their integration by providing them with lodgings in his own home, where they remained throughout the Jewish holidays. He then helped them rent a room from a neighbour, where they remained for a period of three months, during which time Mr. C. obtained a suitable job.

I wish to point out that during the course of these interviews, in reference to the attitudes of the host community, a distinction was made between the reception given survivors by *landsleit* of relief organizations, representatives of

communal organizations, such as Jewish Immigrant Aid Services and Canadian Jewish Congress, and the “neighbour next door.” Generally, the communal organizations were helpful and friendly in aiding survivors. The reverse was true of the attitudes of members of the general community. Only one relief organization had not helped its *landsleit*. The Lodzer Relief organization, formed during the war, disbanded before the arrival of survivors. Two reasons were given for the disbandment: internal fighting over what to do with the money that had been raised; and the negative attitudes toward the newly arrived immigrants by its German and Czechoslovakian members.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE NEEDY

We have a motto. If somebody stretches out a hand for help, we should help him. (Member of the Radomer Mutual Aid Society)

These words, adhering to the Jewish concept of the performance of *mitsvas*, or good deeds, symbolize the attitudes of most organizations toward helping those who were less fortunate. This financial assistance was of two types: to needy *landsleit* abroad, and to those in need in Montreal, not necessarily members of their organization.

In the beginning phases of survivor involvement in these organizations, activities were organized to raise money for and to send parcels to needy *landsleit* abroad, primarily in their Polish cities of origin and in Israel. Other countries to which aid was sent were Argentina, Brazil, and France. For example, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the main activity of the Association of Zaglembe Jews of Montreal was to get in touch with fellow *landsleit*, who were living mainly in Poland and Israel, in order to find out what their needs were. As well, when the organization received letters from people requesting aid, they were read to the members of the executive committee, and aid in the form of money was

immediately sent. Sometimes the money came from the organization's budget, and at other times it was donated privately by the members of its executive. In one instance, according to the minute book of July 19, 1962: Protocol #52 (Zaglembie Papers) of the Association of Zaglembie Jews, \$52 was collected immediately at an executive meeting after a member reported that during a recent trip to Israel he had met a widow *landsleit* in dire straits who required immediate assistance. Her circumstances were followed up by subsequent visits to Israel of Montreal Zaglembie *landsleit*. Usually, letters of thanks, which were read at executive meetings, were received from the benefactors of these "deeds of kindness." In one instance, the Zaglembie *landsleit* received a letter of thanks from an Israeli *landsmen* who had received financial assistance even though he had not solicited it. In most cases, help to needy *landsleit* abroad ceased after they had established themselves and become financially secure.

In some situations, though, this tradition of helping *landsleit* abroad has persisted to the present day. The Federation of Wolynian Jews sends parcels and money to an elderly 82-year-old man living in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the members of the Radomer Mutual Aid Society send aid to a fellow *landsmen* living in Denmark; the Chelmer Society and Kieltzer-Chmielniker Landsmanshaft sent money to the Free Loan Association of their Israeli counterpart organizations, which provide interest-free loans to people; the Piotrokov Trybunalski Landsmanshaft supports elderly Jews in Piotrokov, Poland; and, in 1986, the Tarnover Landsmanshaft of Montreal sent to a fellow *landsleit* in Israel a \$100 cheque so that she could erect a tombstone on her husband's grave. Unfortunately, she died before the money reached her.

Several organizations have helped needy *landsleit* in Montreal who were not members of their respective organizations. A member of the Radomer Mutual Aid Society recalled an incident that occurred in the 1960s, in which a couple who

had recently immigrated from Australia requested a loan. They were immediately lent \$500. No inquiry was undertaken to ascertain the validity of this claim, nor was any pressure ever applied for repayment of the loan.

The Krakower Society sent more financial aid to *landsleit* abroad than in Montreal, because the amount they were able to afford (usually \$20 or \$30) was of greater value abroad, due to the lower standard of living there. In Europe or in Israel, this small amount of money helped substantially. As well, in Montreal, individuals became self-sufficient sooner and did not need aid as much.

BENEFITS AND SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION

They were really helping out each other like brothers and sisters.
(Member of Les Amis de France et de Belgique)

Through the organizations they developed, survivors created an extensive mutual-aid network that replicated the familial support system in existence in pre-war Europe. In the beginning years of their existence, members concerned themselves with helping each other integrate into their new milieus. This was done in a variety of ways. For example, the Chelmer Society sent in the first food order for the newly arrived family, as well as paying for the first month's rent. The members of the ladies' auxiliary of the Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft shopped for and then delivered large food orders to the homes of recently arrived immigrants.

Emotional support and monetary aid were given in many other ways. When a member was sick in the hospital, she or he was visited and/or a present was sent. Moreover, if the woman of the house was hospitalized, either members of the organization would care for small children and perform household tasks, or a homemaker was hired to execute those chores and the fee was paid by the organization. In the beginning years of its existence, the members of the

association Les Amis de France et de Belgique used to cover the funeral costs of those members who were unable to afford them. Later on, a special funeral fund was set up out of the yearly membership dues to assist with the initial funeral costs (\$300) of only the first spouse within a family who died.

Organizations also provided loans to their members. Some people borrowed money to start a business, to buy a car, or to support their families during hard times, such as when the main provider was unemployed. At other times, money was given in the form of a loan, to prevent embarrassment. For example, if it was brought to the executive's attention that members were subsisting on meagre incomes, help was offered in the form of a loan so as not to embarrass the recipient. Not only was this loan never claimed, but few people knew the identity of the "borrower." The important issue was the act of giving. As a member of the Association of Zaglembe Jews pointed out:

We give it to them as a loan in order not to embarrass them. Thus we feel good, but we never claimed the loan back because for us was the giving. But to make them good feel, we told them this we are lending them.

For the most part, financial assistance continued throughout the organization's existences. However, this assistance subsided somewhat as members became more financially secure.

Money to help needy *landsleit* was raised through numerous fund-raising activities. Membership dues were kept at a minimum, in order to attract members. It was felt that too high fees may be a deterrent to membership. After all, the majority of members through the years were of the working-class stratum of society. As a member of Les Amis de France et de Belgique explained:

You are not dealing here with a rich organization with rich businessmen, rich people. There was factory workers. The contributions they gave was really taking from themselves. It was not as if they had so much that they could afford to give. Most of

them they used to run to work every day of the week, but when we had a meeting they were still standing there working and baking cakes and making sandwiches and selling them and running around to make a little bit of money to be able to help each other.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The social and cultural activities of the organizations were the highlights of their members' lives. Not only did they provide a forum for reminiscing about the *heim*, social contact, and cultural expression, but some activities became vehicles for the important fund-raising functions of the organization so that their numerous causes could be supported. The categories of social and cultural activities organized are discussed below.

Parties, Dances, and Balls

Throughout the majority of the organizations life spans, social get-togethers were of great importance, particularly in the genesis period. Some social activities, such as parties that were "like a family evening," were held in people's homes, and others in rented halls. These festivities were usually held to celebrate popular Jewish holidays such as Chanukah, Purim, Tu B'Shvat, Simchat Torah, and Yom Ha'atzmaut. At such parties, members of the Zamosc Landsmanshaft sang Jewish folk songs and recited stories about the themes of the holidays. At times, the talented children of members provided the entertainment at these social gatherings by playing musical instruments and performing skits.

Social get-togethers were also organized for fund-raising purposes. These took the form of tea parties, bazaars, bingo and card games, and large dances, where admission was charged. One such dance, organized by the members of the Krakower Society in the 1960s, drew approximately 700 people. Supper was served and entertainment provided. The members of Les Amis de France et de

Belgique and the Association of Zaglembe Jews have held New Year's dances, which were open to the public and attracted between 300 and 400 people, thus having a social effect on numerous members of the community at large. In October of 1972, the members of the Czenstochover Society held a dinner-dance banquet at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.

In some of the organizations, particularly in the beginning years of their existence, it was the women of the ladies' auxiliaries who prepared the food and did all the serving.

Lectures

In some organizations, lectures were a favoured form of cultural entertainment. Sometimes they were held at general assemblies, to which guest speakers were invited, and at other times they constituted an important part of an "entertainment evening." Favourite topics included issues pertaining to Israel, Nazi war criminals residing in Canada, and oppressed Soviet Jewry.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression never organized any parties and balls, because the members felt that such festivities did not suit the image of their organization. However, over the years an important component of their meetings has been a variety of lectures concerning many different themes. The members wished to broaden their horizons and educate themselves about a broad range of issues and topics. Lectures were delivered by experts in their respective fields regarding specific Jewish issues, such as Jewish customs and traditions, the Montreal Jewish community; Israel; Soviet Jewry; and anti-Semitism. They have also concentrated on self-improvement, with a focus on fashion, the importance of proper diets, and legal matters.

Publication of Books and/or Other Printed Materials

Eleven of the organizations interviewed have participated in the compilation, publication, and subsequent distribution of *yizker bicher* (memorial books). These books, which were named after pre-war communities, have memorialized in print those family members who were killed during the Holocaust, as well as obliterated communities. Many contain historical and personal accounts of Jewish life in east European communities. Some recount the destruction of their communities, while others include a glimpse of communal adjustment in the post-war period. Most are written in Yiddish, but some contain English and Hebrew sections.

Montreal members interviewed felt that participation in the compilation, publication, and distribution of these memorial books was important because, at the time of their release, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many did not as yet have monuments in the cemeteries to mourn and perpetuate the memory of their dead family members. The memorial books fulfilled that void in their lives. Montreal members of the organizations participated in the publication of the *yizker bicher* in a variety of ways. Some sat on the editorial boards of special committees that were set up, primarily in Israel, to compile the books. Others have contributed articles containing personal reflections. Still others have furnished photographs of deceased family members. All of the organizations contributed money to ensure the publication of these books. When they were published, the members assumed responsibility for their distribution. Recently, several organizations, in the fervent desire to pass on the legacy of their obliterated communities and deceased family members, have inquired about the professional translation of these books from Yiddish into English, so that they can attain a wider exposure and readership.

In addition to *yizker bicher*, the organizations have published and/or participated in the publication and compilation of numerous other printed materials. In 1966, the Czenstochover Society published, in Yiddish, a history of their Montreal organization entitled *The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft in Montreal* (Orenstein, 1966). The book contains articles about the history of the organization, a description of its activities, and photos of committees and members. In the 1960s, the Kurower Hilfs Farein compiled a different type of *yizker bich*. This book, in the form of an album perpetuated the memory of deceased Montreal members of the organization. Each page featured the picture of a deceased member. At each meeting, the book was opened and members reminisced about the deceased member and the activities she or he had participated in.

Several organizations have participated in the publication of newsletters and journals which link *landsleit* all over the world. These publications, described by one person as the “voice of the organizations around the world,” contain reports of the activities of the different branches of the organization, personal memoirs based on life in pre-war countries, personal accounts of war experiences, eulogies with pictures of recently deceased members, and congratulatory announcements.

The Montreal Piotrokov Trybunalski Landsmanshaft, in collaboration with the Piotrokov Trybunalski Relief Association, in New York, publishes the *New Bulletin* four times a year; Montreal members contribute articles and pictures. The Radomer Mutual Aid Society has a representative on the board of the journal *Voice of Radom*. Similarly, a representative of the Federation of Wolynian Jews of Montreal serves on the editorial board of *Yalkut Wolyn*, a quarterly publication put out in Israel by the World Union of Wolynian Jews (Livneh, 1984). The Chmielniker Landsmanshaft, in Israel, publishes the *Hed Hairgun*, an annual of Chmielnikers in Israel and the Diaspora.

In the 1960s, the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression published a journal entitled *The Voice of Survivors*. This journal, written in both English and Yiddish, contained information about the organization's numerous social and political activities. In the form of press releases and newspaper clippings, the journal contained informative articles about the issues in which the organization had been involved. As well, it contained up-to-date information about the world-wide Nazi movement.

Two associations have also printed souvenir books to celebrate anniversaries. Les Amis de France et de Belgique did so in 1977, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, and the Zaglembe Jews did so in 1976, on its 18th anniversary.

Two organizations, Kurower Hilfs Farein and the Zamosc Landsmanshaft, have actively helped Yiddish writers publish their books by supporting them financially, and then distributing the finished product.

COMMEMORATION FOR MEMBERS

Without any doubt, the most important achievement of the Society of Friends of France and Belgium has been the unveiling of the cenotaph erected in our cemetery to the memory of our martyred relatives, innocent casualties of Nazi cruelty, abandoned without decent burial. (Friedman, 1977, p. 41)

The majority of interviewees identified the annual commemorations as the longest lasting, as well as one of the most important, activities of the organization. Throughout the organization's histories, all have been involved in some commemorative activity. For the majority of *landsmanshaftn*, this entailed annual memorial services, known as *haskaraks* or *yizkers*. In the early years, adhering to the traditions of their pre-war communities, the members of these *landsmanshaftn* purchased cemetery land to secure plots for their members. Thus,

their sense of community could be maintained in death, as it was during their lives. In many instances, a special committee was organized to deal with burial provisions. Some time later, when members were able to afford it, a special committee was organized for the purpose of soliciting money to erect a monument to the members of their families who had perished during the Holocaust. Before the erection of these monuments, the memorial services used to take place in a synagogue, communal hall, or, in the case of smaller organizations, in members' homes. Until the monument was erected, most organizations held commemorative services once a year, either on the anniversary of the liquidation of their home towns and ghettos, or, according to Jewish tradition, between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur or on the Sunday preceding Rosh Hashanah. Since the erection of the monuments, some organizations have held two yearly commemorative services: one according to tradition and the other to coincide with the deportation of Jews from their home towns and ghettos. At these services, a religious ceremony is conducted, including a communal *Kaddish* and the *El Mole Rachamin*, the memorial prayers for the dead.

On September 18, 1988, I attended the annual commemoration service of the Lodzer Society of Montreal. Although the designated hour for the commemoration was 11:30 a.m., when I arrived, at 11:00 a.m., the bus which had been hired to transport people from the centre of the city had already arrived. As I entered the grounds of the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in Duvernay, a member of the ladies' auxiliary pinned a piece of paper on my jacket which read: "Yizker to the memory of the Lodzer Ghetto Jews" (translated, from the Yiddish, by the author). As I mingled with the crowd, I could not help but notice that the majority of the people were in their senior years. There were very few members of a younger generation. As people circulated on the grounds of the cemetery,

they shook hands and wished each other a new year filled with much good health. Good health seemed to be an important concern. Over and over, I heard it reiterated: "As long as I have my health, I am happy." I soon understood the preoccupation with good health. The reason the members had arrived a half-hour early was that three unveilings (a religious ceremony associated with the uncovering of a tombstone) were scheduled to take place for society members who had died in previous months. These unveilings were scheduled to coincide with the annual commemoration for a specific reason. Because the cemetery is located far from the centre of the city, where most members live, the bereaved members wanted to assure themselves that there would be a *minyan* (at least ten men present) to conduct the religious part of the ceremony.

The commemoration ceremony started promptly at 11:30 a.m., in front of the monument. First, six memorial candles were lit, each one symbolizing one million Jewish people killed. Thereafter, a rabbi, who originated from Lodz, delivered a short, emotional speech in which he reminisced about the rich Jewish life that had been extinguished by the Nazis. He then recounted the numerous hardships and tortures that had befallen the members from Lodz during the war in the ghettos and death camps. A cantor chanted the *El Mole Rachamin*. Many people were crying. Then the members sang the Hebrew song *Ani Me'amin* (I believe). The ceremony ended with the singing, in very loud unison, of the Partisan Hymn. It seemed that they wanted to reinforce with their voices the fact that they had survived. My experience at this commemorative service impressed upon me the importance accorded this event by the members of the organization. Great attention was paid to every minute detail, and a veil of silence descended upon the members during the ceremony. Everyone left promptly after the half-hour-long service.

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

Israel is holy to us. . . . Because we think if before the war if we would have had Israel, it wouldn't have happened what happened. We wouldn't lose our dear ones . . . and we wouldn't have to go through what we went. . . . Because we are Jews and Israel is our country and we have to support it. (Members of the Chelmer Society)

The above comments demonstrate the intensity of feelings the majority of survivors interviewed have expressed for their beloved State of Israel. Many were convinced that the immense Holocaust tragedy would never have occurred had there been a Jewish state in existence to protect them and to offer sanctuary. Therefore, some articulated that Holocaust survivors have a special obligation to support Israel: "Because we understood, coming out of the Holocaust, that we need a state." Still others felt that the establishment of Israel had provided support and protection for Jews all over the world, and allowed them to be proud of their identities.

Throughout the different phases of the organizations' histories, all except two worked on behalf of the State of Israel. This primary concern, especially intensified after the June, 1967, six-day war with her Arab neighbours. In fact, emotional and financial support for Israel was so important that a president of one organization who did not reflect this particular viewpoint was ousted from power. The following statement, made to the aforementioned president by a member of the society, illustrates this point:

You don't let us work for Israel, and this is ground enough not to want you in the society.

In the early phases of the organizations' development, help to Israel entailed aiding needy *landsleit* and the purchase of Israeli bonds. The Krakower Society began to purchase Israeli bonds in 1953, the same year it was founded. Financial aid to Israel has been given in a variety of forms.

With the twofold purpose of supporting their beloved State and perpetuating their obliterated European communities, survivor organizations, some on their own and others in concert with affiliated bodies, have initiated, often through local Zionist organizations, a host of projects in all aspects of Israeli communal life. Some have helped improve health-care facilities. In 1970, the Lodzer Society furnished a room in a medical clinic in Jaffa, and, in 1975, donated a new wing to the existing neurology department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Radomer Mutual Aid Society has sent wheelchairs and money to the Safed Hospital, as well as financial support to the Tel Aviv Rehabilitation Hospital for wounded soldiers. The Czenstochover Society endowed a doctor's office in the Shaare Zedek Hospital, in Jerusalem. The Tarnover Landsmanshaft has supported the Micha Haifa, a rehabilitation centre for deaf children, as well as the Chaim Sheba Medical Centre, a rehabilitation hospital for Israeli soldiers, where their money was used to purchase wheelchairs. Through the Canadian Shaare Zedek Foundation, the Zaglembe Jews donated a three-patient room in the Shaare Zedek Hospital. The members of Les Amis de France et de Belgique have donated a basketball court to Beit Halochem, a sports, rehabilitation, and social centre for Israeli disabled war veterans and their families. The Wolynian Jews have supported the Kiryat Sanz Laniado Hospital, in Netanya, and the Kurowers have donated an operating table to the Bylenson Hospital. The Zaglembe, Czenstochover, and Radomer societies have donated fully equipped ambulances, and the Zamosc Jews, through the local Histadrut, supported the Ness-Ziona Medical Clinic and the Sam Broder Clinic, in Tel Aviv.

These organizations have also supported educational, cultural, and social institutions. The Wolynian Jews have contributed substantially to the establishment, in 1968, of the Heichal Yahaduth Wolyn, a "living monument" to their brethren who perished. It is a centre of cultural, educational, and social

activities for all Wolyn Jews residing in Israel and other parts of the world. Its archives contain the records of the many communities that were exterminated by the Nazis. In co-operation with Yad Vashem (a monument, museum, and centre for Holocaust research and study in Israel), the centre has enriched its research section, thus making it a source of information about the Holocaust. In 1970, the ladies' auxiliary of the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression initiated financial support for Massuah (torch of knowledge), an institution in Israel dedicated to education about and research into the Holocaust. The December, 1979, Chanukah fund-raising campaign solicited money to furnish the library of Massuah with books and documentation pertaining to the Holocaust. Several organizations—the Czenstochover, Kieltzer-Chmielniker, and Zaglembe—have furnished rooms and laboratories in the Technion Israel Institute of Technology, in Haifa. In 1982, the Lodzer Society pledged \$50,000 for cancer research at Bar Ilan University, of which \$40,000 has already been donated. Several organizations, Piotrokov-Trybunalski and the Wolynian Jews, have supported Yad Vashem. As well, the Piotrokov Trybunalski Jews have deposited their archives and historical collections at the Diaspora Research Institute, under the academic wing of Beth Hatefutsoth, Tel Aviv University.

These survivors have not neglected to support the social welfare of Israeli citizens, particularly the widows and orphans of Israeli soldiers killed in action. The Zaglembe Jews support a project for widows and orphans of Israeli soldiers; in 1983, the Lodzer donated money to an orphanage, the Shabtai Levi Home for Children of Servicemen and Infants Sanatorium, in Haifa; and the Chelmer Society, through New York, sends regular financial contributions to Canadian Friends for General Israel Orphans Home for Girls and the Diskin Great Orphan Home, in Jerusalem.

Several organizations have enabled students in Israel to continue their education by initiating scholarships in the name of the organization. The Kieltzer-Chmielniker Landsmanschaft has given scholarships to 18 students in the Amal technical schools. Similarly, since 1965, the Radomer Jews, in concert with their Israeli counterparts, the Yirgun Yotzei Radom, have provided scholarships for students from needy Radomer families. These scholarships are given either in memory of or to honour a society member. The ladies' auxiliary of the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression has donated a perpetual scholarship, in the amount of \$7,500, to students at Technion University. At present, they give a \$500 scholarship to a needy student, preferably a child of Holocaust survivors.

A number of organizations, through the Jewish National Fund of Canada, have planted forests in Israel bearing the organization's name. For example, in 1985, the Lodzer Society pledged \$5,000 toward the Canada Park Project.

Half of the organizations interviewed have participated in bond drives to encourage the purchase of Israeli bonds. Some bond drives have consisted of elaborate dinner dances with entertainment, occasionally in affiliation with another organization or a synagogue. Often, a prominent member of the organization is honoured in recognition of her or his accomplishments and achievements.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM

For the most part, the majority of organizations interviewed, particularly the *landsmanschaftn*, have avoided political involvement. Several organizations prohibited discussions of a political nature, except of those issues pertaining to the State of Israel. One organization, Les Amis de France et de Belgique, included a clause (article 24) in its set of by-laws which explicitly forbade discussions of a

political or religious nature. However, on issues pertaining to Holocaust remembrance, anti-Nazism, anti-Semitism, and the assurance of the survival of the State of Israel, most organizations have remained vigilant and participated in a variety of issues.

In 1981, 11 Jewish organizations and synagogues, including five survivor organizations, sought to halt the construction of a crematorium adjacent to the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in Duvernay, which was jointly owned by them ("Jewish organizations seek," 1981). Although their actions were not successful, the survivors did impart their point that the establishment of a crematorium so close to their cemetery was a very distressing situation.

During Israel's many wars, particularly those in 1967 and 1973, survivor organizations mobilized tremendous resources to raise substantial amounts of money, which was distributed through the Israel Emergency Fund. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, many survivor organizations participated en masse in liberation and memorial rallies organized by the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression, the most outspoken of all survivor organizations. In order to understand the *modus vivendi* of this association, which some members of the community have referred to as the "moral conscience" of the Montreal Jewish community, a case example of some of its activities follows.

THE ASSOCIATION OF SURVIVORS OF NAZI OPPRESSION

The impetus for the creation of the Association was the October 30, 1960, CBC program "Newsmagazine," which aired a documentary exploring the emergence of neo-Nazism in North America, with a particular focus on Quebec Nazi parties. A group of survivors viewing this program were shocked to learn not only that Nazism existed in Canada, but that it was not illegal. An emergency meeting was called at which 50 survivors were present. It was decided that a delegation of

survivors should meet with Saul Hayes, executive director of Canadian Jewish Congress. They were informed that in a democratic country, such as Canada, there was nothing in the criminal code which forbade anyone to organize a neo-Nazi party. They decided to found an organization for the purpose of combatting that which they perceived to be a recurring danger: neo-fascism. Their motto became "Homage to the Dead, Warning to the Living." At a follow-up meeting, held at the Jewish Public Library, the organization was formed and its constitution formulated. Articles 4 and 9 of its constitution ("Constitution," 1966) outline its *modus vivendi*:

4. Alert the Public against Neo Nazi Activities in whatever form and by whatever name, and awaken the public opinion in view of the rising Neo Nazi movements in the world today in order to promote an overall understanding of the danger of Nazism, by keeping the Community well informed and aware.
9. Apply all the necessary means to combat any Nazi-type manifestations in every rational way, in co-operation with all democratic institutions in Canada, who are aware of the danger, so that the enemies of democracy shall not destroy democracy through the use of Democratic privileges in Canada. ("Constitution," 1966, p. 2)

During the first few years after its founding, its *modus vivendi* was to press for changes in Canadian anti-hate legislation which would make "incitement to, or acts of violence against any race or ethnic group an offence against society and punishable under law" (Goldstein & Zablow, 1964, p. 8).

As survivors of the Holocaust, they were distinctly aware of the growing problem of anti-Semitism and the dangers of neo-Nazism that were prevalent in Quebec during the 1960s. Under the leadership of French Canadians Bellefueille and Arcand, who headed the National Unity Party, fascism was alive in Quebec. Determined never to allow the Holocaust to happen again, the survivors decided

to bring their campaign to public attention. They initiated public rallies, commemorative events, and lectures. They sponsored Holocaust exhibitions and maintained a continuous dialogue with political and social leaders, as well as with many citizens' groups.

Their message was brought to the attention of Canadian lawmakers by Milton Klein, Q.C., a Jewish Liberal member of Parliament, who represented the Montreal Cartier riding. On February 20, 1964, Klein introduced a private member's bill, known as Bill C-21, into the House of Commons ("Editorial," 1964). It was seconded by James Walker, of Toronto, the chief whip for the government. This bill, known as the Klein-Walker Bill on Genocide, proposed legislation based on the 1952 United Nations Genocide Convention, to which Canada was a signatory.

In January, 1965, Parliament established a commission, led by Judge Maxwell Cohen, of the McGill University Law Faculty, to look into the issue. In April, 1966, the committee tabled its report, which became Canadian law in 1970 and is known as Bill C-3: An Act to amend the Criminal Code. Under this law, anyone inciting hatred against any identifiable group of people is liable to imprisonment for two years.

The Association involved itself in numerous other issues. For example, on February 25, 1965, it was one of the organizers of a public protest against the decision of the German government to end the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, to take effect on May 8 of that year. In 1978, the Association initiated Canada-wide activities opposing the statute of limitations. A delegation met with the German ambassador in Ottawa to voice displeasure about the abolishment of the statute. In addition, 100,000 postcards were sent to the German embassy and to local consulates protesting the German government's decision. The Bundestag abolished the statute of limitations.

Over the years, numerous protest letters, on a variety of topics, were issued by the Association (Association Papers, letters). Some letters, such as the November 17, 1964, memorandum to the Board of Broadcast Governors of CBC, protested the use of the public airwaves for derogatory comments about specific groups of people made by the well-known American Nazi leader Rockwell. Others, to leading government officials, such as the April 26, 1977, letter to Joe Clark, leader of the official opposition in Parliament at the time, protested the choice of a candidate in the upcoming elections who had made remarks equating Zionism with Nazism and racism. Another letter, dated May 12, 1977, to an Israeli psychiatrist, protested an article that had appeared in *Time Magazine* summarizing his work with Holocaust survivors and their children. The article focused on the transmission of survivor trauma to the children.

An incident that generated much controversy in the Montreal Jewish community concerned the staging of Robert Shaw's play "The Man in the Glass Booth." The incident is briefly discussed below.

"The Man in the Glass Booth"

The Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression was instrumental in rallying community-wide support against the play, which was based loosely on the 1961 war-crimes trial of Adolph Eichmann, in Jerusalem. It was slated to open at the Saidye Bronfman Centre, of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association, in March, 1972. Supported by a consortium of communal organizations, including Canadian Jewish Congress, Canadian Zionist Federation, the Mizrachi Movement, and Hadassah, their actions resulted in the play's cancellation, much to the dismay of those who argued for freedom of artistic expression. The survivors claimed that the play offended the "dignity and honor" of the six million martyrs who perished during the Holocaust. They

particularly objected to several elements of the play. The first was the portrayal of the survivor as a half-crazed "murderer, rapist, plunderer and henchman, who admits eating German children after his liberation" (Association Papers, undated memo). The second was what they perceived to be the play's main thesis: that under similar circumstances, had Hitler come to power among the Jews rather than among the Germans, he would have coerced them to commit similar heinous crimes. In short, the Jews were capable of committing the same heinous crimes as had the Germans. The inference was totally unacceptable to the survivors.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HOLOCAUST-RELATED COMMITTEES IN EXISTING COMMUNAL INSTITUTIONS

The Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression was also instrumental in lobbying for the establishment of a Holocaust Remembrance Committee at Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), and of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre at Allied Jewish Community Services (AJCS). The National Executive of CJC established the Holocaust Remembrance Committee in 1973. The committee's main objective was "to establish firmly in the minds of the Canadian Jewish community that Holocaust considerations should not be limited to one Yom Hashoah [Holocaust] observance only but should be year-round programmatic considerations for the community" (Canadian Jewish Congress Plenary Assembly records, 1974). Many members of the Association were active participants in the activities of this committee, which, over the years, created communal awareness about the Holocaust in numerous ways. It purchased from Yad Vashem a pictorial exhibition, which was displayed in cities across Canada and was seen by thousands of people. It initiated a speakers' bureau, through which a number of prominent personalities who were knowledgeable about the

Holocaust spoke to different organizations and communities. It sponsored prominent guest speakers on the Holocaust, including Beate Klarsfeld, Lucy Dawidowicz, and Simon Wiesenthal. It honoured several “righteous gentiles” for helping Jews and distributed a newsletter. It also helped to initiate Holocaust educational activities in the schools.

The Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression, in conjunction with the sons and daughters of the leadership of AJCS at the time, were responsible for the establishment of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, on October 15, 1979. The occasion was marked by a special commemorative service organized by the Association, during which a black urn of ashes from Auschwitz was deposited in the Memorial Hall of the Centre. Members of the Association are represented on the board of management of the Centre. The objectives of the centre are delineated in the “first draft” of its by-laws, dated March 16, 1987. Article II states:

The object of the Centre shall be to preserve and perpetuate the memory of Jewish life in Europe before and during the Second World War and to memorialize those Jews who died at the hands of Nazis and their sympathizers. This object shall be realized through exhibits, educational programming, research, documentation and dissemination of knowledge about the Holocaust and related subjects. (Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, by-laws)

Members of the Association are quite pleased with their accomplishments in creating communal awareness about the Holocaust in the Montreal area. As one member of the Association stated:

Right now we are sort of satisfied with the fact that there is an anti-hate law. We achieved this. There is a Holocaust Committee at the Canadian Jewish Congress. There is a well-working Holocaust Committee here at the Allied Jewish Community Services, and it's working beautifully, beyond expectations. Tremendous organization.

However, these survivors are not content to rest on their laurels. Vigilance, particularly on issues of the Holocaust-denial movement, Nazis residing in Canada, and anti-Semitism, are still integral objectives and goals, even though the executive of the male division of the Association rarely meets today:

Our executive still meets, but not really. We didn't meet for some time already, to be frank with you. But our organization is there. If there would be a reason, if there would be a cause tomorrow, I myself can get a thousand people anywhere. At least, I think so, if they are still alive. But I can get, I can mobilize people if there is a cause.

Another survivor organization that has effectively remained vigilant on issues of anti-Semitism has been the German-Jewish Heritage Association. Composed primarily of a group of former Jewish-German refugees who had been imprisoned in internment camps in Canada from 1940 to 1942, this organization was founded in 1980, on the 40th anniversary of their imprisonment in Canada. The members wanted to create community awareness about the fact that Kristallnacht (night of broken glass) was, in the words of one of its members, "the most important event of German history. It was the beginning of the end" of the Jews of Europe. This organization, in conjunction with other communal institutions, has co-sponsored lectures pertaining to Kristallnacht in the Montreal Jewish community.

They also, in 1986, brought to the attention of Otto Jelinek, Minister of State and Multiculturalism at the time, some anti-Semitic letters to the editor which had appeared in the *Kanada Kurier*, a leading Canadian German newspaper. In a letter dated May 27, 1986, thanking one of its members for bringing the matter to his attention, Mr. Jelinek stated:

The paper has been reviewed and I am extremely concerned that some letters to the Editor were found to contain material of an anti-Semitic nature that is inconsistent with the philosophy of multiculturalism. Your concerns have been passed to the publisher

of *Kanada Kurier* who assures me that future letters to the editor will be carefully monitored. You can be certain that Multiculturalism Canada will do its part in ensuring that offensive material does not, as promised by the publisher, appear again in publication. (German Jewish Heritage Papers)

INVOLVEMENT IN MONTREAL JEWISH COMMUNAL LIFE

We always took a positive step toward Israel and toward the Jewish community. Some people didn't want to. They thought that the purpose of the *landsmanshaft* is to help needy people and to give a *yizker* book. We had a different approach where we should be part of the Jewish community. So whatever they ask us to do, we do. We haven't been leaders there, but whatever was necessary we always did, whenever they called us. (Member of the Tarnover Landsmanshaft of Montreal)

During the course of these interviews, it became evident that survivors did not shirk from communal responsibilities. Consistently, it was said, "We never refused to give to any local activities," and "When we were approached by any organization that needed money, we always contributed something." They took their communal obligations seriously. They supported financially a host of communal institutions. As well, they were, and in many instances still are, represented in official capacities as delegates to various communal organizations.

The types of communal institutions survivor organizations have supported financially, and continue to support, can be classified as follows: local cultural institutions, such as the Jewish Public Library and the now-defunct Jewish newspaper the *Kanader Adler*; educational institutions, such as the Jewish Peretz Schools and Jewish People's Schools, today amalgamated under the name Jewish People's and Peretz Schools, and the A. Reisen Schools of the Workmen's Circle; religious institutions, such as the Lubavitch yeshiva and the Pardes Chanah Girls' Camp of the Lubavitch movement. As well, several organizations have contributed financially to the Mo'ess Chitten Passover Fund, the Jewish

Community Council's (Vad Hoir) fund, which sends shipments of religious articles to Jewish communities in the Soviet Union on a regular basis, and the Yiddish Committee of CJC.

Ten of the organizations researched have financially supported over the years the Combined Jewish Appeal (CJA), formerly known as the Jewish Appeal—Israel Emergency Fund. Contributions to CJA maintain the Montreal Jewish community's network of health and welfare, educational, cultural, and recreational services, as well as support for the State of Israel. Several organizations contributed to the Israel Emergency Fund when Israel's security was threatened. Others have contributed annually, on an ongoing basis, several in excess of \$1,000. In some instances, the organizations themselves assumed responsibility for the distribution of the pledge cards to their members. Several members were designated as canvassers, and when the pledges were collected a lump-sum cheque was made out in the name of the organization.

These organizations have also been represented at various Jewish communal institutions. Official delegates have attended CJC's plenaries, conferences and meetings at the Labor Zionist Alliance, the Jewish Community Council, and the Montreal United Organization of the Histadrut. Generally, whenever the organization's participation was solicited, representatives were sent immediately. In recent years, some organizations were actively involved in helping to organize the Canadian Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Children, held in Ottawa in April, 1985. For example, representatives of the Lodzer Society and the Association of Zaglembe Jews co-ordinated the busloads of survivors who attended. Several organizations also donated substantial sums of money, which was earmarked to help pay the way for students who would otherwise be unable to attend. In the past six months, representatives of survivor organizations have participated in the consortium of organizations, under the

auspices of Montreal Second Generation, which are planning to erect a monument to the Holocaust in Montreal.

AFFILIATION WITH SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS

IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Thirteen of the organizations researched have been affiliated in some capacity with similar organizations in other parts of the world. In some instances, such as the Kurower Hilfs Farein, different branches exist in New York and Winnipeg, and a central organization exists in Israel. Over the years, the different branches have banded together to accomplish joint projects such as the compilation of the *yizker* book and the financial support of fellow *landsleit*. Recently, the Association of Zaglembe Jews in Montreal, in affiliation with the Zaglembe World Organization, has undertaken a project to erect Yad Hazikaron Memorial for Zaglembe Holocaust Victims, a large forest with 10,000 trees, in Israel. Representatives of the World Volyn Association in Israel, of which the Federation of Wolynian Jews of Montreal is an affiliate member, gather in Israel every two or three years to co-ordinate mutual goals and objectives.

PRESENT-DAY STATUS OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

The majority of these organizations are still in existence; however, for the most part, their activities have diminished greatly, particularly during the winter months, when many of the members retire south to Florida. Several specific reasons were given for the demise of some organizations. In some cases, such as that of the Piotrokov Trybunalski Landsmanshaft, many members have died, and others have moved out of the province in order to live closer to their children. Hence, the only activity is the yearly commemoration service. When specific issues arise which need to be discussed, members meet in each other's homes.

The activities of the Zamosc Landsmanshaft began to flounder in the late 1970s, as people started to move to different locations and transportation became a problem. However, the annual *haskarah* continues, despite the fact that activities ceased in 1980. The only activity of the Krakower Society is the annual *yizker*. According to members of its executive committee, the organization began to disintegrate as its members became more affluent and assimilated into a Canadian way of life. This caused some people to disassociate with their fellow *landsleit*. The same was true for the Pabianitzer Relief Society: as people became more affluent, they became more passive toward the organization. In the beginning, the organization had filled a vital need in their lives because they needed the social contact.

The majority of organizations researched still continue to fill a vital need in the lives of their members. Some still have active agendas. The Radomer Mutual Aid Society still organizes two parties a year, as well as a yearly general assembly and two commemorative services. Les Amis de France et de Belgique organizes four or five general meetings a year, in which discussions take place, films are shown, and card games and bingo are played. These social get-togethers are very important, especially for the older members, who are often alone due to the death of a spouse. As one woman explained:

Let's not forget there's a lot of old people there that are alone, and they're just happy to meet some old friends and to relate to them—to see how the families are—how the children are. It's more social than it used to be.

The Lodzer Society is still a very active organization. Its members continue to organize bond dinner dances, co-ordinate parties, hold an annual general assembly and *haskarah*, and conduct several fund-raising campaigns. Its ladies' auxiliary meets about ten times a year. The ladies' auxiliary of the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression also continues to meet on a monthly basis. As well,

the members of the Chelmer Society continue to get together. General meetings are still held five or six times a year, executive meetings continue, and they still organize money showers in a synagogue hall.

Several organizations have, in the past few years, absorbed new members into their ranks. Some people, in their later years, wish to return to their roots and assume friendships with people from the same pre-war city. Others, as they enter the last stage of the family life cycle, begin to plan their death and the rituals associated with it. They realize the importance of having people attend the funeral, of having a sufficient number of men to say the *Kaddish*, and of having visitors to comfort the bereaved family. They know that, as members of an organization, the responsibility for organizing the rituals associated with their imminent deaths will be taken care of. Still others are joining purely for economic reasons: the purchase of cemetery privileges is cheaper for organization members.

The influx of new members, however, has not balanced the attrition due to deaths and other factors. For some organizations, their eventual demise is a major concern. For this reason, the members of the Czenstochover Society have attempted to involve the second generation, their offspring, in their operations. In 1982, the offspring of the members formed a Second Generation Czenstochover Society in Montreal, with its own executive and ladies' auxiliary. In the beginning, the second generation was not terribly responsive to the idea of forming its own division. As well, some of the parents felt that they did not want to burden their children with organizational responsibilities. The momentum dissipated. However, some members encouraged very strongly the establishment of a second-generation group. Their reasons were as follows: to have them assume responsibility for taking care of the monument and to have them continue the annual *yizkers*. Recently there has again been a thrust by some members to support the revival of the second-generation society. This time, some members

feel that their offspring will listen to them more carefully than they did in 1982, because they see that many survivors are passing away.

CONCERNS OF SURVIVORS

Listening to these survivors speak, I became aware of some of their pressing concerns. They realize that, with their deaths, their organizations will cease to exist. They fear that, with their demise, the culture of their beloved home towns will be gone. They know that they are the last remnants of a soon-to-be-extinct population of witnesses to a most tragic part of world history. They are somewhat appeased that their cities and towns are memorialized in Israel, where their projects bear plaques perpetuating the memory of their *heim*. They also fear that once they are gone, the martyrs of the Holocaust will be forgotten. Many are pained by the fact that their children do not want to join their organizations and perpetuate the memory of their martyrs. Some want their children to have nostalgic sentiments for their cities, although they realize this to be an unrealistic goal. A major concern for those organizations that have erected monuments is the question of who will assume responsibility for caring for those monuments after the last member of their organization has died. The more funerals they attend for members of their organizations, the more pressing a concern this becomes.

SUMMARY

Survivor organizations have had an important impact on Jewish communal life in a variety of ways. They have helped those less fortunate than their members, both abroad and in Montreal. They have set up a mutual-aid network, wherein emotional support and monetary aid were provided for their members, particularly in the genesis period of their existence. They have initiated social and cultural activities, in which they have preserved and transmitted the cultural

heritage of their destroyed communities. They have ensured that their beloved martyrs will never be forgotten, by erecting monuments to their memory at local cemeteries. Survivor organizations have also proven themselves to be very generous in philanthropic endeavours, particularly in their support for the State of Israel and their relations with other organized Montreal Jewish activities and institutions. Some, distinctly aware of the inherent dangers of anti-Semitism, have assumed the role of moral conscience of the Montreal Jewish community, and have lobbied on behalf of anti-hate legislation and remained vigilant with respect to issues of anti-Semitism, Nazis residing in Canada, and the Holocaust-denial movement. These organizations have made significant contributions in many areas of Jewish communal life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In formulating a theoretical foundation for the present study, a variety of concepts were utilized and integrated in order to develop a conceptual understanding of how people adapt to new and strange environments. Maslow's theory of human motivation, immigrant adaptation, and social networks and support were used in order to gain an understanding of survivor adaptation.

Given the magnitude of the Holocaust and the subsequent obstacles and ordeals endured by the survivors in post-war years, their resilience could be partly attributed to the organizations they developed, in which mutual bonds and reciprocity helped them to emotionally adjust to their new environments.

Holocaust survivors have survived a most cataclysmic tragedy in world history. Violently uprooted from their European countries of origin, they have travelled long distances in their fervent desire to find safe havens in which to rebuild their lives. In 1948, the doors to Canada opened slightly for post-war Jewish immigrants, and many survivors entered the country, the majority of them settling in Montreal.

Imbued with a strong sense of heritage of traditions, culture, and communal involvement, many carried their old-world values, beliefs, and experiences with them into their new communities. Many, not welcomed by the community at large, sought the companionship of fellow *landsleit* to help with the integration process. While some people joined already existing organizations,

which served as an anchor where none had existed, others created new organizations. These organizations served as adaptive mechanisms to a new and strange society. They enabled their members to re-establish a sense of community with people who shared similar backgrounds and interests, thus creating new extended families. In these organizations, people were able to comfort each other as they mourned their monumental losses. By participating in the rituals of commemorative services, often on the site of monuments erected to perpetuate the memory of their martyrs and obliterated communities, survivors fulfilled their commitment to remember. The various social, cultural, and philanthropic activities of these organizations reflected the values inherent in pre-war European life. The organizations served as a vehicle for the transmission of the history and culture of their pre-war *heim*.

In view of the particularity of the Holocaust experience, it stands to reason that survivors would be more motivated than ordinary immigrants to ensure that their pre-war communities, culture, and traditions be remembered and preserved. Previous waves of immigrants did not experience the complete eradication of their old-world communities. Many still maintained a connection with their past via correspondence, the sending of parcels, and the sponsorship for immigration of relatives and friends. These ties to the old country were in sharp contrast to the experiences of Holocaust survivors, particularly those from eastern Europe, whose entire communities, including family, friends, homes, and communal institutions, had been destroyed. As a result, these survivors saw themselves as a historical record. Their tangible past existed only in the innermost recess of their minds, in the form of painful memories. Hence, one would expect that survivors, more so than other immigrants, would take their previous values, beliefs, and experiences, and transmit them as a contribution to Jewish civilization and Jewish communal life.

These motivating forces were far more the norm than severe impairment due to traumatic experiences. If anything, it can be said that people can respond to trauma in many different ways. The human condition can be a remarkably versatile and resilient one. Many people have long learned to put troubling experiences behind them and move onward. There is no reason to assume that this would not be the case as well for Holocaust survivors. Some people can take a traumatic experience and translate it into a contribution, as many survivors have done in the area of Jewish culture, education, religion, finance, and organizational affiliation. One might postulate that one would expect more of a contribution from Holocaust survivors because they were determined not to give Hitler his posthumous victory, that is, to allow the spiritual demise of the Jewish people. Survivors, as the repositories of an obliterated way of life, committed themselves to the transmission of their heritage, thus ensuring their spiritual continuity and survival.

Their perseverance has been remarkable. Their ability to overcome numerous obstacles and ordeals in their attempt to make themselves whole again in the post-war era have been tremendous achievements. They did not just survive. Many have created productive and constructive lives, and have played and continue to play important and enriching roles in Jewish communal life.

APPENDIX A
HISTORICAL INVENTORY OF ORGANIZATIONS CREATED
AND/OR REVIVED BY HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Association of Jews from Pinsk and Vicinity
Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression
Association of Zaglembe Jews of Montreal
Bassarabier Cemetery Incorporated
Bergen-Belsen Association
Canadian Federation of Lithuanian Jews
Chelmer Society of Montreal
Czenstochover Society of Montreal
Farband of Warsaw Jews
Federation of Polish Jews of Canada
German-Jewish Heritage Association
Hebrew Sick Benefit Association of Montreal
Kieltzer Chmielniker Landsmanshaft of Montreal
Krakower Society of Montreal
Kurover Hilfs Farein
Les Amis de France et de Belgique
Lodzer Society (Farband) and Ladies' Auxiliary of Montreal
Lubliner Landsmanshaft in Montreal
Mezritcher Landsmanshaft
Pabianitzer Relief Society
Piotrokov Trybunalski and Vicinity Landsmanshaft
Rovno and Lutsk Landsmanshaft
Russian Polish Hebrew Cemetery Incorporated

Stolin and Vicinity Memorial Association

Tarnover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

The Federation of Wolynian Jews of Montreal

The Hungarian Speaking Jewish Association of Montreal

The New World Club of Canada

The Radomer Mutual Aid Society

United Bukoviner Association of Canada

Vilna and Vicinity Association

Vladimir Wolin Society

Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft and Environ

Zamosc Landsmanshaft in Montreal

Zawiercie Vicinity Relief Society

APPENDIX B

ORGANIZATIONS IN SAMPLE AND DATES OF INTERVIEWS

Lodzer Society (Farband) and Ladies' Auxiliary of Montreal: November 18, 1987, and December 3, 1987.

The Radomer Mutual Aid Society: December 21, 1987, and January 19, 1988.

The German-Jewish Heritage Association: May 10, 1988.

Kieltzer-Chmielniker Landsmanshaft of Montreal: May 17, 1988.

Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft and Environ: May 24, 1988.

Les Amis de France et de Belgique: May 26, 1988.

Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression, Women's Division: May 31, 1988.

The Federation of Wolynian Jews of Montreal: May 31, 1988.

Piotrokov Trybunalski and Vicinity Landsmanshaft: June 9, 1988.

Krakower Society of Montreal: June 22, 1988.

Czenstochover Society of Montreal: June 22, 1988.

Pabianitzer Relief Society: June 29, 1988.

Association of Zaglembe Jews of Montreal: June 30, 1988.

Kurower Hilfs Farein: July 5, 1988.

Tarnover Landsmanshaft of Montreal: July 14, 1988.

Zamosc Landsmanshaft in Montreal: July 14, 1988.

Chelmer Society: July 28, 1988.

Canadian Federation of Lithuanian Jews: August 9, 1988.

Mezritcher Landsmanshaft: August 15, 1988.

Farband of Warsaw Jews: September 8, 1988.

APPENDIX C

**CATEGORIES OF ORGANIZATIONS, DATES FOUNDED, AND
MEMBERSHIP****NEWLY CREATED ORGANIZATIONS**

Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression: 1960; 1,500 members

German-Jewish Heritage Association: 1980; 200 members

Kieltzer Chmielniker Landsmanshaft of Montreal: 1971; 60-80 members

Krakower Society of Montreal: 1953; 300 members

Les Amis de France et de Belgique: 1952; 160 members

Lodzer Society (Farband) and Ladies' Auxiliary of Montreal: 1953; 140 members

Piotrokov Trybunalski and Vicinity Landsmanshaft: 1947; 160 members

Tarnover Landsmanshaft of Montreal: 1949; 100 people

The Federation of Wolynian Jews of Montreal: 1965; 220-250 members

Wloclawker, Kutner Landsmanshaft and Environ: 1953; 50 members

Zamosc Landsmanshaft in Montreal: 1953; 80 members

ALREADY EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Zaglembe Jews of Montreal; 250 members

Canadian Federation of Lithuanian Jews; 250 members

Chelmer Society of Montreal; 130 members

Czenstochover Society of Montreal; 150 members

Farband of Warsaw Jews; 250-300 members

Kurower Hilfs Farein; 60 people

Mezritcher Landsmanshaft; 30 people

Pabianitzer Relief Society; 100 members

The Radomer Mutual Aid Society; 170 members

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1: INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE ORGANIZATION

1. What is the official name of your organization?
2. Which of the following best describes the type of organization you belong to?
 - a) landsmanshaft
 - b) fraternal order
 - c) association
 - d) federation
 - e) other

A. EARLY HISTORY

3. What year was your organization founded?
4. Was your organization a newly formed one after the war, or one which joined an already existing one?
5. If it joined an already existing one, which one was it?
6. Was this an organization which had been involved in relief work to help Jewish displaced persons after the war? If yes, what did this organization do?
7. Why did people feel it was important to form/join an organization?
8. From which districts (cities and towns) in Europe did these people come?
9. How did you get members for your organization?
10. How did you find out about the organization?

B. STRUCTURE

11. Did your organization have a membership?

12. Did this membership consist only of Holocaust survivors? If no, were these members Canadian-born?
13. How was it that they were members of your organization?
14. At the height of your organization, how many members would you estimate it had?
15. Does your organization have a constitution or a set of by-laws? If yes, what does it say?
16. Does your organization have a provincial charter?
17. Is it registered with the tax revenue department as a charitable organization?
18. Does your organization have a separate ladies' auxiliary? If yes, how important are its activities to the organization?

C. ACTIVITIES

See Appendix E for list of probes used to stimulate memory.

19. How do you think your organization was received by the general Jewish community?
20. If well received, can you give instances where you feel your organization was well received?
21. Did your organization at any time feel excluded by the rest of the Jewish community?
22. If yes, in what ways? Can you give instances where you feel your organization was excluded?
23. Were there any outgrowths (branches) of your organization in Montreal with the same name? If yes, what were they and what services benefits, activities did (do) they provide?
24. Is your organization affiliated with any other similar organization in other parts of the world? If yes, what is the name of this organization? Where is it located? Describe your relationship with this organization.
25. Given everything that you have told me, what would you say were the longest-lasting activities of the organization until now?

26. What have been the most important activities of the organization until now?

D. PRESENT-DAY STATUS

27. Is your organization still in existence today? If yes, how many members does it have?
28. Are new members joining the organization? If yes, about how many?
29. Why are new members joining?
30. How often are meetings?
31. What are the present activities of the organization?
32. In your opinion, given everything that you have told me, what would you identify as the major contribution and importance of your organization?
33. Would you like to add any comments or to raise any issues which were not touched upon?

PART 2: PERSONAL HISTORY

E. ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION IN PRE-WAR EUROPE

34. Were you a member of a movement, an organization, or a group in pre-World War II Europe? If yes, what kind of movement, organization, or group was it?
35. Were you an active member? If yes, in what way?
36. Did your pre-war European group membership experience influence your founding/joining an organization when you came to Montreal? If yes, how?

F. ORGANIZATION AS A VEHICLE FOR ADAPTATION

37. Do you think your life would have been different had there not been an organization? If yes, in what way?

G. CONTRIBUTION MADE TO JEWISH COMMUNAL LIFE

38. Do you feel that you personally have contributed to the Montreal Jewish community? If yes, how?

H. PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEE

39. Name of interviewee
40. Gender
41. Age
42. Condition(s) under which survived the Holocaust

APPENDIX E

PROBES

PART 3: ACTIVITIES

1. Relief work

Money, food, and clothing parcels, educational materials, and representatives sent to Europe immediately after the war to help *landsleit* or others

2. Sponsorship of displaced persons in Europe3. Financial assistance to needy in:

- a) countries of origin and/or abroad
- b) Montreal (not necessarily members of your organization)

4. Financial benefits and support for individual members of your organization5. Social and cultural activities for your own members:

- a) parties, dances, and balls
- b) lectures
- c) publication of books and other printed materials, such as Jubilee Souvenir Books
- d) general meetings

6. Commemoration for your own members:

- a) purchase of cemetery land for plots
- b) building of a monument to the Holocaust
- c) annual memorial assemblies

7. Support for the State of Israel

- a) projects
- b) bonds
- c) local Zionist organizations
- d) other financial contributions

8. Political and social activism

- a) issues specifically pertaining to the Holocaust
- b) issues not pertaining to the Holocaust
- c) The establishment of Holocaust remembrance committees (national and regional) and the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre within already existing Jewish communal institutions

9. Organization's involvement in Montreal Jewish communal life

- a) support of and involvement in long-standing Jewish communal institutions
- b) development and support of and involvement in local cultural institutions
- c) creation, development, and/or support of medical (health) institutions
- d) development and/or support of educational institutions, both religious and secular
- e) creation, development, and/or support of religious institutions
- f) involvement in Combined Jewish Appeal (formerly Jewish Appeal and Israel Emergency Fund), as contributors and/or canvassers
- g) did representatives of your organization serve as delegates to other communal organizations?
- h) involvement around the issue of communal commemoration

APPENDIX F

MONUMENTS TO THE HOLOCAUST ERECTED AT LOCAL CEMETERIES

- 1952: Adath Israel Congregation; Baron de Hirsch
- 1960: Chelmer Society of Montreal; Mount Pleasant
- 1962: Krakower Society of Montreal; Mount Pleasant
- 1962: Lodzer Farband of Montreal; Mount Pleasant
- 1963: Radomer Mutual Aid Society; Mount Pleasant
- 1964: Association of Jews from Pinsk and Vicinity; Baron de Hirsch
- 1964: Association of Zaglembe Jews of Montreal; Mount Pleasant
- 1964: Bergen-Belsen Association; Kehal Israel
- 1964: Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Tifereth Israel; Baron de Hirsch
- 1964: Les Amis de France et de Belgique; Mount Pleasant
- 1965: Lubliner Landsmanshaft in Montreal; Baron de Hirsch
- 1965: Zawiercie and Vicinity Association of Montreal; Mount Pleasant
- 1965: Czenstochover Society of Montreal; Baron de Hirsch
- 1967: Zamosc Landsmanshaft; Baron de Hirsch
- 1968: The Federation of Wolynian Jews of Montreal; Baron de Hirsch
- 1971: Hebrew Sick Benefit Association of Montreal; Baron de Hirsch
- 1973: Vilna and Vicinity Association; Baron de Hirsch
- 1974: Russian Polish Hebrew Sick Benefit Association; Baron de Hirsch
- 1982: Stolin and Vicinity Memorial Association; Baron de Hirsch
- 1986: Congregation Beth Ora; Kehal Israel

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