

Confronting Hitler's Legacy:
Canadian Jews and Early Holocaust
Discourse, 1933-1956

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation examines Canadian Jewish thought from the Nazi period through to the immediate postwar era regarding the Nazis' persecution and murder of European Jewry. It challenges the widely accepted position that Canadian Jews were indifferent to the Holocaust until the Six Day War of 1967, when survivors of Hitler's extermination program pushed the Holocaust onto the Canadian Jewish community's agenda in order to counter the threat of rising antisemitism. The evidence produced here demonstrates that Canadian Jews' wartime experience of learning about the systematic slaughter of their brethren in Europe and of witnessing the democratic world's unrelenting indifference to the plight of Jewish refugees ensured that the Holocaust was a central component of Jewish life in Canada in the immediate postwar era. Rather than the Cold War climate compelling Canadian Jews to suppress their memories of the Holocaust, as is commonly argued, this thesis shows that ongoing concerns over the security of Jews, the ineffectiveness of the UN, and the rise of antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East propelled Canadian Jews to raise the spectre of the Holocaust. They organized desperate campaigns to create international safeguards for minority groups and worked to strengthen Israel diplomatically and militarily in order to counter future threats of genocide from a position of strength. While the Holocaust remained a central feature of Jewish life throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Holocaust memory proved to be a divisive force amongst Canadian Jews since they often interpreted the Holocaust along ideological lines. The established liberal sector of the Canadian Jewish community bemoaned the ineffectualness of international law and adopted increasingly realist positions to counter the threat of Soviet and Arab antisemitism. The communist wing of the Canadian Jewish

community was less inclined to trust liberal democracies to safeguard Jewish rights, especially during the German rearmament debate of the early 1950s. However, with growing evidence that showed that antisemitism was motivating the Soviet Union to collude with the Arabs to destroy Israel, most Canadian Jews became disenchanted by communism. Therefore, this dissertation alters the perception of the postwar Canadian Jewish community from one in which they were focused squarely on domestic issues, such as social mobility and fighting discrimination, to one in which memory of the Holocaust kept Canadian Jews focused on the tribulations facing Jews around the world.

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Abbreviations

AJC	American Jewish Committee
AP	Associated Press
BUP	British United Press
CCCJ	Canadian Council of Christians and Jews
CCF	Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation
CCL	Canadian Congress of Labour
CJC	Canadian Jewish Congress
CNCR	Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution
EDC	European Defence Community
J AFC	Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee
JDC	American Joint Distribution Committee
JIAS	Jewish Immigrant Aid Society
JLC	Jewish Labour Committee
JPRC	Joint Public Relations Committee
JPS	Jewish Public Service
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency
LPP	Labour Progressive Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UJPO	United Jewish People's Order
UPA-UJA	United Palestine Appeal and the United Jewish Appeal
UZC	United Zionist Council of Canada
WJC	World Jewish Congress
ZOC	Zionist Organization of Canada

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Introduction

The memorialization of the Holocaust became integral to Canadian Jewish life even before the Nazis had been stopped in their campaign to destroy European Jewry. As early as 1942, the Montreal Council of Orthodox Rabbis¹ declared December 2, 1942 a national day of mourning for Orthodox Jews, the largest denomination of Judaism in Canada, in order to comply with the edicts of the Chief Rabbi of Palestine and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada. On the radio, Canadian M.P. Leon D. Crestohl, President of the Montreal Jewish Community Council², read Canadian Chief Rabbi Hersh Cohen's order for mourning: "Hitler and his Nazi hordes are determined to annihilate the Jewish people in Europe. Authentic reports have reached us of the horrible, merciless and cold-blooded slaughter of over a million Jews in Poland. Israel therefore mourns the death of its martyred, innocent children, victims of Nazi brutality." After specifying that Jews were to set aside work and entertainment to spend the day in prayer and attend Yiskor services, which every Orthodox synagogue was required to provide, Crestohl read a prayer for those trapped in Europe: "we pray that the Almighty may have mercy upon such of our brethren as are given to suffering, and exposed to danger or captivity, whether they abide on the sea or on the land, and may they be delivered from anguish to redemption, from darkness unto light and from slavery unto liberty; and may the arms of our sovereign the king, together with his allies, be blessed with a speedy victory, and bring deliverance to all the peoples of the world. Amen."³

¹ Also identified as Vaad Haradonim.

² Also identified as Vaad Ho'ir.

³ "Proclamation," 1942, in LAC, Leon D. Crestohl fonds, MG32-C24, M-5224, file "Speeches cont.—Memorial Service, 1944."

By 1945, the Rabbinical Council of Montreal moved the day of mourning to March 14 in accordance with proclamations issued by the Chief Rabbi of Palestine and the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. Again Cohen called upon Crestohl to issue the proclamation over radio on CFCF:

Hitler and his Nazi hordes were grimly determined to annihilate the Jewish People in Europe. For five years they relentlessly pursued their diabolic destruction. The extent of their achievements has now been bared with the liberation of the conquered countries....The sad and heart-rending facts are now known. Completely destroyed are the great Jewish centres of Life and Learning in the whole of Continental Europe. Five million of our brethren, young and old, have been mercilessly massacred in cold blood,--destroyed in lethal gas chambers,--and consumed by the fires of murder furnaces. The House of Israel therefore mourns--mourns the death of our martyred innocent children, victims of Nazi brutality--mourns the death of the sainted souls who died Al Kiddush Hashem—for the sanctification of His Holy Name.

Crestohl reminded his co-religionists that this new “day of atonement...shall be devoted to prayer, fasting and to charity.” Crestohl was accompanied on the radio by Cantor Nathan Mendelsohn of Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, who read Psalm 121 and recited the Kaddish.⁴

Although the lead was taken by Orthodox Jews in Canada to mourn Jews being exterminated in Hitler’s Europe, in 1944, secular Canadian Jewish organizations were determined that all Canadian Jews unite in grieving the Jewish tragedy in Europe with an annual memorialization of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. On April 16, Montreal Jewry met at Adath Jeshurun Synagogue to hear Rabbi Hirsh Cohen, Rabbi Pinhus Hirshprung, and H. Wolofsky, publisher of the *Jewish Daily Eagle* and *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, among others. As an advertisement for the meeting indicated, the purpose behind the gathering was

⁴ Crestohl to James A. Shaw, General Manager of CFCF, letter, 13 March 1945, in LAC, Leon D. Crestohl fonds, MG32-C24, M-5224, file “Speeches cont.—Memorial Service, 1944.”

not merely to mourn, but also to mythologize the Jewish struggle and “Salute the memory of these intrepid men and women of all ages who, notwithstanding the horrors to which they have been subjected, yet retained the spirit of the will to liberty.”⁵ The *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* gave meaning to the Holocaust by writing that despite the Warsaw Ghetto uprising being “hopeless” to save Jews, it demonstrated that the noble spirit of Jews would not be defeated: “Let us vow that their death has not been in vain. Only if we give their death meaning intended by them, will their death not have been in vain. If we fail them in this then...we desecrate their noble death. It should be obvious that the negation of Jewish nationalism could never have evoked the spirit which flared up there. They gave their lives so that Israel, as a living force, might go on.”⁶ A. M. Klein, editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, also mythologized the uprising, comparing it to the Maccabean revolt, giving meaning to the Holocaust as part of the narrative of the Jewish struggle to oppose the tyranny of Nazi Germany: “The memory of this epic we will not let die. It stands as a constant tribute to Jewish valour, valour manifesting itself in every class and group of the Warsaw ghetto. It gave the lie to the repeated and malicious slanders of Nazidom; it constituted the first suicide battle of any of the democratic forces—and this was no force, but a civilian population, undernourished, epidemic-ridden, rising, in a burst of glory, against its implacable foe. There is no other event in our history which parallels it. The only one which remotely resembles it is the act of Samson, pulling down the pillars of Dagon, and crying, ‘Let me die with the Philistines.’”⁷ These acts of memorialization were not isolated, but

⁵ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 13 April 1944, 5.

⁶ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 13 April 1944, 8.

⁷ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 13 April 1944, 3.

occurred across Canada every year. Throughout the immediate postwar era, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was emblematic of the Holocaust for Canadian Jews and was commemorated in April each year across the country.⁸

This thesis examines the development of Canadian Jewish thinking on the Holocaust in the immediate postwar era. It is underpinned by the methodological approach that the meaning and significance of the Holocaust in the eyes of Canadian Jews evolved throughout the 1940s and 1950s to meet political crises experienced by world Jewry. That is to say, Holocaust representations—be they in the form of words or actions—were politicized in the Canadian context to support ideological positions. Rather than assume that Canadian ideas of the Holocaust merely reflected the narrative of events that led to the mass murder of European Jewry or presume that Holocaust discourse was formed in a vacuum, this thesis examines how Canadian nationalism and specific concerns within the Canadian Jewish community interacted to shape constructions of the Holocaust in the immediate postwar era.

My methodology borrows from a myriad of scholarly studies concerning how societies and groups represent and remember past historical events. These studies can be organized into two frameworks that take divergent approaches in understanding the processes by which representations of history become infused within a culture's *mentalité*.⁹ First,

⁸ For example, in 1945, the Montreal Jewish community was called to meet at Baron Byng High School on April 18. See "Do not fail to attend the Commemoration Meeting," pamphlet, 1945, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA, box 8, file 139; *Canadian Jewish Review*, 13 April 1945, 4.

⁹ A complementary breakdown of Holocaust memory studies is Timothy Snyder's dichotomy of "mass personal memory" and "national memory," where the former consists of the collected memories of direct participants and witnesses of an event and the latter is the "the organizational principle, or set of myths, by which nationally conscious individuals understand the past and its demands on the present." See his "Memory of Sovereignty and Sovereignty over memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939-1999," in Jan-Werner Muller's *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39-50.

scholars have opted to approach memory from a psychoanalytical perspective. In this school of thought, group memory operates along the same lines as individual memory in that it is determined by the collective's individual emotional and intellectual responses to encountered events. In the case of the Holocaust, the standard interpretation is based on Freudian ideas and theorizes that Jewish victims were traumatised by their collective experience and therefore repressed their memory of the Holocaust for a time. Burdened by guilt for either committing or not preventing these crimes, perpetrators and bystanders were reluctant to remember the Holocaust until the subsequent generation began to challenge this collective amnesia. Attention has also been paid to how responses to the Holocaust vary between generations, which is seen as vital to understanding the future of Holocaust discourse since those who can personally recollect their experiences of the Holocaust are becoming fewer in society.¹⁰ Scholarship in this field has relied heavily on Holocaust testimony and literature, exploring the limitations of forms and media in representing the Holocaust.¹¹

¹⁰ Key scholarly texts in the field include Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Lawrence Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Randolph J. Brahm, ed. *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Geoffrey Hartman, ed. *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). For an analysis of survivor testimonies from a psychological perspective, see Randolph J. Brahm, ed. *The Psychological Perspectives of the Holocaust and of its Aftermath* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1988); Natan P. F. Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma: Psychological Effects and Treatment* (New York: I Universe, 2009). For generational studies of the Holocaust, see Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy, eds. *Generations of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of the Survivors* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1979); Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003); John Sigal and Morton Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth: Intergenerational Effects of the Holocaust* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Hadas Wiseman and Jacques P. Barber, *Echoes of the Trauma: Relational Themes and Emotions in Children of Holocaust Survivors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For studies on the Holocaust and 'postmemory', see Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Holocaust literature is immense, but academic scholarship has tended to focus on the following texts: Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1996); W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2002); Primo Levy, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Touchstone,

Second, academics have built on the theory that representations of the Holocaust cannot accurately reflect the reality of Holocaust experiences for contemporary audiences, and therefore have sought to explore the reciprocal and complex relationship between the construction of Holocaust representations and shifting political discourses within society. In the 1980s, historians reacquainted themselves with the work of Maurice Halbwachs, an interwar sociologist who argued that collective memory is a social construction shaped by current political aims.¹² Halbwachs differentiated history from memory. Whereas history attempts to understand change over time with the historian mindful that conditions and mentalities of the past differed from those in the present, memory conflates the past with the present through nostalgia.¹³ Therefore, collective memory, according to Halbwachs, reflects more the ideology and worldview of that society or group than reflects the past events, and serves to coalesce a group's identity.¹⁴ Building on this theoretical framework, scholars have explored how the collective memory of the Holocaust differs geographically and shifts over time to fit different cultural milieus and political contexts. Alon Confino has stressed the need to go beyond analyzing the form of representations and to examine *why* these representations were effective in conveying meaning: "the crucial issue in the history of memory is not how a past is represented but why it was received or rejected. For every

1996); Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl: A Story and Novella* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹¹ Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹² See Introduction in Lewis A. Coser, trans., *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 22.

¹³ Maurice Halbwachs, "The Reconstruction of the Past," in Lewis A. Coser, trans., *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 46-51.

¹⁴ For a brief discussion of Halbwachs' theory in relation to the historian's craft, see Margaret MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (New York: Random House, 2008), 48-49.

society sets up images of the past. Yet to make a difference in society, it is not enough for a certain past to be selected. It must steer emotions, motivate people to act, be received; in short, it must become a socio-cultural mode of action.”¹⁵ Historians of the Holocaust have typically concerned themselves with memory on the national level;¹⁶ occasionally they have compared how different countries have chosen to represent and remember the Holocaust.¹⁷ Only recently has there developed a trend to see past national boundaries and examine the interaction between Holocaust and political discourses in the international sphere, such as decolonization, national sovereignty, human rights, and international jurisprudence.¹⁸

¹⁵ Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 1390.

¹⁶ Some of the more recent and key histories on Holocaust thought using Halbwachs’ collective memory theory within national contexts are below. For the United States, see Kirsten Fermaglich, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-65* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Mariner Books, 2000); Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). For Germany, see Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Jeffery Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Claudia Koonz, “Between Memory and Oblivion: Concentration Camps in German Memory,” in John R. Gillis, ed. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 258-80. For the Soviet Union, see Zvi Gittelman, “History, Memory, and Politics: The Holocaust in the Soviet Union,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5 (1990), 23-37. For Israel, see Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991). For Italy, see Robert S. C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012). For France, see Joan Beth Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). For Great Britain, see Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen, eds., *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (London: Palgrave, 2013). For Australia, see Tom Lawson and James Jordan, *The Memory of the Holocaust in Australia* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2007). For Poland, see Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Marek Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust: Politics and Memory* (Oxford: Berghahan Books, 2012).

¹⁷ See Judith Miller, *One, By One, By One* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990); James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Rebecca Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust: The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jennifer Taylor, ed., *National Responses to the Holocaust: National Identity and Public Memory* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2014); Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁸ See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); David Fraser, *Law After Auschwitz: Towards a*

Controversy has surrounded studies into the politicization of Holocaust memory for two reasons. First, promoters of Holocaust consciousness are frequently accused, particularly by the political left, of peddling a political agenda, namely Zionism, rather than being sincere in advocating for humanitarianism and human rights. Arno Mayer, frustrated by the tumultuous negative reviews of his efforts to historicize the Holocaust within the Nazi campaign against communism (albeit at the wrongful expense of minimizing Nazi antisemitism), lashed out against those who see the Holocaust as “absolutely unprecedented and totally mysterious” as well as those who belittled the fact that non-Jews also were exterminated in death camps. With the historical focus on the Jewish tragedy, Mayer was angered that Jews appeared unconcerned about “the fate of other peoples, past and present.” Mayer contends that instead of Holocaust memory being used to combat genocide around the globe, it has “justified repressive excesses against Palestinians, which they fear will corrode and ultimately destroy Israel.” Accordingly, Mayer contends that the Holocaust has been constructed as a wall behind which Israel can defend itself with impunity.¹⁹

Another criticism against the prevalence of Holocaust discourse in Western culture is that it has perpetuated a culture of victimization, where ethnic groups compete for victim status in order to gain political capital. Charles Maier’s now famous complaint that “modern American politics...has become a competition for enshrining grievances,” could also be directed at Canadian politics.²⁰ Much of this controversy has surrounded the construction of

Jurisprudence of the Holocaust (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2005); Dan Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Palgrave, 2013).

¹⁹ Arno J. Mayer, “Memory and History: On the Poverty of Remembering and Forgetting the Judeocide,” *Radical history Review* 56 (1993): 5-20.

²⁰ Charles S. Maier, “A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial,” *History & Memory* 5 (Fall-Winter 1993), 147.

the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. This project was conceived after a proposal to include a Holocaust Gallery in the Canadian War Museum that would highlight Canada's poor record on rescuing Jews during the war. It was rejected in 1998 due to pressure from veterans groups, who were aggravated by what they perceived as Jewish efforts to overshadow the sacrifices of Canada's military to save democracy.²¹ The remedy was a separate, government-funded museum with a decidedly positive mandate, which included the guiding principle of "celebrating Canadians' commitment to human rights."²² While human rights advocates worry that the museum will present a sanitized version of Canada's human rights abuses, various ethnic groups complain that their grievances are being overlooked or minimized to preserve the Canadian identity as a champion of human rights.²³ Timothy Snyder has also spoken against the usefulness of the West's tendency to identify with the victims rather than perpetrators or bystanders, since not only do perpetrators of human rights violations claim victim status, but also "the identification with the victim affirms a radical separation from the perpetrator." This "othering" of the perpetrator erects a barrier to understanding the conditions and motives that move perpetrators to commit

²¹ A fair presentation of the debate is found in David Monod, "'Who Owns History Anyway?' The Political Assault on North American History," in Marburger Ahornblätter, ed. *Beiträge zur Kanada-Forschung* (Schriften der Universitätsbibliothek Marburg: 1999), <<http://archiv.ub.uni-marburg.de/sum/90/sum90-5.html>>.

²² "Mandate and Museum Experience," Canadian Museum of Human Rights website, <<http://humanrights.ca/about-museum/mandate-and-museum-experience>>.

²³ For instance, Ukrainian-Canadian leaders have complained that their exhibit is stuffed in the back of the museum by the washrooms, Palestinian-Canadian lobbyists are upset that their grievances have been overlooked, and the First Nation advocates are irate that European colonialism of the New World has not been termed 'genocide.' *National Post*, 27 September 2013.

genocide, and works to limit international intervention to stop the violence, therefore doing a disservice to victims.²⁴

This thesis builds on both of these methodological strains, acknowledging that historical memory is a social construct guided by contemporary political considerations, but also keeping in mind that the individuals who worked to make Canadians aware of the Holocaust were humans and therefore affected emotionally by what they learned regarding Hitler's Holocaust. In other words, the experiences and memories of Hitler's persecution of the Jews during the 1930s and 1940s made an impact on Canadian Jewry and they tended to view contemporary events through the lens of Holocaust memory, even when there was little resemblance between events in the 1950s and the 1930s.

Historiography

The study of Jewish responses to the Holocaust in the immediate post-war era has been of little interest to historians, especially in Canada, as the common conception is that the West knew little about the extermination of European Jews. Historiography since the 1980s and 1990s was almost unanimous in its position that, until at least the 1960s, the world remained silent about the Holocaust. This theory was first fully articulated by Leon A. Jick in 1980, when he argued that American Jewry "sought to forget" about Hitler and the extermination of the Jews because of the emergence of the Cold War. According to Jick, with McCarthyism spreading in the 1950s like a plague across America, the established Jewish community was careful not to associate themselves with Communism, lest they awaken latent antisemitism

²⁴ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 399-402. See also Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

and be ostracized.²⁵ Therefore, Soviet crimes, such as the massacre of Polish officers in the Katyn forest, were the only Second World War atrocities discussed. The argument suggests that Jews did not want to sully West Germany's reputation, especially during the 1950s when it was being integrated into NATO. Moreover, discussing the Holocaust was apparently too painful for Jews. Historians present Jews in 1950's North America as seeking to melt into society and become "normal" by redoubling their efforts at upward social mobility. As Jick argued, "the breakthrough in the process of coming to grips with the reality and bringing the Holocaust to the center of Jewish consciousness came in 1967." With the fear that Jews faced a second Holocaust, this time in Palestine, American Jews were jolted out of their silence and embarked on a massive campaign to raise awareness and educate the public about the Holocaust, specifically by raising the spectre of American indifference and apathy towards the destruction of European Jews in the Second World War.²⁶

Jick's arguments are compelling for most historians in the field, perhaps because many remember the fear that gripped the Jewish community in the late 1960s, and have been repeated in nearly every history dealing with Jews in North America following the Second World War. For most historians, the construction of the Holocaust as a central landmark of the American landscape emerged due to the development of an intimate relationship between

²⁵ For early exponents of similar arguments see Gerd Korman, "The Holocaust in American Historical Writing," *Societas* 2, no. 3 (1972): 261-69; Steven Whitfield, "The Holocaust and the American Jewish Intellectual," *Judaism* 28, no. 4 (1979): 399.

²⁶ Leon A. Jick, "The Holocaust – its Use and Abuse within the American Public," *Yad Vashem Studies* 14 (1981): 303-318. Jick cites the appearance of both Arthur Morse's *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Random House, 1968) and Henry Feingold's *The Politics of Rescue: the Roosevelt Administration, 1939-1945* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970) as evidence for the late emergence of interest in the Holocaust. However, these works are devoted to uncovering America's dismal response to the Holocaust and not the process of the extermination or the experiences of the victims. It is safe to assume that these books' audiences must have already been aware of the events that transpired against the Jews of Europe during the Second World War for these books to evoke such powerful reactions from readers.

the United States and Israel in the 1960s. This argument was made most convincingly by Peter Novick, who takes the position that the idea of the Holocaust was “something that would not have been recognizable to most people” in the 1940s and 1950s and is therefore a “retrospective construction” of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁷ Tim Cole proclaimed that it was only in the 1960s that “that anything like widespread awareness of the ‘Holocaust’ began to emerge.”²⁸ Gerald Sorin has even, somewhat fantastically, declared that “Holocaust survivors and American society” colluded in a “conspiracy of silence.”²⁹ Alan Mintz points to the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1960-1961 as the “crucial event” that pushed the Holocaust into mainstream consciousness, an event that he proposes gave American Jews “licence...to pay more attention to this aspect of their own past and make it the object of broad and intense inquiry.”³⁰ Most historians of the postwar America emphasize that the Jewish community censored discussions of the Holocaust since it did not fit into the melting pot of American liberal culture.³¹

²⁷ Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 20.

²⁸ Tim Cole, *Images of the Holocaust: The Myth of the ‘Shoah’ Business* (London: Duckworth, 1999), 7.

²⁹ See Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 195. For a similar treatment of the American Jewish community’s alleged postwar silence, see Nathan Glazer, “Hansen’s Hypothesis and the Historical Experience of Generations,” in *American Immigrants and Their Generations: Studies and Commentaries on the Hansen Thesis After Fifty Years*, ed. Peter Kvisto and Dab Blank (Urbana: university of Illinois Press, 1990), 109.

³⁰ Elsewhere, Mintz writes “An acute awareness of the Holocaust was not part of the American Jewish experience during the first two decades after the event because it impeded this process of Americanization.” See Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 5-8, 11-12.

³¹ Besides the texts quoted above, there is an immense body of literature that argues that there was a ‘conspiracy of silence’ between the American Jewish community and American society that created an atmosphere of disinterest in the Holocaust and compelled Holocaust survivors to be silent and not discuss the tragedy that befell European Jewry during the Second World War. Michael E. Staub has even argued that the often repeated meaning of the Holocaust “that never again could (or should) they [Jews] allow themselves to experience powerlessness” was absent in American discourse and “did not emerge until the later 1960s.” See his “Holocaust Consciousness and American Jewish Politics,” in Marc Lee Raphael, ed., *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 313-36. Jessica Hillman also writes that “American culture entered a period of silence in regard to the Holocaust” following the conclusion

In the United States, the emergence of Holocaust consciousness is closely tied to America's relationship to Israel. For Novick, prior to the 1960s, a relationship with Israel did not have a special place in the heart of Americans, including American Jews, and he goes so far as to say that the "notion of Western guilt as the godfather of Israel...is quite false."³² It was the spring of 1967 that was the "dramatic turning point in American Jews' relationship to Israel," and thus "marked an important stage in their changing relationship to the Holocaust."³³ Agreeing with such argumentation, Michael Morgan is able to say that since "Israel's survival became for many Jews the core, if not the totality of Jewish identity," the prospect that the West would sit quietly by while the Arab nations attempted to wipe Israel off the map precipitated "an acknowledgement of the Holocaust, Auschwitz, the memory of the catastrophe."³⁴ Novick goes one step further when he argues that American Jews did not

of the Second World War. Like most historians of postwar American Jews, she attributes this 'silence' to the "new integrationist possibilities open to them" and the worry that discussion of the Holocaust would "stir up the specter of anti-Semitism." Moreover, she contends that "the Holocaust distracted from the priority of Zionism." Echoing Peter Novick's arguments, she claims that "Jews were also eager to avoid the stereotypical association of their people with communism. By 'dwelling' on the crimes of Germany, Jews were associated with the new American enemy, the Soviets." In short, "America did not want to hear." See her *Echoes of the Holocaust on the American Musical Stage* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 11. Also making this case, and perhaps more widely read, are Edward Shapiro's *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 213-16 and Howard Sachar's *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 839-47. More recently, the case has been stated in see David B. MacDonald, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide: The Holocaust and Historical Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18-20.

³² Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 71.

³³ Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 148.

³⁴ Michael L. Morgan, "To Seize memory: History and Identity in Post-Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965," in *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 158. For other works that point to events surrounding Israel in the 1960s that brought the Holocaust into the forefront of both American Jewish life and American mainstream culture, see also Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992): 213-5; Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 8-9; Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132. Perhaps best known is Jonathan D. Sarna's widely acclaimed *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), where, on page 333, he presents the interpretation of American memory of the Holocaust as delayed. He writes "In the case of the Holocaust, it was Israel's capture of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann in 1960, his trial in

raise awareness of the Holocaust and American indifference to the Jewish extermination merely because of the prospect of a second Holocaust in Palestine, but also to solve the problem of “Israel’s increasing isolation in the world.” By emphasizing Jewish victimhood and using the Holocaust as a “benchmark of oppression,” thereby “trivializing crimes of lesser magnitude,” Israel became beyond reproach.³⁵

While Novick’s work was polemical, Norman Finkelstein inflamed the debate over the politicization of the Holocaust by writing that American Jewry only brought the Holocaust into the public forum in the 1960s because it was “the perfect weapon for deflecting criticism of Israel.” He dismisses the notion that Jews were concerned about a second Holocaust in 1967 or 1973 as naive: “The avowed concern for Holocaust memory was as contrived as the avowed concern for Israel’s fate.” Finkelstein adds that “concern for survivors of the Nazi holocaust was equally contrived: a liability before June 1967, they were silenced; an asset after June 1967, they were sanctified.”³⁶ Pointing to Israel’s poor treatment of Palestinian refugees, Finkelstein continues, “The Holocaust has proven to be an indispensable ideological weapon. Through its deployment, one of the world’s most formidable military powers, with a horrendous human rights record, has cast itself as a ‘victim’ state, and the most successful ethnic group in the United States has likewise acquired victimhood.”³⁷

Jerusalem about a year later, and Hannah Arendt’s disturbing book on the trial...that thrust the destruction of the Jews into the public consciousness.”

³⁵ Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 20.

³⁶ Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 20.

³⁷ Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, 3.

The near consensus of historians regarding the absence of Holocaust consciousness in the two decades after the Second World War has begun to crack in the last ten years, especially in the United States. Lawrence Baron was one of the first to point to early scholarly research on Nazism that delved into the nature of the Holocaust, although he said considerably less regarding the impact that these studies had on mass culture and political discourse in the United States.³⁸ Kirsten Fermaglich's *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965* also argues that the Holocaust entered American consciousness in the late 1950s by exploring the writings of a number of Jewish intellectuals, such as Stanley Elkin, Betty Friedan and Robert Jay Lifton. She finds that these social activists used analogies of the Holocaust to explain contemporary American problems. For example, Betty Friedan called the American home a "comfortable concentration camp" to show that "suburban women, like concentration camp inmates, participated in their own oppression."³⁹ According to Fermaglich, American Jewish writers "emphasized the evils of Nazi concentration camps as a means of expressing prevalent intellectual concerns with bureaucracy, alienation, and conformity and of criticizing American society from a liberal perspective."⁴⁰ Historians have been swayed little by her work, however, insisting that just because Americans were drawing lessons from concentration camps does not demonstrate that they "were indeed familiar with the Nazi extermination of European Jewry."⁴¹

³⁸ Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 1 (2003): 62-88.

³⁹ Fermaglich, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares*, 2.

⁴⁰ Fermaglich, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares*, 23.

⁴¹ For a useful critique of Fermaglich's thesis, see Benjamin L. Alper, "Review of *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares*," *American Jewish History* 92, no. 4 (2007): 502-4.

Hasia Diner's effort to show that all previous historians in this field "have erred grievously" made more than a ripple. Diner is one of the preeminent historians on American Jewish life and she managed to assemble an impressive array of sources to show that the American Jewish community did remember and make the Holocaust central to their communal identity. Moreover, her title *We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* was a challenge to historians who held the opinion that Holocaust commemoration was motivated solely by a political agenda. Not surprisingly then, her study tends to focus more on listing hundreds of instances of commemoration at the expense of discussing the political context behind these representations of the Holocaust or how representations of the Holocaust have shifted over time to reflect changing political circumstances.⁴²

Nonetheless, her work has made many historians reassess their thinking on the role of the Holocaust in the postwar Jewish experience. David Cesarani is one of many historians who believe that Diner has "landed a knockout punch" against the dominant position.⁴³ Inspired by her research, Cesarani adjusted his own view of the conspiracy of silence theory. In his own research over the past few of years, he has found that Jews both on and off the

⁴² Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009); for a more succinct version of her argument see Hasia Diner, "Post-World War II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe," *American Jewish History* 91, no. 3-4 (2003): 439-67 and Hasia Diner, "American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962," Monna and Otto Weinmann Annual Lecture, United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum, New York, 6 May 2010.

<<http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/lectures/lecture.php?content=3-weinmann>>. Elsewhere she tackles the difficult question of why American Jewry decided to erase early Holocaust commemorations from their histories. See her "Before 'The Holocaust': American Jews Confront Catastrophe, 1945-62," in Deborah Dash Moore ed., *American Jewish Identity Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Of Michigan Press, 2014), 83-118.

⁴³ David Cesarani, "Review of Hasia Diner's *We Remember With Reverence and Love*," *American Jewish History* 94, no. 4 (2008): 338-41.

European continent were obsessed with the Holocaust in the years immediately following the war, but the sheer bombardment of Holocaust-related material quickly left audiences bored.⁴⁴

Dan Stone also agrees that the notion that Jews were silent about the Holocaust in the late 1940s and early 1950s is misleading. Although his historiographical analysis of Holocaust scholarship focused exclusively on research during the past twenty years, he writes that “it is no longer possible to claim that there was silence in the postwar period.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ David Cesarani, “Challenging the ‘Myth of Silence’: Postwar Responses to the Destruction of European Jewry,” J. B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Annual Lecture, United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum, New York, April 2, 2009. <<http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/lectures/lecture.php?content=2-shapiro>>. He has also assembled the work of numerous scholars who have recently challenged the postwar silence of the Holocaust in a volume. See David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, eds., *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁴⁵ Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3; see also Lawrence Baron, “The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 1 (2003): 62-88. David Kaufman also agrees that Hasia Diner has “argued persuasively” that “the production of holocaust memory began immediately after the Second World War” See David Kaufman, “Revival through Celebrity: American Fame, Jewish identity, and the Early 1960s,” Eitan P. Fishbane and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds. *Jewish Renaissance and Revival in America* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 135-44. There are a few historians who remain unconvinced by the massive quantity of evidence that Diner draws upon, often citing the consensus among Holocaust survivors that they were not welcome in the first two decades to discuss their experiences under the Nazi regime. This position is stated by William B. Helmreich, “The reluctance of the survivors to discuss what had happened, based in part on the lack of interest by American Jews, created a ‘conspiracy of silence’ that lasted for many years.” See his *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 69. Beth B. Cohen writes that there was “a lack of genuine interest in the agony of the Holocaust,” see her *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 155-58. One of the most recent challenges to Diner’s research is from Arlene Stein, who writes “someone coming of age today might imagine that commemorations of the Holocaust were always part of the postwar American landscape. And yet there was a great deal of reticence about speaking of the Holocaust for a least two decades after the war’s end among Jewish Americans, as well as among non-Jews, described by some as a ‘conspiracy of silence.’ More recently, the historian Hasia Diner has declared that this silence is a myth: American Jews began building a commemorative culture swiftly and with a great deal of determination. But while numerous small-scale efforts to memorialize the murdered Jews of Europe made their way into Jewish communities during the immediate postwar period, it took several decades for consciousness of the Holocaust to consolidate, and for an understanding of the genocide of European Jewry to cohere into a meaningful category of experience, and one that deserved broad recognition.” Her book outlines the struggles of Holocaust survivors to bring the Holocaust into the American public sphere: “it would not be until the 1970s that the Holocaust—the consciousness of its enormity and the struggle with its meaning—took its place as one of the pillars supporting Jewish American identity.” See her *Reluctant Witnesses: Survivors, Their Children, and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.

Canadian historians, however, have been reluctant to challenge the conventional view that the Holocaust was rarely discussed in the postwar era. The definitive monograph in Canadian historiography that makes the case for the Holocaust remaining outside public discourse in the immediate postwar era is Franklin Bialystok's *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*. Bialystok contends that the "Holocaust was not part of their [Canadian Jewish] world," for at least a generation after the Second World War. Not only did the trauma of the Holocaust cause Jews to repress Holocaust memories, according to Bialystok, but there was also "a sense of shame in commemorating an event that...had occurred without resistance by the victims"⁴⁶ Relying on the testimony of many Holocaust survivors, Bialystok finds that the established Jewish community in the 1950s had little interest in hearing about the experiences of Jews who escaped from Nazi-occupied Europe. Disinterest turned to antagonism as recent displaced persons were seen as a burden on the Canadian Jewish community. The newcomers' strange customs and lack of English skills led to derogatory name calling, such as addressing them by using the term "greenhorn," and a psychological rift tore the community in half. According to Bialystok, the Holocaust only emerged in Jewish consciousness in the 1960s, thanks to the efforts of Holocaust survivors who used their testimony to shake the established Jewish community into action against the threat of antisemitism at home and abroad. With the surfacing of Neo-Nazism throughout the West, including Canada, and prospect of a war of extermination against the surviving remnant in Israel in 1967, frightened Holocaust survivors saw these events as eerily similar to the events of 1930's Germany. According to Bialystok's account,

⁴⁶ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 7.

the more established Canadian Jewish community believed such talk constituted fear-mongering and would only “alienate Canadian society.” Bialystok argues that with the Canadian Jewish community split over this issue, it was only after the joint Syrian and Egyptian attack on Israel in October 1973 and after Holocaust survivors had made significant headway into Jewish institutions that “the legacy of the Holocaust surfaced as a marker of ethnic identification for most Canadian Jews.”⁴⁷

Historians of Canadian Jewry have typically found themselves in agreement with Bialystok and have accepted his interpretation. The leading expert on Canadian Jewry, Gerald Tulchinsky, recently wrote that it was only by the 1980s or even the 1990s that “a growing awareness of the Holocaust entered into Jewish life in Canada.”⁴⁸ Even Michael Marrus writes that “for us, at that time [the late 1950s and early 1960s], the holocaust was simply absent” from university curricula, “non-Jews, but also Jews, did not speak about the Holocaust.”⁴⁹ More recently, Harold Troper has merged Bialystok’s “delayed impact” theory with many of the reasons outlined in American historiography when he writes that “this ‘pall of desperation’ [that coincided with the threat of Egypt’s impending attack on Israel in 1967] reflected an emergent Holocaust consciousness percolating in the Jewish mind since the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a consciousness reinforced by the coming of age of Holocaust survivors as a force in the Canadian Jewish community and by fears of a growing neo-Nazi revival in both Europe and North America.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 9.

⁴⁸ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews: A People’s Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 459.

⁴⁹ Michael R. Marrus, “Getting It Right: A Historian Thinking of the Holocaust,” in Jerry S. Grafstein, ed. *Beyond Imagination: Canadians Write About the Holocaust* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), 27.

⁵⁰ Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 126-7.

The Canadian consensus over the “delayed impact” theory is largely due to a number of testimonials that have confirmed that this was the case, even though the vast majority of Canadian testimonies on record say nothing about Canadian interest or disinterest in the Holocaust in the immediate postwar era. However, some Holocaust survivors were angered when they were not able to share their experiences, even within the Jewish community. One survivor in an interview in the 1980s explained: “we were all anxious to tell of our experiences but we found no listeners, nobody wanted to hear about it, they say we heard enough. Either they felt guilty or they felt sick listening to all this.”⁵¹ Another survivor said that he was also very “disappointed” by the Jewish community in Cornwall who he believed were “not interested” in hearing his story.⁵² A survivor who arrived in Winnipeg in 1958 also noted that “no one asked about her experiences.”⁵³ However, the vast majority of early Holocaust testimonials present the view that it was the Holocaust survivors themselves, rather than the established Jewish community, who were determined to limit conversation about their experiences both in hiding from the Nazis and life in concentration and extermination camps. This difficulty in speaking about the Holocaust, even privately, is attributed over and over again in testimonials to debilitating fear. Survivors who did discuss life in concentration camps almost always confided in close personal friends who also had shared a similar experience under Nazi rule.⁵⁴ In one interview, a woman who was asked whether she spoke about the Holocaust answered, “No. I told my children. I tried to tell them but I can’t talk about it...I’m choking up even now. So I try, my husband doesn’t let

⁵¹ Interview with HC, in CJCCCN, CJC fonds, Holocaust Documentation Project.

⁵² Interview with KKE, in CJCCCN, CJC fonds, Holocaust Documentation Project.

⁵³ Interviews no. 17, 7. In Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, Holocaust Survivor Testimony.

⁵⁴ Interview with M and R, in CJCCCN, CJC fonds, Holocaust Documentation Project.

me talk about it. I still dream about it, I still scream at night so I try not to, not to think about it.”⁵⁵ Another survivor who was very active in the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression and travelled across Canada to share his experiences with school children, noted that it took him twenty-five years to speak about the Holocaust: “I couldn’t talk about it, not even with...my children.” When asked if people wanted to hear his story twenty years ago, he said that “people were reluctant because they were afraid they shouldn’t have nightmares...”⁵⁶

This thesis demonstrates that despite the fact that only a few Holocaust survivors who arrived in Canada were initially able to share their experiences and shape representations of the Holocaust in Canada, Holocaust memory became an important aspect of Jewish identity in Canada during the war years through to 1956. Holocaust discourse was used by Canadian Jews to understand threats facing Israel and the Jewish diaspora in the 1940s and 1950s. The Canadian Jewish role as bystanders to the European catastrophe and also as Allies against Nazism shaped how Canadian Jews understood the Holocaust. Thinking about the Holocaust was framed within mainstream political discourse over Canadian identity and Canada’s role on the international stage. Since Nazi Germany was viewed by Canada as the antithesis to Canadian ideals of liberalism and a pluralistic harmonious society, it reaffirmed Canadians’ self-identification as a tolerant society and memories of the Holocaust thus did little to challenge prevalent racist attitudes in Canada. Canadian Jews, however, especially the many Canadian Jews who still had relatives in the Old World who were trapped in Hitler’s regime, were deeply shaken by what they witnessed during Hitler’s reign. During the war years,

⁵⁵ Interview with S, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, Holocaust Documentation Project.

⁵⁶ Interview with TG, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, Holocaust Documentation Project.

Canadian Jews presented Jewish deaths in Europe as heroic martyrdoms in the defense of freedom and Western Civilization. They utilized the memory of these martyrs to support liberal international governance projects, such as the UN and the Genocide Convention, which they hoped would make the world safe for Jews. However, Jewish idealism began to wear thin by the early 1950s, especially amongst progressives within the Jewish community, who lost faith in the ability of the international system to prevent the re-emergence of antisemitism. By the mid-1950s, Holocaust memory in Canada had become closely tied to supporting Israel as Canadian Jews were convinced that the appeasement policies of the 1930s were still being applied to antisemitic regimes such as the Soviet Union and Egypt. Worried that the West would sacrifice Israel in order to preserve peace and maintain the West's balance of power in the Cold War, Canadian Jews embraced the image of Holocaust casualties as ardent freedom fighters. Representations of the Holocaust in the 1950s also opened a rift in the Jewish community between liberal Jews and socialist and communist Jews.

Chapter one examines the liberal paradigm through which the Canadian Jewish community encountered the rise of Hitler's antisemitic regime. In order to understand Canadian memory of the Holocaust, we must explore how Canadians understood Nazi antisemitism in the 1930s. What role did rise of Nazi racism in Germany play within Canadian political discourses? How did Canadian Jews make sense of the persecution of Jews in Germany and how did these events shape the Canadian Jewish community's identity? This chapter explores Canadian Jewish responses to the rise of Hitler's regime and the Nazi implementation of antisemitic laws, the advent of state-sponsored violence against

Germany's Jews in 1938, and the emergence of the Jewish refugee crisis. It argues that Canadian Jews understood the Nazis' persecution of Europe's Jews and the subsequent Jewish refugee crisis of the 1930s within the context of Canada's association with the British Empire. Germany's attack against its Jewish citizens was decried in Canada not because of their racist nature, but because they were an affront to the liberal order and perceived as a threat to the stability of Europe. While Canadian Jewish efforts to convince Canadian opinion to open Canadian borders for Jewish refugees failed, they helped popularize the view that Hitler's attack on Jews constituted a threat to the international order.

The second chapter delves into Canadians-Jewish responses to the mass murder of Europe's Jews during the 1940s. It argues that Canadian Jewry understood the Canadian war effort through the paradigm of Hitler's war against Jews. This association was not inevitable, due to efforts by the Canadian Government to obscure the Holocaust from the Canadian public. In fact, Canadian Jews worked to associate the mass murder of Jews with casualties from underground resistance and partisan movements in order to suggest that Jews were Allies fighting in the struggle for liberty behind the frontlines. The Canadian Jewish press covered the Holocaust closely during the war years and many Canadian Jewish youths volunteered to fight in Canada's military in order to help rescue Jews in Europe. During these years and well into the 1940s, Canadian Jewry wrestled with making sense of the Holocaust. While many Jews questioned their religious convictions, others began to attend synagogue to find answers. With the cessation of hostilities, Canadian Jews turned to relief efforts for the remnant left in Europe. However, with the solidification of communist rule in Eastern Europe and the persistence of European antisemitism, Canadian Jews came to see

Jewish life in Europe as untenable and turned to support Israel and democratic international organizations as the best home to protect Jewish life.

The third chapter analyzes Canadian Jewish reactions to the rearmament and integration into NATO of West Germany in the early 1950s. The “German problem” was especially controversial in Canadian Jewish circles and highlights the degree to which the Holocaust had become rooted within Canadian Jewish identity and thinking. The chapter plots the rift in the Canadian Jewish community between liberals, whose turn from idealistic internationalism to supporting realist Canadian Cold War priorities led them to support West German rearmament, and communist Jews, who were not willing to welcome West Germany into the community of nations for fear that West Germany would initiate a second Holocaust. The rift was laden with emotional exchanges, leading to the expulsion of communist organizations—namely the United Jewish People’s Order—from the CJC. Although the rift was certainly motivated by ideological differences, at its core was concern about Holocaust memory. For communists and some socialist Jews in Canada, the Holocaust became a distorted lens through which they viewed 1950s’ West Germany and they therefore adamantly rejected Canada’s position to support West Germany’s entry into NATO, arguing that such an act was tantamount to reinstating the Nazis. While many in the Canadian Jewish leadership found such arguments compelling, the political necessity to contain the Soviet Union, which was beginning to exhibit a strong antisemitic tendency, forced the CJC to cut ties with the Jewish communists and support German rearmament. The corresponding agreement that West Germany signed to make restitution to the victims of the Holocaust prior to West Germany gaining sovereignty did little to induce either liberal or socialist Jews

to forgive Germany, even if the financial payout was seen as important to rebuild destroyed Jewish institutions.

The fourth chapter analyzes the growing relationship between Zionism, the rise of antisemitism in the Arab world, and Holocaust memory in Canada by examining Canadian Jewish responses to the Suez Crisis and the Sinai War in 1956. It argues that Canadian Jews interpreted the political tensions of the 1950's Middle East in light of the Holocaust. The Egyptian dictator, Gamal Nasser was perceived by Canadian Jews as Hitler, and his antisemitic domestic policies were analogous to the Nazis' anti-Jewish discrimination of the 1930s. The Cold War climate caused Canadian Jews to fear that the west would once again sacrifice Jews in order to appease a dictator and prevent global war. This time the result would be the destruction of Egyptian Jews and the newly formed Jewish State of Israel. The fear of a second Holocaust pressed Canadian Jews to instigate a public relations campaign aimed at preserving Israel as a Jewish safe-haven.

Holocaust memory in the immediate postwar years was not inconsequential to Canadian Jewish identity, but was fundamental in sculpting the ideological makeup of Canadian Jewry in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Holocaust thinking became a paradigm within the Jewish community and was formed within the context of national debates over Canada's role on the international stage to protect democracy. This lens sometimes skewed perceptions of international developments, and sensitivity to perceived rises in antisemitism, such as in the case of West Germany during the early 1950s, leading to panicked responses, and, at times, dividing the Canadian Jewish community along ideological lines.

Chapter 1

“Hitler’s Assault on Civilization”: Canada’s Response to Nazi Germany’s Persecution of Jews, 1933-1939

A significant recent trend within the fields of Holocaust memory and Holocaust representations is for scholars to begin their analyses after 1945, thereby suggesting that thinking about the Holocaust was enigmatic during the war years.⁵⁷ This approach is often taken due to the accepted position that the Holocaust was rarely discussed in the public sphere until the liberation of Europe, when Allies stumbled into concentration camps to see the wreckage of Nazi atrocities. The limitation of this approach is that it presupposes that Holocaust thinking had to be framed within the dialogue surrounding the Cold War rather than built on an established discourse that had been constructed during the years of Nazi rule. This assumption is peculiar considering that memory begins to form during an event and is constructed as individuals attempt to interpret the collective experience. Thus, in examining how the Nazi assault on European Jews shaped Jewish identity in Canada, it is important to look at how Canadian perceptions of German atrocities were formed while these crimes happened.

⁵⁷ Key examples of this exclusively postwar approach to the study of Holocaust discourse include Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945-50* (New York: Palgrave, 2011); Fermaglich, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965*; Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France*; Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Michael Rotherberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993); Tom Lawson and James Jordan, eds., *The Memory of the Holocaust in Australia*.

Moreover, the Holocaust was not a singular event, but a process that began by isolating and removing Jews from German society through cultural, economic, and legal means, and only gradually turned to extermination under the cover of war. While observing how Nazi antisemitism devolved from economic boycotts to deportation, ghettoization, and extermination, Canadian ideas also shifted regarding Nazism as Canadian national priorities evolved. When discussing Canadian memory of the Holocaust, the context of the 1930s should not be ignored. As American and British historians have pointed out, Western witnesses of Nazi atrocities in 1945 understood the horror found in liberated camps within political paradigms emanating from debates in the 1930s concerning appeasement and the binary threat of communism and fascism.⁵⁸ Thus, in order to understand Canadian Jewish memory of the Holocaust, we must explore how Canadians understood Nazi antisemitism in the 1930s and the international response to Nazi persecution. A number of questions are considered in this chapter. What role did the rise of Nazi racism in Germany play within Canadian political discourses? How did Canadian Jews make sense of the persecution of Jews in Germany and how did these events shape the Canadian Jewish community's identity?

Since the presumption is that the Jewish tribulations were of little concern to Canadians, few historians have examined Canadian ideas concerning Nazi antisemitism in the 1930s. One exception is Amanda Grzyb's examination of the Canadian press' coverage

⁵⁸ Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: the Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 294-319; Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 50-77, 187-89; Aubrey H. Newman, "British Reactions to News of the Holocaust," in eds. Richard Bosbach and Thomas Brockmann, *Religion and Politik in Deutschland und Großbritannien* (München: K. G. Saur, 2001), 139-44; See Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 65, 86-88; Norman Erwin, "Making Sense of Mass Murder: Toronto's Media Coverage of the Liberation of the Concentration Camps and Trials of War Criminals, 1944-1946," Major Research Paper, York University, 2007.

of *Kristallnacht*. However, her study is somewhat unsatisfying as she relies almost exclusively on the *Globe and Mail* for understanding Canadian responses, and does not contextualize news of *Kristallnacht* within the Canadian social and political context of the late 1930s. After providing a straightforward analysis of her evidence, she comes to the rather strange and contradictory conclusion that the press pushed the European Jewish plight off Canada's public agenda because Canadians were "either hopeful that *Kristallnacht* had been the worst of the violence, or [were] overwhelmed by a sense that Jewish suffering was somehow unsolvable, inevitable, eternal."⁵⁹

Rather than explore Canadian perceptions of Nazism, the majority of Canadian research in the field focuses on Canadian racism as an explanation of why the Canadian government prevented Jewish refugees from entering Canada during the 1930s and much of the 1940s. Irving Abella and Harold Troper's monumental *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, for example, copiously documents the formation and maintenance of regulatory barricades to Jewish entry into Canada. Abella and Troper's research argues that antisemitism was endemic within government circles. Blurring the nebulous line between bystander and perpetrator categories, they argue that the "Nazis read rejection of the Jews, especially by the democracies, as tacit approval of their policies.... The Holocaust is a tragedy which also envelops and implicates the bystander."⁶⁰ While these historians conclude that Mackenzie King's government had "read the public mood and had read it correctly," they also suggest that antisemitism within Quebec was decisive in the

⁵⁹ Amanda Grzyb, "From *Kristallnacht* to the MS *St. Louis* Tragedy: Canadian Press Coverage of Nazi Persecution of the Jews and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, September 1938 to August 1939," in L. Ruth Klein ed. *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 78-113.

⁶⁰ Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, xxii-xxiii.

decision to prevent Jewish immigration, since opening the doors “risk[ed] alienating Quebec” and thus the collapse of the Liberal government.⁶¹

Building on Abella and Troper’s foundational work, Canadian historians have sought to uncover a myriad of examples for how antisemitism had inundated Canadian society to explain Canada’s inhumane response to the Jewish crisis. These historians reveal that institutional racism ran rampant during the interwar period. The medical, legal, and teaching professions regularly insisted that applicants disclose their ‘race’ for the purpose of ensuring that only Christians were hired. Quotas were placed on Jewish admission into universities. Even many vacation destinations frequently advertised that they were closed to Jews, since this was desirable for their clientele.⁶² The ownership of property and Jewish settlement in particular neighborhoods across the country was similarly restricted though covenants written into land deeds, to ensure that areas remained ‘white.’⁶³ Cyril H. Levitt and William Shaffir contend that in Toronto in 1933, the impression that Jews were encroaching on a ‘white’ Protestant neighborhood was enough to set the conditions for the Christie Pits Riot.⁶⁴ Fascist

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁶² For the standard works on Canadian antisemitism see Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews: A People’s Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), ch. 9; Richard Menkis, “Antisemitism in the Evolving Nation: From New France to 1950,” in *From Immigration to Integration, The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds. Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith, 2001), 31-51; Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response*; Irving Abella, “Anti-Semitism in Canada in the Interwar Years,” in *The Jews of North America*, ed. Moses Rischin (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1987), 235-46; David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties: On Anti-Semitism in Canada, 1929-1939* vols. 1-13 (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, 1977-1980); Louis Rosenberg, *Canada’s Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1993), 304; Gerald E. Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy, Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977), ch. 3.

⁶³ See Stephen Speisman, “Antisemitism in Ontario” in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davies (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1992): 113-134; Cyril H. Levitt and William Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Denys, 1987). For the struggle to make racial covenants illegal in the post-war era, see James W. St. G. Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), ch. 4.

⁶⁴ Levitt and Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*.

movements sprang up across Canada during the Great Depression. Since they held xenophobic and nativist attitudes, the fascists' appeal rested on the "prevalent if largely latent anti-Semitism" throughout Canada.⁶⁵ Though one may question whether the predominant fascist in Canada, Adrien Arcand, was an important player on the Canadian political scene, what is particularly telling was the reluctance of Canadians to defend Jews from Arcand's insidious attacks. Thus, Martin Robin admits that fascism was weak and remained on the fringe of Canadian society; what he finds disturbing about the movement was that "Jews were permissible targets."⁶⁶ Canada's most blatant antisemitic policy was directly tied to who was allowed to live within its borders. The Canadian immigration policy privileged 'white' Western Europeans above all else, and created a "Special Permit Group," for Jews and other undesirable 'races,' that was automatically banned entry unless permission was given by the Cabinet on an individual basis.⁶⁷ Stephen Speisman writes that racially restrictive covenants on property deeds, which prevented land ownership from falling into the hands of Jews, were

⁶⁵ Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975), 3. For other works on Canadian fascism see Jean-Francois Nadeau, *The Canadian Führer: The Life of Adrien Arcand* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2011); Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁶⁶ Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Policies in Canada, 1920-1940*.

⁶⁷ For further discussion on Canada's interwar immigration policy as it related to Jews, see Gerald E. Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy, Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), ch. 3; Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 220-253; Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada* (Montreal: Eagle Press, 1966); Joseph Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving: Two Hundred Years of Jewish Immigration and Immigrant Aid Effort in Canada, 1760-1960* (Montreal: Eagle, 1962); Harold Troper, "New Horizons in a New Land: Jewish Immigration to Canada," in Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant, eds., (Toronto: Institute for International Affairs, B'nai Brith Canada, 2001); Harold Troper, "Jews and Canadian Immigration Policy, 1900-1950," in Moses Rischin, ed., *The Jews of North America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 44-58; Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995); Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 32-62; Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many*, ch. 1;

not unusual in Ontario and were put in place to ensure that many neighborhoods remained ‘white.’⁶⁸

Just as relevant to understanding mainstream Canadian thought towards Jews is the research exploring the relationship between Canadian antisemitism and religion. Historians are divided on the issue. By far, the most nuanced and careful examination of Canadian Christian attitudes towards Jews is Alan T. Davies and Marilyn F. Nefsky’s *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight during the Nazi Era*. They question the charge that Protestants were silent on the issue of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the 1930s and 1940s. While Davies and Nefsky find that certain denominations, such as the Lutherans and Mennonites were overtly antisemitic on occasion, they cite numerous examples of Canadian Protestants who vocalized their abhorrence of Nazi racial ideas and called for government action. However, such balanced analyses are rare. In a searing, if at times sardonic, indictment of the English-Canadian elite, Alan Mendelson makes the case that English-Canadian antisemitism was often rooted in a religious, not pseudoscientific racial, discourse, in which Jews were seen as tribalistic and stubbornly clinging to an antiquated religion.⁶⁹ Even more controversial discussions pertain to the degree to which antisemitism formed the core of the Quebecois nationalist movement before the Quiet Revolution. Esther Delisle has garnered enormous criticism for her in-depth, albeit somewhat haphazard, examination of the philosophy of the iconic Abbé Lionel Groulx. She finds that Groulx and other Catholic intellectuals were influenced by the pseudoscientific

⁶⁸ Stephen Speisman, “Antisemitism in Ontario,” 113-134.

⁶⁹ Alan Mendelson, *Exiles From Nowhere: The Jews and the Canadian Elite* (Montreal: Robin Brass Studio, 2008). For a succinct examination of one Canadian intellectual’s antisemitic ideas, see Gerald Tulchinsky, “Goldwin Smith: Victorian Canadian Antisemite,” in Alan T. Davies, ed., *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003), 67-92.

racism that was prevalent in Europe. Nostalgic for a pastoral utopia in Quebec, Groulx blamed the Jews for all the ills associated with industrialization and urbanization, including the growing secularization of Quebec.⁷⁰

The barrage of work indicting Christians for antisemitism has garnered spirited responses. Most notably, Pierre Anctil has demanded nuance in contextualizing French-Canadian ideology. He compares the Jewish admission rate between the Anglophone, Protestant McGill University and the Francophone, Catholic l'Université de Montréal in the 1930s, and finds that neither linguistic group was immune from racism.⁷¹ However, apologists continue to persist. More recently, Kyle Jantzen and Jonathan Durance have written an interesting, yet unequivocally one-sided analysis of Canadian Protestant responses to *Kristallnacht*. Although they admit that antisemitism was “endemic in the Canadian society,” they suggest that Canadian Protestants were somehow immune to the racist ideas of the time. According to these scholars, Protestants demanded that their government take action to save Europe’s Jews, including opening Canada’s doors to Jewish immigrants, either because of the liberal current in Protestant thought regarding the “brotherhood of man” and “equality in God’s eyes,” or the belief held by many practitioners that since Jews were God’s “chosen people” Christians were obligated to support them. However their argument that Canadian inaction towards Jewish refugees had more to do “with the ‘deafness’ of the government” and “less to do with the ‘silence’ of the churches,” miscarries because it

⁷⁰ Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and Extremist Right-wing Nationalism in Quebec from 1929-1939*. Trans. Madeleine Hebert, Claire Rothman, and Kathe Roth (Montreal: Robert Davies, 1993). Mordecai Richler has done much to popularize her arguments, see his postscript in *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec! Requiem for a Divided Country* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992), 244-60.

⁷¹ Pierre Anctil, “Interlude of hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919-39” in Alan T. Davies, ed., *Anti-Semitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003), 135-65.

artificially isolates Christian discourse from Canadian national debate, when in fact religious belief informed political discourse and *vice-versa*.⁷²

While these studies into Canadian antisemitism are useful, the historiography tends to veer away from exploring what Canadians perceived and understood about Nazi Jewish policy. Importantly, they have failed to explain why Canadians, who are presented clearly in the historical literature as antisemitic, were so horrified by Nazi antisemitism. Why did *Kristallnacht* cement Canadian opinion against Hitler's Germany? Did the fact that Germany's anti-Jewish policies had evolved into violence make Canadians question their own antisemitic ideas against Jews? One of the deficiencies within the historiography is the tendency to examine sub-groups within Canadian society—be it clergy, fascists, civil servants, or the intelligentsia—at the expense of answering a larger question: did the rise of Nazism shift ideas of what it meant to be Canadian?

This chapter attempts to redress this imbalance by arguing that ideas of national identity provided the framework for Canadian responses to the Nazis' policy towards Jews and the ensuing Jewish refugee crisis of the 1930s. Although many Canadians believed that Canada was a land of minorities, Canadian nationalism drew strength from Canada's imperial connection to the British Empire. Great Britain was not just significant to Canadians because it was the "mother country" of Canada and the home of many Canadian ancestors, but also because it was the purveyor of the liberal order that ensured the longevity and unity of the Confederation. Within the last fifteen years, Ian McKay has challenged historians to think of Canada as not simply a geographical expanse on the map. Rather, he urges scholars

⁷² Kyle Jantzen and Jonathan Durance, "Out Jewish Brethren: Christian Responses to *Kristallnacht* in Canadian mass Media," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46, no. 4 (Fall 2011), 537-48.

to conceptualize Canada as a “certain politico-economic logic—to wit, liberalism.” For McKay, at the centre of Canadian history is the liberal order, which is defined by the supremacy of the “individual,” a decidedly nebulous creature whose status is determined by where he or she falls in regards to gender, class, and race.⁷³ Canadians prided themselves on being a part of the British Empire because liberal principles that defined Canadian culture, such as equality before the law, private property, and civil liberties, were safeguarded by the British institution of parliamentary rule. Moreover, Britain’s mission to bring Christianity to the furthest reaches of the globe led Canadians to see the British Empire as the bastion of Western civilization.

Throughout the 1930s, discussions on Nazi racism dominated the Canadian public sphere. However, this focus was not necessarily because of humanitarian concern for Jewish victims; rather, three underlining factors influenced Canadian discourse over Hitler’s persecution of Jews. First, Canadian opinion in the mainstream media was directed against Nazi racism because it constituted an attack on the liberal order, which threatened to destabilize international relations, push Europe into another war, and threaten the Western democracies. The tidal wave of antisemitic measures that followed Hitler’s rise to power, including the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935, revealed to Canadians the illiberal nature of the Nazi state. Following *Kristallnacht* in 1938, Canadians observed that freedom of consciousness and religious belief in Germany had gone up in flames along with the synagogues. With both German citizens and the state looting property and throwing Jews in concentration camps to suffer torture and even death, clearly the sanctity of private property

⁷³ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2000): 617-47.

and the rule of law had left Germany. In tandem with Hitler's antisemitic domestic policy, his blatant disregard for international conventions to preserve peace increased Canadian concern that war would break out.

Another characteristic of Canadian responses to Nazi persecution in the 1930s was the emphasis in the mainstream press placed on discussing the role of the perpetrators at the expense of considering the Jewish experience in Germany. The main reason for minimizing discussion on Jewish victims was because Hitler's anti-Jewish measures had created a refugee crisis and many liberal Canadians, especially those in government, had no desire to fuel domestic pressure to alter Canada's restrictive immigration policy to accommodate the suffering Jews. However, another important reason was that Canadians viewed the German people—not exclusively the German Jews—as Hitler's primary victims. Antisemitism was presented as a device used to corrupt democratic institutions and strip power away from citizens.

Canadians were also concerned about the implication his domestic policy would have on foreign relations. As Hitler tipped the balance of power in Germany's favour through annexation and strong-arm diplomacy, the Nazis' antisemitic policies signified to Canadians that the bulwark of liberalism, the British Empire, needed to prepare for war, not to save Jews, but Western civilization itself. Thus, Nazi antisemitism made Canadians more assured of their own liberal values and did little to initiate any soul-searching regarding domestic antisemitism.

This chapter examines both Jewish and non-Jewish Canadian responses to the Nazis' legislative assault on Jewish rights, culminating in the Nuremberg race laws in 1935. By

examining the press coverage of Nazi persecution of the Jews, this chapter seeks to determine whether the Nazi turn to violence shifted Canadian ideas regarding Hitler or antisemitism. Finally, to gauge how the plight of the Jews shaped Canadian attitudes about their international role, this chapter explores Canadian responses to the voyage of the *SS. St. Louis* and the pleas to find a haven for Germany's Jews in the summer of 1939, before the eruption of the Second World War. The content of articles, editorials, headlines, and letters-to-the-editor is analyzed and contextualized within Canadian national discourse to determine how both mainstream and Jewish Canadian responses to Nazi antisemitism were constructed.⁷⁴

1.1 The Nazi Revolution and the Dismantling of Jewish Rights

When Hitler became Chancellor in January 30, 1933, it was no secret that the Nazi Party was rank with Jew-haters, even if Hitler disguising his antisemitism during the Nazi campaign for leadership.⁷⁵ Almost immediately after the Nazis gained full political control of Germany through the Enabling Act of March 1933, Hitler imposed a series of anti-Jewish measures to curtail the Jewish presence in German society. A boycott of Jewish stores was implemented on April 1, which was enforced through sporadic violence against Jews by *Sturmabteilung* (SA) thugs. With the boycott largely unsuccessful, Hitler turned to legal measures to ruin Jews economically. He effectively removed Jews from the civil service on April 7, with the

⁷⁴ The content of each newspaper is examined from ten days before each event through to ten days following.

⁷⁵ According to Robert Gellately, "Anti-Semitism was never far beneath the surface in any of Hitler's speeches, but this time [in 1930-1933] it was offered in a code all his listeners recognized." See his Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 213. See also Sarah Ann Gordon, *Hitler, Germans, and the "Jewish Question."* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 68-90.

so-called “Law of the Restoration of the Civil Service.” Other laws soon followed that prevented Jewish lawyers and doctors from practicing in Germany.⁷⁶ These antisemitic laws and violence were widely reported and denounced in the West.⁷⁷ In Canada, Pierre van Paassen, writing for the *Toronto Star* from Berlin in 1933, sent back detailed reports of the Nazis’ brutal treatment of Jews that were widely published throughout the Canadian press.⁷⁸

The Canadian Jewish community was quick to protest the state-sanctioned antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence in Germany. Jewish MPs S. W. Jacobs, A. A. Heaps, and Samuel Factor appealed to Prime Minister R. B. Bennett in a personal interview on March 22 for the Canadian government to “ascertain the nature of the mistreatment alleged to have been suffered by German Jews,” since the Nazis had censored the press, and to put pressure on the German Government through the League of Nations, which was supposed to protect “racial and religious rights.” According to the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Bennett received the delegation “sympathetically,” but promised only to contact Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Oscar Skelton, to obtain an accurate report of the Jewish situation in Germany.⁷⁹ A number of protest meetings sprang up across the country to voice Canadian outrage. On March 26, a Montreal conference of representatives from over 90 various Jewish institutions who gathered to discuss the plight of Jewry in Germany, quickly evolved

⁷⁶ For the most useful discussions on the first wave of anti-Jewish persecution, particularly Hitler’s role in the early persecution of Jews in Germany and the place of antisemitism within the Nazi Party, see Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution of and Murder of the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29-51; Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997), 41-72 ; Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews, 1933-1938* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 62-132;

⁷⁷ See Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, vol.1, 19; Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press & the Coming of the Holocaust, 1939-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 13-39.

⁷⁸ Levitt and Shaffir, *Christie Pits*, 207; Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, 52-3.

⁷⁹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 24 March 1933, 5.

into a mass protest meeting. Thousands of concerned Jews descended on the auditorium at the YMHA to voice their protest. The “undercurrent of indignation that was seething in every Jewish heart,” according to the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, was palpable at the meeting. The editor of the *Chronicle* noted, from various telegrams received by Jewish community leaders, that “the feeling of animus against the blood-begrimed Nazis is gaining in intensity and together with Jewry the world over, a full-throated expression of horror and protest will go forth to the civilized world.”⁸⁰ In a resolution proposed by H. A. Caiserman and adopted at the conference, it was decided that a committee would be established to set up a boycott of German-made goods should Jewish atrocities in Germany continue.⁸¹ Moreover, mass meetings were to be coordinated across Canada to protest “the maltreatment of our brethren in Germany.”⁸²

In an attempt to give these protests greater impact, Jews attempted to align themselves with broader Canadian political discourse by securing prominent secular and Christian leaders to speak at mass meetings and by appealing to British and Christian values of liberty and freedom as a basis for opposing Germany’s attacks on Jews. In Vancouver, the fortunate 1500 protesters who managed to arrive before Moose Hall was filled to capacity listened as clergymen and newspaper editors denounced Nazism as an affront to both civilization and Christianity. The Archbishop of New Westminster, A. U. De Pencier proclaimed that the Nazis’ boycott was “the greatest anti-Semitic movement in modern times.” Speaking for the absent Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vancouver W. M. Duke, J.

⁸⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 31 March 1933, 3.

⁸¹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 31 March 1933, 9. On the origins of the boycott on German goods see *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 29 December 1933, 3-4; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 24 November 1933, 14.

⁸² *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 24 March 1933, 8; 7 April 1933, 49.

M. Coady agreed and commended the meeting as an example to Germans “of the tolerance of Canadian people towards those of other creeds and race.” For the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, “master of oratory” Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser of Beth Israel Congregation provided the most “impassioned speech.” He lamented that if the “moral consciousness of the world” was not “roused” by the news of Nazi atrocities, the basis of civilization would be thrown into question: “Shall civilization look on with indifference? If it does then let us go home and weep, for civilization is dead. No country in the world has the right to elevate racial persecution to be a national policy. Nazi Germany challenges not only Jews, but the whole civilized world. Nazi Germany challenges Christianity—for whatever our religion, we are all believers in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Is it not time that hatreds and bigotries were forgotten?”⁸³

Throughout the country, protesters gathered and passed resolutions that demanded that the Canadian government denounce the “ghoulish attacks of the German Huns” as these attacks were abhorrent to “all liberty-loving regardless of race or creed.”⁸⁴ In Hamilton, 2000 citizens, including MP C. W. Bell and Mayor Peebles, unanimously adopted a resolution to “express their protest, censure and horror at the anti-Jewish action in Germany which is denying Jews the fundamental rights of every human being in a spirit contrary to traditions of British freedom of religion and of liberty.” The resolution demanded that the Canadian and British governments “use whatever humane methods are within their power to prevent continuance and recurrence of such abhorrent tactics and to alleviate the distress

⁸³ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 13 April 1933, 1-2.

⁸⁴ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 31 March 1933, 3.

necessarily following it.”⁸⁵ About 1200 Canadians, from “various religious denominations” according to the *Canadian Jewish Review*, gathered in London and accepted a similar resolution.⁸⁶

In Montreal and Toronto, the largest gatherings followed similar patterns of denouncing Nazism as reactionary. On April 2, 3500 Torontonians poured into Massey Hall and heard shouts that Hitler and his henchmen “may wade ankle-deep through Jewish blood and tears, but eventually they will pay for it, every drop.” MPP Sam Factor, noting that “it is very tragic that in this age of enlightenment it becomes necessary for Jews to hold meetings to protest the treatment of their people in other lands,” announced that that he would lobby the Federal Government to delay renewing the trade agreement between Germany and Canada that had expired in March, until Hitler had given assurances that the Jewish persecution would stop. Rev. Canon Plumtre, speaking on behalf of Bishop Owen, stated that the West needed to protest Nazi antisemitism because “when justice fails, civilization crumbles to the ground. A great injustice has been done, an injustice that touches the very heart of civilization.” In a rather ironic speech, Ontario Premier George Stewart Henry admitted that he was shocked that the German ‘race’ could retreat so far from the precepts of civilization, but was hopeful that the atrocities would quickly end:

One would have thought that in these times of civilization such persecutions would have faded from the face of the earth. Possibly as a citizen of the British Empire I expected too much. I thought people the world over had achieved the enlightenment of our empire. It is unbelievable to us that there should be persecution anywhere in the world. We have always stood for freedom of worship and of speech. The German and the British have sprung from the same stock and so I hope that within Germany itself there will arise a

⁸⁵ *Canadian Jewish Review*, 7 April 1933, 51.

⁸⁶ *Canadian Jewish Review*, 7 April 1933, 51.

protest that will stifle this threatened violence. The Germans are a great people. Surely they, in this advanced state of civilization, will not permit any authority so to disgrace their country and their people.

Not convinced by Henry's racialized wishful thinking, MPP Sam Factor proposed a resolution that was accepted by loud applause. This resolution demanded that a petition be sent to the German Government "to put a stop to all anti-Semitic activities" under the threat that "we shall proclaim a boycott and urge both Jews and non-Jews to co-operate."⁸⁷

An astounding 10,000 protesters met at Mount Royal Arena in Montreal, where they heard, among others, Mayor Fernand Rinfret, MPP Honoré Mercier, and two Jewish MPs: S. W. Jacobs and A. A. Heaps. Due to the minority position of the French Quebecois within the Confederacy of Canada, speakers laid emphasis on the government's role in protecting the rights of minorities. Former President of the League of Nations Assembly, Senator Raoul Dandurand, "lifted the meeting out of the atmosphere of strictly Jewish protest to a higher plane of moral and political principle," according to the *Montreal Gazette*, by showing that Germany was breaking international law by not protecting its citizens: "Minorities should be treated not only justly, but even generously, so that they may forget that they are minorities. This, in my view, is the highest manifestation of civilization." Rinfret agreed, stating that Germany had "disregarded the essential ethics of humanity and justice," and thereby "soiled the German flag." Mercier, like many Canadians, thought Germany could learn much from observing how Canada treated its minorities: "Our country has been built on tolerance and the protection of minorities."⁸⁸ Rabbi Harry Stern also addressed the assembly and continued in the vein of other Jewish speakers: Nazism was aimed at the "uprooting of democracy and a

⁸⁷ *Canadian Jewish Review*, 7 April 1933, 49-51.

⁸⁸ *Montreal Gazette*, 7 April 1933, 19.

negation of human freedom.” In answer to isolated voices that claimed that Jewish persecution was a German “local matter,” and not the concern of the international community, Stern gave the ominous warning that “barbarism has been revived once more in a civilized world...and this savagery is threatening international idealism and the comradeship of nations.”⁸⁹

At the annual convention held in Nuremberg from September 10-16, 1935, the Nazis gathered to celebrate the destruction of the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919.⁹⁰ With Germany about to host the Olympic Games in 1936, the Nazi Party tried to make Nazi anti-Jewish policies more palatable to the international community by legally removing Jews from Germany’s body politic. The new Reich Citizenship Law stripped Jews of their rights as citizens.⁹¹ Although the plan backfired, garnering criticism from the free world, what is revealing about Canadian responses is that while Jewish suffering was bemoaned, it was clearly of secondary concern. Canadian outrage was directed at the Nazi measures for being anti-liberal, rather than racist. Canadians were primarily apprehensive that Nazi minority policies might destabilize European politics.

⁸⁹ Harry J. Stern, “Rabbi Stern’s Address,” in LAC, Harry J. Stern fonds, MG31-F12, box 20, file 7 “Addresses and Essays, n.d., part 1.”

⁹⁰ For a discussion of the European international situation facing Hitler in 1935 and its impact on German society, see Ian Kershaw, *The “Hitler Myth”: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (London: Oxford, 2001), 70-74, 235; Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler’s Foreign Policy, 1933-1939: The Road to World War II* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005), 106-25.

⁹¹ Alan E. Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 41-46; Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 68-73. For the debate on whether Canada and the U.S. should boycott the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin in the face of Nazi antisemitism, see Richard Menkis and Harold Troper, “Racial Laws vs. Olympic Aspirations in the Anglo-Canadian Press of Fall 1935,” in *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War*, ed. Ruth Klein (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 46-77.

In the lead-up coverage to the Nuremberg rally, the Canadian press hoped that Hitler would put an end to the violent tendencies of the Nazi Party's racial policy to avoid sparking an international crisis. On September 11, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that "Hitler would concentrate his efforts at the gathering on healing the breach between the extremist and more conservative factions of the party." While Hitler's antisemitism was widely known, his concern that unbridled violence against Jews would disrupt Germany's international relations and trade was seen as a restraining influence by Canadian observers. However, the *Winnipeg Free Press* saw verbal clashes between the "radical champions of 'Aryanism' like Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels" and moderates, such as Hjalmar Schacht, the Minister of Economy, as "a source of anxiety"⁹²

Therefore, Hitler's legal solution to the "Jewish Question" shocked Canadians. On September 16, editors voiced their outrage at Hitler's abandonment of individual rights and equality before the law. Headlines slammed the Nazi legislation as regressive and barbaric.⁹³ The front page of the *Calgary Herald* contained the bombastic headline: "NAZIS BAR JEWS FROM CITIZENSHIP: Race's German Status Back to That Of Middle Ages."⁹⁴ The *Winnipeg Free Press* printed an editorial from the *Manchester Guardian* that insisted that Hitler should now be considered "Germany's 'Jew-baiter-in-Chief'." Since *Mein Kampf* contained "the weightiest verbal attacks on the Jews" and demonstrated that Hitler was

⁹² *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 September 1935, 9.

⁹³ For examples of the press reaction, see *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 September 1935, 1; *Regina Leader-Post*, 16 September 1935, 8; *Halifax Herald*, 16 September 1935, 1.

⁹⁴ *Calgary Herald*, 16 September 1935, 1.

consumed by his “hatred of the Jews,” the *Guardian* was convinced that Hitler was behind the persecution of Jews.⁹⁵

While the Canadian press frowned on Hitler’s anti-Jewish legislation, they did not place much importance on the Nuremberg Laws. From September 2, 1935 to September 25, 1935, the racial laws received minimal coverage, especially in smaller, regional newspapers like the *Regina Leader-Post* and *Halifax Herald*.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, this coverage often hit the front page, with more detailed follow-up news items being printed in the foreign news sections of the paper. Since Jewish families still hoped that they would be tolerated in Germany and a refugee crisis was not yet in full swing, pressure to let Jews into Canada was minimal. Thus, while Hitler’s attack on the individual liberty of Jews was decried, the matter was still seen as a German domestic issue, and held little concern for Canadians.

Canadian Jews viewed the Nuremberg Laws on two levels. First, they understood the Race Laws as a natural continuation of the Nazi anti-Jewish policy in 1933 and thus a means to legislate Jews out of German society. “The policy of segregation,” reported the *Western Jewish Bulletin*, “is being pushed to a point where it has become one of complete isolation, if not oblivion, for Jews, and this is calculated to breed hatred,” with the purpose of renewing the economic, social, and cultural boycott on Jews.⁹⁷ Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath linked the Nuremberg Race Laws with the creation of a legislative ghetto without the “towering walls

⁹⁵ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 September 1935, 11.

⁹⁶ Although the *Halifax Herald* printed five news articles referring to the Nuremberg Conference, only two made any explicit mention of the anti-Jewish nature of the Nazi laws, see *Halifax Herald*, 11 September 1935, 1; 16 September 1935, 1, 4. Similarly, the *Regina Leader-Post* printed eight articles on the Nuremberg Conference, but only four discussed the racial aspects of the new laws: *Regina Leader-Post* 11 September 1935, 10; 16 September 1935, 8, 17 September 1935, 5, 8.

⁹⁷ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 10 October 1935, 1-2.

and gates which might protect its unhappy denizens from the brutality of the riotous mob,” thus “carrying us back into the darkest depths of the Middle Ages.”⁹⁸

However, on a more fundamental level, Canadian Jews began to see Jewish persecution as part of a struggle for civilization that was being fought in Germany. In the *Canadian Jewish Review*'s “every Friday” feature, the columnist suggested that the significance of the “brutal defloration of a highly enlightened people by a ruthless robber band” went far beyond the threat to Jews alone, but constituted an assault on the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition: Germany was experiencing a “fight for the spirit of Hebraism, which includes both the Jewish and the Christian idealism, as against that paganism which threatens not only the Jews, but everything that is known as the Christian world.” With antisemitism engrained within Nazi law, Jews were losing faith that German democrats could wrestle their country out of the grips of the Nazis: “It still remains to be seen which will triumph as a guiding principle of governments, the maintenance of civil liberty or the curtailment of individual freedom and with it the denial of all the things of the spirit for which modern civilization is supposed to stand.”⁹⁹

However, many Canadian onlookers, including some Jews, had a propensity towards looking at Nazi antisemitism through the lens of German exceptionalism. For example, Charles Bender, rabbi at the prestigious Spanish-and-Portuguese Synagogue in Montreal presented an early version of Germany's *Sonderweg* that appealed to many Canadians. In his pamphlet *From Luther to Hitler: Why Anti-Semitism Is Indigenous To the German People*, Bender argued that Hitlerism was no “historical accident”; rather, “for centuries past the

⁹⁸ *Canadian Jewish Review*, 27 September 1935, 3.

⁹⁹ *Canadian Jewish Review*, 27 September 1935, 4.

whole culture and civilization of Germanic thought have imbibed at a fountain of anti-Semitism that has been flowing ceaselessly.” Although Martin Luther initially “garbed himself in the mantle of humanitarianism” to convert Jews, he later “flew into a frenzy of hatred” and demanded that his followers “shun the Jews, to close them up in ghettos, to drive them out if possible.” It was Luther, according to Bender, who “laid the ground for an anti-Semitic movement which eventually became the national legacy of the German people.” By exploring the writings of German antisemites Wilhelm Marr and Herrman Ahlwardt, as well as the “renegade Englishman” Houston Chamberlain, the pamphlet asserts that antisemitism and “Teutomania” infused German nationalism. The argument went that the distinction made “between Nazis and Germans are therefore unwarranted and untrue” since Hitlerism and antisemitism had become “woven into the tissues of the people.” Bender suggested that since Germany was the “cradle of scientific anti-Semitism,” the persecution that Jews experienced elsewhere was because Germany “was not satisfied with creating the new anti-Semitism, but it managed to carry its virus into other countries.”¹⁰⁰ The difficulty with blaming Germany for antisemitism was that Canadians then assumed that acts of antisemitism within Canada were anomalies; while antisemitic fascists might have peddled their antisemitic rags in Canada, Canadians could rest with clear consciences due to a long tradition of British individual rights.

The press’ tendency to print news that emphasized the fantastical nature of Hitlerian antisemitism left Canadians bewildered by Nazi ideology and hindered many from seeing a correlation between Nazi racial thinking and antisemitism in Canada during the 1930s. One

¹⁰⁰ Charles Bender, *From Luther to Hitler: Why Anti-Semitism Is Indigenous to the German People* in Charles Bender Personalia fonds, in CJCCCNA and LAC, Leon Kronitz fonds, MG31-H147, vol. 24.

bizarre example of Nazi racial pseudoscience that raised Canadian eyebrows was German inventor Walter Schmitz's pendulum. In the days leading up to the Nuremberg rally, Schmitz made the ridiculous claim that the pendulum could detect Jews if swung over their "handwriting, finger-prints, and maybe other things." Schmitz believed that the pendulum worked because "All pure Aryan blood belongs to gold and platinum and Jewish blood to zinc and lead." Such antiquated thinking propelled the *Montreal Daily Star* to print the article on the front page.¹⁰¹ Originally published in Julius Streicher's weekly publication *German Health*, the article made headlines in numerous Canadian newspapers. The fact that no Canadian newspaper under review specifically explained that the Nuremberg Laws used ancestral religious allegiance and lineage, and not supposedly 'racial' science, to identify Jews, suggests that Canadians did not want to associate their own racialized thinking with the Nazis.

For the Canadian Jewish community, however, the parallels between antisemitism in Germany and Canada were quite evident. Beyond organizing mass protests and boycotts, the Canadian Jews also resurrected the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1934 so that the community could fight domestic antisemitism on a united front. Certainly scientific racism had a long history in Canada. It was "common sense," to use James W. St. G. Walker's term, for Canadians to believe that biology determined a 'race's' mental acumen, labor abilities, sexual proclivities, and morality, since character and behavioral traits were thought to be passed genetically.¹⁰² Throughout the Western world, eugenicists were concerned that

¹⁰¹ *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 September 1935, 11; *Montreal Daily Star*, 4 September 1935, 1-2; *Calgary Daily Herald*, 4 September 1935, 5.

¹⁰² Walker, "Race," *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada*, 12-23.

miscegenation and the reproduction of “asocials” would lead to “racial degeneration.” This phobia moved legislators in Alberta and British Columbia to implement a vigorous sterilization program against the “feeble-minded” to protect Canada’s Anglo-Saxon ‘racial’ stock.¹⁰³ In Saskatchewan, statutes even prevented ‘white’ female laborers from being employed by “Chinamen,” because the “Oriental” ‘race’ was seen as primitive, driven by base desires, and posing a sexual threat. Canadian eugenicists demanded that the state erect immigration walls to prevent Canada’s Anglo-Saxon racial stock from becoming contaminated.¹⁰⁴ In 1923, through an Order in Council, the Canadian Government attempted to restrict immigrants by dividing applicants into three categories: Preferred Group, Non-Preferred Group, and Special Permit Group. Preferred Group referred to immigrants from North-Western Europe, as they were believed to have the “racial characteristics” necessary to integrate easily into Canadian society. The Non-Preferred Group consisted of immigrants from Eastern Europe who would be admitted only if they were to settle in Canada’s hinterland and work in the agricultural and resource-development industries. Jews, however, regardless of their nation of origin,¹⁰⁵ were placed in the Special Permit Group, alongside “Orientals,” and automatically banned entry. Thus, Jews could only enter Canada if the Canadian cabinet made an exception for a specific case.¹⁰⁶ The policy was so clearly racist

¹⁰³ Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁴ James W. St. G. Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada*, ch. 2.

¹⁰⁵ The one exception was Jews of British and American extraction with immediate family in Canada. Harold Troper, “New Horizons in a New Land: Jewish Immigration to Canada,” in *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience*, eds. Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto: Institute for International Relations, 2001), 11-14.

¹⁰⁶ Louis Rosenberg, *Canada’s Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, 127-28.

that Harold Troper has declared that “in distinguishing Jews from non-Jews of the same citizenship, Canada predated the Nuremberg laws by more than ten years.”¹⁰⁷

Although racialized thinking was endemic within Canadian society well before the Nazi Revolution in Germany, the Great Depression had initiated a fascist movement within Canada that closely resembled Hitler’s Nazi movement. An atmosphere of anxiety gripped the Jewish community as it became apparent that Hitlerism was infecting Canadian society. By 1933 Canadian youths were imitating Hitler’s brown-shirted SA and forming Swastika Clubs. They marched along Toronto’s eastern waterfront intimidating Jewish residents from sunbathing on the beaches and occasionally instigating physical quarrels with Jews. Tensions came to a head on August 16, 1933 when, at the end of a minor league baseball game between St. Peter’s and the predominantly Jewish team Harbord in Toronto’s Willowvale Park, four youths from the Christie Pit Gang unfurled and displayed on the side of a hill a massive white quilt with a swastika painted on it. One hundred Jews charged up the hill to destroy the banner and beat up those who had put it on display. With cries of “Heil Hitler” being heard, the mob quickly grew to 10,000, according to the Canadian Press, and fighting erupted “as Jews recognized Gentiles.”¹⁰⁸ In Quebec, Canadian fascists, such as Joseph Ménard and Adrian Arcand, published antisemitic tabloids that propagated the *Elders of Zion*’s mythical world Jewish conspiracy and the idea that Jews drink blood.¹⁰⁹ However, antisemites were not just cranks. Notable Catholic clerics in Quebec, such as Abbé Groulx,

¹⁰⁷Harold Troper, “Jews and Canadian Immigration Policy, 1900-1950,” in Roses Rischen ed. *The Jews of North America* (Detroit: Wayne States University Press, 1987), 51.

¹⁰⁸ For contemporary accounts of the riot see *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 August 1933, 1; *Montreal Gazette*, 17 August 1933, 1, 3; *Vancouver Sun*, 17 August 1933, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, 12-31.

demanded that Canadians boycott Jewish shops and “buy at home!”¹¹⁰ In his recent study of the early Canadian Jewish campaign to fight antisemitism, James W. St. G. Walker has shown that the Jewish approach was neither “‘passive’ or ‘apologetic’” in the 1930s. Canadian Jews utilized diverse strategies to subvert the Nazi threat in Canada. However, since most Canadians saw Nazi antisemitism as a German problem and nonexistent within the Canadian experience, paramount in the Jewish agenda was educating Canadians of the presence of antisemitism in Canada.¹¹¹

1.2 Kristallnacht: A Descent Into Lawlessness

Throughout the night of November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis unleashed a coordinated attack on the Jews of Germany and Austria. The murder of the German diplomat Ernst Vom Rath by Herschel Grynszpan, a Jew distraught over his family’s deportation from Germany, was used by the Nazis to unleash the murderous rampage. Members of the *Sturmabteilung*, both in and out of uniform, systematically set ablaze hundreds of synagogues in Adolf Hitler’s Germany to destroy the Jewish community and drive them out of the Reich. Jewish homes and businesses were looted and devastated. This pogrom was given the euphemism *Kristallnacht* in an effort to shift the world’s gaze towards the seemingly innocuous shards of glass strewn on the streets from the broken windows of Jewish shops, and away from the ninety-one Jewish people who had been beaten to death by Nazi thugs.¹¹² By November 12,

¹¹⁰ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 173-4.

¹¹¹ James Walker, “Claiming Equality for Canadian Jewry: The Struggle for Inclusion, 1930-1945,” in *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War*, ed. L. Ruth Klein (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 228.

¹¹² Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006).

the Nazis had rounded up 30,000 Jewish men and driven them into concentration camps where many were killed. To pay for the damaged property, an astronomically large fine of one billion marks was slapped on the Jewish community for allegedly provoking the riots.¹¹³

In the days leading up to the November pogrom, the persecution of German Jews was of little concern to Canadians since it had little bearing on Western European politics. During late October and early November, Germany deported thousands of its Polish Jewish population, much to Poland's chagrin. With antisemitism rampant throughout Polish society, thousands of Jews were denied entry into Poland and left stateless, trapped along the border.¹¹⁴ Canadians were, for the most part, indifferent. Only the *Montreal Star* with its large Jewish readership printed several reports about "the fate of thousands of Jews stranded along the [German-Polish] frontier." The *Montreal Star* emphasized the human dimension and described the deteriorating conditions of trapped Jews.¹¹⁵ Most Canadian newspaper editors and their readers were unaware of the growing tensions that Nazi anti-Jewish policies were creating and therefore did not see Grynspan's shooting of vom Rath as very significant.

Throughout November 8 and 9, the story gained more prominence as anti-Jewish demonstrations broke out across Germany and various Nazi officials began to threaten Jews with reprisals. On November 9, the *Winnipeg Free Press* printed the headline "Jews Fear Reprisals" followed by a British United Press (BUP) report claiming that "some well-

¹¹³ For the latest research, see Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht, 1938* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹¹⁴ For Polish antisemitism in the Twentieth Century see Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz, An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Celia Stopnicka Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1977); Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

¹¹⁵ *Montreal Star*, 1 November 1938, 1; 2 November 1938, 11; 5 November 1938, 5; 7 November 1938, 4.

informed quarters believed that measures were under consideration for expulsion of all foreign Jews from Germany.” An unnamed high-ranking Nazi official told the BUP correspondent that “the Jewish question will now be brought to a solution.”¹¹⁶

The article noted that Jews were “highly apprehensive” since the German press had become riddled with “anti-Jewish comment[s].”¹¹⁷ The call to “fight against the international Jewish danger” was warmly received in some German circles, and the *Montreal Star* specified that riots had erupted in Berlin and Vienna.¹¹⁸ Using AP, the *Regina Leader-Post* and the *Calgary Herald* likewise printed that “reprisals against Jews” were already underway in Kassel and Bebra and that Nazis were in the process of “‘disarming’ Berlin’s Jews.”¹¹⁹

Although most of the Canadian press contained clues of an impending attack on Germany’s Jews, when the story broke across Canada on November 10, nothing had prepared the Canadian public for the scale of the pogrom. All Canadian newspapers gave *Kristallnacht* tremendous exposure. The pogrom caught the Canadian public’s attention and it consistently appeared on the front page of most Canadian newspapers.

Diligent coverage allowed journalists to expose the Nazi lie that *Kristallnacht* was a spontaneous outpouring of German rage against Jews. The *Montreal Star* reported that the mobs were “carefully organized in advance.” AP telegrams made it clear that the wrecking gangs were in fact made up of “groups of SA and SS men (the Elite Guards and Storm

¹¹⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 November 1938, 1.

¹¹⁷ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 November 1938, 1. The *Montreal Star* also printed an extended version of the same BUP telegram under the grim headline “Reich Jews to Suffer for Attack: Germans Attribute Shooting of Diplomat to Judaism.”

¹¹⁸ *Montreal Star*, 8 November 1938, 1, 4.

¹¹⁹ *Regina Leader-Post*, 8 November 1938, 1; *Calgary Herald*, 9 November 1938, 3.

Troops) wearing civilian clothes.”¹²⁰ The following day, the *Winnipeg Free Press* pointed out that the police “merely kept the crowd back so the destroyers could work unhindered.” Making a mockery of German propaganda, the *Winnipeg Free Press* concluded that “the Jewish population was in terror, anticipating not only a continuance of ‘spontaneous’ demonstrations but a merciless official campaign of repression.”¹²¹

On November 12, the *Halifax Herald* picked up the story and printed an AP release on the pogrom that showed that the Nazis were secretly behind the anti-Jewish rioting. Goebbels told the foreign press that “it is absurd to say that this thing (the demonstration) was organized,” claiming that the widespread damage was because “we did not have 100,000 police available to put one before every Jewish shop.” However, the AP correspondent had none of it, pointing to the roundup of thousands of wealthy Jews throughout Germany. The *Halifax Herald* agreed and printed the headline “German Police Launch Raids On Upper Class Jews” on its front page, suggesting that the pogrom was a Nazi initiative to take Jewish wealth.¹²²

In fact, most Canadian newspapers failed to examine critically the Nazi motives for organizing the pogrom. The leading interpretation was that the Nazis had attempted to confiscate Jewish private property to bankroll the state.¹²³ Headlines underscored this perspective by focusing on the widespread looting and destruction of property, such as

¹²⁰ *Montreal Star*, 10 November 1938, 1.

¹²¹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 November 1938, 20.

¹²² *Halifax Herald*, 12 November, 1938 1.

¹²³ American historian Deborah Lipstadt similarly finds that the U.S. press “had difficulty grasping that one of the primary motives for *Kristallnacht* had been to destroy organized Jewish life and to make the Reich *Judenrein*.” Since content in Canadian reports derived mainly from AP reports, it is hardly surprising that the Canadian press also emphasized Nazi efforts to extract wealth from Jews to fix the German economy. See Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press & the Coming of the Holocaust: 1933-1945*, 101-2.

“Reich Jews Face Reign of Terror: 10,000 Shops Looted as Revenge for Paris Killing”¹²⁴ and “Mad Torch of Hate: Nazis Burn, Smash and Pillage Jewish Shops and Synagogues.”¹²⁵ This emphasis on the theft was reinforced when Hermann Göring announced a few days later that the Jewish population would have to pay a \$400,000,000 fine to cover the damage caused during the pogrom. With economists saying that the cash available to Jews “would come nowhere near the total amount” demanded, it became clear to Canadians that the fine was meant to “strip Jews of every pfennig of ready cash and force the sale of holdings.”¹²⁶

The Canadian press noted that the Nazis had issued several decrees that prohibited Jews from owning retail stores and running any commercial or industrial venture.¹²⁷ Under the headline “Synagogues Wrecked: Nation-Wide Attacks by Nazi Germans,” the *Regina Leader-Post* speculated that *Kristallnacht* “probably meant that shots fired in Paris have killed Jewish business in Berlin.”¹²⁸ On November 11, the *Calgary Herald* confirmed that the Nazis had made a resolution to resurrect a Jewish ghetto in Berlin. While such actions were meant to remove Jews from every aspect of German society, the AP report emphasized the economic consequences and noted that Jewish “shops would be tolerated only in sufficient number to supply the needs of the Jewish communities.”¹²⁹ For the Canadian press, the pogrom was a decisive step in the Nazi drive to eliminate Jewish capital.

The conspiracy theory that Jews controlled the world’s financial systems informed—albeit subtly—the discourse on *Kristallnacht* in some Canadian newspapers. Most notably,

¹²⁴ *Montreal Star*, 10 November 1938, 1.

¹²⁵ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 November 1938, 20.

¹²⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 14 November 1938, 1.

¹²⁷ *Regina Leader-Post*, 12 November 1938, 1.

¹²⁸ *Regina Leader-Post*, 10 November 1938, 1.

¹²⁹ *Calgary Herald*, 11 November 1938, 1.

the *Halifax Herald's* coverage avoided any mention of Jewish terror in the face of vicious violence throughout the night of November 9-10. Only on November 14, when the fine and various Nazi decrees that targeted Jewish property were announced, did the *Halifax Herald* splash across its front page in bold, capital letters: "PANIC SPREADS AMONG JEWS."¹³⁰ The emphasis on Jewish concern over money, as opposed to the destruction of Jewish cultural and religious institutions, suggests that some members of the press were reluctant to question the racial stereotypes embedded within Nazi racial policies.

The *Montreal Star* came closest to capturing the real essence of *Kristallnacht*, which was aimed at enacting the social death of Jews in Germany. On November 12, it ran the headline "Nazis Bar Jews From German Culture: Reich Provides 'Final Solution,'" under which it described various decrees issued in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht* that banned Jews from German cultural institutions, such as theatres and museums. Although the article noted that Jewish stores and businesses destroyed during *Kristallnacht* were "not to be restored" and discussed the fine levied against Jews, this was presented as just one aspect of the Nazi campaign. After noting that tens of thousands of Jews were being hauled off to the Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps, the *Montreal Star* recorded an interview with Dr. James W. Parkes in Toronto. This British authority on antisemitism eerily predicted that "years of poverty and humiliation, ending in practical extermination, is the tragic future for Jews in Germany unless the great democratic nations open their doors to refugees."¹³¹

¹³⁰ *Halifax Herald*, 14 November 1938, 1.

¹³¹ *Montreal Star*, 12 November 1938, 1, 4.

1.3 Nazi Racial Policies: A Threat to Civilization

It was not the awful plight of Jewish refugees or Canada's immigration policy regarding Jews that fuelled Canadian interest in *Kristallnacht*. Rather, Canadians fixated on the savage means by which Hitler attacked Germany's Jews and the anti-liberal nature of Nazism. On November 17, the *Halifax Herald's* award-winning cartoonist Robert Chambers captured the dominant Canadian opinion regarding the Nazis in the following cartoon which depicts Hitler taking Germany into a Hobbesian "State of Nature" where law and civilization do not exist. Ominously, the remaining steps that Hitler was about to take were not yet labelled.



Halifax Herald, November 17, 1938, p. 8.

Chambers was not alone in suggesting that Germany had abandoned liberalism and thus posed a threat to civilization. According to W. G. McCutcheon, Chairman of the Montreal Council of the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy, not only was “civilized humanity... challenged by the forces of darkness and evil now ruling in Germany,” but Hitler “threaten[ed] the destruction of liberty and in fact all civilized human values throughout the world.” McCutcheon demanded that Canadians boycott German goods and that the government embargo exports to Germany, hoping that these measures would bring “Hitler to heel.” Similarly, the Conservative MP for Kitchener, Ontario stated that “if Canadians did not let Germany know that those who value British freedom stand aghast, it would not be long until Nazi doctrines would spread.”¹³²

Another aspect of Western civilization that Hitler was trouncing was Christian egalitarianism, particularly the notion that all humans were equal in God’s eyes and that salvation was open to all. On the Sunday morning of November 13, Rev. F. S. Morley of Stanley Presbyterian Church preached against all forms of racial discrimination. Pointing to slavery and Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia, he argued that racism has “justified more baseness and cruelty than any other terror in the world.”¹³³ The next Sunday, pastors from numerous denominations continued to condemn the pogrom as anti-Christian. He was “amazed that such atrocities and barbarities could exist in a supposedly civilized country” and could “not but deplore and condemn the many people indifferent to these rights and privileges.” While many Canadian Christians may have felt that the Jews were misguided in

¹³² *Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1938, 17.

¹³³ *Montreal Star*, 14 November 1938, 11.

their rejection of Christianity, evangelism and toleration were seen as the civilized approach to the Jewish people, not violence.¹³⁴

Many Jews agreed that Nazism was not Christian, but essentially pagan. Temple Emanu-El's Rabbi Harry J. Stern held that "anti-semitism is just another form of witchcraft." Rather than suggesting that the religious conflict between Christianity and Judaism explained contemporary antisemitism, he surmised that "modern Christianity has learned to appreciate its debt to Judaism and has grown to respect the mother-faith of Christianity." Instead, the "myth of racial purity" was at the root of Jewish persecution in Europe.¹³⁵ Rabbi Charles Bender suggested that *Kristallnacht* was part of a war between Nazi paganism and true religion. Pointing to the persecution of Christians as well as Jews, Bender argued that "there is... a deeper significance to the present era of German frightfulness, for together with the tragedy of the Jews, there is the onslaught against religious principles in general and the downfall of complete civilization." To defend both religion and civilization, Bender called on Canadians to go beyond "emotionalism" and allow entry to Jewish refugees: "Our present government can make for itself a lasting monument by saving the lives of thousands of German Jews."¹³⁶

On November 20, thousands of Canadians participated in dozens of memorial and protest meetings organized by the Canadian Jewish Congress. These gatherings occurred in "practically every important community across Canada," according to the *Halifax Herald*, in order to "reveal to Germany the feeling in this country, and to give proof to suffering Jews

¹³⁴ *Halifax Herald*, 21 November 1938, 14.

¹³⁵ *Montreal Star*, 7 November 1938, 8.

¹³⁶ *Montreal Star*, 19 November 1938, 2.

that they had the sympathy of the Dominion's people." Although the Canadian Jewish Congress had hoped that these gatherings would put pressure on the Canadian Government to alter its immigration policy to accommodate Jewish refugees,¹³⁷ most of the discussion generated at the meetings tended to focus on the Nazi perpetrators.¹³⁸ At His Majesty's Theatre in Montreal, Chief Justice R. A. E. Greenshields told thousands in the audience that pogroms in a "civilized country... are almost unbelievable" and that *Kristallnacht* was "worthy of as severe a condemnation by the right thinking as the worst ever done by the barbarians of the dark days of the Middle Ages."¹³⁹ With some exceptions, condemnation of Nazism, not the plight of Jews, was the topic of the day.

The disdain for Nazism emanating from Canada on November 20 sparked an immediate verbal retaliation from Goebbels' propaganda mouthpiece *Voelkischer Beobachter*. "But why should Canadians look abroad?" *Voelkischer Beobachter* fumed, "If Canadian journalists want to see real atrocities they need only go to the Indian reservations of their own country. There they will discover what inhuman treatment really means; how the old Indian population was destroyed by starvation and liquor." It targeted the *Montreal Star* specifically for launching a "campaign of hatred unequalled in baseness" against Germany, which could only mean that the Canadian newspaper was controlled by Jews and ought to be renamed "the Star of David."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Abella and Troper, 40-41. Several of the resolutions can be found in Alan T. Davies and Marilyn F. Nefsky, *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight during the Nazi Era* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 132-35.

¹³⁸ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 November 1938, 3.

¹³⁹ *Montreal Star*, 21 November 1938, 1, 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Montreal Star*, 21 November 1938, 1.

The Nazi effort to draw the West's gaze away from *Kristallnacht* by citing racism in the democracies was seen by Canadians as an assault on their identity as a welcoming land of immigrants grounded on British liberties. "CANADA ATTACKED BY NAZI PRESS,"¹⁴¹ "We Are Strafed!"¹⁴² and "NAZIS HIT CANADA"¹⁴³ were just some of the front page headlines that appeared across Canada. Pointing out the hypocrisy of criticism by the Nazis who clearly cared nothing for the sanctity of civil liberties, Canadian editors were determined to contrast Canada's racial politics with the Nazis' by stating that Canadian conduct towards racial minorities operated within the confines of British liberty.¹⁴⁴ Under the header—oozing with sarcasm—"Lo, The Poor Indian!" the *Halifax Herald* editor noted that "Indians have freedom equal to that of any of His Majesty's subjects. They may own property, engage in business or the professions. On the other hand, those who choose to remain wards of a paternalistic government are given land, monetary grants, medical services, food when required, and education."¹⁴⁵ The *Regina Leader-Post* editor agreed, stating that the "Indians are, in the main, a well-treated people."¹⁴⁶ The *Calgary Herald* was convinced that poor conditions among the First Nations were due to "at worst, administrative sloth and not of the calculated ferocity which Germany has so well exemplified of late."¹⁴⁷

Interestingly, just a few months before these "baseless charges," the Canadian government had opened an investigation into the legal role of 'race' in Canada. In March 1938, the German government had inquired through its Consulate in Ottawa "whether the

¹⁴¹ *Halifax Herald*, 21 November 1938, 1.

¹⁴² *Montreal Star*, 21 November 1938, 1.

¹⁴³ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 21 November 1938, 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 21 November 1938, 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Halifax Herald*, 22 November 1938, 6.

¹⁴⁶ *Regina Leader-Post*, 21 November 1938, 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Calgary Herald*, 22 November 1938, 4.

Canadian laws governing the exercise of civil and political rights, the marriage, the illegitimate sexual relations, the exercise of a profession, the administration of schools and universities, and the immigration contain provisions which make legal consequences dependent upon a person's belonging, or not belonging, to a particular race of colour."¹⁴⁸

After a three month investigation that included contacting Director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources, F. C. Blair, regarding 'race' in immigration regulations,¹⁴⁹ Under-Secretary of State O. D. Skelton came to the odd conclusion that "as a general principle...the laws of the Dominion and of the provinces do not make the race of a person a factor of legal consequence." Skelton then proceeded to list "exceptions," such as the "immigration laws respecting some Asiatics, the provincial franchise law for Chinese in Saskatchewan, and certain provincial laws affecting Asiatics in British Columbia." In regards to Amerindians, Skelton argued that the provisions were "protective rather than restrictive and apply to Indians living on land reserves," despite having a list of provincial statutes appended to his letter to the German Consulate General which disenfranchised "Indians" with no mention of residence status.¹⁵⁰ That Canada was a democratic nation founded upon British ideas of liberty free of racism was so engrained within Canadian consciousness that Canadians were incapable of seeing any similarities between Canadian and German racial politics.

1.4 Kristallnacht and the Coming of War

¹⁴⁸ H. U. Granow to O. D. Skelton, letter, 14 March 1938, in LAC, External Affairs Records, RG25-G1, vol. 1875, file 558, "Germany Request on Canadian racial policies in 1938."

¹⁴⁹ F. C. Blair to M. Wershof, letter, 23 March 1938, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Skelton to E. Windels, letter, 27 June 1938, *ibid.*

Canadian discourse regarding *Kristallnacht* was part of an international debate in the Western democracies about whether Western civilization could remain safe from Hitler if British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy persisted. Rather than presenting *Kristallnacht* in hindsight, as a "prelude to destruction," to use Martin Gilbert's phrase, it is important to see *Kristallnacht* as its Canadian witnesses did: within the prewar international context.

The Canadian press was acutely aware that *Kristallnacht* had effectively destroyed Britain's confidence in its appeasement policy.¹⁵¹ Former British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, who had resigned his post in opposition to appeasement in February 1938, demanded that Britain re-evaluate its foreign policy vis-à-vis Germany in the context of the "fresh outbreaks of lawlessness or brutality."¹⁵² Picking up on the shifting political climate in Britain, *Calgary Herald* correspondent A. C. Cummings reported that *Kristallnacht* was pushing elements within the British oppositional parties—Labour and Liberal—together under Eden to form a "popular front calculated radically to change Britain's present foreign policy."¹⁵³ The *Winnipeg Free Press* agreed and noted that oppositional parties in Oxford City were even using the slogan "A Vote for Chamberlain is a Vote for Hitler."¹⁵⁴

Similarly, deteriorating relations between the United States and Germany over *Kristallnacht* provided Canadians with ominous signs of an impending war. In the immediate days following *Kristallnacht*, the Canadian press reported a "wave of protests" emanating

¹⁵¹ For British responses to *Kristallnacht* see Jodi Burkett's "Antisemitism and Racism in Britain: Assessing the Reaction to and the Legacy of *Kristallnacht*" in *Violence, Memory, and History: Western Perceptions of Kristallnacht* (Toronto: Routledge, 2014), 16-33.

¹⁵² *Halifax Herald*, 15 November, 1938, 1, 2.

¹⁵³ *Calgary Herald*, 12 November, 1938, 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 15 November 1938, 3.

from the United States.¹⁵⁵ President Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to *Kristallnacht* was widely reported across Canada. He condemned Germany's attack on Jews, stating that he "could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth century civilization."¹⁵⁶ Although Roosevelt did not sever diplomatic relations, he did recall American Ambassador Hugh Robert Wilson to Washington for "report and consultation."¹⁵⁷ The *Halifax Herald* reported that American Attorney-General Homer S. Cummings described *Kristallnacht* as "uncivilized" and compared the attack to "the cruelties of 19 centuries ago when Christians were fed to wild beasts."¹⁵⁸

With diplomatic ties between Germany and the democratic nations strained, the *Halifax Herald* published the following cartoon by Robert Chambers, illustrating Germany's departure from Western civilization. With Canada's gaze fixed on the Nazis, the victim is not German Jewry, but the German nation itself.

¹⁵⁵ *Regina Leader-Post*, 12 November 1938, 11.

¹⁵⁶ *Regina Leader-Post*, 16 November 1938, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 105.

¹⁵⁸ *The Halifax Herald*, 19 November 1938, 3; *Montreal Star*, 19 November 1938, 1, 4.



Halifax Herald, November 22, 1938, p. 6.

With *Kristallnacht* isolating Germany, the Canadian press became obsessed with the prospect that Canada might face a second world war. For W. C. Wansbrough, headmaster of Lower Canada College, “ferocious and insensate” aggression against Jews had made

democratic countries question whether Hitler and Germany would uphold the international treaties they signed, including the Munich Agreement.¹⁵⁹ One writer to the editor of the *Montreal Star* believed Canadians were “on the very brink of another and greater world conflict. Millions of men from democratic countries will be pouring forth their blood for the ideal of freedom, religious and racial toleration.”¹⁶⁰ Just a few months earlier, during the Sudetenland crisis, Canadians were debating whether “we could attain ‘neutrality’ or merely stay home and keep out of the war.” However, with Hitler’s actions against civilization, the *Montreal Star* sensed that Canadians realized that war was unavoidable and the conversation had changed to “how we can best get ready to repel a quite possible attack on our own defenceless cities and vulnerable ports.”¹⁶¹

Letters-to-the-editor unanimously decried Chamberlain’s appeasement policy. One writer asked the *Montreal Star* editor “what is going to be our situation in North America when the Fascist bloc dominate the World, as they intend to do, and will do, if Mr. Chamberlain is allowed to continue his weak and pro-Fascist policy of surrender.”¹⁶² The *Regina Leader-Post* warned that since Canada had “no army, no navy, no air force,” it was “in no shape to get into a war with Germany.” To ensure that Canadians went beyond “soap-box oratory” and put teeth behind the mass protest resolutions that branded “the Nazis of Germany as barbarians,” the Canadian government would have to divert funds from “bigger

¹⁵⁹ *Montreal Star*, 17 November 1938, 20.

¹⁶⁰ *Montreal Star*, 19 November 1938, 8.

¹⁶¹ *Montreal Star*, 21 November 1938, 10.

¹⁶² *Montreal Star*, 15 November 1938, 10.

relief budgets” towards military equipment and training.¹⁶³ Clearly, Canada was focused on *Kristallnacht* because they were concerned that it might trigger a war with Germany.

1.5 Canada and the Jewish Refugee Crisis

Although the focus of the press was on the perpetrators, Jewish persecution did move many Canadians temporarily to demand that their government open the doors to Jews, often using letters to newspaper editors to share these sentiments. One such letter by Marguerite Strathy, expressed the “cold horror and deep pity that fill[ed] the soul” of many Canadians. Noting the accomplishments of Jews and that Jesus was Jewish, she reasoned that Canada should view the refugee crisis as an opportunity.¹⁶⁴ The strategy of presenting the Jewish refugee crisis as an economic opportunity for Canada was propagated by Constance Hayward, Executive Secretary for the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution. While addressing the Women’s Canadian Club, she claimed that Jewish refugees were a “blessing in disguise” and could pave “a way to economic activity.”¹⁶⁵ The *Ottawa Citizen* called upon Canadians to demonstrate the sincerity of their protest against Nazi persecution of Jews, stating that “it would be timely evidence of the genuineness of this Canadian sentiment to make it possible for more of the exiled and persecuted people to find sanctuary in Canada, where the natural resources are more than sufficient to support 20,000,000 people.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Regina Leader-Post*, 22 November 1938, 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Montreal Star*, 19 November 1938, 8.

¹⁶⁵ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 November 1938, 8.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 November 1938, 13.

Noting this outpouring of support, journalists believed Canada was largely in favour of at least a temporary increase in Jewish immigration. The *Montreal Star* was convinced that if the Canadian government decided to “find room for several thousand Jewish refugees,” they would be “received sympathetically, we believe, by all right-thinking Canadian citizens.”¹⁶⁷ On November 21, after learning of “sheafs of telegrams [that] came to the government this morning urging that it do something by opening the doors to Jewish refugees,” *Calgary Herald*’s Ottawa correspondent Charles Bishop told his readers to “expect Canada will open doors to [a] limited number of German Jewish refugees.” Although he estimated that the humanitarian crisis would prompt Canada to “admit a few thousand refugees at least,” the Government need to qualify their response and factor in “national considerations,” specifically the “expansion of defence expenditures.”¹⁶⁸

However, not all Canadians agreed that increasing Jewish immigration into Canada was the solution to the Jewish refugee crisis. Several letters-to-the-editor stated that Jews were to blame for their own persecution and advocated for the present practice of restricting Jewish entry into Canada. One letter in the *Halifax Herald* demanded that Canada continue to increase its population through admitting “preferred nationalists, and not the acceptance of objectionable peoples that are continually at variance with their neighbours.” This reader felt it necessary to remind other readers of the *Halifax Herald* that “the vast majority of these refugees belong to a race that has been shunned by most countries in every age, and of

¹⁶⁷ *Montreal Star*, 18 November 1938, 8.

¹⁶⁸ *Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1938, 1.

which, probably, there are already too many in our country.”¹⁶⁹ On November 4, Whidden Graham wrote to the editor of the *Montreal Star* claiming that Jews were “Asiatics: descendants of Mongol or Tartar tribes.” He was convinced that Canada should apply the same immigration restrictions to the Jews as it did to the “Chinese, Hindus or Japanese,” or else the unemployment problem would escalate by “displacing some of the industrial workers who are now employed.”¹⁷⁰

Although such antisemitic remarks were vigorously shot down, the notion remained that Jews must bear some responsibility for why they caused “antagonism” with their neighbours. One reader in the *Montreal Star* explained that he and other Catholics “found it extremely difficult to immunize ourselves from the subtle poison of prejudice,” but the “consensus of opinion seems to be that the root of the evil rests, paradoxically, with the victims themselves.” He hoped that the *Montreal Star* would provide “enlightenment” or “truth” on the matter, because as the case was currently presented, “one is led to believe that their own racial habits and characteristics are largely responsible for bringing down these torrents of abuse and ill-treatment upon their heads.”¹⁷¹

Due to the belief that Jews did not make good citizens, editor of the *Regina Leader-Post*, D. B. MacRae complained that “it is not good enough for Germany to say ‘If you want the Jews, take them.’ If Canada started to abuse her German, her Polish, her central European elements, would it be good enough for Canada to ask the other nations to come and take them

¹⁶⁹ *Halifax Herald*, 7 November 1938, 8. For a response condemning this letter as racist, see *Halifax Herald*, 17 November 1938, 8.

¹⁷⁰ *Montreal Star*, 4 November 1938, 12. For letters condemning Graham as a Nazi propagandist, see *Montreal Star*, 9 November 1938, 10; 10 November 1938, 10. For the claim made by antisemites that the Nazi atrocities of *Kristallnacht* were exaggerated and that Jews were “unproductive people,” see *Montreal Star*, 15 November 1938, 10. This letter was ridiculed by Louis Cohen, *Montreal Star*, 19 November 1938, 8.

¹⁷¹ *Montreal Star*, 19 November 1938, 10.

if they did not like what Canada was doing? It may be the easiest thing to say, but it is no answer.” For this editor, Canada should not sacrifice its national interests by altering its “racial” and religious composition simply because of the illiberal actions of another country.¹⁷² Rather, MacRae argued that Canada should help alleviate the “refugee problem” by admitting Sudetenland Germans, “who are opposed to Nazi control.”¹⁷³ The Canadian Corps Association suggested to Prime Minister Mackenzie King that “Africa might be a more suitable place for [Jewish] settlers.”¹⁷⁴ King seemed inclined to agree, noting in this diary before *Kristallnacht* that “My own feeling is that nothing is to be gained by creating an internal problem in an effort to meet an international one.... We must seek nonetheless to keep this part of the Continent free from unrest and from too great an intermixture of foreign strains of blood.... I fear we would have riots if we agree to a policy that admitted numbers of Jews.”¹⁷⁵ In fact, most discussion of how the Jewish refugee crisis was going to be solved focused on distant colonial holdings, such as Kenya, Tanganyika and British Guiana.¹⁷⁶ With Canada on the verge of war to save civilization from Hitlerism, King was hardly willing to open Canada’s gates to Jews and risk national unity.

Scholars have noted that the Protestant clergy were vocal in their criticism of Nazi racial policy.¹⁷⁷ However, even the church was often hesitant to recommend whole scale Jewish immigration into Canada. Focus remained for the most part on the ugly nature of German antisemitism and away from the racism of Canada’s restrictive immigration policy.

¹⁷² *Regina Leader-Post*, 14 November 1938, 6.

¹⁷³ *Regina Leader-Post*, 11 November 1938, 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1938, 17.

¹⁷⁵ Entry, 29 March 1938, Diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, in LAC, MG26-J13.

¹⁷⁶ See *Calgary Herald*, 16 November 1938, 3; 22 November 1938, 5; 18 November 1938, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Kyle Jantzen and Jonathan Durance, “Our Jewish brethren: Christian Responses to *Kristallnacht* in Canadian Mass Media,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 537-48.

Many Christians did not necessarily believe that the solution to Germany's "Jewish problem" was mass Jewish migration to Canada. The hope was that world opinion would pressure Germany to reverse its anti-Jewish policy. By arguing that antisemitism and racism were anti-Christian and noting the extreme nature of Nazi racism, Canadian Christians avoided confronting their own racist assumptions. Myron O. Brinton, a Baptist preacher in Nova Scotia, reminded his congregation that the "Kingdom [of God] embraces all races and classes and nations wherein no race or nation is supposed to have special privileges, and our ideals of British justice demanding equal right to all and special privileges to none."¹⁷⁸ In a similar vein, the Catholic Archdiocese in Halifax instructed its parishioners to "pray fervently that God will assist them [Jews] in their affliction and also that God in His mercy may convert their tyrant persecutors to more humane ideals or in His justice may take from those persecutors their power of enslaving and crushing their fellow-men."¹⁷⁹

When discussion moved towards Canada as a potential sanctuary for Jews, many Christians were quick to note that Canadians should not be too generous. The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec urged that Canada allow entry to "carefully selected individuals or groups of refugees."¹⁸⁰ The hypocrisy of condemning Nazis for antisemitism and upholding a racist immigration policy was not lost on some Christian ministers. Anglican minister J. E. Barret condemned fellow Christian organizations for their "half-hearted" appeals to the government, noting that the continued demand for only "selected refugees" suggests that Canadian were "far more interested in what we can get from the

¹⁷⁸ *Halifax Herald*, 21 November 1938, 14.

¹⁷⁹ *Halifax Herald*, 21 November 1938, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Marilyn Nefsky, "The Shadow of Evil: Nazism and Canadian Protestantism," in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan T. Davies (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 205.

refugees than what we can give them.”¹⁸¹ While exceptions abound, it is evident that most Canadian Christians were shocked and appalled by Nazi atrocities against Jews, but were only willing to make a token gesture to disassociate themselves from Germany’s racism.

During the summer of 1939, the Jewish refugee crisis had intensified and Jews were frantically trying to escape Germany. In what has become one of the most famous efforts to escape Nazi Germany, 936 Jewish refugees boarded the *MS St. Louis* in Hamburg on May 13, 1939, headed for Cuba. However, when the *St. Louis* arrived in Havana after its two week voyage, the Cuban government denied entry to all but 29 Jews, even after the American Jewish Joint Distribution offered a \$500 bond for each Jew admitted.¹⁸² With passengers desperate not to return to Germany in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the ship floated frantically around the Atlantic for nearly a month during which time several passengers attempted to commit suicide. Appeals to the United States and Canada to open their gates and permit the refugees entry were rejected. Recently, documentation has come to light that shows that the State Department “worked behind the scenes to ensure that none of the refugees was returned to Germany,” not because of concern for Jews, but because they were worried that the crisis could “wreck British negotiations with Germany to avoid war.”¹⁸³ Ultimately, on June 6, 1939, the *St. Louis* sailed back to Europe, as Britain, France, Belgium,

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁸² *Montreal Star*, 31 May 1939, 32.

¹⁸³ Robert N. Rosen, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006), 101, 566, fn. 22. For the standard version of the State Department’s indifference to the plight of Jews aboard the *St. Louis*, see Arthur Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Random House, 1967), 270; Morse is responsible for fabricating the myth that the State Department instructed the coast guard to trail the *St. Louis* to ensure that passengers did not jump overboard and attempt to swim to Florida. See, Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), 137, 361. For American Jewish efforts to find passengers haven, see Paul Vincent, “The Voyage of the *St. Louis* Revisited,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 25, no. 2 (2011): 252-89.

and Holland agreed to admit them. By 1942, 227 of these passengers had been rounded up and exterminated by the Nazis.¹⁸⁴

Despite Canadians' intense concern for the Jewish situation in Germany in November 1938, by the summer of 1939, their interest had again waned and the *St. Louis* received minimal coverage. Articles rarely went beyond stating bare-bone facts and came almost exclusively from AP and UP. On May 31, the story broke across Canada that Cuba had denied admission to the refugees and remained in the papers for the following few days. The *Montreal Star* and the *Halifax Herald* printed the story first and emphasised the desperate state of Jews aboard.¹⁸⁵ The next day, the *Winnipeg Free Press* picked up the story, noting that Cuban officials were concerned about the potential for a "collective suicide pact" among the passengers, or that the Jews might "mutiny" when the ship departed to return to Hamburg.¹⁸⁶ Several newspapers briefly reported on June 3 that the Dominican Republic was willing to accept the refugees and the story nearly disappeared from Canadian newspapers for two weeks.¹⁸⁷ There was only fleeting reference to the fact that plans to find a haven in the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic, had fallen through.¹⁸⁸

Only the *Montreal Star* was willing to provide context and devote significant space to explaining that Cuba's anti-Jewish policy was affecting other ships carrying Jewish asylum-seekers to Cuba and that American Jewish communities were working to reverse the Cuban

¹⁸⁴ Rosen, *Saving the Jews*, 103, 120. A total of 254 of these passengers died at the hands of the Nazis. See Sarah A. Ogilvie and Scott Miller, *Refuge Denied: The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 174.

¹⁸⁵ *Montreal Star*, 31 May 1939, 32; see also *Halifax Herald*, 31 May 1939, 1.

¹⁸⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 June 1939, 5.

¹⁸⁷ *The Winnipeg Free Press*, 3 June 1939, 3, 31; *Halifax Herald*, 3 June 1939, 1; *Regina Leader-Post*, 3 June 1939, 7; *Montreal Star*, 1 June 1939, 1.

¹⁸⁸ *Regina Leader-Post*, 7 June 1939, 1.

decision or find homes for these Jews elsewhere.¹⁸⁹ Although coverage in the *Montreal Star* was sustained, the story only resurfaced in other newspapers on June 14, when various Western European countries announced that they would give asylum to the refugees.¹⁹⁰ The AP report that appeared in various Canadian newspapers presented the episode as a triumph: “eager hopes turned first into tragic disappointment and then desperation, ended happily.”¹⁹¹ With the exception of the *Montreal Star*’s pages, Canadians would have encountered little on the *St. Louis* saga in the Canadian press. Rather Canadian attention was fixated on King George VI and Queen Elizabeth’s tour across Canada.

When Jewish refugees were discussed in the press, Canadians continued to avoid presenting Canada as a potential haven. Chas V. Hunter suggested to the editor of the *Montreal Star* that Russia would be a good candidate to take Germany’s Jews because it was “an immense country” and “there are thousands of wealthy Jews in the world who could become agriculturalists” in Russia. Since “many British troops have shed their blood in order to maintain order and peace” between Jews and Arabs, this correspondent suggested Zionism ought to be abandoned. Strangely, this writer ignored the fact that Canada could also welcome Jews as farmers.¹⁹² UP Correspondent Dana A. Schmidt even reported that thousands of Jewish refugees in Europe were receiving training in “agriculture” and “handicrafts” through ORT trade schools to revise “the charges perhaps most consistently

¹⁸⁹ *Montreal Star*, 1 June 1939, 1; 2 June 1939, 1, 2; 6 June 1939, 1; 7 June 1939, 1; 8 June 1939, 20; 9 June 1939, 1; 10 June 1939, 14.

¹⁹⁰ *Calgary Herald*, 14 June 1939, 4; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 14 June 1939, 14; *Halifax Herald*, 14 June 1949, 1; *Regina Leader-Post*, 14 June 1939, 14; *Montreal Star*, 12 June 1939, 1.

¹⁹¹ *Halifax Herald*, 18 June 1939, 1; *Regina Leader-Post*, 19 June 1939, 16.

¹⁹² *Montreal Star*, 23 May 1939, 10.

brought against Jews—that they are merchants, that they tend to concentrate in and dominate intellectual occupations, and that they shun manual labor.”¹⁹³

Jewish critics of Canada’s refugee policy argued that Canada was missing an opportunity. Berlin Rabbi Joachim Prinz visited Canada in June and in an address to the Women’s Canadian Club in Fort Garry Hotel, reminded his audience that Canada is “an empty country and cannot prosper without selected immigration.” For him, the Canadian government was pursuing a “short-sighted policy” by not considering immigrating Jewish refugees, who could “bring to this country valuable industries.” Prinz was convinced that popular images that “these Jews are savages” were unfair since “most of them are college graduates.”¹⁹⁴

By the summer of 1939, Canadians were beginning to revise their assumption that an influx of labour would stagnate economic recovery and lead to greater unemployment. The *Winnipeg Free Press* noted that these economic reasons had become the “chief objections” to welcoming refugees into Canada, since most were not farmers. However, the *Winnipeg Free Press* editor insisted that “this is not altogether certain” and that “the exact opposite has been the case in other countries.” Pointing out that refugees “bring new skills” and “additional capital,” the editor suggested that they could be the key to job creation. While not all refugees were wealthy and “there are lawyers who have to be re-trained,” Jewish and Christian refugee organizations had ensured that “not a single refugee has appeared on the public charity rolls.”¹⁹⁵ F. C. Brown, former president of the Canadian Manufacturers’

¹⁹³ *Calgary Herald*, 16 June 1939, 2.

¹⁹⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 June 1939, 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 June 1939, 17.

Association agreed, stating that “skilled refugees” could be instrumental in creating “new industries” throughout Canada. With the expense of the railroad, Brown insisted that Canada needed to increase its population simply to afford its infrastructure: “A nation with Canada’s vast network of railways and government services cannot afford to stand still.”¹⁹⁶

Although many Canadians supported increasing immigration and helping to resolve the refugee crisis, they were determined that decisions for admitting refugees into Canada be based on how refugees would strengthen the economy. Grant Dexter, writing for the *Regina Leader-Post*, pointed out that Canada was already following this policy and that 20,000 refugees would be admitted into Canada throughout 1939 if the practice of granting 100 permits to refugees each week was continued. Grant argued that refugees were making a positive impact on Canadian economic development. Although the refugees admitted were not Jews but mainly Sudetenland German refugees, Grant believed that there was little opposition in Canada for treating refugees “as immigrants,” rather than “considering refugees as human beings whose plight calls for action from a Christian country.” Without opposition to this practice from Canadians, Grant was certain that “no change will take place.”¹⁹⁷ When the Canadian Medical Association met on June 19, 1939, its members too were concerned that admitting Jewish refugees would threaten their jobs, especially considering that “Canadian universities are already graduating enough doctors to take care of present needs.” In response, the *Calgary Herald* insisted that the humanitarian crisis put a moral obligation on Canada: “where can these persecuted people go?” The editor also felt the need to remind readers “all are not Jews. There are hundreds of thousands of residents in Czechoslovakia,

¹⁹⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 14 June 1939, 4.

¹⁹⁷ *Regina Leader-Post*, 16 June 1939, 4.

who are desperately anxious to escape from German Nazi terrorism.” It was these refugees, according to the *Calgary Herald*, who “could make a valuable contribution to any country that would receive them,” not Jews.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, voices demanding that Canada offer sanctuary to the desperate Jews aboard the *St. Louis* were silent in the Canadian press.

1.6 Conclusion

Despite the immense amount of attention Nazi racial policy garnered in the Canadian press, *Kristallnacht* did little to change Canadian attitudes towards Jews. That Canada was a democratic nation founded upon British ideas of liberty was so engrained within Canadian consciousness that most Canadians were reluctant to see any similarities between Canadian and German racial politics. The shift of Nazi racial policy from legalized discrimination to state-sponsored violence and terrorism against Jews only served to reinforce the view that racism was a blight that had infected the German nation, but was largely absent from Canadian life. Rather than looking at the underlining assumptions of racialism that informed racist decisions throughout the West, the Canadian media showcased the sensational news story that the Nazis had stripped Germany of the rule of law, the rights of private property, religious freedom, and individual liberty. The focus of the press was on the Nazi perpetrators and the victimhood of the German nation, rather than the suffering of Germany’s Jews. Canadians felt confident that the British liberalism that was ingrained within Canadian consciousness and institutionalized through Canada’s legal and parliamentary system

¹⁹⁸ *Calgary Herald*, 20 June 1939, 20.

immunized Canadian culture from racism and the ravages that were being unleashed in Germany.

Yet Canadian debate concerning Jewish refugees during the late 1930s was framed within in a racist discourse. Even following *Kristallnacht*, Canadians were often reluctant to perceive Jewish refugees as useful Canadian immigrants. Racial assumptions moved Canadians to demand that their government be highly selective in admitting Jews. In the minds of Canadians, the ideal refugees fleeing from Hitler were not the Jews, who were stereotyped as exploitative capitalist geniuses, but the ‘white’ Sudeten Germans, whose industrious ‘racial’ qualities and Protestant work ethic would fuel them to extract the wealth from Canada’s natural resources.

Canada’s popular response to Hitler’s racial policies was therefore measured. Canadians voiced their outrage over Nazi atrocities against the Jews, holding that racism was both unchristian and uncivilized. However, they refused to allow the Nazis to dictate Canadian immigration policy. Hitler’s efforts to export Germany’s minority problem to Canada was seen as an effort to stir up racial tensions within Canada and weaken Canada’s potential war effort. Few saw the contradiction of preserving an immigration policy based on racial stereotypes while condemning Hitler’s persecution of Jews.

Chapter 2

The Canadian Jewish Encounter with the Holocaust, 1939-1948

For Canadians, the realization that Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews had evolved from discriminating laws and localized violence to systematic mass murder happened in the midst of Canada's war effort. Canadian newspapers slowly filled with details of Hitler's campaign to exterminate European Jewry. Reporters dug up grisly details of how Nazis tortured and then killed vast numbers of individuals whom the Nazis believed to be "racially" inferior. Files in the Canadian government quickly filled up as concerned citizens sent letters and telegrams pleading that Canada do something to help rescue Jews trapped in Europe. Publications and reports painted the grim picture that all of occupied Europe was being forced to submit their rights and their Jews to the Nazi state. Governments-in-Exile, notably Poland, published reports describing how their populations were being ravaged by the Nazis. These revelations, forwarded to Ottawa, showed that Eastern Europe was being transformed into a German colonial hinterland and as a result was becoming a Jewish graveyard. Jews had no place in the new Nazi racial order and were being exterminated, while other local populations were being enslaved. The terror that the Nazi totalitarian regime would be imposed on Western Europe and eventually the New World was ultimately the main impetus behind Canada's war effort.

However, the fact that the Canadian Government methodically prevented Jews, who were trying to escape Europe, from finding sanctuary in Canada has led historians to question

the notion that Canada was fighting the “good war.”¹ How could Canada fight a war for “freedom,” to liberate the oppressed nations of Europe and do so little to provide sanctuary to Jews, knowing full well that they were destined for extermination? To understand this seeming contradiction, historians have focused on three aspects of the bystander experience. First, they attempted to measure the level and nature of Canadian antisemitism and racism to determine whether Canadians were indifferent to the suffering of Jews. Second, historians explored what Canadians knew about the persecution of Jews and when they discovered their systematic extermination. Third, enormous scrutiny has been given to the efforts of the Canadian Jewish community to lobby the government and raise awareness of the tragedy befalling European Jews. While these studies have shed light on the efforts of Canadians to end racism in Canada, due to the highly charged nature of the debate regarding Canadian culpability over the Holocaust and contradictory nature of the source record, the historiography tends to be polemical.

Books about Canadian antisemitism during the Second World War have provided grim reading, often leaving Canadians in disbelief. Irving Abella and Harold Troper’s *None Is Too Many* provides copious documentation on the persistence of antisemitism within government circles. Much of their criticism is directed at Frederick Charles Blair, Director of the Immigration Branch in the Ministry of Mines and Resources until 1943, who had a “strong personal distaste for Jews” and was given a free hand to exercise his “fetish for regulations” to keep Jews from entering Canada. However, these historians recognize that

¹ For books that present the Second World War as the “good war,” see Studs Terkel *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Michael C.C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: American and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); J.L. Granatstein and Peter Neary, eds., *The Good Fight: Canadians in the Second World War* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1995).

the decision to stop Jews from entering Canada in any significant number was a “a political decision, not a bureaucratic one.” Consequently, they examined the attitudes of Canadian cabinet ministers, diplomats, and public opinion makers and found that antisemitic stereotypes of Jews were prevalent throughout Canada, making Canadians wary of opening their doors to Jews and apathetic to their suffering.²

This study has been complemented by numerous publications throughout the English-speaking world that suggest that the Allies were indifferent to the plight of Jews and that they put war goals ahead of rescuing Jews.³ Canadian studies have taken a regional approach to show that antisemitism was not uniform throughout the country, but manifested itself differently amongst the English-speaking elite, Quebecois nationalists, and populist movements.⁴ Historians have built on this research and plotted the various campaigns to rid

² Abella and Troper, 7-8. For further analyses of antisemitism within the Canadian Government’s bureaucracy see Lita-Rose Betcherman *Ernest Lapointe: Mackenzie King’s Great Quebec Lieutenant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). For additional studies on Canadian responses to the Jewish refugee crisis see Gerald Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978); Paula Draper, *The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1984).

³ See David Wyman, *Abandonment of the Jews: American and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1984 [2007]); Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Martin Gilbert *Auschwitz and the Allies* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981); Henry Feingold, *Politics of Rescue: the Roosevelt Administration, 1939-1945* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970); Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987); Seymour Maxwell Finger, ed., *American Jewry During the Holocaust* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes & Meier, 1984); Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry During the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981).

⁴ For racism within the Social Credit Party, see Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000); for antisemitism within Canadian populist movements see Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); for “gentile antisemitism” within the English-Canadian intellectual elite, see Alan Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: The Jews and the Canadian Elite* (Montreal: Robin Brass Studios, 2008). For antisemitism in French Canada, see Pierre Anctil, *Le Rendez-vous manqué: Les Juifs de Montréal face au Québec de l’entre-deux-guerres* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1988); Pierre Anctil, “Interlude of hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919-39,” in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan T. Davies (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003); Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and the Delirium of*

Canada of racism, often pointing out how legal and legislative reform was prioritized to transform attitudes towards minorities and minimize racial discrimination. This research hints that the Holocaust provided ammunition to hurl at bigots following the war, but that racism was so embedded within the discourse over rights and freedoms that it endured in Canada. As Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager write, “widespread efforts to dispel prejudice and fight against discrimination after the Second World War were not spontaneous reactions against the horrific consequences of racism that had manifested themselves during the war, but the result of campaigns that were carefully and painstakingly orchestrated.”⁵

Despite the depth of research that has gone into uncovering Canada’s seedy past, many Canadians have found the picture too dark and have attempted to find other explanations for Canadian inaction with regards to Jewish refugees. Utilizing content analytical methodologies that examine the frequency, location, and wording of news of the Holocaust in the press, a method that has become common practice in American historiography, some historians have examined whether Canadians actually knew that Jews were being exterminated by Hitler during the war. Some American studies have cast doubt on whether the American public realized that Jews were being hunted and killed. Deborah Lipstadt argues that American journalists were hesitant to give prominence to news of the Holocaust because they feared that the atrocities were exaggerated or fictionalized as they had been during the First World War. Therefore reports on the Holocaust that crossed news editors’ desk were often omitted or buried in the back of newspapers because they seemed

Extremist Right-Wing Nationalism in French Canada from 1929-1939, trans. Madeleine Hébert (Montreal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1993).

⁵ Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager, “‘This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights’: Minorities and the Origins of Ontario’s Human Rights Campaigns,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (2001): 1-35.

too incredible to be believed and might undermine the newspaper's credibility as an objective source of news.⁶ Similarly, Laurel Leff's painstaking analysis of the *New York Times*' coverage of the Holocaust came to the compelling conclusion that news of the destruction of European Jewry was minimized to bely the suspicion that the newspaper was a Jewish mouthpiece. Moreover, the *Times*' publisher, Arthur Hay Sulzberger, held the opinion accepted by American Reform Judaism that Jewry was defined by its religion rather than as a people group or nation and therefore the victims of atrocities ought to be referenced by the nationality of their residence.⁷

Similarly, examinations of Canadian media coverage of the Holocaust during the war have cast doubt on whether Canadians realized that Jews were being exterminated. Most historians agree that the Canadian Government only realized the extent of Germany's war against the Jews in 1942, but are less inclined to speculate whether the Canadian public knew at that time.⁸ Historians have often argued that the Holocaust only came to the attention of the public sphere throughout the West when Allied soldiers, quickly followed by reporters, marched into the extermination camps of Eastern Europe and the concentration camps of Western Europe and saw the corpses of Hitler's victims. The graphic and disturbing images of mounds of bodies and the machinery of murder seemed to grab the attention of the West

⁶ Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

⁷ Laurel Leff, *Buried by The Times: the Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For the theory that American reporters were misled by antisemitic concentration camp prisoners, see Robert H. Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 127-28. Peter Novick has tempered this theory by noting that American journalists may also have not realized that the Nazis were specifically targeting Jews because by the time concentration camps in Germany were liberated, most Jews were already murdered in the extermination centres in Poland. See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 63-5.

⁸ Victor Sefton, "The European Holocaust --Who Knew What and When – A Canadian Aspect," *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 2, no. 2 (1978): 121-133.

and became a spectacle for newsreels, magazines, and newspapers.⁹ In Canada, Irving Abella and Harold Troper write that “with the discovery of the camps, the public, including the Canadian public, now knew what its governments had long known about events in Europe.”¹⁰ Similarly, Janine Stingel argues that the Holocaust became known “by the war’s end, [to] any Canadian who read a newspaper,” which makes abhorrent the fact that antisemites in the Social Credit Party had suggested that the Canadian Jewish community was exaggerating the extent of Jewish losses in Europe.¹¹

Yet some historians have suggested that Canadians had only themselves to blame for not understanding that Hitler was waging a war against the Jews, even in the last days of the Nazi regime. David Goutor has found that the Canadian press woefully neglected attention to the Holocaust by de-emphasizing the Jewish identity of the victims in reports of the liberation of the concentration camps. This trend was not due to a “climate of disbelief in Canada about the Holocaust,” but because Canadians were indifferent to Jews. Because of this prejudice, the press neglected to inform Canadians “of the centrality of antisemitism in

⁹ The American and British historiography on the liberation of the concentration camps is now fairly extensive. See John S. Conway, “The First Report about Auschwitz,” *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 1 (1984): 133-51; Robert H. Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Jon Bridgman, *The End of the Holocaust: The Liberation of the Camps* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1990); Hannah Caven, “Horror in Our Time: Images of the Concentration Camps in the British Media, 1945,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 21, no. 3 (2001): 205-253; David Cesarani, “Great Britain,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Joyce Fine, “American Radio Coverage of the Holocaust,” *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 5 (1998): 145-168; Jeremy D. Harris, “Broadcasting the Massacres: An Analysis of the BBC’s Contemporary Coverage of the Holocaust,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 25 (1996): 65-98; Ron Hollander, “WE KNEW: America’s Newspapers Report the Holocaust,” in *Why Didn’t The Press Shout? American & International Journalism During the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (Jersey City, NJ: Yeshiva University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Abella and Troper, 187.

¹¹ Stingel, *Social Discredit*, 229.

Nazi ideology” and minimized coverage of Canada’s criminally negative response to Jewish refugees frantically trying to escape Hitler’s empire.¹²

Nonetheless, the claim that Canadians were ignorant of Hitler’s diabolical plan to make Europe *Judenfrei* is not without its critics. Gerald Tulchinsky, a historian who has devoted the last forty years to understanding the development of Canada’s Jewish community, insists that the frequent reports in both the Jewish and mainstream media of Jewish massacres after mid-1942 led Canadians to realize the scope of the Holocaust: “Soon reports were appearing regularly in the Canadian press, and by 1943 the destruction of the Jews of Europe was indisputable.”¹³ Ulrich Frisse has conducted a study of the *Toronto Daily Star* in which he argues that the Holocaust was a “recurrent and overall continuous theme that allowed Canadians to understand the true nature of the destruction process.”¹⁴

The suggestion that the Western public remained unaware of Hitler’s destruction of Europe’s Jews has become a damning indictment against the Jewish communities throughout the free world. In the United States, accusations have been made that the wealthy American Jewish community was more interested in upward social mobility and keeping step with the Roosevelt administration than with prioritizing rescue. Haskel Lookstein has stated that he

¹² David Goutor, “The Canadian Media and the ‘Discovery’ of the Holocaust, 1944-1945,” in *Canadian Jewish Studies* 4-5 (1996-97): 88-119.

¹³ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 214.

¹⁴ However, Frisse finds it difficult to explain the absence of coverage of the murderous campaigns of the *Einsatzgruppen* in 1941 or the tendency of Holocaust-related news items to be buried deep in the back of the paper and rarely on the front page, a trend that continued until late 1944. Shying away from the assumption that such decisions were a mere reflection of the publisher’s political orientation, Frisse believes that the decision of selecting stories for the front page was often made by the night editor, due to the time difference between Europe and North America: “In the absence of autobiographical accounts and other relevant sources, such as night editors’ internal memoranda to their staff, no comprehensive conclusion can be drawn in regards to the news selection process on holocaust-related items at the *Star’s* Toronto office.” See Ulrich Frisse, “The ‘Bystanders’ Perspective’: The *Toronto Daily Star* and Its Coverage of the Persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust in Canada, 1933-1945,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 39, no. 1 (2011): 234.

looked “in vain...for a sign that American Jews altered some aspect of their life-style to indicate their awareness of the plight of their European brother. There was no need for civil disobedience; some small gesture would have sufficed to keep the matter at the forefront of their consciousness and to generate feelings of sympathy and solidarity....The Final Solution may not have been *unstoppable* by American Jewry, but it should have been *unbearable* for them. And it wasn't.”¹⁵ David Wyman has noted that the fragmentary nature of the American Jewish community—racked by divisions over religion, class, and Zionism, and without effective leadership—delayed the formation of the War Refugee Board and forestalled efforts to rescue Jews before the majority was killed.¹⁶

Similar criticism has been launched at the Canadian Jewish community, although the debate is less contentious than in the United States. Irving Abella and Harold Troper initially set a moderate tone in the historiography by noting that the diplomatic approach that the Canadian Jewish community chose to win support for opening Canada's gates was understandable for the times: “Without doubt, mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, hunger strikes and protest marches to Parliament Hill, although perhaps cathartic to a Jewish community seething with the anguish of rejection, would only have confirmed what many Canadians believed—Jews were a disruptive, selfish and dangerous group.” Ultimately, the Canadian Jewish community lacked clout in Ottawa.¹⁷ Franklin Bialystok has gone one step

¹⁵ Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public response of American Jews to the Holocaust 1938-1944* (New York: Hartmore House, 1985), 215-16.

¹⁶ David Wyman also agrees with Lookstein regarding American Jewry's general indifference, noting that “An additional problem was the inability of American Jewish leaders to break out of a business-as-usual pattern. Too few schedules were rearranged. Vacations were seldom sacrificed. Too few projects of lesser significance were put aside.” David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 191-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1984 [2007]), 238-9.

¹⁷ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 283-84.

further, condemning Canadian Jewish leadership for being “unduly timorous in their efforts with the government.” Although he admits that the “Jewish community was weak, fragmented, and outside the power structure of Canadian decision-makers,” he finds that Canadian Jewry became focused on the war effort at the expense of helping their brethren in Europe: “Concern about the murder of European Jewry was submerged by the war effort itself.” This led to lackluster fundraising campaigns for devastated Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and weak relief and rehabilitation efforts in the few years following the war.¹⁸ Max Beer has pursued this line of inquiry and agrees that Canadian Jews were more interested in being perceived as patriotic than in saving European Jewry: “as the war progressed loyalty to Canada and support for the war effort became the overriding issues for the community and the leadership and concern for their European brethren faded into the background.”¹⁹ Adara Goldberg, a student of Bialystok, concurs, noting that budgets for the rehabilitation of Jewish refugees who managed to secure entry into Canada were “miniscule,” suggesting that the community lacked interest in Holocaust survivors.²⁰

This chapter will attempt to unravel the various conflicting interpretations that surround the Canadian Jewish response to the Holocaust by moving beyond the simplistic question of whether Canadians “knew or not” about the extermination of Jews, to examine how Canadians understood Hitler’s atrocities against Jews. I argue that Canadian Jewish responses to the Holocaust were conditioned by the Canadian war effort and a keen awareness of domestic antisemitism. Whereas the Canadian Government attempted to

¹⁸ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 15-16, 29.

¹⁹ Max Beer, “What Else Could We Have Done?: The Montreal Jewish Community, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Jewish Press and the Holocaust” (MA Thesis, Concordia University, 2006), iii.

²⁰ Adara Goldberg, “We Were Called Greenies: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Canada,” (PhD Dissertation, Clark University, 2012), 1-2.

universalize the victims and focus on the perpetrators of the crime to solidify Canadian support for the war, Canadian Jews sought to build Canadian sympathy for Jewish victims by presenting European Jewry within the confines of Canada's struggle to defeat tyranny. For Canadian Jews, framing the Holocaust around the theme of resistance—rather than victimization—worked to attempt to give meaning to the enormous loss of life, but also to justify the need for Canada to rethink its antisemitism and allow Jews to escape to Canada. Moreover, by presenting Jews as an ally fighting Nazi Germany, Canadian Jews hoped to support the opening up of Palestine as a means to reward Jewish war efforts. Due in part to the grotesque nature of Germany's campaign against the Jews and the Government's reluctance to bring the Holocaust into public debate, Hitler's crimes against the Jews did little to move Canadian society to rethink their own racist assumptions. Rather, mainstream Canadian discourse delved into the corrupting and degenerative effects that antisemitism wrought on the perpetrators rather than trying to understand the perspective of the victims. When Jewish survivors were discussed in the Canadian press, they were often presented as a lens through which Canadians could glimpse the pathology of the Nazis. For Canadian Jews though, understanding Jewish resistance went beyond political arguments to address the spiritual crisis gripped by the community.

2.1 The Effort to Keep the Holocaust out of its 'Good War' Against Nazism

When Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939, its stated purpose was to defend freedom, the British Empire, and Western civilization. Canadian parliamentarians would certainly have remembered *Kristallnacht*, but Canada's decision had less to do with

protecting Jews and more to do with protecting the liberal order in Europe. Prime Minister Mackenzie King's three hour speech made no mention of Jews since they were seen as one group of victims among many. With the Nazi encroachments into Poland, it was clear that Nazi lawlessness had shifted from the domestic scene to the international sphere. Hitler's "wanton disregard of all treaty obligations" and dastardly use of "terrorism and violence," according to King, demanded that Canada join the Christian crusade against Nazi Germany and save the liberal order: "The forces of evil have been loosed in the world in a struggle between the pagan conception of a social order which ignores the individual and is based upon the doctrine of might and a civilization based upon the Christian conception of the brotherhood of man, with its regard for the sanctity of contractual relations and the sacredness of human personality."²¹

Following the declaration, the Canadian Government embarked on a public opinion campaign to solidify support behind the war effort by creating national pride around it. To emphasize the necessity of sacrificing lives in the pursuit of a total war to defeat Nazi Germany, especially following the fall of France in June 1940, the Government depicted Canada as the antipode of Nazi Germany.²² Although a significant aspect of the program to

²¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 10 September 1939, 19-25; King's speech has been subject to criticism. Donald Creighton has argued that King had a "great talent for verbal flatulence" and was "a master of rotund but empty generalities," as King had no intention of having Canada engage in a total war against Germany. See Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada, 1939-1957* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), 2. Bruce Hutchison agreed in his biography of King, accusing King's speech of being "bumbling and lamentable," see *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011 [1952]), 251.

²² For a useful discussion on the evolution of Canadian propaganda during the Second World War see William R. Young, "Mobilizing English Canada For War: The Bureau of Public Information, the Wartime Information Board and a View of the Nation During the Second World War," in Sidney Aster, ed. *The Second World War as a National Experience* (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1981), 189-99. Young notes that Canadian propaganda shifted from an anti-Nazi campaign to address the anticipated postwar

demonize Nazi Germany was shedding light on Nazi atrocities, the Canadian Government neglected drawing attention to the extermination of Europe's Jews. King's speeches throughout the war explicitly excluded any mention of Jews, even when he addressed German mass murder in Eastern Europe. Rather, he persisted in defining Nazi atrocities as actions against liberalism and examples of Nazi godlessness.

At Chateau Laurier on September 17, 1941, King presented Germany's expansion in light of his own research on industrial relations, arguing that just as "industry must recognize that it existed to serve the needs of humanity; not that humanity existed to serve the greed of industry," Germany's military ambitions were an example of "the evil of national power when it exalts itself above humanity." At the core of Germany's national chauvinism was the Prussian militaristic mentality: "It is the real force behind the Nazi terror. It is the real secret of German power. It remains the implacable foe. The German war machine, the inhuman monster which the Prussian mind has created and continues to direct has already ravaged a whole continent and impoverished, enslaved, strangled or devoured millions of human lives. It is a dragon which can only be slain by fighting men."²³ King's problem with the Prussian mentality was the ideology of racial hierarchy, which, as he explained at the start of the Third Victory Bond Drive on October 16, 1942 in Montreal, threatened minorities and by extension the Canadian way of life, given that Canada was a land of minorities:

Our nationhood is not based on the superiority of a single race, or of a single language. Canada was founded on the faith that two of the proudest races in the world, despite barriers of tongue and creed, could work together, in mutual

problems by presenting the war as a democratizing experience that would produce better quality of life in Canada.

²³ Mackenzie King, *Canada and the War, Servitude or Freedom: The Present Position of the War* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, King's Printer, 1941).

tolerance and mutual respect, to develop a common nationality. Into our equal partnership of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, we have admitted thousands who were born of other racial stocks, and who speak other tongues. They, one and all, have sought a homeland where nationality means not domination and slavery, but equality and freedom.... Only by extending throughout the world the ideals of mutual tolerance, of racial co-operation, and of equality among men, which form the basis of Canada's nationhood, can nationality come to serve humanity.²⁴

For King, the wholesale mass murder on the Eastern Front was endemic to Hitler's imperial war: "where the master race fears the greater fertility of other races, wholesale extermination by starvation, disease, and even by mass murder, has been in evidence." Atrocities were not committed "in the heat of battle, or for purposes only of terrorization, but as the deliberate instrument of Hitler's racial policy." However, perhaps surprisingly, while King exclaimed that Canada was fighting to end "mass murder," "racial extermination," "destruction of culture," and "persecution of religion," he failed again to mention that the prime targets of Hitler's 'race' war were Jews.²⁵

There are two reasons why King specifically minimized the Jewish tragedy in his speeches. First, he was more concerned about Hitler's threat to Christianity than to Jews. In a tortuous line of logic, King became convinced that Hitler was murdering Jews in order to destroy Christianity. King arrived at this notion following a meeting with two prominent Zionists, Archibald J. Freiman and Chaim Weizmann on May 9, 1941. Weizmann was visiting Canada in an attempt to gain support for the position that increasing Jewish immigration into Palestine would facilitate the creation of a valuable ally in the Middle East

²⁴ Mackenzie King, "Nothing Matters Now but Victory, October 16, 1942," in King, *Canada and the Fight for Freedom* (Freeport, NY: 1944), 210-20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

against the Axis.²⁶ However, King interpreted Weizmann's point that Nazism was an antichristian philosophy to mean "that Hitlerism was not aimed against the Jews fundamentally but at Christianity through the Jews. That what Hitler was out to destroy was Christendom. I believe in this he [Weizmann] is right. He [Hitler] does not want a brotherhood of man. He wants to have his fellow-men ruled by an armed guard."²⁷ Therefore, in King's mind, the attacks on Jews were a means to solidify power in order to destroy Christendom.

The second reason that King kept focus away from the Jewish tragedy was that Canadians were uninterested in Jews at best and hostile to the idea of Canada becoming a haven for Jewish refugees. In fact, King appeared more concerned for the fate of British citizens in the wake of the collapse of France than for the fate of Polish Jews who were being sealed inside ghettos. After reading Hitler's "A Last Appeal to Reason" speech of July 19, 1940, in which Hitler called for Britain's surrender to avoid further casualties, King wrote "Words cannot describe my feelings as I read Hitler's speech, particularly with its threats of extermination of the peoples of Britain. There is something terribly diabolical about a nature that could express its determination to destroy human life regardless of its innocence or extent. A man who had sold himself to the lower depths of hell could not have expressed himself more damnably."²⁸ Sensing astutely that Canadians were more concerned with the immediate aspects of the war than with the murder of European Jewry, King mandated that government propaganda avoid the topic. He told as much to Emil Ludwig, a German-Jewish

²⁶ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 May, 1941, 3; 16 May 1941, 15.

²⁷ Entry, 9 May 1941, 1, in LAC, Diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, MG26-J13.

²⁸ Entry, 19 July 1940, 2, in LAC, Diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, MG26-J13.

historical writer, who appealed to King on June 11, 1944 to allow Jewish refugees to settle in Canada to escape Hitler: ²⁹ “I explained to him again the nature of the political problem, the difficulty of a leader of a govt. bringing up this question on the eve of an election but agreed that Canada would have to open her doors and fill many of her large waste spaces with population once our own men had returned from the front.” To rescue Jews trapped in Europe before the war’s end would not be politically expedient. Frustrated that offering his sympathy was not enough, King wrote in his diary following Ludwig’s visit: “I must say when one listens to accounts of their [Jewish] persecutions, one cannot have any human sympathies without being prepared to do much on their behalf.”³⁰ While there was political capital to be gained by decrying Hitler’s atrocities, focusing on the Jewish aspect of the Nazis’ murdering rampage was counterintuitive in King’s mind.

The obscuration of the Holocaust was mandated throughout the Canadian propaganda infrastructure. The two government agencies that controlled information regarding Canada’s war effort—the Wartime Information Board³¹ and the National Film Board—were remarkably silent about the mass murder of Jews, even during the liberation of the concentration camps. Throughout most of the war, both agencies were led by John Grierson, the WIB’s General Manager until 1944 and the commissioner of the NFB. As his biographer Jack C. Ellis wrote, Grierson’s “social conscience and vision led him to accentuate the

²⁹ In February 1944, Ludwig had written a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* demanding that the Allies “send a proclamation to the German people through leaflets and to the German Government through neutral countries; threatening that further murdering of Jews would involve retaliation after victory,” in order to “drive a wedge into the already existing dissension of the generals and the Nazis.” See JTA Archive, JTA Daily News Bulletin, 21 February 1944, 4, http://pdfs.jta.org/1944/1944-02-21_043.pdf.

³⁰ Entry, 11 June 1944, 1, in LAC, Diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, MG26-J13.

³¹ The WIB was established in 1942 in the wake of the conscription crisis, replacing the Public Information Bureau that had primarily been tasked with supplying photographs to the media of Canada’s war effort.

positive and avoid the negative propaganda of hate so easily available.”³² While he focused on presenting different aspects of the war effort to build unity among Canadians,³³ Grierson also produced documentaries that dealt with aspects of Nazi atrocities; however, these were carefully edited and scripted to avoid referencing the unique tragedy befalling Jews. When asked by his American Jewish friend Arthur Gottlieb in the summer of 1942 why the NFB “has maintained a virtual silence about Hitler’s war against the Jews,” Grierson initially tried to excuse the NFB’s lack of response, claiming that “there just is no contemporary footage about the rumours we keep hearing about.” Gottlieb remained unconvinced that this was the reason and pressed Grierson further: “you know bloody well the killing machine against the Jews goes on unchecked. Let’s face it. Canada is an anti-Semitic country that couldn’t give a damn about the Jews.” Grierson admitted that he was not entirely wrong and that the government was “willing to be led, rather than to lead a Canadian public opinion that is frankly anti-Semitic, particularly in Quebec.” On why the NFB had produced no documentary on Jewish refugees, Grierson explained that his hands were tied:

The Cabinet War Committee declared Canada’s information policy on this issue: remain silent. Ottawa ordered all atrocity stories held up until they could be verified...Government policy has spared Canadian civilian morale and some possible guilt feelings. Mr. King’s government has long depended upon Quebec’s votes and seats in Parliament, and English Canada fears becoming awash in a sea of Jewish refugees. The government is not prepared to lose votes on the Jewish issue. It is a closed subject at the NFB.³⁴

³² Jack C. Ellis, *John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 149.

³³ For an analysis of how Grierson’s socialism influenced the making of the NFB’s films during the Second World War see Malek M. Khouri, *The Rise and Fall of Counter-hegemonic Discourse on the Working Class: National Film Board of Canada Films, 1939-1946* (PhD Thesis, McGill University, 2000).

³⁴ See Gary Evans, *John Grierson: Trailblazer of Documentary Film* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2005), 89-92.

This censorship of the Holocaust was maintained throughout all of the NFB productions for the duration of the war. Although the NFB's first major series, *Canada Carries On*, described the war experience from multiple perspectives, its *World In Action* series delved into the political implications of the Nazis' bid for hegemony in Europe, and took exceptional care to avoid discussing Europe's Jews. For example, *Geopolitik – Hitler's Plan for Empire* argued that the West was slow to react to the threat of fascism, but instead of emphasizing Germany's assault against the Jews in the 1930s and the West's unresponsiveness to the ensuing refugee crisis, the documentary criticized the West's indifference to the overthrow of the Spanish Republic.³⁵ In another documentary produced in 1942, *War for Men's Minds*, the NFB examined Nazi ideology at length, but did not mention Hitler's antisemitism. According to the writer, Stuart Legg, at the heart of the Nazi "creed was violence," which the narrator contrasted with the British liberal tradition: "And in every quarter of her [Britain's] Empire – wherever her subjects aspired to the freedom of self-government – Britain held up this old liberal ideal of change by gradual reform." Legg's simplistic message was that the democracies would be victorious if they remain united: "with this weapon of human brotherhood firmly in our hands, we are discovering the real meaning of the war for men's minds."³⁶ Even in the documentary covering the liberation of concentration camps, *Behind the Swastika: Nazi Atrocities*, the NFB continued to minimize Jewish victims by claiming that atrocities were directed against individuals who challenged the Nazis' tyrannical rule. In one scene, as the camera panned across liberated emaciated

³⁵ Stuart Legg, *Geopolitik – Hitler's Plan for Empire* (Ottawa: NFB, 1942).

³⁶ Director Stuart Legg, *The War for Men's Minds* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1942). [narrator Lorne Greene]

prisoners, the narrator declared “These are the men who dared to defy the Fuehrer, free thinking men who believed in the democratic principles, Jews and Gentile. Their only crime was that they were anti-Nazi. They were herded into concentration camps and left to the mercy of sadistic guards, who beat, starved, and murdered them in thousands.” The remainder of the short film documented the Allied soldiers, politicians, and journalists witnessing the human carnage.³⁷ The intent of Canadian propaganda was to reinforce the paradigm of Canada as a tolerant, liberal society by “othering” Nazi Germany and presenting it as the antithesis of Canadianism.³⁸

The practice of reinforcing Canadian self-perceptions as a harmonious multicultural state by “othering” the Nazis and avoiding discussion of the Holocaust is also evident in the Canadian Government’s fundraising efforts. Posters demonized Hitler, insisting that Canada had to defeat Nazi Germany to avoid enslavement. These posters did little to draw attention to the Holocaust.

³⁷ *Behind the Swastika: Nazi Atrocities*, NFB, 1945.

³⁸ The binary construction of Canadian identity in opposition to Nazism is evident in Watson Kirkconnell’s *Canadians All: A Primer of Canadian National Unity* (Ottawa: Wartime Information Board, 1941), which was written within the Nationalities Branch initially part of the Bureau of Public Information, with the mandate to build Canadian unity among immigrant populations, as well as to monitor foreign language press. In an effort to contrast Canadian nationality with Nazi Germany, Kirkconnell warned that racist hatred was being propagated in Canada from Germany to undermine Canada’s war effort. As Kirkconnell explains in the Forward: “Before the Nazi attacks with military strength, he attempts to undermine the moral and physical resistance of his victim nation by termite tactics. Intrinsicly, a nation like Canada, whose population comprises many races and creeds, is perfect ground for the employment of Nazi underground warfare.” Kirkconnell pointed specifically to a Nazi fifth-column in Canada “disseminating calumnies against Canadian Jews... in order that such hatred may spread and paralyze our national morale.” However, to discredit Nazi racism, Kirkconnell criticized the Nazi belief in a ‘master race’, but not the notion that there were different ‘races,’ nor even that different ‘races’ had differing capabilities. He did disparage the claim that nationalities constituted races by illustrating that Europe comprised of only three racial groups: “(i) the tall, fair-haired, long skulled Nordic, (ii) the short, dark, long-skulled Mediterranean, and (iii) the stocky, broad-headed Alpine type.” The fundamental problem with Nazi racial thinking for Kirkconnell was not that the Nazis’ world view was based on racialized thinking, but that “Germany itself is hopelessly mixed,” with various Germans being “indistinguishable from the racial type in Poland.” Not surprisingly, Kirkconnell’s breakdown of the European ‘races’ was consistent with Canada’s immigration policy of prioritizing “Nordic” stocks from Northwestern Europe while restricting immigration from the Mediterranean region.



War Victory Bond Poster, 1943, LAC³⁹

Rather, the focus was on differentiating between German nationalism and the Canadian experience, suggesting that racism was being imported into Canada by a Nazi fifth column determined to foster disunity and weaken Canada's resolve for war. Harry Mayerovitch drew one poster that featured a Nazi spirit rising out of a grave clutching a paper inscribed with "Race Prejudice, Discrimination, Intolerance." The poster was captioned: "We've Buried the Body... Let's kill the Spirit," essentially tying Canada's fight

³⁹ Harold Shaw, "Save to Beat the Devil!" in LAC, accession no. 1983-030 X PIC 01220.

against racial discrimination to the military conflict.⁴⁰ In 1943, the campaign against racism in Winnipeg embraced the slogan “Be Canadian. Act British,” enforcing the mentality that tolerance and acceptance of difference creeds and ‘races’ was the essence of British North America.

⁴⁰ Harry Mayerovitch, “We’ve Buried the Body,” n.d., in LAC, Harry Mayerovitch fonds, MG30-D400, vol. 1, “Second World War artwork, posters and designs.”

THIS STRAW MAN CAN KILL!

This straw man, folks, has been set up by your enemies. His job is to fool Canadians... to scare Canadians... to lure them into destroying themselves.

His hands are dripping with the blood of millions of innocent people—including Frenchmen... Poles... Czechs... peoples of war-wracked countries throughout the world.

He has a deadly weapon. Hate. But here is the grim joker. He cannot fire that weapon... unless you pull the trigger.

He hopes to destroy you by making you hate your neighbor, the people you work with. While groups of Canadians fight each other, where will they find the colossal strength to destroy the Hitler of the world?

But he is a straw man. Tear off that cloak of hatred and he falls apart, completely. Take away that gun and he hasn't a leg to stand on. What's the gun loaded with? Lies, lies, lies!

"The Protestants are prejudiced." "The Catholics are bigoted." "The Jews are intolerant."

These lies aren't all made in Berlin or Tokyo. Some of your best friends tell them. But it is our enemy they help. People who would die rather than betray a military secret, betray our boys in uniform every time they repeat, or listen unprotestingly to these lies. By spreading hatred and distrust, they slow up war production, sabotage civilian morale, dull the fighting spirit that makes a winning army.

Shall we give the Germans and the Japs part of our army? Send them some of our planes and tanks and bullets? Well, of course, that sounds ridiculous.

Then let's not accomplish the same result by helping this straw man fire his gun. Break him down. Tear him to pieces. Expose him for what he is... an agent of the enemy, doing his ugly work wherever people are weak or careless enough to help him.

This is a job for every Canadian. Kill this straw man. He is disunity. For if you don't destroy him, he will destroy you!

Pledge for good Canadians

I BELIEVE IN THESE FOUR FREEDOMS:

The free is freedom of speech and expression.
The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way... everywhere in the world.
The third is freedom from want... we agree action a feasible program for its attainment.
The fourth is freedom from fear.

BE CANADIAN! - ACT BRITISH!

BUY WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES REGULARLY

* This message is sponsored by a City-wide group of Public-Sector Citizens consisting of Canada's most social-minded, but NOT Communist, the servants of humanity.

The Winnipeg Tribune, 6 November 1943, 5⁴¹

⁴¹ For other posters as part of this "Be Canadian! - Act British!" campaign see CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series DB1, box 10, file 13, "Overseas Relief-newsclippings, 1942-1943."

The most elaborate fundraising operation, “If Day,” simulated the occupation of Winnipeg by mock Nazi forces on February 19, 1942, but also paid no heed to the Nazi persecution of Jews, despite its intended purpose of awakening the Canadian imagination to the horrors of the Nazi threat. Terror was envisaged through an emergency blackout at 7 AM amid the screaming of air raid sirens to recreate the London blitz. The Nazi attack on liberty was embodied by troops attired in Wehrmacht uniforms who burnt books in front of the public library and reprinted the *Winnipeg Tribune* in German, renaming it *Das Winnipeger Lügenblatt*.⁴² Premier John Bracken, his cabinet, and the mayor were arrested, churches were closed, and a curfew was imposed. However, there were no reports in the local press that these mock Nazi soldiers rounded up Jews specifically. No indication that the shops looted were owned by Jews. In fact, *Life* magazine coverage of the spectacle noted that the “‘Nazis’ close[d] the Protestant and Catholic Church,” apparently leaving synagogues alone.⁴³ Presumably, due to the absence of antisemitism in this fake Nazi assault on Winnipeg, the Canadian Jewish press refused to cover the event.⁴⁴

The Canadian Government’s decision to keep the Holocaust out of the public spotlight was certainly not due to a lack of information coming out of Europe regarding the extermination of Jews. Information on the Nazi atrocities was being digested and published by Jewish organizations as early 1941. One key source that Canadian officials could have acquired, although they did not, was a study by the Institute of Jewish Affairs, entitled *Jews in Nazi Europe, February 1933 to November 1941*, which was presented at the Inter-

⁴² Translated, “The Winnipeg Lies-Sheet.”

⁴³ *Life*, 9 March 1942, 30-32.

⁴⁴ There was no mention of “If Day” in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, or *The Canadian Jewish Review*.

American Jewish Conference in November 1941. The plus-100 page document copiously tracked the persecution of Jews by country, noting the deteriorating conditions of Jews in German-occupied areas. The report's analysis of Polish Jewry indicated that the Nazis intended to murder its population: "extermination is the main object of the whole policy of the Germans toward the Jewish population both in Poland and in Germany."⁴⁵

Although the Canadian Government did not seek out available information on the Holocaust, it nonetheless had a fairly substantial quantity of intelligence on the issue that had been collected and analyzed by foreign governments and forwarded to the Department of External Affairs and even the Wartime Information Board. One of the most detailed and earliest sources available was a confidential series entitled "Report on Jewry," prepared by a team of researchers in Britain's Ministry of Information.⁴⁶ Using intercepted correspondence between Jewish informants in Europe and the Middle East often to American Jewish charity agencies, such as the Joint Distribution Committee, the British compiled lengthy reports on the conditions facing European Jewry, attached translated copies of the correspondence, and distributed the material to its Allies. The fifth report, dated February 9, 1942, but only received in Ottawa on May 14, 1942, covered the period from September to December 1942, and began by making clear that the latest information "brings the toll of deportation and mass murder a stage further towards the apparently intended climax of complete extermination."

⁴⁵ Institute of Jewish Affairs, *Jews in Nazi Europe, February 1933 to November 1941* (Baltimore, MD: Inter-American Jewish Conference [American Jewish Congress], 1941), in LAC, Leon Kronitz fonds, MG31-H147, vol. 24, file, "Jewish in Nazi Europe."

⁴⁶ For a discussion on whether British analysts writing these reports had access to secret German Order Police decodes, see Richard Breitman, "What Chilean Diplomat Learned about the Holocaust," Interagency World Group Research Paper, National Archives, London, 20 June 2001, < <http://www.archives.gov/iwg/research-papers/breitman-chilean-diplomats.html> >; Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and American Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 101.

With regards to Jewish efforts to effect rescue, the writer noted that “it is an ironical fact that considerable facilities for immigration have now been offered by the Western Hemisphere when apparently insuperable barriers have arisen in Europe.”⁴⁷ What followed was a breakdown by occupied country of the anti-Jewish laws being enforced and the number of Jews being deported to the East. Of particular note was the section on Poland, which documented the acceleration of the Final Solution from “first hand accounts from deportees in Poland, sent by underground routes through neutral intermediaries to London.” Under the header “Mass Murder on Polish Territory,” the British author warned that the Nazis were speeding up their extermination campaign against Jews, chronicling that “during September rumors began to accumulate from many sources regarding a plan for the wholesale massacre of the Jews deported to Russia and Poland.”⁴⁸ These “rumors” were now facts, according to the report, and there was solid evidence that “there was a plan behind these measures [deportation] to exterminate immediately the largest possible number of Jews.” According to various sources listed, half of the Warsaw Ghetto had been “liquidated” by October 1942.⁴⁹ As early as November 12, 1943, External Affairs also had accounts from Jewish partisans who witnessed the Jewish communities of Bendin, Dabrowa and Sosnowiec being rounded up and sent “to the annihilation camp at Oswiecim.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ “Postal & Telegraph Censorship Report on Jewry,” No. 5, “Mid-September to December, 1942,” 9 February 1942, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, file 724-DP-39C, “Intercepted Communication re: Treatment of Jews and Activities of Jewish Organizations in Various Countries.”

⁴⁸ In fact, news of the Final Solution was being debated in Geneva a month earlier, and by 10 August 1942, Gerhart Riegner had passed on this information to the U.S. State Department and the British Foreign Office.

⁴⁹ “Postal & Telegraph Censorship Report on Jewry,” No. 5, “Mid-September to December, 1942,” 9 February 1942, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, file 724-DP-39C, “Intercepted Communication re: Treatment of Jews and Activities of Jewish Organizations in Various Countries.”

⁵⁰ Ichud Olami to D. Werheim and A. Tartakower, “Conditions in Enemy Territory – Jewish Underground in Poland,” received by Canadian Directorate of Censorship, 12 January 1944, in LAC, Department of External

External Affairs also was receiving reports from Governments-in-Exiles, specifically Poland and Czechoslovakia, which revealed that Jews were being hunted and murdered *en masse* throughout Europe. Following the razing of Lidice, Dr. Hubert Ripka, the Czechoslovakian Secretary of State, informed Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada in London, on two separate occasions, June 2 and 17, 1942, of the terror unleashed by the Nazis at Lidice and Lezaky in retribution for Reinhard Heydrich's assassination. On February 26, 1943, Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister, brought Massey up to speed on the continuing efforts of the Nazis to squash resistance in Czechoslovakia, noting that in the week following Heydrich's death, 1,288 individuals had been murdered by the Nazis. Interestingly, Masaryk also pointed out that Kurt Daluege, who was appointed as Protector of Moravia and Bohemia following Heydrich's death, had "intensified the anti-Semitic measures" and "expedited the deportations." By the end of 1942, only 18,000 Jews remained of the 90,000 prewar Jewish populations of Bohemia and Moravia. In Slovakia, an additional 76,000 Jews had been deported to Poland, leaving only 19,000, most of whom Masaryk said were awaiting their own deportation to concentration camps.⁵¹

Information on the Holocaust was not restricted to confidential files in External Affairs; detailed reports of the Holocaust also made their way into Wartime Information Board files, which could have been used as a source for its fundraising campaigns and propaganda materials. In late 1942 the WIB received a copy of *Bestiality...unknown in any previous record of history*, a grisly documentation of the crimes perpetrated against Poles.

Affairs fonds, RG25, file 724-DP-39C, "Intercepted Communication re: Treatment of Jews and Activities of Jewish Organizations in Various Countries."

⁵¹ Masaryk to Massey, letter, 26 February 1943, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 3034, file, 4079-B-40, pt 1, "German Atrocities in Czechoslovakia: Reports."

Although this report was commissioned by the Polish Government-in-Exile, and thus framed Germany's crimes against all Poles, it did contain a section on the "destruction of the Jewish population," which outlined the escalation of the mass murder of Jews. Ghettos were described as places of death, which had "incredibly miserable conditions, the mortality is enormous, and it is an everyday phenomenon for dead bodies to be lying in the streets." However, the method of murder had quickened from death by starvation and disease to mass shootings and asphyxiation. British Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, was quoted as estimating that 700,000 Jews had been murdered in Poland by the summer of 1942. Most of the Lublin ghetto had been transported "over a period of several days to the locality of Sobibor...where they were all murdered with gas, machine-guns and even by being bayoneted." The Poles warned that the "Jewish population in Poland is doomed to die out in accordance with the slogan, 'All the Jews should have their throats cut, no matter what the outcome of the war may be.'"⁵²

Numerous research papers were also collected in the WIB files discussing Nazi racial thinking, most notably Wiener Library's *The Nazis at War* bulletin, which translated and contextualized Nazi press statements and speeches about war aims.⁵³ Many other analyses on Nazi racism in the WIB files were written by Britain's Ministry of Information. In one document on German education, the author noted that "the Nazi system is based on the twin myths of racial purity and racial superiority. Its aims are the glorification of the German

⁵² The Polish Ministry of Information, *Bestiality...unknown in any previous record of history...* (London: Stratton House, 1942) in LAC, Wartime Information Board fonds, RG36-31, file 13-1-19-3, "German Atrocities."

⁵³ "The Nazis at War," in LAC, Wartime Information Board fonds, RG36-31, file 13-1-19-6.

people and their domination of all other peoples by conquest.”⁵⁴ In another document discussing German war aims, the author gathered copious amounts of documentation to demonstrate that Hitler was carving out a colonial empire in Europe based on a racial hierarchy, which would be achieved in two stages. Germany sought “mastery over all other races” through conquest and enslavement. As “a master race is liable to decay if it leaves the work to inferior peoples,” the Germans would “ultimately exterminate and replace other races.” The German extermination of the Jews was presented as essential to this mission and therefore Jews were being targeted first: “Nazi Germany aims to go back not only to the days of slavery, but ultimately, to the still more primitive times before slavery, on which enslavement in its day was a forward step, -- namely the times when victors simply exterminated the vanquished, as in the jungle. The start has been made with the Jews, then with the Poles, -- to be continued elsewhere.” Despite this 20,000 word document only referencing Jews in two other locations, this minimization of the Holocaust should not be taken to mean that information was unknown. Rather, Hitler’s crimes against Jews were so familiar, that the report explained that its minimal treatment of “the systematic German policy of extermination of Jews everywhere and taking over their places by Germans are too notorious to need quotations in proof.”⁵⁵

While lack of intelligence cannot explain the Canadian Government’s silence on the Holocaust, there is evidence that any Government effort to tie Canada’s war effort to Hitler’s atrocities against European Jews would alienate Quebec opinion. The most palpable

⁵⁴ Reference Division (Foreign Information), Ministry of Information, UK, “Nazi Education,” 19 February 1943, in LAC Wartime Information Board fonds, RG36-31, file 13-1-19-4.

⁵⁵ Reference Division (Foreign Information), Ministry of Information, UK, “The Thousand Year Reich, As Expounded by Germans Themselves,” 3 February 1943, in LAC Wartime Information Board fonds, RG36-31, file 13-1-19-4.

expression of antisemitic derision over Canada's fight against Nazism was a series of anti-Jewish riots in Montreal in anticipation of the April 27, 1942 plebiscite on whether the Government should be released from its promise not to institute the draft. On March 17, 1942, following an anti-conscription meeting with Liberal MP Jean-Francois Pouliot sponsored by the "League for the Defense of Canada," an estimated 450 youths paraded down St. Lawrence Boulevard through a predominantly Jewish section, yelling "À bas les Juifs!" smashing several shop windows, and initiating several violent altercations with local Jewish residents in front of the YMHA. The police managed to chase the demonstrators away, arresting eight youths.⁵⁶ Although a larger and more violent anti-conscription riot had rocked the city a month earlier following a speech by Henri Bourassa, which left a dozen police officers injured, it had been devoid of antisemitic expression.⁵⁷ The Montreal press was insistent that the antisemitism in Quebec should not be exaggerated. Torchy Anderson of the *Montreal Gazette* wrote: "don't think that all the people of Quebec are shouting 'À bas la conscription,' and breaking Jewish shop windows. The great majority of them are reading the world news in the newspapers—and understanding it."⁵⁸ The *Montreal Daily Star* agreed, insisting that "these young men should not be taken seriously."⁵⁹ Yet Canadian Jews were not about to brush off these incidents as the impetuous acts of bored youths. A. M. Klein called attention to the "prepared placards" and the coordinated march upon the Jewish district to show that "this demonstration was by no means a spontaneous manifestation." He

⁵⁶ *Montreal Daily Star*, 25 March 1942, 3; *Canadian Jewish Review*, 27 March 1942, 4; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1942, 3, 6.

⁵⁷ *Montreal Gazette*, 12 February 1942, 1, 14; *Montreal Daily Star*, 12 February 1942, 3-4; *Globe and Mail*, 25 March 1942, 1.

⁵⁸ *Montreal Gazette*, 23 April 1942, 8.

⁵⁹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1942, 3.

was convinced that “a hand, yet unseen, directs” these assaults and that a fifth column resides within Quebec.⁶⁰ J. J. Glass, Ontario M.P.P., also brought this argument into Queen’s Park, saying that the riot “bears the stamp of the Nazis. It is a well-defined principle of the Nazis to divide the people.”⁶¹ Due to these specific incidents and the general belief that antisemitic stereotypes abided in the hearts of many French Canadians, suggesting that Canada was sacrificing blood and treasure to stave off a Jewish crisis, rather than defending Canadian national interests, was not seen by the Government as a wise method of cementing support for the war effort. Government statements on Nazi atrocities tended to avoid mention of antisemitism, as it was a dividing issue amongst Canadians. To better serve the war effort, the Canadian Government framed the discourse on Nazi atrocities around Germany’s illiberal and anti-Christian policies, a propaganda strategy formulated in the 1930s.

2.2 Canadian Mainstream Press Coverage of the Holocaust

Although the Canadian Government did not specifically broach the subject of the Nazi war against Jews, Canadian newspapers did receive a copious amount of detailed reports concerning the mass extermination of the Jews, primarily through British and American wireless agencies. Throughout the first three years of the war, the Canadian press framed the ghettoization and extermination of Jews within the context of Germany expanding its illiberal domestic policies into occupied territories. Therefore, Nazi crimes against Jews were not treated as unique, but as just another example of German irreverence for human life and the liberal order in its aim to subjugate Europe. When the press attempted to understand why the

⁶⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1942, 3.

⁶¹ *Globe and Mail*, 10 April 1942, 5.

Nazis were brutally suppressing occupied territories, it followed the Canadian Government's line of reasoning that the Nazis were vigorously stomping out resistance to their tyrannical rule. Thus, the victims—including Jews—were perceived as political opponents to Nazism, motivated by their religious convictions to uphold the liberal order.

There is little evidence to suggest that Canadians doubted that Europe's Jews were being murdered *en masse* since much of this information came from official channels, even if they were not coming from the Canadian government. By late 1942 information about the Holocaust was widely available and the Allied governments confirmed that the Nazis' racist ideology was motive for exterminating the Jews. Mainly gleaned from the American press, Canadian newspapers began to fill with reliable information on the millions of Jews being murdered throughout 1942 and 1943. The news reports that Heinrich Himmler had "ordered the extermination of one-half of the Jewish population of Poland by the end of this year [1942], and that 250,000 had been killed through September under that program," was distributed by CP and made it clear that Jewish deaths were not incidental casualties of the brutal fighting along the Eastern Front, but specifically targeted by the Nazis.⁶² The Inter-Allied Information Committee's press release in December 1942, which stated that 99 percent of Jews in Yugoslavia had been murdered and that Poland had become "one vast centre for murdering Jews" was printed throughout Canadian newspapers.⁶³ In the *Globe and Mail's* June 16 1942 "War Summary," it was estimated that the 60,000 Jews living in Vilna, Lithuania had been shot *en masse* over the span of two weeks, which the editor

⁶² *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 24 November 1942, 8; a similar report was issued by the Polish Government-in-exile on 11 December 1942, see *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* 11 December 1924, 3.

⁶³ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 21 December 1942, 2.

described as “probably the greatest manslaughter in all history.”⁶⁴ A statement made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, on October 29, 1942 which declared that Jews from across Europe were being murdered from as early as the age of two was printed in the *Toronto Star* under the headline “Exterminate Jews is Seen Nazi Aim.”⁶⁵

On November 24, 1942, WJC Chairman Stephen S. Wise made the statement that the U.S. State Department had verified the authenticity of the Gerhart Riegner Telegram, which confirmed that the Nazis were carrying out a campaign to exterminate the entirety of European Jewry. The story was distributed by AP in Canada and noted that two million Jews had already been murdered in an “extermination campaign.”⁶⁶ The Canadian newspapers also reported that U.S. President F. D. Roosevelt was “profoundly shocked to learn” that two million Jews had been murdered by the Nazis.⁶⁷

Following the State Department’s verification of the Reigner telegram, the United States, United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, in addition to various governments-in-exile issued a declaration on December 17, 1942 condemning the Nazi extermination of Jews, prompting a flurry of coverage in the Canadian public sphere regarding the Holocaust. The declaration confirmed that the Nazis were “now carrying into effect Hitler’s oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe.” Geographically, the statement pointed to Poland as the “principal Nazi slaughter-house.” The Allies warned that “those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution,” and appealed to “all freedom-loving people to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny.” The statement was quoted extensively in the

⁶⁴ *Globe and Mail*, 16 June 1942, 1.

⁶⁵ *Toronto Star*, 29 October 1942, 38.

⁶⁶ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 25 November 1942, 20; *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 November 1942, 20; *Montreal Gazette*, 1, 18; *Calgary Herald*, 25 November 1942, 16.

⁶⁷ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 9 December 1942, 10.

Canadian press, often making front page material. Although the Canadian Government was not involved in drafting the declaration, the press noted King's statement that his administration was "glad to associate itself with an Allied declaration."⁶⁸ King continued by stating that the Nazi atrocities had consolidated Canadian public opinion behind the war effort: "The Governments of freedom-loving nations have joined in this declaration in order to make it clear to Nazi leaders that their extermination policy, far from rendering the Nazis' position in Europe more secure is having the opposite effect of speeding Allied efforts to win an early victory and to bring closer the day of retribution."⁶⁹

With evidence piling up, the *Winnipeg Tribune* did not even believe that the Nazis were attempting to keep their extermination program a secret. Following a report from the War Information Board in February 1943 on the horrendous conditions in Warsaw, editor John Bird wrote that "Nazism make no bones about the purpose behind their savagery—it is to wipe the Poles and the Jews from the face of the earth."⁷⁰

Throughout the war, the World Jewish Congress and American Jewry were also regularly putting out press statements about the Holocaust that were picked up in the Canadian press. In June 1942, the WJC issued a press statement noting that over one million Jews had been murdered since the invasion of Poland. The report noted that Jews were being rounded up throughout occupied Europe, deported to Eastern Europe, and shot *en masse* by firing squads.⁷¹ In February 1943, the British branch of the WJC issued a statement that created a stir in Canada by providing evidence that the Nazis were issuing a new directive to

⁶⁸ *Calgary Herald*, 17 December 1942, 1; *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 December 1942, 3.

⁶⁹ "Allies Protest Inhuman Acts Against Jews," *Globe and Mail*, 18 December 1942, 7.

⁷⁰ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 16 February 1943, 6.

⁷¹ *Globe and Mail*, 30 June 1942, 8.

“speed and intensify the extermination by massacre and starvation of the Jews remaining in occupied Europe.” The WJC report stated that numerous jurisdictions were to be “cleared of Jews,” including Berlin, Warsaw, Bohemia, and Moravia.⁷² Days later, Joseph Goebbels made a Freudian slip that generated attention when he declared that Germany was waging war to protect the European continent from the “Bolshevik” threat and that Germany had to deal with its ‘Jewish problem’: “we shall exterminate—” quickly catching himself “—exclude them.”⁷³ By the late summer of 1943, the Canadian press reported that an additional million Jews had been murdered, based on a research paper by the Institute of Jewish Affairs. It read in part: “more than 3,000,000 Jews have been destroyed in the four-year period since the outbreak of war by planned starvation, forced labor, deportation, pogroms, and the methodical murder in the German-run extermination centres of Eastern Europe.” To emphasize that Jewish deaths were the result of an extermination campaign, the report noted that a mere eight percent of Jewish deaths were the result of military combat.⁷⁴ The CP distributed a report in early 1944 which stated that “nearly the entire Jewish community in Holland—numbering 180,000—has been wiped out by the Germans.”⁷⁵ By February 1945, Max Perlman, Director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, announced in Hamilton’s Beth Jacob Synagogue that “of the six and a half million Jewish people in Europe in 1939, it is estimated that one an half million survived the Nazi extermination plan.”⁷⁶ On January 4, 1943, The *Toronto Star* ran a strongly-worded column by “The Observer” arguing

⁷² *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 15 February 1943, 8; *Montreal Gazette*, 15 February 1943, 6; *Toronto Star*, 15 February 1943, 10.

⁷³ *Toronto Star*, 19 February 1943, 19.

⁷⁴ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 27 August 1943, 3.

⁷⁵ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 19 February 1944, 23.

⁷⁶ *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 February 1945.

that Hitler's campaign against Jews surpassed the murderous hordes of Genghis Khan in terms of producing "slaughter, devastation and general misery." The journalist emphasized the brutality of the Nazis:

I doubt if there is anything in the record of the barbarian for sheer, unjustifiable and inexcusable malignity to match this citizen of one of the most cultured and highly civilized countries in his savage hatred of the Jews. Not content with starving or working them to death in the refrigerator of Poland and the oven of the Sahara, Hitler has hung over the Jews of Europe that still survive the threat that he means to exterminate the total Jewish population of all the countries in Europe and Africa over which he exercises any control. Three million Jews that still survive are to be wiped out.

The article proceeded to outline the Jewish contribution to Western civilization and Christianity, which had become "embodied, in part, by all four great powers that are leagued against this supreme anti-Jew and anti-Christ of history."⁷⁷

The American War Refugee Board's 25,000 word report in November 1944 on Auschwitz also received considerable attention in the Canadian press and gave undeniable evidence that Jews were being systematically murdered. The report was based on two eye-witnesses who escaped and was confirmed by the US State Department, which stated that "the governments of the United States and of other countries have evidence which clearly substantiates the facts."⁷⁸ An AP article quoted at length from the War Refugee Board report, describing how the Nazis were improving the efficiency of murder, with larger gas chambers being installed and techniques introduced to prevent resistance by disguising the murder chambers as showers, thereby increasing the number of people the camp could

⁷⁷ *Toronto Star*, 4 January 1943, 6.

⁷⁸ Report can be found in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 3034, file 4079-E-40, part 1, "German Atrocities in Poland, Reports."

murder to 6000 per day. The *Toronto Star* stressed that the camp was primarily focused on killing Jews, estimating that 1,500,000 Jews had been murdered in Auschwitz between April 1942 and April 1944. Also quoting from the report, the article indicated that “on principle only Jews are gassed.”⁷⁹ The UP account also noted that the camp was for Jews, describing that “Jews from all over enslaved Europe were transported to the two extermination camps [Auschwitz and Birkenau] in the hundreds of thousands.”⁸⁰

Despite the abundant news articles on the wholesale massacre of Europe’s Jews, Canadian editors continued to perpetuate the interpretation that Nazi crimes against Jews were similar to German crimes against other nations, only appearing harshest because they were targeted first. In an editorial entitled “Exterminating the Poles,” the *Globe and Mail* noted that the Germans were purging the land of Poles “so that the Nazis may go in and take possession of the looted territory.”⁸¹ Its editorial “Public Enemy Number One” on February 5, 1940, extended the victims of the Nazis’ extermination campaign to anyone “incapable of becoming Germanized.” “The policy of extermination is deliberate and coldblooded,” the *Globe and Mail* wrote, “it extends to non-Jews and Jews alike. Especially victimized are the churches, priests and nuns, the Polish intellectuals and nobility. The Jews were the first because they were the easiest victims, but the terror of the Gestapo now operates among the

⁷⁹ *Globe and Mail*, 27 November 1944, 15.

⁸⁰ *Victoria Advocate*, 27 November 1944, 4; For early references to Auschwitz in the Canadian press, see *Montreal Gazette*, 13 January 1944, 13; *Toronto Star*, 26 November 1944, 8; *Globe and Mail*, 27 November 1944, 15; *Toronto Telegram*, 30 November 1944, 17. A similar report out of Geneva was printed in the *New York Times* and estimated that “1,715,000 Jews had been put to death by the Germans in upper Silesian ‘extermination camps’ at Auschwitz and Birkenau,” and appeared in the Canadian press in July 1944. See *Hamilton Spectator*, 3 July 1944.

⁸¹ *Globe and Mail*, 26 January 1940, 6.

Polish Catholics with a frightening thoroughness.”⁸² As one victim among many, the murder of Jews was discussed extensively in the *Globe and Mail*. On January 5, 1940, the *Globe and Mail* reprinted a *New York Times* article on the mass shootings of Jews in Poland. However, the explanation given to these mass killings was wide of the mark, suggesting that Jews were killed because they resisted being forced into slave labour.⁸³ A report of the nazification of Lodz in the *Globe and Mail* also did little to indicate that the fate of Jews varied from that of any other residents. The *Globe and Mail* correspondent, Jerzy Szapiro, wrote that “Jews will be expelled altogether,” but also that the “Polish middle class will disappear,” and that Polish workers would be forced into slavery.⁸⁴ In fact, when mortality rates in the Warsaw ghetto were soaring and estimated to exceed 300 per day in January 1942, a report from the *New York Times* was printed in the *Globe and Mail* which ‘corrected’ the impression held by many that the suffering of Jews was higher than the surrounding Polish population: “Contrary to what one might think, the Polish death rate is said by reliable observers to be even higher than that among inhabitants of the ghettos.”⁸⁵ The *Globe and Mail* also printed an article by BUP correspondent Glen M. Stadler, who proposed that the mass shootings in Eastern Europe were actions taken to suppress the population and to allow Germany to plunder its resources for the war effort. Under the headline, “Nearly 400,000 Killed by Hun Firing Squads,” Stadler wrote that “the wholesale use of firing squads alone proved that Hitler’s dreamed-of ‘new order’ for Europe is not quite functioning as he desired.” The mass shooting of Jews was mentioned briefly and restricted to the Baltic States

⁸² *Globe and Mail*, 5 February 1940, 6.

⁸³ *Globe and Mail*, 6 January 1940, 7.

⁸⁴ *Globe and Mail*, 20 February 1940, 3.

⁸⁵ *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1942, 75.

and Western Russia. These deaths were motivated by plunder, according to Stadler, who thought that “the appropriation of Jewish property, carried systematically by the Gestapo, has contributed a large part of the \$36,000,000,000 of German plunder in the occupied countries.”⁸⁶ The *Winnipeg Evening Tribune’s* editorial “Living Room,” argued that Nazi atrocities were aimed at ensuring long-term German hegemony in Europe by reducing the population of rival nationalities: “‘Ruin the health, destroy the race’ is the Nazi axiom. For this reason, as well as a lower birth-rate, Hitler keeps a million and a half French soldiers penned up in prison camps. It is part of a plan of extermination. Another phase of the plan is the cancellation of all visits to anti-tuberculosis clinics. This diabolical policy of weakening resistance to Nazi domination is being tried on the Poles and Jews as well as the French. It will rank high among the crimes for which the Germans will have to answer at the bar of justice after victory.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Globe and Mail*, 18 May 1942, 9.

⁸⁷ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 2 January 1943, 6.



Toronto Star, December 4, 1943, 6.

The reportage of the liberation of the death camps in Eastern Europe did little to challenge the misinformation regarding Nazi atrocities. The Lublin death camp Majdanek was liberated on July 23, 1944 and received extensive Canadian press coverage because the Soviet Union invited Western observers to investigate the camp in August 1944. However, journalists tended only to describe what they saw—ranging from the large size of the facilities to the massive piles of clothes and other personal effects left behind by the victims, to the machinery of death, such as the gas chambers and crematoria. Since reporters presumably experienced the same tour, their accounts varied little. Notably absent from most reports was any mention of Jewish victims. When they were mentioned, they were listed only

as one among the many nationalities murdered.⁸⁸ Instead of highlighting the camp as the embodiment of the Nazi racist ideology, reports tended to focus on the sadism of German guards and the degeneration of German society. With the end of the war in sight, Canadians were wrestling with how to deal with postwar Germany. One editor believed that acclimating Germans to democracy and liberalism was impossible and that the Allies would have to occupy Germany until this generation died off.⁸⁹ The notable exception to journalism that universalized Nazi victims was an excellent piece in *Maclean's* by Anna Louis Strong, an American socialist who had travelled throughout the Soviet Union investigating labour relations. She had the language skills necessary to interview numerous Jewish survivors and described the process by which Jews were stricken from local economies, ghettoized, and finally murdered.⁹⁰ Her emphasis on Nazi antisemitism as a cause for mass murder in Majdanek was exceptional due to her ability to talk to a broad range of survivors.⁹¹

One reason for the continual presentation of Jews as only one victim among many was because the universalization of Nazi victims was a concept being perpetuated in the

⁸⁸ Norman Erwin, "Making Sense of Mass Murder: Coverage of the Liberation of the Concentration Camps and trials of War Criminals, 1944-1946" (Major Research Paper, York University, 2007), 20-30.

⁸⁹ *Toronto Telegram*, 31 August 1944, 6.

⁹⁰ *Maclean's*, 1 September 1944, 11, 39-41.

⁹¹ For a representative sample of coverage of the liberation of Majdanek that appeared in Canada, see below. Just as most stories about the Holocaust were written by specific correspondents and distributed through the Canadian press by the wireless agencies, the coverage of Majdanek's liberation was no exception. Paul Winterton, *Toronto Star*, 30 August 1944, 3; W. H. Lawrence, *Globe and Mail*, 30 August 1944, 1; Daniel De Luce, *Toronto Star*, 30 August 1944, 3; Harry Hall, *Toronto Telegram*, 7 September 1944, 6; *Toronto Telegram*, 1 December 1944, 2; *Time* [Canadian Edition], 21 August 1944, 19; Richard Lauterbach, *Life*, 18 September 1944, 17-18; Wilson Woodside, *Saturday Night*, 11 November 1944, 12-13; Ralph Parker, *Liberty*, 28 October 1944, 20-31, 68; Ilya Ehrenburg, *Toronto Star*, 29 November 1944, 6; Daniel De Luce, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 30 August 1944, 1-2; Daniel De Luce, *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 August 1944, 9; Arthur Ankpin, *Victoria Advocate*, 30 August 1944; W. H. Lawrence, *Montreal Gazette*, 30 August 1944, 16; Maurice Hindus, *Toronto Star*, 30 August 1944, 1, 3.

United States,⁹² where most of the articles printed in the Canadian press originated. For example, in his report to Congress on June 12, 1944, President Roosevelt stated that the American Government had made clear its “abhorrence” for the Nazi “program of mass extermination of minorities.”

The statement, which was covered in Canada’s press, read that “as the hour of the final defeat of the Hitlerite forces draws closer, the theory of their insane desire to wipe out the Jewish race in Europe continues undiminished.” However, Roosevelt continued that Jews were not the only victims, “this is but one example: many Christian groups also are being murdered.”⁹³ While noting that Christians were also victims may have made the Nazi atrocities more personal for many Americans, it fit into the Canadian news editors’ narrative that Hitler was persecuting segments of the population who were politically opposed to Nazism because of liberal and democratic beliefs. This argument was made by the *Toronto Star*’s editor George H. Maitland on September 2, 1943. The editorial argued that wartime massacres against Jews were a natural extension of Hitler’s interwar assault on liberal institutions:

The Nazis opened the first front in their war against civilization when they passed the Nuremburg decrees against the Jewish People. This was the opening gun, as the world now knows, in their attack on Christianity, liberalism and democratic principles and ways of life. They have stated constantly that liberalism, Christianity and democracy are of Jewish origin. They have said that they dislike the Jews because of their role in the scientific and liberal movements. The Jews were the first sufferers in Hitler’s war against civilization. They have had the heaviest losses of all the submerged

⁹² See Laurel Leff, *Buried by The Times: The Holocaust and America’s Most Important Newspaper* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press & the Coming of the Holocaust, 1939-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

⁹³ *Hamilton Spectator*, 12 June 1944, 3.

groups in Nazi-occupied Europe. Over a million innocent people have already been put to death. Hitler has declared his intention to exterminate them⁹⁴

While news articles on the events of the Holocaust were abundant, there was a multiplicity of interpretations as to why Nazis were targeting Jews. Often Jewish victims were discussed in the same manner as other political opponents to Nazism in an attempt to show that all who suffered at the hands of the Nazis did so as a result of defending the liberal order.

2.3 Canadian Jews Respond to the Minimization of the Holocaust

Although information in the Canadian mainstream press on the Holocaust was spotty before the summer of 1942, the Canadian Jewish press was already filled with news articles that warned that the Nazi ghettoization had devolved into mass murder, either through methods of starvation and disease or from shootings as is evident by the coverage in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. The contrast between the sheer volume of information detailing the destruction of European Jewry in the Jewish press and the interpretation in the mainstream media that Jews were just one victim among many, led Canadian Jews to initiate a public campaign to raise awareness of the Holocaust.

Much of information in the Canadian Jewish press came from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) and the Jewish Press Service (JPS). In 1941, the Nazi radio station in Prague declared that Jews would “be regarded as hostages for the anti-German war-mongering activity of the other half of world Jewry in Britain, the United States and elsewhere.” The announcer declared that the “Jews will vanish from Europe like wolves” since Hitler was

⁹⁴ *Toronto Star*, 2 September 1943, 6.

determined “to eliminate all Jews from Europe.”⁹⁵ Such proclamations did not immediately bring about the idea that the Nazis would literally murder every European Jew, but when reports of wholesale massacres began filling up Jewish newspapers, it made these stories more believable. In one case, Sophia Ozerskaya, who had managed to hide her Jewish heritage from the Nazis, told JTA correspondent S. S. Rodoff of what she experienced in Nazi-occupied Minsk. She recounted the immediacy, following the fall of Minsk, with which the Nazis cordoned off a dozen streets to form a Jewish ghetto. On three different occasions she spied on the *Einsatzgruppen* rounding up tens of thousands of Jews, driving them outside the city and shooting them. The first mass execution on November 7, 1941 claimed the lives of 35,000 Jews. Ozerskaya’s account was so detailed that she even noted the gendered nature of the extermination, with men being murdered *en masse* first, and women and children being murdered months later, in March and April.⁹⁶ As early as July 1942, the JTA reported that gas was being used to kill Poland’s Jews. By this time, an estimated 700,000 Jews had been killed in this manner over the past twelve months. Thirty-five thousand Jews in the Lodz ghetto had been “executed in gas chambers carried on trucks.” These trucks had been driven to the nearby towns of Kolo, Bugaj, and Isbica, and

⁹⁵ “Hitler Keeps 8,000,000 Jews as hostages,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 19 December 1941, 24. The broadcast was eerily similar to Hitler’s speech on 20 January 1939, when he warned: “if the international Jewish financiers in and outside of Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.”

⁹⁶ S. S. Rodoff, “Massacre of 72,000 Jews in Minsk, Described by Escaping Eye-Witness,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 21 August 1942, 5. Another report even notes the contradictory nature of Nazi antisemitic law and sexual practices in the *Wehrmacht*. This report states that “the Germans are still sending attractive Jewish women to the military houses of prostitution which follow the German Army.” See “Report Nazi Executions of Jews in Ukraine Continue,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 12 December 1941, 6.

used to kill their Jewish populations.⁹⁷ This story was confirmed in August, when Canadian Jewish readers learned that “portable gas chambers” were being used to kill thousands of Polish Jews near Chelmno. The source was three “Jewish grave diggers” who had escaped the “Chelmno castle.” They told the grisly details of Jews being asked to strip and being “led to the ‘bath’, which actually was a platform from which they were loaded onto large grey trucks.” After being “jammed inside,” they were driven into the woods while gas was pumped into the back. The bodies were then dumped into a “pit.”⁹⁸ There was no doubt that these gas chambers were the product of the Nazi plot to exterminate every Jew in Poland. Another news item even recorded Heinrich Himmler’s trip to Warsaw, where he had “worked out details of a plan aiming at the mass extermination of the Jews of Poland.” The Nazi language of mass murder was easily decoded in the Canadian Jewish press: “‘deportation’ [was] a new Nazi term for execution.”⁹⁹

The Premier of the Polish Government-in-exile, Wladyslaw Sikorski, broadcast in June 1942 that “tens of thousands of Jews have been massacred in Lublin, Wilno, Lwow” and several other towns throughout the year.¹⁰⁰ One widely distributed report stated that one million Jews had “already been annihilated by the Nazis in Poland and that Heinrich Himmler...has ordered the extermination of one-half of the entire Jewish population in occupied Polish territory by the end of the year.” The report detailed that the Jewish ghettos

⁹⁷ “Nazi Massacre 700,000 Polish Jews: Thousands Executed in Mobile Gas Chambers,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1942, 5.

⁹⁸ “Ghastly Details—Portable Gas Chambers Execute Thousands of Polish Jews,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 7 August 1942, 6. For news stories of the Chelmno extermination camp in the Canadian Jewish press see *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 5 March 1943, 4.

⁹⁹ “Himmler Completes Plans for ‘Extermination’ of Polish Jews,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 7 August 1942, 5.

¹⁰⁰ “Sikorski Assails Nazi Atrocities Against Jews,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 26 June 1942, 16.

were being emptied. Jews “were herded into cattle cars,” which had lime and chlorinated water “sprinkled” on the floors of the cars; the end result being that “when the trains arrived at their destination, half of the passengers were dead from suffocation.” The Polish Government was certain that the Jews on the trains went to “special ‘extermination camps’ near the township of Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor, where they were murdered in wholesale massacres.”¹⁰¹

Reports were not limited to Hitler’s quest of exterminating the Jews of Poland; it was clear that Jews were being wiped out even further East. One report stated: “300,000 Jews Executed in Vilna and Kaunas Districts since October.” What followed was an extensive list of the number of Jews murdered in various towns throughout Eastern Europe.¹⁰² Another report indicated that twenty-five percent of Rumanian Jews were already dead, with epidemics and starvation poised to rapidly kill the rest.¹⁰³ As early as March 20, 1942, A. M. Klein could confidently state that the policy of the German High Command “is the total extermination of the Jews of Europe.” Although some Jews were kept alive for slave labour to help the Nazi war effort, Klein noted that even Jewish labourers were destined for death because “the mass-murder of Jews constitutes an end in itself.”¹⁰⁴

On December 17, 1942, the Jewish press widely covered the United Nations’ “Declaration of the Allied Nations on Nazi Slaughter of Jews.” The statement left no doubt

¹⁰¹ “Mass-Extermination of Jews: only 40,000 left in Warsaw ghetto,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1942, 28; see also “Poland’s Remaining Jews to be Interned and Exterminated,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 11 December 1942, 13.

¹⁰² “300,000 Jews Executed in Vilna and Kaunas Districts since October,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1942, 5.

¹⁰³ “70,000 Rumanian Jews Interned in Occupied Russia are Starving; 25% Reported Dead,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1942, 6.

¹⁰⁴ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 20 March 1942, 3.

that Jews were being exterminated. “Allied attention,” it read in part, “has been drawn to numerous reports from Europe that the German authorities, not content with denying to persons of Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended, the most elementary human rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler’s oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe.” The declaration highlighted the “appalling horror and brutality” of the conditions that Jews had to suffer in the cattle cars when the “ghettos established by the German invader are being systematically emptied.” Fit Jews were “worked to death in labor camps” while the sick or elderly were “left to die of exposure and starvation or are deliberately massacred in mass executions.”¹⁰⁵ Canadian Jews read that in Britain, after Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden read the Statement in the House of Commons and called on parliament to stand and observe one minute of silence, he was asked what the Allies were doing to rescue Europe’s Jews. His response was vague: “There are immense difficulties standing in the way, but the allies are doing all they can to alleviate the horrors.”¹⁰⁶

Many Jews conceptualized the war against Hitler as a struggle between Judeo-Christianity and Hitler’s inhuman tyranny, building on the Canadian discourse of the interwar period. Foremost in making this case was Rabbi Harry J. Stern, spiritual leader of Montreal’s Reform Temple Emanu-el and champion of inter-religious dialogue. Following the Allied Declaration against Nazi atrocities, Stern argued that the fight to save Jews needed to be conducted on two fronts. First, he recognized the need to wage war against Nazi

¹⁰⁵ “Nazis Guilty of Jewish Massacres Will Be Punished Eleven United Nations Declare,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 25 December 1942, 5. For the preparations to this declaration, see *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1942, 6.

¹⁰⁶ “British Parliament Honors Jews Massacred by Nazis; Eden Reads Allies Statement,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 25 December 1942, 5.

Germany. He believed that Hitler's murder of European Jews and Hitler's military conquest of Europe were both part of an irreconcilable conflict between the Judeo-Christian tradition that championed individual liberty and Hitler's illiberal religion based on racial hierarchy. "Basically it is a war of ideas. Two irreconcilable philosophies confront each other," Stern said, "on the one side, the racial-national idea—that is the supremacy of the racial state as the one preeminent object of devotion, to which all persons much be subjugated; and on the other, the individualist-universalist idea—that is , the supremacy of persons, one by one, as the object of pre-eminent concern, and therefore a universalism, that, overriding national and racial lines see all humanity in terms of God's Fatherhood and Man's Brotherhood." While Stern presented the Jews as Hitler's "first victim," he also noted that Jews were also the "worst victim" in that they were suffering the most. Second, Stern believed that more needed to be done to help Europe's Jews before they were completely wiped out. He lamented that the Allies had not intervened ten years earlier and "spared the world this holocaust." While he thought that the Allied declaration was "commendable" and appreciated that the Nazis would be punished "for having done to death two million Jews," he believed the Allies ought to do something to save the millions of Jews still trapped in Europe: "I wish it were possible that practical action might be taken despite the recognized difficulties to rescue those living, starving and dying within ghetto walls who by Hitler's decree are faced with extermination!"¹⁰⁷

With such ominous news coming out of Europe, Canadian Jews devoted themselves to supporting the war effort, as this was seen as the most likely means to end Hitler's reign of

¹⁰⁷ Harry J. Stern, "Jew and Christian in a World at War," in Harry J. Stern ed. *The Jewish Spirit Triumphant* (New York: Bloch, 1943), 1-10

terror against Europe's Jews. The Canadian Jewish community did not see the Holocaust as distinctly separate from Hitler's military campaigns since they believed that Hitler's racial ideology was the driving force behind Germany's expansionistic foreign policy. Canada's Jews hoped that if Canadians viewed Jewish resisters as Allies that they would pressure Britain to open Palestine up to European Jews.

When Britain declared war on Germany, Canada's Jews gave a sigh of relief. Even before Canada was at war, A. M. Klein championed the West's decision to fight the scourge of tyranny, even if it led to another world war or would "lead to a holocaust [of] stupendous proportions." The Jewish diaspora's support of military conflict, for Klein, had been settled by Hitler years earlier: "The reaction of Jewry permits of no ambiguity. For six years the Nazis have carried on a relentless war against our people, a war directed against the defenceless, inspired by no reason save the instincts of savagery, and conducted without let-up, without restraint, without quarter. Its objective has been shouted from the roof-tops, and has been echoed across the world—the utter destruction, the complete annihilation of Jewry." Supporting the war effort was of the utmost importance since Klein rightly suspected that Jews "shall not survive a British defeat."¹⁰⁸ A. B. Bennett, a founder of the Canadian Jewish Congress, described this sentiment years later: "the feeling of helplessness, of aloneness in a world of cruelty gave way to a spirit of Militancy. The Jews had allies in the fight against Hitlerism."¹⁰⁹ Supporting the war effort and saving Europe's Jews were interrelated in the minds of Canadian Jews. Ending Hitler's reign over Europe and preserving the British Empire was paramount to saving Europe's Jews.

¹⁰⁸ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 8 September 1939, 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Congress Bulletin*, 11 December 1953, in JHS, box 253, file 7, "Congress Bulletin."

Even in the early years of the war, Samuel Bronfman, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, reiterated the sentiment that the lives of European Jews could only be safeguarded by the military defeat of Nazism. Speaking at the Inter-American Jewish Conference less than a month before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Bronfman argued that “democratic ideals cannot be attained solely through an emphasis upon the rights of man,” but occasionally required a military response. “Speaking for Canadian Jewry,” Bronfman continued, “that immediately as our country declared war against the Nazi barbarian, the Canadian Jewish Congress forthwith geared its activity to one end—a maximum war effort upon all fronts. All other problems became, by the very nature of things, purely incidental; for the supreme objective included all the subsidiary goals.”¹¹⁰ In Samuel Bronfman’s fiftieth birthday address, he reaffirmed Canadian Jewry’s loyalty to the Crown: “How imperative it is for us, living in the land of freedom, to do all that we can, and more, to preserve the Empire, to save Europe from itself, to safeguard the principles of decent human conduct, and, by glorious deed, to ransom our brothers from their captivity.”¹¹¹ Again on January 11, 1942, Bronfman confirmed the Canadian Jewish position that military victory was essential to the survival of European Jewry: “this is now a life and death struggle between civilization and barbarism.”¹¹² While Bronfman emphasized that the freedom of all peoples was at stake, he made it clear that the Jews had a special interest in the war.

Indeed many Jews joined Canada’s military because they wanted to strike back at the Nazis after reading about the persecution of the Jews, even if they did not yet know that

¹¹⁰ Samuel Bronfman, address, 23 November 1941, in JHS, box 258, file 15, “Bronfman, Samuel, 1941-1951, Correspondence,” 2.

¹¹¹ Samuel Bronfman, address, 4 March 1941, in JHS, box 258, file 15, “Bronfman, Samuel, 1941-1951, Correspondence,” 7.

¹¹² *Globe and Mail*, 12 January 1942, 13.

Hitler intended to murder them. In a series of interviews in the 1980s by the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, several Jews from Winnipeg remembered that they enlisted in Canada's military to fight the Nazis in large part because of the responsibility they felt to do something to protect their brethren in Europe. One man recounted that he joined in 1940 after reading newspaper accounts of Jewish persecution: "it bothered him when he heard how the Jews were being discriminated against in Europe," the interviewer recounted.¹¹³ A Jewish woman recalled enlisting "partly because of the horror" enacted against the Jews, "though she soon realized that her efforts weren't going to make the difference."¹¹⁴ Another Jewish man joined the Army just days after Canada's entry into the war, specifically noting that his "decision to join the service came with a clearer understanding of what was happening in Europe" and was "not motivated by patriotism" but by concern for European Jewry.¹¹⁵ Historian Gerald Tulchinsky notes that numerous Jews joined the military because they had a personal stake in defeating Nazism as both Canadians and Jews. He quotes Rabbi David Monson, who tried to recruit Jews to join the Canadian military by arguing that Jews had even more to fight for than Christians: "if Hitler wins, Christians will be slaves. Jews will be committed to death."¹¹⁶

During the first several years of the war, the Canadian Jewish Congress focused on promoting recruitment and fundraising. In 1940, the CJC opened a recruiting center for Canada's military in Montreal. It distributed a brochure calling for volunteers, emphasizing that the military struggle was not only to protect the British Empire, but also Europe's Jews:

¹¹³ Interview of DL by Stuart Carroll, 5 June 1986, in JHC, no. 379.

¹¹⁴ Interview of ZL by Stuart Carroll, 2 June 1986, in JHC, no. 379.

¹¹⁵ Interview of RL by Gilead Paritzky, 24 July 1986, in JHC, no. 379.

¹¹⁶ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 205-11.

The Nazi hordes are increasing the momentum of the war from day to day—more and more millions of brave men are thrown into the life-and-death struggle for the preservation of their national existence. Hitler has vowed to conquer the British Empire destroy the Jewish race, and to enslave the whole world. Hitler is fighting desperately, making use of tremendous forces to attain his goal—to become the sole dictator of the world. Hitler’s victory would mean the destruction of our Empire and the annihilation of our people. There is only one answer to this challenge: Hitler and his gang must be destroyed.¹¹⁷

By January 1, 1944, 12,000 Jewish men had volunteered for military service. The CJC also furnished and operated sixteen recreational centers across the country to help boost morale among military personnel. Thousands of “comfort boxes” and millions of cigarettes were purchased by the CJC and sent to Canadian soldiers on the frontlines.¹¹⁸ In 1940, Bronfman personally donated \$250,000 to the Canadian Government to research the technology needed to speed up the defeat of Germany, this was in addition to the one million dollars of war bonds Bronfman purchased annually.¹¹⁹ In anticipation of the Fifth General Session of the CJC, Jewish journalist I. Medres interviewed Bronfman in December 1941 to learn what priorities the CJC would be focusing on in the coming year. Not surprisingly, Bronfman emphasized Canadian Jewish dedication to the war effort: “Since the last plenary session of the Canadian Jewish Congress three years ago, world events have completely changed millions of lives. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have been up-rooted from their homes, have been forced into slavery and herded into ghettos. They have been living a life worse

¹¹⁷ “To The Jewish Able-Bodied Young Man,” recruitment pamphlet, n.d., in OJA, Ben Kayfetz fonds, 62, s.3, file 1, “CJC WWII enlistment posters and comic file.”

¹¹⁸ “Finish Your Job,” CJC fundraising pamphlet, 1944, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series DB 01, box 20, “CJC Pamphlets.”

¹¹⁹ *Winnipeg Tribune*, 26 September 1940, 6; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1940, 104.

than death....To remove this scourge is the mission of all remaining free peoples....They will not lay down their arms until Hitlerism has been completely destroyed.”¹²⁰

The CJC also felt compelled to publicize the immense contributions of the Canadian Jewish community to stave off criticism that Jews were not pulling their weight. A common criticism was that Jewish recruitment was below the national average.¹²¹ This complaint was voiced by the Director of the Immigration Branch, F. C. Blair in 1943. Writing to a former internee and now Jewish farm laborer who was disputing with his employer, Blair railed that Jews were shirking their duties to help Canada wage war:

Now I want you to take a good look at your own situation. You are not subject to military call-up or training or service. No matter how many Canadian boys are called up and have to risk life itself by military service, you are exempt from this. You know or should know that there is a very critical shortage of farm workers in this country and it should not be difficult for you to see why we insist on men in your position rendering national service by remaining at farm work....The purpose of the present letter is to tell you very frankly that unless you settle down and behave yourself and endeavor to render decent service that your employer has a right to expect and that you are under obligation to give, we propose to return you to the camp and leave you there as an example of a man who had no interest in helping the war effort of the country which had given him shelter.

The farm worker was shocked by this and other inflammatory letters from Blair, and explained that he had the flu and had taken only one afternoon to rest in bed to recover.

Moreover, he argued that he wholeheartedly supported the war effort by buying as many war savings stamps and certificates as he could afford.¹²²

¹²⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 12 December 1941, 8.

¹²¹ See James Walker “Claiming Equality for Canadian Jews: The Struggle for Inclusion, 1930-1945,” in Ruth Klein, ed. *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 237.

¹²² See correspondence between Blair to EN between February and March 1943, in LAC, Canadian National Committee on Refugees fonds, MG28-V43, vol. 1, file 24, “Internee Cases, L-W.”

Gerald Tulchinsky has argued that the disparity between Jewish and non-Jewish recruitment is because the Canadian Jewish population tended to be more highly educated than the national average.¹²³ However, during the last two years of the war, as information on the Holocaust became more widely known, Canadian Jewish recruitment jumped from 7.7 percent of Canadian Jews serving in Canada's armed forces to 10 percent.¹²⁴ The CJC was eager to publicize Canadian Jewish contributions because it hoped that Canada would sympathise with the need to open Canada's door and allow entry to Jewish refugees. Speaking at the Western Conference of the CJC on May 25, 1943, Bronfman outlined the contributions of Canadian Jewry to the war effort, and suggested that this service entitled European Jews to be granted "temporary asylum" in the free world and "permanent asylum and final rehabilitation in the land of their forefathers—Palestine."¹²⁵

Percy Jacobson, a Jewish small business owner who kept a detailed diary documenting the political and social climate in Montreal during the war, was acutely aware of the deteriorating situation facing Europe's Jews and this fuelled a hatred not of Germans, but rather a disdain for democracies that reveled in their tolerance of minorities yet offered no protection to persecuted Jews elsewhere:

The mess we are now in is because expediency has been the guiding principle of England. If England had stood for justice and righteousness when the Jews were first persecuted by Hitler there would today be a different England...and perhaps a different Germany. I mention England because she has always been held up and held herself up as the champion of human liberty, of law and of

¹²³ Whereas 41.4 percent of Canadian men of military age joined Canada's armed forces, only 39.9 percent of Jews in the same age bracket enrolled. Those that did were often conscripted and inactive: with Jews composing 1.46 percent of the Canadian population but 2.2 percent of the conscripts. See Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 209-11.

¹²⁴ *Hamilton Spectator*, 13 January 1945.

¹²⁵ *Winnipeg Tribune*, 25 May 1943, 6.

decency. This I think is her crime against civilization and one which she will be judged for in history.¹²⁶

Nonetheless, with Britain's entry into the war, Jacobson's family were committed to the fight. His son joined the RCAF in 1939, because, as Jacobson said, "we are Jews and Hitler's persecution of the Jews will go down into history along with the stories of the Spanish Inquisition."¹²⁷

However, when news from the Polish National Council in the summer of 1942 reached Canada that nearly a million Jews had been slaughtered, the Canadian Jewish community sought to move beyond supporting the war effort to raising awareness of the Holocaust in mainstream Canada. Ben Sheps wrote Bronfman on July 6, 1942, noting the lack of coverage of Jewish atrocities in the mainstream press at the time and demanding that the CJC do something to spur a media frenzy around the massacre of Jews. Sheps pointed out that "with the exception of a few brief paragraphs in the daily press, little, if any comment has been made by the Canadian newspapers, in Western Canada at least, on these atrocious happenings." Sheps speculated that due to this lack of coverage in the mainstream dailies, "very many [Canadians] are unfortunately unaware of the slaughter of the Jewish civilian population which is taking place in German occupied countries at present." Hoping to return Canadian sentiment against Nazi antisemitism to what it was "shortly after his [Hitler's] rise to power," Sheps urged the CJC to launch a nationwide protest immediately, before an organization such "as the Jewish Branch of the League for Allied Victory, which is

¹²⁶ Jacobson Diary entry, 14 April 1940, in CJCCCNA, Percy and Joe Jacobson fonds.

¹²⁷ Jacobson Diary entry, 13 September 1939, in CJCCCNA, Percy and Joe Jacobson fonds.

Communist inspired, may take advantage of the situation and endeavor to capture Jewish sympathy.”¹²⁸

Mass meetings began to be organized by the Canadian Jewish community to raise awareness of the Holocaust and were frequently reported in the secular press. The Jewish Labor Committee was especially active in bringing experts on Nazi anti-Jewish policy to Canada to reveal the tragedy befalling Europe’s Jews and to raise funds to feed trapped Jews and help them escape. One of the first mass meetings organized by the JLC was in Toronto and included William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, M. J. Coldwell, leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and S. Nutkevitch, a refugee who escaped from Europe. Green interpreted Germany’s mass murders within the broader context of the political struggle for European hegemony. He warned that the Allies needed more than military victory in order to defeat this “modern Haman.” Green called on Canadians to challenge racism: “we must exterminate the ignorance, the hate, the bestiality which breed and nourish such inhuman philosophies as naziism [sic] and fascism. We must clean out the pestilence holes of Europe where tyranny constantly is reborn through the centuries. We must activate the forces of democracy throughout the world offering freedom, opportunity and equal rights to all peoples.” Although Green did not minimize the destruction of European Jews—noting that one and a half million Jews had already been slaughtered since the beginning of the war—he asserted that these deaths were attributed to political resistance, the victims having been “starved to death or killed in action resisting their merciless oppressors.” Perhaps not realizing that the religious and philosophical

¹²⁸ B. Sheps to Samuel Bronfman, letter, 6 July 1942, in JHS, box 258, file 15, “Bronfman, Samuel, 1941-1951, Correspondence.”

divisions that paralyzed the American Jewish community were largely nonexistent in Canada, he demanded that Canadian Jews “forget your own personal, petty and immediate interests” and devote their resources to winning the war. Moreover, he did not present the Jewish situation as unique, instead arguing that “this is a war for survival—survival for Jew and Gentile alike, survival for the poor man and the rich, the worker and the employer.” Green’s interpretations were shared by Coldwell, who reiterated that Hitlerism needed to be abolished in order to lay “the foundation of a new and better world order based on social justice and universal peace.” According to the report in the *Toronto Star*, Nutkevitch focused less on postwar solutions and more on recalling the horrors he had witnessed before coming to Canada.¹²⁹ Several months later, the JLC invited Jacob Pat, a Polish journalist who had escaped to New York in 1938, to speak in Montreal on February 16, 1943 about the situation facing Polish Jews. While Pat emphasized that the Jews were resisting the Nazis and were mobilizing, “awaiting the signal of invasion to spring upon the Nazis from behind,” he made it clear that they were desperate to escape Poland. Pat complained that the JLC’s recent request to the Canadian Government that sixty exit visas be made available immediately for Jews hiding in France, Portugal and Spain, was being delayed: “for men threatened with Nazi arrest, every day of delay means the possibility of imprisonment, torture or death.” His graphic descriptions of the Nazi murder of 10,000 children executed in gas vans in a single day in August 1943, and his description of a fifty square kilometer area around the town of Belgite “dotted with fires” radiating from pyres of burning corpses, made the local press.¹³⁰ General Secretary of the WJC, Arie Tartakower, who had fled Poland following the Nazi

¹²⁹ *Toronto Star*, 5 October 1942, 4.

¹³⁰ *Montreal Gazette*, 15 February 1943, 6.

invasion, was invited to speak in Winnipeg about the ongoing efforts to save Europe's Jews on April 4, 1943.¹³¹ The *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* described his talk as a "somber accounting of how 2,000,000 Jews have died in Europe under the scourge of Hitler," and stressed that "if his figures erred, they erred as under-estimates." Tartakower insisted that what was needed was the immediate shipping of food stuffs to starving European Jews and the declaration of various allied countries to provide temporary havens for Jews who escaped to neutral countries, thus facilitating a route to safety.¹³²

During the summer of 1942, members of the Canadian Jewish Congress organized further protest meetings across the country to be held in August. The purpose of the meetings was not simply to voice the "indignation of all civilized men against the abominable barbarism practised by the Nazi savages against our race," but to create "resolutions and speeches stressing the unity of Jews and of the United Nations in their determination to stop at nothing short of freedom."¹³³ The organizers hoped not only to harden Canadians' resolve to wage war, but also to stir up public sympathy and compel the government to change its refugee policy.¹³⁴ One CJC executive sent a letter to the Montreal Jewish community, stating that "the inhuman sufferings and tribulations of our unfortunate brethren in occupied countries should arouse the conscience of every civilized man and woman.... We must arouse public opinion!"¹³⁵

¹³¹ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 3 April 1943, 2.

¹³² *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 5 April 1943, 15.

¹³³ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 24 July 1942, 15.

¹³⁴ For more on the Canadian Jewish effort to change government refugee policy see Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys Limited, 1983).

¹³⁵ Michael Garber, "To the Heads of Jewish Organizations in Montreal," 23 September 1942, in CJCCNA, series ZA, box 2, folder 15,

In October 1942, the Canadian Jewish community again organized three coordinated mass protests in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal. The Winnipeg Division of the CJC rented out the largest hall in the city, the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium, which the city rented to them at half price to show its support for the cause. Basically, the entire Winnipeg intelligentsia, including church leaders, the political establishment, and foreign dignitaries, agreed to attend.¹³⁶ The CJC hoped that the meeting “would focus public attention on the sufferings of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, and would bring about an authoritative expression of opinion which would be spread throughout Canada in conjunction with the meeting to be held in Montreal and Toronto.”¹³⁷

Besides protest meetings, Canadian Jews also conducted memorial services for the Nazis’ Jewish victims as a method to raise awareness of the Holocaust. Although some community members believed that mourning the dead was counterintuitive when the struggle to defeat Nazi Germany continued, Canadian Jewish memorial services were nevertheless held in 1942. The Palestine rabbinate declared December 2 a day of mourning and the Canadian Jewish community followed suit despite A. B. Bennett’s disapproval. Writing in his regular column in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Bennett argued that memorials were dangerous and could sap energy away from the war effort: “can we afford to divert our attention and energy from the practical tasks at hand and indulge in an orgy of unproductive

¹³⁶ Those who spoke included A.M. Shinbane, K.C., Premier John Brackon, Mayor John Queen, president of the University of Manitoba Sidney Smith, Anglican Minister Hon. Canon Carruthers, Bishop Vincent Cooney of the Catholic Church, United Church Minister E. M. Howse, co-chairman of the Canadian Conference of Christians and Jews, E. Crossley Hunter, T. McCutchan of the Trades and Labour Council of Winnipeg, and Rabbi Solomon Frank. In the audience were representatives from the American, Polish, Czechoslovak, Norwegian, and Netherlands Consuls. Other notable attendees included R. J. McWilliams, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and J. W. Dafoe, president of the Winnipeg Free Press.

¹³⁷ “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1942,” minutes, 8 October 1942, in JHC, box 250, file 8, 2-3.

hysteria?” One historian has taken Bennett’s words to mean that he was indifferent to the suffering of European Jewry and that this attitude was shared by much of the Jewish community.¹³⁸ However, Bennett was not being apathetic; he believed that this was the time to redouble the Jewish community’s efforts to destroy Hitler’s hordes and save Jewish lives. He ended his column by writing: “does not God in His wisdom expect the human spirit today to speak forth His message in a voice of steel, in the accents of cannon thunder, to silence and [s]lay the rampant genius of evil. Human beings have but measured reserves of nervous strength. We must husband our powers for the great venture of annihilating Hitlerism.”¹³⁹

Yet memorial services were held in “nearly every community across the country,” the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* reported. In Toronto, Bennett himself opened the Kaddish service in Massey Hall, where several thousand participated. Numerous synagogues throughout Montreal offered memorial services to mourners. Non-Jewish politicians frequently spoke during these services, often using the Jewish community’s grief to consolidate their contribution to the war effort. Although western Canada received delayed notice that December 2 was to be the day of mourning, the demand for these services was so strong that services were quickly assembled. The services were not limited to Jewish institutions. Thanks to fliers and posters being distributed throughout November, many public schools in Toronto and Montreal assembled their pupils, regardless of whether or not they were Jewish, and told them of the great suffering that Jews were enduring in Europe.

¹³⁸ Max Beer, “The Montreal Jewish Community and the Holocaust,” *Current Psychology* 26, no. 3-4 (2007): 191-205.

¹³⁹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 11 December 1942, 6.

High school students were asked to observe a moment of silence and Jewish labour unions demanded that their workers be allowed to do likewise.¹⁴⁰

By December 1942, with news reaching the West that the Nazis were hunting down all the Jews throughout their occupied territories, transporting them to the General Government region and murdering them, Canadian Jews demanded that their leadership extend their efforts beyond supporting the military action against Nazi Germany and raising awareness of the Holocaust to pushing the Canadian Government to open its doors to Jews. While the CJC had been lobbying the Canadian Government to negotiate entry for some of Europe's Jews to enter Canada, these negotiations were confidential, giving the impression that nothing was being done. Canadian Jews thus urged their leadership to do something to alter Canada's rigid immigration policy and bring hope to their European brethren.

Several plans were discussed and rejected in 1943 to raise awareness of the plight of Canadian Jews and compel the Canadian Government to open its doors to allow Jewish refugees entry. The Winnipeg's People's Relief Committee proposed a tag day, in which volunteers would hit the streets of Winnipeg to raise money for Jewish refugees by selling pins. However, this proposal was rejected by the CJC because it would likely result in little money and raise the wrong kind of publicity. Ben Sheps and Alex Freeman explained that "it should be our objective to arouse public sympathy among non-Jews, which would exert pressure on the Canadian Government and the United Nations to admit Jewish refugees to Palestine, and to Allied countries, and that soliciting small contributions from the non-Jewish public by a tag day would not help us in any way, but would on the contrary defeat our

¹⁴⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 11 December 1942, 7.

purpose.”¹⁴¹ The Canadian Jewish Congress proposed that a petition demanding that Canada admit Jewish refugees should be circulated with the intention of garnering the signature of every Canadian Jew. Once signed, it would be presented at the inter-governmental refugee conference. But with that conference scheduled to be held in Ottawa, and the Canadian National Committee for Refugees (CNCR) drafting their own petition tailored towards all Canadians, the CJC decided to abandon their own petition in favour of getting Canadian Jews to support the CNCR petition.¹⁴² The CJC printed fliers and pamphlets and distributed the petition to Jewish stores, manufacturers, and businesses to encourage the Jewish community to vote.¹⁴³ Unfortunately, the petition was a failure. Canadians were not eager to support the prospect of permitting more Jews entrance to Canada. By January 13, 1944, less than 12,000 signatures had been collected in western Canada.¹⁴⁴ Two months later, the national figure was still far below the objective of 500,000 names.

Total number of signatures for the CNCR Petition by Province

Ontario	48,419
Quebec	34,388
Manitoba	15,714
British Columbia	8,601
Saskatchewan	7,689
Alberta	6,230
New Brunswick	2,294
Nova Scotia	1,981
Prince Edward Island	330
Newfoundland (Canadians)	17
 Total:	 125,663 ¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1943,” minutes, 13 May 1943, in JHC, box 250, file 9, 1-2.

¹⁴² “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1943,” Louis Rosenberg Report, 22 June 1943, in JHC, box 250, file 9.

¹⁴³ “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1943,” minutes, 4 November 1943, in JHC, box 250, file 9, 2.

¹⁴⁴ “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1944,” minutes, 13 January 1944, in JHC, box 250, file 9, 2.

¹⁴⁵ “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1944,” minutes, 16 March 1944, in JHC, box 250, file 9, 1.

Not only did the petition gain less support than the Jewish community hoped, the John Baptiste Society had retaliated with its own petition against the admission of refugees, which had gotten 125,000 signatures.¹⁴⁶

Similarly, in December 1943, the Toronto and District Council of the Canadian Legion advised members not to sign petitions to bring refugees into Canada. The Legion said that “mass petitions now being circulated for admission of refugees to Canada represent an objectionable form of ‘pressure politics’ not in accordance with Canadian democratic principles.”¹⁴⁷ Letters poured into various newspapers arguing that restrictions needed to be upheld to ensure that refugees did not flood into Canada and steal jobs from Canadian men fighting overseas. Writing to the editor of the *Globe and Mail*, O. T. G. Williams expressed the cynical view that Jewish organizations were manipulating Canadians by appealing to Christian values: “An appeal made in the name of Christianity is hard to resist for a people which is professedly Christian. When the appeal is further strengthened by being made on behalf of victims of an oppression our men are dying to suppress, it, for many, becomes irresistible.” Resist Canadians must, Williams demanded, not only because there was “doubt” that refugees were as “destitute” as they claimed, or because they would “step into vacancies created by our men who are overseas,” but most importantly because refugees would alter the racial makeup of Canada: “a country which owes its place in the world to British blood, and can hold her own only by being British.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Minutes, 20 June 1943, United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies (Central Division), in OJA, F. 17, S. 4-2, file 1.

¹⁴⁷ *Toronto Telegram*, 7 December 1943, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series Db 01, box 10, file 11: “Refugees-newsclippings, 1943-44.”

¹⁴⁸ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 8 November 1943, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series Db 01, box 10, file 11: “Refugees-newsclippings, 1943-44.”

Polls by the *Canadian Institute of Public Opinion* conducted in January 1943 and again one year later indicate that the Canadian National Committee on Refugees' campaign had also created a strong backlash amongst French Canadians.

“After the war do you think Canada should open its doors and permit people from all parts of the world to settle here, or do you think we should keep them out?”

	1943	1944
Open its doors....	14%	13%
Allow some in	59	50
Keep all out....	21	29
Undecided....	6	8

Favoring a closed door policy:

	1943	1944
British origin....	13%	18%
French origin....	46	56
Other origin....	14	15 ¹⁴⁹

But while the publicity generated by the Jewish community garnered backlash from many circles, it did draw some positive attention to the Holocaust. Watson Thomson, a Scot whose résumé included teacher training in Jamaica and Nigeria and who had immigrated to Canada in the late 1930s to become Director of Adult Education at the University of Manitoba in 1941, was appalled at the apathy towards European Jews. In a radio broadcast on CBC during Easter Sunday, 1943, he challenged Canadians to take a “few minutes” away from the festivities of Easter and “look at events in our own day which constitute nothing less than the crucifixion of a whole people.” Watson elaborated on how two million Jews had

¹⁴⁹ *Welland-Port Colborne Eve Tribune*, 26 January 1944, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series Db 01, box 10, file 11: “Refugees-newsclippings, 1943-44.”

been killed to date and how “the killing still goes on.” While he acknowledged that the West’s leaders had spoken against the atrocities and promised swift justice against the perpetrators upon defeat, he pointed out that they had said nothing “about immediate action to save his [Hitler’s] remaining victims.” The lack of a concerted rescue effort, Watson believed, was not because “there is nothing we could do,” it was “because we care more about defeating and punishing Nazis than saving Jewish lives.” Watson continued by contending that Canada was not exempt from criticism because “we have never said we wanted them [Jewish refugees] ourselves.” Watson called on Canadians to go beyond expressing sympathy for the plight of Jews, but to write to their politicians and demand that Canada rescue Jews from Europe: “Upon us is a higher and harder obligation. Not to pity the Jews, not to sentimentalize over them, not to pass resolutions about them. But to rise up and act with all the passion of an awakened human conscience, and save Jewish lives.”¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, by March 1943, following the decision to move the refugee inter-governmental conference from Ottawa to Bermuda, Canadian Jews were giving up hope that the CJC would influence Canadian officials at all on the question of rescuing European Jews. A. H. Aronovitch, president of the Western Division of the CJC, lamented: “Our hope for immediate relief for the war sufferers in Europe is at the moment shattered and we can only pray that the individual British, American and Canadian statesmen charged with this grave responsibility are fully conscious of the fact that time is not preventing the murder of our brothers and other persecuted peoples.”¹⁵¹ The Bermuda Conference, was, in fact, a

¹⁵⁰ Watson, radio address, 1943 in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 25, file 231A.

¹⁵¹ A. H. Aronovitch, report, 8 April 1943, in JHC, box 250, file 9, “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1943,” 2.

complete failure. Canada did not even attend and Britain and America gave no allowances for increased immigration of Jewish refugees to either country.

Due to their failure to bring large numbers of Jewish refugees into Canada during the war, the Canadian Jewish community tried to save Europe's Jews in two ways other than supporting the war effort: supporting Zionism and raising funds for relief. The connection between Holocaust discourse in Canada and support for the State of Israel, which has become synonymous over the past thirty years, was certainly not inevitable. In fact, in the early years of the Second World War, as news slowly reached Canada of the terror facing Jewry in ghettos, many Canadian Jews were openly hostile to Zionism. This opposition was generally not based on ideological or religious grounds, but because Zionism pushed the focus, and often the relief funds, towards Jews in Palestine and away from what the community felt was the more urgent cause of rescuing and providing relief for Jews trapped in ghettos. But by 1943, Canadian Zionists began to gain support due mainly to the failure of the Western democracies to open their gates sufficiently wide enough to permit Jews to escape Europe. Zionism, therefore, was seen one of the most plausible routes for Jews to find sanctuary.

Although Canadian Jewry tended to be favourable to Zionism, seeing little conflict in being loyal Canadians while striving for Jewish nationalism in Palestine, the CJC was initially critical of the fundraising efforts of the Zionist Organization of Canada. The Jewish community in Trail, B.C. refused to hold a fundraising meeting with the ZOC in 1941. Executive director of the western division of the ZOC Rabbi Aron Horowitz was astounded, and wrote the president of the local Jewish community, Max Goldstein, "It is hard for me to

reconcile myself to the idea that at a time when our people are decimated by slaughter and are bleeding under the whip and heel of the Nazi beast, there should be found even one Jewish community that should deny us a hearing.” Not taking no for an answer, Horowitz visited the community anyway. He argued that the Zionist purpose was to “answer the desperate call for help that comes to us from the millions of our tortured and humiliated people.” In response, the United Palestine Appeal received a modest donation.¹⁵² Yet even some card-carrying Zionists were frustrated by the ZOC’s unwillingness to prioritize relief and rescue work in Europe. The Zionist student organization at the University of Manitoba, the Avukah Society, lashed out against the ZOC’s fundraising appeal: “You ask me what I am doing to help the war effort and my brethren in Palestine. How does supporting the U.P.A. help the war effort? Do my brethren in Palestine need help more than my brethren in Europe?....Can I have confidence in and support your leaders who as so called Jew savers attempt to help ½ million settled proud Jews in Palestine and turn their backs upon the millions of destitute starving Jews in Europe?”¹⁵³ For many Canadian Jews the answer was no.

Horowitz complained to the ZOC’s national executive director Rabbi Jesse Schwartz that the CJC seemed “to think that other organizations have to obtain their sanction to conduct certain activities.”¹⁵⁴ Zionist leaders in Canada argued that their work in Palestine was necessary to relieve the Jews caught in the European maelstrom by opening the doors in

¹⁵² Horowitz to Goldstein, letter, 2 September 1941, in LAC, Rabbi Aron Horowitz fonds, MG31-H103, vol. 1, file “Correspondence: Western Director, Zionist Organization of Canada, 1941.”

¹⁵³ Leonard Gelfand to Max Yale Diamond, letter, n.d., in LAC, Rabbi Aron Horowitz fonds, MG31-H103, vol. 1, file “Correspondence: Western Director, Zionist Organization of Canada, 1942.”

¹⁵⁴ Horowitz to Schwartz, letter, 30 July 1940, in LAC, Rabbi Aron Horowitz fonds, MG31-H103, vol. 1, file “Correspondence: Western Director, Zionist Organization of Canada, 1940.”

Palestine and working to revoke the 1939 White Paper. In 1940, the UPA campaign called on Zionists “to answer the desperate call for help that comes from millions of our miserable and homeless people. The number of people—men, women and children—that will be saved and settled in our Homeland depends on the means that will be provided by American and Canadian Jewry.”¹⁵⁵

By 1943, with the realization that the Western democracies were unable or unwilling to save Europe’s Jews from Hitler’s extermination camps, the Zionist message began to take hold amongst Canadian Jews. However, one significant difficulty for Canadian Zionists was to remain supportive of Britain while denouncing their position on Palestine. While Horowitz attempted to walk this fine line by claiming that the British people and even Winston Churchill were in favour of lifting restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine,¹⁵⁶ he did not mince words at a Calgary mass meeting on November 10, 1943, saying: “At a time when our leaders speak of all sorts of freedoms, what a mockery this Paper is to the millions of our men, women, and children who have been choked to death, burned alive, and blown into shreds.”¹⁵⁷

The Canadian Conference of Christians and Jews was also supportive of the creation of a Jewish state to provide sanctuary to Europe’s Jews. Rev. E. Crossley Hunter spoke to

¹⁵⁵ Horowitz circular letter, 18 June 1940, in LAC, Rabbi Aron Horowitz fonds, MG31-H103, vol. 1, file “Correspondence: Western Director, Zionist Organization of Canada, 1940.”

¹⁵⁶ Horowitz quotes Winston Churchill’s well-known speech of 23 May 23 1949, see United Kingdom, House of Commons, *Hansard*, 1939, vol. 347, 2167-79.

¹⁵⁷ The Calgary Jewish community supported a resolution to be sent to the Canadian Government “in the name of the millions of our martyred people, and in the name of the honour of Great Britain,” to appeal to Britain with the purpose of the “opening of Palestine to Jewish immigration, and the reestablishment of the Jewish Commonwealth in our historical Homeland.” Horowitz, “An Appeal to the Conscience of Britain,” speech, 10 November 1943, in LAC, Rabbi Aron Horowitz fonds, MG31-H103, vol. 1, file “Correspondence: Western Director, Zionist Organization of Canada, 1943.”

the Sharon Zionist Club of Winnipeg on September 23, 1943 to voice his support for a Jewish state. Like American theologian and political commentator Reinhold Niebuhr, who Hunter had read in preparation for his talk, Hunter argued that the West's obligation to the Jewish people was a moral one. He insisted that the West needed to protect the rights of nations and not just individuals: "justice in history is concerned with the collective as well as with the individual." While Niebuhr sensed that there was a great deal of guilt regarding the West's ineffectual defence of the minorities under Hitler's thumb causing support for Zionism, with the war effort so closely tied to Canadian Jewish efforts to save Europe's Jews, Hunter saw no culpability on Canada's part for the Jews' "present plight in Europe," though he argued that it did "warrant your [Jewish] right to a national home and state."¹⁵⁸

Less controversial than supporting Zionism was sending relief to European Jewish refugees that had managed to escape the Nazis. Saul Hayes later recalled that when the Jews were trapped in Europe "doomed to death by the hundred[s] of thousands" and Canadian Jews were praying that "the gates of Canada will be opened and the true, humane heart of the Canadian people will be evidenced," the Canadian Jewish community's "emphasis turned to

¹⁵⁸ E. Crossley Hunter, *A Non-Jew Approaches Zionism*, 23 September 1943, in JHC, box 202, file 1. In 1943, Niebuhr wrote two pro-Zionist, hard-hitting articles in *The Nation*, in which he suggests that a Jewish state in Palestine is the only solution to the "Jewish problem" while antisemitism and intolerance persisted in Europe and in the democracies: "The problem of what is to become of the Jews in the post-war world ought to engage all of us, not only because a suffering people has a claim upon our compassion but because the very quality of our civilization is involved in the solution. It is, in fact, a scandal that the Jews have had so little effective aid from the rest of us in a situation in which they are only the chief victims. The Nazis intend to decimate the Poles and to reduce other peoples to the status of helots; but they are bent upon the extermination of the Jews. One probable reason for the liberal world's failure to be more instant in its aid to the Jews is that we cannot face the full dimensions of this problem without undermining the characteristic credos of the democratic world. Even the Jews are loath to bring the problem to our attention in all its tragic depth. We will not face it because we should be overwhelmed by a sense of guilt in contemplating those aspects of the problem which Hitler did not create but only aggravated." See Reinhold Niebuhr, "Jews after the War," *The Nation*, 21 February 1942, 214-16. Niebuhr's articles were mimeographed by the Western Division of the CJC and mailed to "members of the Dominion Executive Committees and all others interested." See "CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1943," minutes, 11 February 1943, in JHC, box 250, file 8, 3.

Europe and the life-saving work of the Joint Distribution Committee, with its program of feeding the hungry, helping those able to smuggle themselves across the war-tautened borders and otherwise alleviating misery wherever possible.”¹⁵⁹ In May 1942, the United Jewish Refugee & War Relief Agencies were spending \$25,000 to send medical supplies and non-perishable foodstuffs to Polish Jewish refugees in the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁰ Throughout the war, the Canadian community supported the United Jewish Relief Agency’s campaign to raise funds for the JDC. These funds were used to ship supplies to destitute refugees who had managed to escape Hitler’s grasp early in the war and to help smuggle Jews out of Nazi-occupied Europe.

2.4 Discourse on the Holocaust and the Defeat of Nazi Germany

During 1944, the Canadian discourse about its war effort shifted from how to defeat Nazi Germany to how the West would maintain peace once Germany was defeated. This shift in perspective helped to propel Germany’s annihilation of Europe’s Jews further into Canadian national discourse as Canadians debated how to “win the peace.” Canadians examined the mistakes of the interwar period that led to the rise of Nazism, including appeasement diplomacy. Foremost among Canadian concerns was the subjugation of Germany to prevent a third world war. Holocaust survivors were largely influential in drawing attention to the fact that Jews were the primary victims of Hitler’s mass murder campaign as their testimonies at war crimes military tribunals made front-page news because of the sensationalist nature of their stories. While Canadians became familiar with the devastation

¹⁵⁹ *Congress Bulletin*, 10 October 1953, in JHS, box 253, file 7, “Congress Bulletin,” 5.

¹⁶⁰ “CJC Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1942,” Summary of Report on Meetings of National Executive Committee, 30 May 1942, in JHC, box 250, file 8, 2.

wrought against European Jews through the media coverage of the liberation of camps and the war crimes trials, Canadian attention to the tragedy of Europe Jewry was subsumed into the problem of Germany. While Canadian Jews were interested in these debates, they perceived that while the war might be ending, the Jewish crisis would continue on for years. The Jewish community emphasized the need to continue sending relief to European Jewry and to open Palestine to survivors. When Canadian Jews did memorialize European Jewry, they tended to emphasize Jewish resistance to the Holocaust, so that European Jewry constituted an Ally in the defeat of Nazism. This perception was not only meant to garner support for Jewish statehood but also to give meaning to the tragedy.

When the concentration camps were liberated by Allied forces on the western front, debates about the incumbent peace revolved around the nature of German society. Were Germans victims of Nazism as was generally believed during the 1930s, or was Nazism ingrained within the German psyche? Should the occupation of Germany be dictated by a policy of retribution or rehabilitation? Were Germans capable of being educated to embrace democratic and liberal values? It was within the context of these questions, and not questions over whether Canada should change its immigration policy, that mainstream Canadian newspapers began to treat the Jewish annihilation as decidedly different from the Nazi treatment of other subjugated nations. With the war coming to an end, the assumption was that Jews would return to their original countries, lifting the onus of responsibility from Canadians to welcome large numbers of Jews.

Journalists focused on describing the horror that they had witnessed in the western camps and discussing the corruption of German culture that could have allowed such crimes

against humanity to persist. George P. Vanier, Canada's Ambassador to France, joined the American delegation of Congressmen on their tour of Buchenwald in April 1945. He reported his experience in a broadcast on the radio on May 1, 1945. Vanier followed the convention of giving a terse blow-by-blow account of what he witnessed. He emphasized that Buchenwald was different from the extermination camps in Poland, since it was intended for "political prisoners." Vanier took special note that there were several hundred Jewish children still alive in the camp, but that their parents were undoubtedly dead due to "the barbarous treatment inflicted on Poles and Jews by the Germans."¹⁶¹ Considering that of those liberated at Buchenwald, only twenty percent were Jews,¹⁶² Vanier gave an accurate explanation for why there were so few Jews left in the camp. Seeing the machinery of death, he reflected on the degeneration of German nationalism in combining the science of mass production with the Nazi ideology of racial superiority:

One is forced to the conviction that those who did these horrible things saw nothing wrong in them; perhaps they were actually proud of their efficiency in producing dead. They are not as other humans, they are satanic. Though they have a veneer of civilisation, deep down they must still be barbarians—in saying this one is unfair to the barbarian because there is a scientific refinement about these horrors which barbarians, uncouth and wild, living in a primitive state, could not invent. Since the very beginning, many have considered that this war was really a Crusade; that it was a struggle between Christendom and satandom.¹⁶³

Jewish survivors were occasionally interviewed and discussed the slave labor they endured, making it clear that Jews were expendable in the Nazi labor system. UP correspondent, Clinton B. Conger, visited an underground armament factory in Hanover and in April 1945

¹⁶¹ G. P. Vanier, speech, 1 May 1945, in LAC, George P. Vanier fonds, R5815-0-8-E, vol. 17, file 3, "G. P. Vanier, Buchenwald—1945."

¹⁶² Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 65.

¹⁶³ G. P. Vanier, speech, 1 May 1945, in LAC, George P. Vanier fonds, R5815-0-8-E, vol. 17, file 3, "G. P. Vanier, Buchenwald—1945."

interviewed the Polish Jews who had been transferred to build the facility. After taking note of the emaciated survivors' appearances and being told that only 190 of the original 1000 Jews had survived, he was told that they were being worked to death because "they were members of a race the Nazis wanted to exterminate." One teenager explained that Jews "under 10 were considered of no use" and "sent to the gas chambers."¹⁶⁴ Reports from numerous Jewish survivors indicated that the Nazis had hunted down Jews from across their empire and not only used a vast network of concentration camps to work Jews to death, but also extermination camps. Bela Fabian, the former president of Hungary's Independent Democratic Party and an escapee from a concentration camp, told American reporters that five million Jews from across Europe had been shipped to Auschwitz and gassed.¹⁶⁵

Of particular interest to Canadians was the idea of femininity within the Nazi concentration camp system, which contrasted strikingly with prevalent ideas of femininity in Canada. While Canadian women's roles moved out of the home during the war, this was seen as a policy of necessity, and female paid work in postwar Canada amongst the middle class was discouraged. Although Canadian women's experience frequently diverged radically from the prescribed gender role because many women did not have the financial resources or the inclination to remain fulltime homemakers, the dominant idea in Canadian culture was that society was best served by women performing a domestic role due to the prevalence of Victorian notions of women as the purveyors of morality.¹⁶⁶ News stories out

¹⁶⁴ *Toronto Telegram*, 12 April 1945, 2.

¹⁶⁵ *Hamilton Spectator*, 11 April 1945.

¹⁶⁶ For a discussion of the conservative attitudes that Canadians held toward women during the Second World War and into the postwar period, see Tarah Brookfield, *Cold War Comforts: Canadian Women, Child Safety, and Global Insecurity* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2012), 10-12; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no. 4

of the Belsen and Buchenwald concentration camps suggested that German women had been corrupted by Nazism and were no longer providing a moral compass for German society. For example the Buchenwald commandant's wife, Ilsa Koch, had the disgusting practice of decorating her home with tattooed human skin, which she used to make lampshades, book bindings, and knick-knacks. The press focused on her perverse brand of consumption, in which prisoners would "line up shirtless" and "she would pick a design or mark she particularly liked." The prisoner would then be murdered and his skin removed.¹⁶⁷

Although historians have shown that the Nuremberg war crimes trials did not focus on crimes against Jews, many of minor war tribunals following the liberation of concentration camps did. These encounters between Holocaust survivors and perpetrators were covered extensively in the Canadian press. The British military tribunal in Luneburg against Belsen commandant Josef Kramer and his guards in September and October 1945 in particular gained much attention in the press because a number of female guards were also accused of sadistic crimes. The trial went beyond the despicable conditions at Belsen to discuss Kramer and his guards' roles at Auschwitz, where Kramer had been tasked with overseeing the gas chambers until late 1944.¹⁶⁸ However, the media spotlight was on the nineteen female guards and their sadistic treatment of prisoners. From photographs widely disseminated throughout the Canadian press, the female guards appeared to be ordinary

(Dec. 1991): 474; Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); For how Canadian women's experience differed from the normative role, see Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Franca Iacovetta, Frances Swyripa and Marlene Epp eds. *Sisters or Strangers: Immigrant, Ethnic and Racialized Women in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁷ *Hamilton Spectator*, 23 April 1945.

¹⁶⁸ *Toronto Star*, 6 October 1945, 4.

housewives, but from the testimony heard, they had no conception of moral decency. Of particular fascination to Canadians was the 22 year-old guard Irma Grese, whose testimony made front-page news across the country. Dozens of pictures were taken of her during the trial and printed throughout the press, giving her a peculiar celebrity status. Even the Canadian Jewish press reveled in describing Irma Grese. The *Jewish Western Bulletin* noted the contrast between her appearance as the “ideal Nazi woman,” and her disposition of being “terrifyingly brutal.” Reporters commented that she had “a certain savage beauty...[with] the most cruel eyes.”¹⁶⁹ The *Toronto Star* claimed that Grese looked “more like a society fashion model than an accused murderer and torturer,” describing her as “a striking figure.”¹⁷⁰ Canadian journalists frequently commented on her indifferent attitude towards Holocaust survival testimony and film evidence of Auschwitz during the proceedings. Her testimony on the stand demonstrated for Canadian audiences how Nazism had corrupted German society. The AP news report recounted a version of her life, in which her socially acceptable desire to become a nurse was perverted by Nazism to make her a vicious murderer: “her father, who knew nothing but hard work, was anti-Hitler in his views and forbade his five children to enter Hitler Youth movements. But after her mother died, Irma said she became a nurse and volunteered for the S.S., being sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp, north of Berlin, for training.”¹⁷¹ Witnesses at the tribunal recounted that Grese carried a gun, and appeared to enjoy frequently whipping and setting dogs on

¹⁶⁹ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 28 September 1945, 1.

¹⁷⁰ *Toronto Star* 16 October 16, 1945, 1; 16 November 1945, 1; *Winnipeg Tribune*, 17 October 1945, 1, 2; *Toronto Telegram*, 18 September 1945, 1; *Globe and Mail* 24 April 1945, 13.

¹⁷¹ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 17 October 1945, 1, 2.

prisoners, although she denied any involvement in sending prisoners to the gas chambers in Auschwitz.

Despite Grese's questionable celebrity status, the Belsen tribunal and other war crime trials provided opportunities either in person or through affidavits for hundreds of Jewish victims to remember and bring their grievances into the public sphere. Day after day, journalists recorded the systematic murder of Jews. Regina Rosenthal, a Polish Jew who survived Auschwitz, accused Kramer of forcing 300 prisoners into an inferno, where they were burned alive.¹⁷² Lydia Sonzajn discussed her failed efforts to blow up the Auschwitz gas chambers, and the murderous reprisals that followed when the plan was discovered by the Nazis. She told the court that Kramer was "responsible for having my family sent to the gas chamber."¹⁷³ Other witnesses described the unbearable hunger that prisoners endured, which led to hundreds of cases of cannibalism.¹⁷⁴ Pola Zynger recalled the traumatic experience of having one of the Belsen guards beat her unconscious.¹⁷⁵ Helen Klein told her experience of being one of twelve hundred Polish Jews sent to Auschwitz who was fortunate not to be among the 800 who were immediately selected for the gas chamber. She remembered seeing Grese on the platform inspecting the arrivals.¹⁷⁶ Sigmud Bendall, a Jewish doctor from Lodz, worked in Auschwitz disposing of the bodies of Jewish victims. He recounted the process by which corpses had their teeth fillings removed, hair shorn, and bodies finally burned in "long trenches...fitted with tubes to drain off the fats from

¹⁷² *Toronto Star*, 4 October 4, 1945, 1.

¹⁷³ *Toronto Star*, 28 September 1945, 1, 8.

¹⁷⁴ *Toronto Star*, 28 September 1945, 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Toronto Star*, 29 September 1945, 15.

¹⁷⁶ *Toronto Star*, 29 September 1945, 15.

bodies.”¹⁷⁷ Zophia Litwinska, a Jewish Pole, recalled her horrifying experience of being selected alongside 3000 Jews for the gas chamber upon arrival in Auschwitz: “I was led into a room like a shower bath where there were towels and even mirrors...I was terrified at what was happening that I had no idea how many people were there. There were cries and tears. People shouted at each other, hit each other. We were all terrified. Then I saw the fumes coming in from a window. I had to cough very violently. Tears streamed from my eyes and I had a choking sensation in my throat.” When she was inside the chamber “choking to death in the fighting, crying mass of people,” according to her testimony, a guard pulled her out of the chamber realizing she was married to a Polish officer.¹⁷⁸ These dramatic memories showed Nazi deprivation at its worst.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ *Toronto Star*, 1 October 1945, 9.

¹⁷⁸ *Toronto Star*, 24 September 1945, 1, 2.

¹⁷⁹ For the transcript of the Belsen Tribunal, see *Trial of Josef Kramer and forty-four others: The Belsen Trial* (London: W. Hodge, 1949). The transcripts from the trial have been digitized and can be found here: <http://www.bergenbelsen.co.uk/pages/TrialTranscript/Trial_Contents.html>. For a recent analysis of Holocaust survival testimony at the Belsen Trial see Lorie Charlesworth, *The ‘Minor’ War Crimes Trials: A Socio-Legal investigation of Victims’ Justice* (London: Routledge, 2014).



NOR EVEN THE EXCUSE OF IGNORANCE
Toronto Star, 14 December 1945, 6.

The Jewish experiences outlined in the trial testimonies confirmed the degenerated nature of German society, specifically in relation to science. Editors discussed how German medical science had been perverted from healing its citizens to being used by doctors to perform fatal and sadistic experimentations on prisoners. Experiments discussed in the Canadian press included high altitude pressure tests, acclimation to extreme temperatures through whole body submersion, introducing infectious diseases, and testing dangerous

treatments.¹⁸⁰ The *Toronto Telegram* noted that the entire medical field in Germany had been “debased” by the Nazis. While the Germans were inventing “scientific techniques to exterminate helpless civilians,” basic standards for the treatment of disease within German cities had dropped, with physicians not having sufficient access to plasma and whole blood. Mortality rates due to gangrene were soaring even though the disease was effectively non-existent in Allied nations. Basic medical knowledge, such as familiarity with Penicillin, was relatively unknown, leading to drastically higher death rates in German hospitals compared with Allied treatment centers.¹⁸¹

With Nazism corrupting every aspect of German culture, the Canadian media questioned whether the German nation had indeed been victimized by the Nazis. The *Toronto Star* noted that Germany had once been a leading nation in “science, art, music, scholarship, philosophy, religion, moral discipline and humanitarianism,” but that the Nazi revolution, illiberalism, and descent into violence had “destroyed not merely the human forms of men and women, but their genius and talent and the spiritual force of an entire nation.”¹⁸² The *Toronto Telegram* suggested that Canadian sympathy for Germans was misplaced and that the Allies needed to impose a harsh peace on Germany: “for a long time they will have to be supervised as closely as the inmates of a madhouse.”¹⁸³ In *Maclean’s*, Canadian Jewish journalist L. S. B. Shapiro referenced conversations he had with several Germans in Holland, and came to the conclusion that they were not remorseful for Nazi atrocities or for driving

¹⁸⁰ *Hamilton Spectator*, 4 February 1946; 21 September 1946; *Globe and Mail*, 6 July 1945, 3; *Toronto Telegram*, 18 May 1945, 1;

¹⁸¹ *Toronto Star*, 24 November 1944, 6.

¹⁸² *Toronto Telegram*, 1 May 1945, 6.

¹⁸³ *Toronto Telegram*, 23 April 1945, 6. See also editorial cartoon *Toronto Telegram*, 8 May 1945, 6.

Europe into war, but that they regretted only that they had lost.¹⁸⁴ Shapiro called on Canadians to be “vindictive” towards Germans and “remain their masters” until Germany gained a “realization of her war guilt”¹⁸⁵ Opinions ranged on how to re-educate the Germans from putting the German population into concentration camps and exploiting their labor¹⁸⁶ to evangelizing Germany and bringing it “back to God.”¹⁸⁷ Norman Rawson, the minister of Centennial Church in Hamilton, told congregants that there was no distinction between Nazis and ordinary Germans since the crimes against humanity were products of German culture: “They’re going to try to make us distinguish between Nazi and Germans. Sob sisters are already at work....I tell you there’s overruling evidence the German people knew Adolf Hitler’s plan, knew what he intended to do—first with the Jews, with the Germans, then with the world. It isn’t the Nazis who have enslaved the Germans. History shows that the Nazis are a natural outcome of philosophers and writers of Germany since 1807.”¹⁸⁸

While Canadian saw the liberation of the concentration camps as a signal of the end of the war, for Canadian Jews the end of hostilities did not mean the end of Jewish suffering and dying in Europe. The liberation of the concentration camps did not immediately forestall the mortality rate of Jews, thousands of whom were starving and diseased. Two weeks after Belsen was liberated over five hundred people were dying per day within its confines.¹⁸⁹ In August 1945, Earl Harrison submitted a report to American President Harry S. Truman: “As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we

¹⁸⁴ *Maclean's*, 15 June 1945, 13, 48-50.

¹⁸⁵ *Maclean's*, 15 July 1945, 10, 48, 51.

¹⁸⁶ *Saturday Night*, 1 May 1945, 6.

¹⁸⁷ *Saturday Night*, 1 December 1945, 29.

¹⁸⁸ *Toronto Star*, 20 November 1944, 3.

¹⁸⁹ Jo Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp* (London: Routledge, 1998), 25.

do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people, seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy.”¹⁹⁰ As news reached Canadians that Jews still languished in detestable conditions, the desire to mourn and remember Hitler’s victims became incorporated into relief efforts to save Jews who were still suffering due to the Nazi assault on European Jewry.

In 1946 Saul Hayes insisted that the Jewish community go beyond expressing sympathy and memorializing Europe’s Jews to give money to save those who survived Hitler’s “biological warfare.” Although Hayes admitted that the “senses become dulled to losses of life” when “the world is used to large-scale bombings,” and that “it is hard for the mind to be receptive to statements such as Jewry lost five million of its adherents or an entire ghetto of Lodz was cremated,” nonetheless it was important that Canadian Jews went beyond memorializing and gave money so that Jewish survivors could rebuild their lives. In fact, Hayes was critical of the memorialization and sympathy garnered by the plight of European Jewry since it had produced little tangible help for DPs: “You may say that the Jews are the forgotten people. Unfortunately they are not forgotten, they are too well remembered. Every minor gauleiter remembered them, every important gestapo official proscribed them and at liberation they were not forgotten, they were too well remembered. Everyone knew of their

¹⁹⁰ William I. Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 320.

plight and even talked about it but, like those who talk about the weather, they did little about it.”¹⁹¹ Now was the time for action, not words.

Relief work accelerated in the postwar years, as Canadian Jews initially believed that survivors would be able to return to their homelands and rebuild their communities. Clothing drives were quite successful and were not indicative of a lack of concern among Canadian Jews, as one historian has suggested.¹⁹² The reason why Canadian Jews organized clothing drives was because representatives of the JDC saw that there was a need for such items. The JDC interviewed Lucius N. Littauer, former manager of the Polish Telegraph Agency, who had spent several months in Poland following the Red Army’s liberation. From this source, the JDC concluded that the Polish Jews “need in the first place not food, but clothing, includ[ing] shoes, and medicaments.”¹⁹³ By the summer of 1946, the CJC had collected 100,000 items to be shipped overseas.¹⁹⁴ In October 1946, Hayes estimated that the clothing collected thus far was valued at \$160,000. The CJC had also secured several sewing machines, worth \$4,500. The success of the clothing drive was not because Canadian Jewry did not want to support Polish Jewry with their wallets. In the twelve months prior to October 1946, the CJC had raised \$750,000 which had been wired overseas via the JDC.¹⁹⁵ The CJC National Executive estimated that during the 1946 calendar year, the UJA’s various

¹⁹¹ Saul Hayes speech, n.d., in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 12, file “Saul Hayes: Speeches, 1945-1957.”

¹⁹² Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 32-35.

¹⁹³ L. Caimann to American Joint Distribution Committee, letter, 11 May 1945, LAC, RG25 G-1, vol. 1939, file 724-DP-39C, “Intercepted Communications, Re. Treatment of Jews and Activities of Jewish Organizations in Various Countries.”

¹⁹⁴ Dominion Council, Western Division of CJC, minutes, 9 May 1946, JHC, CJC Western Division fonds, file “Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1945,” 1.

¹⁹⁵ Dominion Council, Western Division of CJC, minutes, 15 October 1946, JHC, CJC Western Division fonds, file “Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1945,” 2.

campaigns collected “approximately \$1,500,000, if the value of the supplies in kind such as clothing, medicaments, etc. are added.”¹⁹⁶ The next year, the CJC raised its fundraising goal for overseas relief to two million dollars. The CJC managed to collect \$1,850,000 of its goal in 1947, and earmarked \$1,400,000 to be transferred to the JDC.¹⁹⁷ The Western Division raised almost \$400,000, and an additional \$15,000 worth of clothing had been collected.¹⁹⁸

To revitalize religious and communal life, the Central Division of the CJC requested that each synagogue in Ontario donate one or more Torah Scrolls to the European Jewish communities. Hoping to draw attention to the desperate situation that still existed in Poland, the CJC arranged a ceremonial service on October 2, 1945, in which “Orthodox patriarchs of the community” would congregate and “special prayers will be offered” for the survivors. The CJC promised that the event would “be one of the most significant moments in the religious life of Ontario’s Jewish community.”¹⁹⁹

Within the Canadian Jewish community, controversy erupted over the state of Canadian Jewish aid to Poland, which many members of the community thought was absurdly low. Following the cessation of hostilities in Europe in 1945, CJC General Secretary H. M. Caiserman and communist Jewish community leader Sam Lipshitz visited Poland to assess the condition of Polish Jewry in the aftermath of the Nazi occupation. The trip was triggered by complaints from Polish Jews that Canadian relief supplies were

¹⁹⁶ Dominion Council, Western Division of CJC, minutes, 15 May 1947, JHC, CJC Western Division fonds, file “Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1945,” 1.

¹⁹⁷ Saul Hayes Circular letter, 28 February 1947, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 272A; Dominion Council, Western Division of CJC, minutes, 14 June 1948, JHC, CJC Western Division fonds, file “Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1945,” 1.

¹⁹⁸ Dominion Council, Western Division of CJC, minutes, 8 January 1948, JHC, CJC Western Division fonds, file “Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1945,” 1-2.

¹⁹⁹ Press release, 1945, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA, box 8, file 180.

inadequate and that other national Jewish communities were being privileged over Polish Jews. Historian Franklin Bialystok has suggested that the Canadian response to the needs of Polish Jewry was paltry and exhibited a general apathy towards Holocaust survivors. Rather than sending much needed cash, Bialystok writes that “the Canadian Jewish community would do little but apply some band-aids. Having satisfied themselves and their constituency that it had discharged this responsibility, its leaders quickly turned to matters of great importance.” By “band-aids,” Bialystok refers to the meager financial aid and supplies sent to Poland as relief, which was simply inadequate to rebuild Polish-Jewish society. Rather than help Jewish survivors rebuild their communities in Poland, Bialystok argues that the CJC misrepresented the Polish desire to leave.²⁰⁰ However, Canadian Jewish relations with the postwar Jewish population in Poland were complicated by misinformation and the belief that rampant antisemitism in Poland made the existence of a Jewish community in Poland untenable.

One of the reasons why the Central Committee of Polish Jewry criticized the lack of contributions from Canadian Jewry was because money raised in Canada by the CJC was not transmitted directly to Poland. Funds for overseas relief were handed to the JDC, which was responsible for putting the money to good use. Until 1946, funds sent to the JDC had not been earmarked by their origin, which according to Saul Hayes, had the consequence that “the European beneficiaries were not aware of the fact that they were receiving contributions from Canadian sources.”²⁰¹ H. Frank noted that “relief is a two sided medallion.” While the

²⁰⁰ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 30-36.

²⁰¹ Dominion Council, Western Division of CJC, minutes, 11 April 1946, JHC, CJC Western Division fonds, file “Canadian Jewish Congress Minutes, Western Executive Committee, 1945,” 1.

primary goal was to help “the sick, helpless and needy,” there was the secondary need “of identifying the relief with the giver.” Since the JDC was unable to “make known to the Jews of Europe the Canadian Jewish interest,” one of primary reasons for sending H. M. Caiserman to Poland was to correct this misunderstanding. A secondary goal was to help locate Jewish relatives of Canadians.²⁰² Hayes instructed Caiserman to visit all the towns that had *Landsmannschaften* offices in Canada to find out “what happened to these communities.”²⁰³

In Poland, the CJC delegation visited twenty communities and identified which supplies shipped by the JDC came from Canada.²⁰⁴ In a private letter to Hayes, Caiserman shared his initial impressions and noted that the “relations of the Central Committee and the JDC were strained,” with the institutions of the Central Committee—houses, schools, and hospitals—lacking many basic necessities of life. Compounding the difficulties, the Central Committee was holding mass meetings accusing the JDC of failing to get reasonable currency exchange rates. At the beginning of February 1945, both Caiserman and Lipshitz agreed that it might be necessary for Canadian Jewry to “rush money to purchase locally the necessary products and relieve the critical situation.” However, Caiserman advised Hayes that nothing should be done until he had completed his investigation and determined that the Central Committee could “obtain a more acceptable rate of exchange than 100 Zlotes per dollar.”²⁰⁵ Three weeks later, Caiserman’s opinion had shifted, and he reported that the JDC

²⁰² H. Frank to A. Field, letter, 2 January 1946, in JHS, CJC fonds, box 258, file 1, “H. M. Caiserman’s Mission to Poland.”

²⁰³ Hayes to Caiserman, memorandum, 27 November 1945, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 11, file 182.

²⁰⁴ H. M. Caiserman, “The Polish Picture,” n.d., in CJCCNA, series ZA 1945, box 1, file 12.

²⁰⁵ Caiserman to Hayes, letter, 3 February 1946, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 1, file 12A.

“gave up the exchange fight” and had made the exchange rate more favorable: between 100 to 150 Zlotes per dollar. Caiserman also believed that the JDC was “doing a very good job in spite of the abuses in the communist papers in Canada and the Central Committee leaders,” believing that the conditions would have been “catastrophic” without the JDC.

On arrival in Lodz, the Canadian delegation was attacked by the Central Jewish Committee for not adequately providing relief, which Polish leaders blamed for the flight of Jews out of Poland. On December 17, 1945, members of the Central Committee ridiculed the relief practices of Canadian Jews. The clothes were “a disgrace.” One Polish leader said that Canada’s idea of relief was “insulting.” The practice of sending goods and supplies when money was needed was antiquated. Give the Polish Jew the option to buy “according to his taste” and send money. If money was available, the Central Committee felt confident that the 150,000 Polish Jews in the Soviet Union would return and that “a good percentage will remain.” Although “we know that anti-Semitism reigns, and that underground black force aim to destroy us and the Polish government,” this leader insisted that “we have here the very best chances for a small good Jewish Community” and that the Polish government was working to stop antisemitic attacks.²⁰⁶

During his travels throughout Poland, Caiserman sensed that the Central Committee’s view of aid was shaped by political ideology, rather than the view of Polish Jews. He was impressed by the amount of Jewish rebuilding he encountered, but realized that the Jewish population in Poland was living in fear and eager to leave. At a mass meeting in Bialystok on January 18, 1946, Caiserman was told of an antisemitic group called “Jeknik Polski” of

²⁰⁶ H.M. Caiserman diary, minutes, 17 December 1945, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 11, file 182.

London, which “organized Jewish attacks in Poland.” Since liberation, 46 Jews had been murdered in Bialestock alone. At the closing of the meeting, Caiserman recorded that vice-president Turek of the Central Committee requested that Canadian Jewry exert pressure and “demand [the] realization of Zionism.” In Warsaw, Caiserman was informed that the Jewish population in August was 80,000, but now, in December, it had dropped to 50,000.

However, the flight from Poland was even greater than the numbers led him to believe as it was counteracted by the fact that thousands of the 200,000 Polish Jews who had fled to the Soviet Union during the Nazi era were returning to Poland.²⁰⁷ Caiserman travelled to Ostrowicz on January 12 and met with the local Central Committee president, Aaron Freedenthal. He was told numerous stories of mass shootings during the Nazi period. Amongst the 200 Jews who survived, Freedenthal said there was “terrific insecurity,” that 5 Jews had been killed since liberation in the town, and that “emigration was the unanimous voice of the small community.” When Caiserman said that he would still “recommend to our Congress aid for those who want to remain and those who want to leave,” he was chided for not understanding the situation. According to Caiserman’s diary, “he [Freedenthal] felt that I am overlooking the overwhelming [sic] opinion of Polish Jewry—the imperative need of leaving Poland.”²⁰⁸

Upon their return to Canada in February 1946, Caiserman and Lipshitz went on a speaking tour across the country, discussing the work of the JDC and the conditions of Polish Jewry. Caiserman reported that Polish Jewish rehabilitation was progressing faster than he

²⁰⁷ H.M. Caiserman diary, entry, 19 December 1945, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 11, file 182.

²⁰⁸ H. M. Caiserman diary, entry, 12 January 1945, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 11, file 182.

expected: “To my great amazement I found, first, that the remnants of Polish Jewry had the courage, the initiative and determination to organize and to unite.” Jewish cultural institutions had been rebuilt—including a Yiddish newspaper, Jewish schools, libraries, and writing associations. Caiserman noted that the Historical Department of the Central Jewish Committee in Lodz was documenting and printing volume upon volume of research on the Nazi mass murder of Jews.²⁰⁹ However, there was still desperate need for basic supplies, such as medicine, since nearly “every survivor suffered damage to his health because only those who lived in bunkers, underground sewers, caves or as partisans in the forests had a chance to keep alive.”²¹⁰ Caiserman did not stress Polish Jews’ belief that Canadian relief was inadequate, but did note in his speeches that Polish Jewry was “unsatisfied with Jewish communities of the American continent” because “it is convinced that we did not do everything that could have been done to rescue Polish Jewry from the terrific extermination.” Certainly Caiserman was not going to take the reports of Polish antisemitism lightly and reported that “Jewish life in Poland is still not secure.” Caiserman reasoned that the fact that the Nazis built the extermination camps in Poland “proves how satisfied they were with the ravages of Jew-baiting in Poland.” With reports that 800 Jews had been murdered in Poland since liberation, Canadian Jews were apprehensive.²¹¹

Lipshitz’s interpretation of Polish conditions varied drastically from Caiserman’s. Lipshitz attacked the CJC delegate for exaggerating the level of Polish antisemitism. Instead, Lipshitz echoed the complaints raised by the Central Committee in Lodz, that the CJC was

²⁰⁹ H.M. Casierman, “Jewish Education and Jewish Cultural Activities in Poland,” n.d., in CJCCCNA, series ZA 1945, box 1, file 12.

²¹⁰ Caiserman Addresses Women’s Luncheon, News Release, 25 March 1946, JHS, CJC fonds, box 258, file 1, “H. M. Caiserman’s Mission to Poland.”

²¹¹ H. M. Caiserman, speech, n.d. in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 11, file 182.

not using the wealth of the monied Jews to offer adequate aid and were blaming antisemitism for the struggles to build a Jewish community in Poland. Caiserman took offense to the claim that he was misrepresenting the Polish-Jewish situation, noting his belief that “the serious anti-Semitic situation in Poland is inherited from the furious anti-semitic propaganda before the war and the years of Nazi occupation.”²¹² In fact, while most of the murders that Caiserman was hearing about in postwar Poland were motivated by anti-government opposition and “banditry,” not antisemitism, it is easily understandable how the traumatised Jewish population would have seen it differently.²¹³

The CJC had even received information from the Central Committee Jews late in 1945 which specified that the Polish government was cracking down on antisemitism. The Central Committee wrote that “the Polish government knows perfectly well that anti-semitism endangers the aims of the Polish democracy and is leading a systematic campaign against it, trying to guide and re-educate the public opinion.”²¹⁴ It’s hardly surprising that Lipshitz and the Canadian Jewish communists found this statement reassuring, but for liberals within the CJC, assurances from a totalitarian regime that they were obliterating antisemitism were not convincing.

Indeed, in 1946, a delegation of the Central Committee of Polish Jews visited Canada with dire reports of continued pogroms launched by the Poles following the Nazi retreat. The delegation was led by Dr. Emil Sommerstein, whom one observer described as “the

²¹² H. M. Caiserman, “A reply,” n.d., in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 11, file 182A.

²¹³ See Jan T. Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in Istvan Deak, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009), 106-7.

²¹⁴ See “Situation of Jews in Poland,” December 1945 in CJCCCNA, H. M. Caiserman fonds, series DA 1, box 4, file 1, “Situation of Jews in Poland.”

personification of the Jewish tragedy in Europe...old, tired, worn, yet with head erect, white beard flowing and supported by a cane.”²¹⁵ He recounted early efforts to rebuild Jewish life in Poland, including publishing a Yiddish newspaper, re-establishing a Jewish school in Lodz, and creating a Yiddish radio program. Echoing previous Central Committee appeals, Sommerstein explained that the Jewish Poles were in need of basic necessities for survival, such as clothing, food, and medication. His associate Zuckerman, a young Polish Jew who had been active in the Jewish underground, stated explicitly that there was no future for Jewry in Poland, and that Jewish youth were preparing to leave for Palestine. Leon Crestohl, a Jewish lawyer and son of a Polish Rabbi, who served as President of the Federation of Polish Jews of Canada during the war and on the Presidium of the Jewish Community Council of Montreal, met the Polish delegates several times, in Canada, England, and France. He found that the Jewish Poles were divided on the issue of whether the Jewish community was viable in Poland along political lines. Zionists, especially youth who had no emotional connection to Poland, were eager to leave and anti-Zionists were determined to use donated funds to rebuild their destroyed communities. However, Crestohl estimated that 90 percent of Jewish Poles were “anxious to leave the country and go to Palestine.” Even Sommerstein, who advocated for resources to be sent to Poland, Crestohl believed “would most easily favour an exodus of Jews from Poland...although it is not politic for him to publicly proclaim this desire.” Nearly all the delegates believed, according to Crestohl, “that there is great danger of a violent antisemitic war developing in Poland.” The reason for this concern was not only the history of Polish antisemitism, but also that Jews were “clamouring for

²¹⁵ Leon Crestohl “Report in 1945 to Federation of Polish Jews following my visit to Europe,” in LAC, Leon Crestohl fonds, MG32-C24, M-5224, file, “Annual Reports and Jewish Organizations.”

return of their belongings, houses, furnishings, machinery, places of business, dwellings” and Poles, also reeling from the economic pressures, tried to push Jews away. Crestohl was told that in Radom, approximately 1200 Jews demanded the return of their property, only to receive declarations that “unless all Jews leave Radom by the 15th of a certain month, they would all be murdered.” The five Jewish leaders who reported the threat to the police were brushed off and told it was a prank. They were found murdered just days before the deadline with notes “pinned to the bodies” warning that the threat was not a prank. The Jews fled. The incident was not isolated. In Krakow, events reminiscent of *Kristallnacht* occurred, with synagogues set alight and 17 Jews murdered.

In London, Crestohl attended the Zionist Organization meeting where he again sought out the Polish delegates. What he found was a cacophony of opinions that left him “not only confused, but bewildered.” Interestingly, Crestohl reported that the “one point only where they all agreed... was a reluctance to talk about the past. They were all interested in the future. They refused to paint the gruesome pictures with which World emotions have become terrorized. They were only concerned with what the Jews of the World will do now.” The Polish delegates recommended sending relief supplies through a Swedish intermediary, Gilel Storch, who had been instrumental in releasing 3500 Jewish women who had been sterilized through Nazi experimentation and also in negotiating the release of 7,500 Jews from German camps for the price of 500,000 Swedish kronen.²¹⁶ To ease the clothing shortage among Polish Jews, 52 sewing machines were shipped to DPs in Poland, 36 to Italy and 15 to Belgium. The Canadian Federation also coordinated with the Polish Federation in

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

France to obtain visas for Polish Jews to emigrate.²¹⁷ When Crestohl returned to Canada, he made it clear that the situation of Jews in Poland was desperate, as the Poles were conducting pogroms against Jews emerging from hiding and Britain was still refusing to settle Jews in Palestine.²¹⁸ The Federation for Polish Jews, led by Crestohl called on Canadian Jews to donate Yiddish and Hebrew books to repopulate libraries and enable Jewish students in Poland to continue their studies.²¹⁹

Throughout 1946, evidence became overwhelming that resettling Jews in Europe was untenable. Not only was antisemitism resurgent in Poland, but Jews had little desire to return to the graveyard of their brethren. Siemund Fischel, President of the *Juedische Gemeinde*, the Communal Association of Central Europe Jews in Shanghai reported to the CJC on August 22, 1946 that of the 18,000 Jewish refugees who had escaped into China, 2,000 had already died because of “climate” and “disease.” However, “a return to Europe can also not be taken into consideration, as nearly all members of our Communal Association have lost their closest relatives by the Nazi-murderers in a beastly way,” Fischel explained. He hoped that Canada would permit entry to these Jewish immigrants.²²⁰

²¹⁷ News Bulletin, October 1946 in OJA, Canadian Federation of Polish Jews fonds.

²¹⁸ Crestohl, unfinished journal written in 1962, see entry for August 1945, in LAC, Leon Crestohl fonds, MG32-C24, M-5224, file, “typewritten copies of personal experiences.” Fortunately, Crestohl’s uncle and aunt had survived the war and they had an emotional reunion with Crestohl when he arrived in Paris in August 1945. They recounted their wartime experiences of fleeing to Paris in 1940, then being hidden in the south of France for the duration of the war.

²¹⁹ Rabbi H. A. Fischel, “Community Bulletin,” September 1945, in OJA, Canadian Federation of Polish Jews fond.

²²⁰ Fischel to Samuel Bronfman, 22 August 1946, letter in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 71, file 5.

2.5 The Impact of Holocaust memory on Canadian Jews

It would be false to suggest that the politicization of the Holocaust was just a weapon that Canadian Jews used disingenuously to promote Jewish rights. Canadian Jews also memorialized the Holocaust in less political ways. For most Canadian Jews, the frequent discussion of the Holocaust in weekly Jewish newspapers and the insertion of Holocaust commemorative events into the Jewish calendar wove the Holocaust into the fabric of Jewish life. Since commemorations were rarely Canadian initiatives, participation in the annual the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial helped incorporate Canadian Jews into a global Jewish community that placed exceeding importance on remembering the Holocaust. For example, in 1954, the World Jewish Congress called on Jewish communities around the world to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by initiating major projects that would revitalize Jewish culture and “repair the cultural losses” the world Jewry had suffered with the annihilation of its European members. Projects were to be completed by 27 Nissan, 5714, Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, and were to be dedicated to the Jewish resistance against Nazism.²²¹ Iran’s Jewish community of 100,000 erected a Jewish library; a Jewish school was created in Costa Rica; Chile’s 30,000 Jews ushered in a Jewish Division at the National Library of Chile.²²² The next year, Dr. I. Schwarzbart, director of the World Jewish Congress’ Organization Department, called on Jews to extend these memorialization projects to “engrave the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters in the hearts of generations”

²²¹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 April 1954, 3.

²²² *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 6 August 1954, 3.

by producing research on the Holocaust.²²³ In Canada, memorial services were held across the country and reaffirmed Canadian commitment to remember the victims and prevent a second occurrence. Toronto's Temple Emanu-El announced that Rabbi Harry J. Stern was presiding over a "special ritual of remembrance [to] be included in the Haggadah Service for the six million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis and for the heroes of the ghetto uprising."²²⁴ On October 27, 1948, the Canadian Federation of Lithuanian Jews organized a memorial service commemorating the liquidation of Kovner [Kovno] Ghetto, featuring Jacob Rabinovitch and B. Shainson, both of whom escaped Lithuania.²²⁵ For some community leaders, helping Jewish DPs who had survived but were suffering was more important than memorializing the dead. Saul Hayes, in a fundraising tour of the Maritimes a year after the war's end, insisted that Canadian Jews focus on the surviving remnant in DP camps and donate to relief missions to avert the continuing death toll: "I have to leave the sackcloth and ashes to those both better equipped and perhaps with more time than I have. I will listen to the El Molei Rachmin at a proper time and place and I will be as devout in the prayers for the dead as the next man, but I intend to exercise every ounce of energy and every fibre to save the living and not mourn the dead."²²⁶

Nonetheless, in the years following the Second World War, Canadian Jews also embarked on a number of literary endeavours in the postwar era to represent the nature of the

²²³ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 11 February 1954, 3.

²²⁴ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1955, 14.

²²⁵ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 22 October 1948, 6.

²²⁶ Saul Hayes, "Notes of Speech for the June 30th", 1946 session of the Maritime Conference of the Canadian Jewish Congress," in CJCCNA, Canadian Jewish Congress fonds, series CA, box 12, file "Saul Hayes: Notes for Speeches, 1946."

European Jewish experience during the Holocaust.²²⁷ Most notable was A. M. Klein's masterpiece *The Second Scroll*, which parallels the structure of the Torah, and focuses on the journey from the despair and religious doubt resulting from the tragedy of the Holocaust to finding redemption in the creation of Israel. First published in 1951 following his own visit to Israel, Klein's fiction describes a Canadian journalist who travels to Europe in search of his uncle, a Jewish partisan in the Holocaust, only to find that he has recently died, but his spirit lives on in Israel.²²⁸ Although Klein's allegory is one of the most widely-praised works of Holocaust literature, other Canadian Jews also wrote more modest contributions. Henry Kreisel, a Jewish internee who arrived in Canada during the late 1930s after fleeing Austria during the Anschluss, wrote about the antisemitism that pervaded interwar Vienna and also about the guilt that Jewish survivors carried from making morally compromising decisions for survival.²²⁹ By the late 1940s and early 1950s, Holocaust survivors who entered Canada, such as Rachel M. Korn and Chava Rosenfarb, were able to write more intimate tales of Jewish life in occupied Europe, and although this literature was often written and published in Yiddish, it was important to Canadian Jews.²³⁰

²²⁷ Norman Ravvin has argued that Canadian Jews began to explore Holocaust-related themes in literary form by the late 1940s. Norman Ravvin, "The War and Before: Responses in Mainstream Canadian Literary Life," in L. Ruth Klein, ed. *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 183-217. One of the few Canadian fictions about Jews in hiding in Germany during the Holocaust was Philip Child's *Day of Wrath* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948).

²²⁸ A. M. Klein, *The Second Scroll* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982 [1951]). See also Roger Hymn's *Aught from Naught: A. M. Klein's The Second Scroll* (Victoria, BC: English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 1999).

²²⁹ See Henry Kreisel, *The Rich Man* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1948); Henry Kreisel, *The Betrayal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964).

²³⁰ For example, the publication of Chava Rosenfarb's collection *Fragmenten fun a tog-bukh* was celebrated in the *Congress Bulletin*. The reviewer believed that these poems were "polished works of art" that demonstrated that despite Rosenfarb being a "witness to murder" and being condemned to "death with her life yet unlive," she "survived whole in spirit and genius." The *Congress* reviewer saw the historical importance of these works,

Despite some historians suggesting that the drive to climb the social ladder distracted Canadian Jews from remembering the Holocaust, Jewish community-building was conceptualized as a response to the Holocaust. During the postwar period, the Canadian Jewish community underwent a massive demographic transition. From 1945 to 1956, the Jewish community welcomed tens of thousands of immigrants, increasing the number of Jews in Canada by 60,000 individuals or 31 percent. Franklin Bialystok estimates that over half of these immigrants were Holocaust survivors. In tandem with this rapid community growth, Canadian Jews were becoming more affluent, leaving their inner-city neighbourhoods and moving to more prosperous suburbs, and enrolling their children in universities to embark on professional careers.²³¹ Canadian Jews were “bent on advancing from the fringes of the Canadian mosaic into the mainstream of Canadian society,” and in this effort, according to Bialystok, the Holocaust had no place: “As for remembering the Holocaust, for most Canadian Jews it was [a] painful reminder of Jewish powerlessness, of submission to unbearable dehumanization without resistance, which disturbed the new image of the confident Canadian Jew who celebrated the apparent miraculous rebirth of the Jewish state as both a historical and a spiritual emergence....Simply put, the vast majority of

especially since many of the poems had originally been written “actually in the ghetto and in the extermination camp,” thus giving the reader a sense “of the moods and events on the other side of those deaths.” Finally, the poems had an emotional impact that threw into doubt the morality of the present age: “Six million innocent people were murdered without cause. The meaning of that still inconceivable fact will, without any doubt, absorb the mind of mankind for centuries...in the years to come more than in the stunning period of that act. Humanity will never be able to pretend to speak of justice, punishment or righteousness until it can assimilate the concept of the six million dead...how civilized people could have become such murderers, how millions of others could fail to act to save the victims.” The questions raised over international law were so great in the poems that the *Congress Bulletin* thought “it would be despairing pessimism to think that non-Jewish humanity will ignore the mountains of dead.” See Review by D. R., *Congress Bulletin* (July 1949), in JHS, box 253, file 7, “Congress Bulletin.” Work under review was Chava Rosenfarb, *Di balade fun nekhtiken vald un andere lider* [*The Ballad of Yesterday’s Forest and Other Poems Together With Pages From a Diary*], (Montreal: H. Hershman, 1948).

²³¹ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 73-74.

Canadian Jews remained estranged from the memory of the Holocaust.”²³² However, since the Holocaust was frequently on the minds of Canadian Jews, it is not surprising that community-building and Holocaust memorialization were closely related. For Canadian Jews, the destruction of European Jewish culture put the onus of preserving Jewish life on North American Jewry. Harold Lande, a Jewish judge in Quebec’s Provincial Court, noted that Jewish education had to become a greater priority to Canadian Jewry in the wake of the Holocaust:

During the past twenty years, we have witnessed the most catastrophic change in the organic pattern of Jewish life in the world. Until little more than a score of years ago, Eastern Europe was a great source of our cultural and religious inspiration. Almost overnight in terms of history, the great stronghold of Jewishness has been wiped out....America alone is the hope for the preservation of the Jewish heritage in the present generation of Jews outside of Israel. In the past, we relied for much of our leadership on tides of immigration. If our own educational techniques were inadequate, there were always transfusions of blood from abroad, but there is no more blood plasma. We are on our own and what we do with the education of our youth will determine whether we have or have not met our great historic responsibility.²³³

Lande hoped that Canadian Jewry would go beyond fundraising or “dollar Judaism” and begin creating a spiritual and cultural community based on Jewish values.²³⁴ This sentiment was shared by American Jewry, who believed that Jewish survival depended on transforming North America into the cultural centre of Judaism. Canadian Jews therefore presented community-building as a necessary response to the Holocaust. As Canadian Jews

²³² *ibid.*, *Delayed Impact*, 70. Bialystok continues, “With an emphasis on turning themselves into ordinary Canadians, established Jews were abandoning the connection to their European roots. In so doing, they were neither prepared to mark nor interested in marking the Holocaust as an event with which they could identify. They may have lost family members of whom they had little memory, but for the community as a whole, the Holocaust was a significant issue. In fact, discussion of the event or learning about it through the survivors and through the few available books was discouraged. It was a blot on Jewish history.” See Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 94.

²³³ Jewish Education Session, CJC Thirteenth Plenary Session, 21-24 June 1962, 1-2, in OJA, Canadian Jewish Congress, Central Division fonds, F.17, s. 5-4-1, file 71, “Jewish Education Report.”

²³⁴ *ibid.*

moved to suburbs and rebuilt their community centers, they dedicated synagogues to the Holocaust martyrs. One notable example was the building of the Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto in 1955 with the amalgamation of Goel Tzedec and Beth HaMidrash HaGadol. The panels in the sanctuary were sculpted by Ernest Raab, a Holocaust survivor whose parents had been gassed, and featured symbols of Nazi concentration camps. In the dedication service, Rabbi Stuart E. Rosenberg stated that the building of this synagogue was an act of defiance against Hitler and an effort to carry on Jewish life:

Not many nights have passed since the lights of our synagogues and schools went out all over Europe. And with them, the sainted, the gifted, the learned, and the martyred. And now, in a free land and a free society, in stately dignity and in quiet confidence—the Scrolls of the Torah are borne aloft once more. And this symbol proclaims a great truth: By this supreme act of faith—faith in ourselves, in our freedoms—because of the God of freedom—the Psalmist once again comes to life: ‘I shall not die, but I will live and proclaim the works of the Lord.’²³⁵ This ceremony is a symbol of hope.²³⁶

Even before the Second World War ended, Canadian Jews infused the annihilation of European Jewry with religious significance by comparing it to the great acts of suffering and heroism in the Talmud. Hyman Chanover, writing for the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, compared the struggle against Nazism with the Maccabees’ rebellion against Syrian oppression. Comparing the liberation of German-occupied nations to lighting Chanukah candles, Chanover could marvel at the courage of Jews fighting Nazism, but not with a cheerful heart: “the lights that have been going on have also revealed unbelievably horrible

²³⁵ Psalm 118:17.

²³⁶ Stuart E. Rosenberg, “Dedication Sermon,” 9 December 1955, in LAC, Stuart R. Rosenberg fonds, MG31-F3, vol. 23, file, “Dedication Sermon.”

scenes of mass murder in the Nazi extermination camps for Jews.”²³⁷ For some Jews, the Seder table transformed from a joyful occasion celebrating the salvation of the Jews from their enslavement under the Pharaohs to a somber remembrance that Jews were being slaughtered in Poland. Harry Musikansky, editor of the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, wrote on April 16, 1943 that “the ancient story of Passover is being relived by Israel. The tyranny, enslavement and extermination practiced by the ancient Pharaohs were not very different from that of the modern Führer. It is a discouraging thought.”²³⁸ The secular newspaper *Winnipeg Tribune* even noted that the 1945 Rosh Hashanah celebrations would be marred, despite the end of the war, because “half of European Jewry was exterminated by the Nazis, [and this] will be stressed in sermons.”²³⁹

At Holy Blossom Temple, activities were transformed by the Holocaust. At the Annual Congregational Dinner on April 12, 1945, the synagogue paid homage to the Canadian Jewish soldiers who had served both their country and their morals to fight against Nazism. In a prepared speech, Rabbi Abraham Feinberg explained that the war and the destruction of European Jewry had shaken his congregation’s faith. Canadian Jews had been traumatised by Hitler’s war against the Jews and he saw his role in maintaining Jewish morale: “Every current of conflict, every hurricane of disaster, even from far-off Majdanek, every cold blast of insecurity and fear sweeping through Jewish hearts, inevitably swirls around the Rabbi.” Feinberg noted that membership at the Temple had “increased enormously” as Canadian Jews attempted to understand the spiritual meaning of the

²³⁷ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 22 December 1944, 3.

²³⁸ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 16 April 1943, 2.

²³⁹ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 6 September 1945, 13.

Holocaust: “at no point in our tumultuous and tear drenched past has the danger of physical destruction and spiritual demoralization been as great.” Its religious school had also dramatically grown in size, reaching nearly 300 pupils despite the facility originally designed for only 175. Feinberg explained that under the leadership of Peter Hunter and Heinz Warschauer, the schools “has been enlarged in physical scope and in spiritual intensity.” Even children were questioning the Jewish practices and traditions as they heard the tragedy befalling European Jewry: “No Jewish child is exempt from the disillusioning impact of the Nazi extermination-program, anti-Semitic pressure in the immediate environment, the faith-undermining growth of materialistic rationalism and the increasing indifference to Jewish practice and values in the average Jewish home.”²⁴⁰ As early as 1944, Holy Blossom Temple believed that it was important that children in its religious school discuss the Holocaust. Grade 10 students were asked to make scrapbooks on “The Warsaw Ghetto and its Fate” and “Palestine is being Rebuilt,” that could be deposited in the school library for future students.²⁴¹ Younger children also were introduced to the Holocaust and to the Canadian Jewish role in helping refugees. In the Kindergarten class, children were told of the suffering of Hitler’s victims and participated in fundraising efforts to “bring money for the children of Europe.” Similarly, the Grade 5 program included a segment on “The Children in Europe,” which discussed the relief efforts of Canadian Jewry to send them “food, clothing, medical

²⁴⁰ Abraham L. Feinberg, “Past, Present and Future—A Blue-Print,” in Laurie T. Simonsky, *President’s Annual Report* (Toronto: Holy Blossom Congregation, 1945) in CJCCCNA, Abraham Feinberg fonds, file, “Publications.”

²⁴¹ LAC, Heinz Warschauer fonds, MG31-D129, vol. 3, file, “Holy Blossom Religious School Curriculum, 1944-45.”

and sanitary supplies.” The course also discussed the “horrors and fear [and] years of death and darkness” that had enveloped Europe’s Jews.²⁴²

2.6 Conclusion

The Holocaust became infused within Canadian Jewish life during the war years. The struggle to save Europe’s Jews was invariably tied to the war effort for Canadian Jews, despite the Canadian Government’s effort to separate Canadian war aims from the European Jewish experience and frame the war as a liberal and Christian crusade against tyranny and oppression. Although the annihilation of the Jews did make appearances in the Canadian mainstream press, especially after 1942, the story was rarely discussed from a Canadian perspective until Hitler’s defeat was certain and discussion switched to how Germany ought to be punished. For Canadian Jews, the Second World War was an extension of the Nazi war to rid Germany of Jews. Therefore, the Canadian war effort was understood to be a means to save Europe’s Jews from complete annihilation. Canadian Jews certainly did lament the West’s unwillingness to launch any systematic rescue action to liberate Jews, but they were also conscious that winning the war quickly needed to be a top priority. The end of the fight against Nazi Germany did not immediately bring an end to Jewish suffering in Europe. Nor did Canadian Jews believe that the danger of antisemitism passed with the defeat of Hitler’s regime. One of the greatest impact on Canadian Jews was a greater sensitivity to the dangers of antisemitism. The Nazi period demonstrated that antisemitism was not only a social

²⁴² “The Tempelite,” Holy Blossom Religious School, 1947-48 program, in LAC, Heinz Warschauer fonds, MG31-D129, Vol. 3, file “H. B. Anniversary Programmes, 1947-48, 52-56, and 1960.”

disease that ate away at the foundations of democratic institutions, but that it could lead to the annihilation of millions of Jews if left unchecked. Therefore, Canadian Jewish efforts turned towards creating international safeguards that they hoped would prevent further genocides and securing the State of Israel, where Jews could show a sign of strength to combat further assaults.

Chapter 3

Conceptualizing the Postwar World Order in the Aftermath of the Holocaust

Following the Second World War, the extermination of European Jewry was not forgotten by the Canadian Jewish community, but impacted their views on the postwar settlement. The Jewish diaspora, including Canadian Jews, took part—as much as they could without having a seat at the negotiating table in the UN—in conceiving an international order that would protect Jews and other minorities from future state-sponsored mass murder. To bring justice to the international order, Canadian Jews looked to the Holocaust for lessons and zeroed in on two main inter-connected factors that they believed created the conditions for Nazi antisemitism to evolve into the extermination of Jews: the insecurity of citizenship law and the impenetrable barrier of national sovereignty. Canadian Jews realized that one of the first steps Nazi Germany took against Jews was to strip them of their citizenship, which dehumanized them in the eyes of the law, making them easier to murder. For many Jews, the Holocaust also demonstrated the danger of maintaining the unfettered sanctity of national sovereignty. In the 1930s, the Western democracies could look on, protest, and locally organize boycotts on German goods, but effectively do nothing while Germany stripped Jews of their citizenship, deported Jews to the limbo region of the Polish-German border, and organized a pogrom that caused the destruction of Jewish life, property, and liberty in 1938. Perhaps the one thing that would have helped—lifting the immigration quotas and allow German Jews to flee Europe—was not pursued largely because the national sovereignty of

Western democracies ensured immigration policies were determined by the perceived national interests and not humanitarian sentiment.

This Holocaust discourse influenced Canadian Jews to press for human rights protection both domestically and in the international sphere. In 1946, Canadian Jews attempted to use Canadian memories of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the 1930s to insert a human rights amendment into the proposed Citizenship Act. While this effort proved unsuccessful, largely because Canadians had attuned themselves to disassociate Canada's liberal culture from the problems that consumed Germany, and therefore saw little need to legislate against discrimination at the federal level, Canadian Jews exerted pressure on the international front to grant rights to humans beyond those enshrined in citizenship law.¹ Canadian Jews championed the need for international institutions, such as the UN and the Genocide Convention, which would further the cause of liberalism and justice between nations.

While Canadian Jews remained united around these issues, a rift developed within the Canadian Jewish community along both class and ideological lines over the German problem. Due to the Allied strategy to contain Soviet expansion, the Western Allies decided to welcome West Germany back into the comity of nations, making it an independent, remilitarized partner in NATO. This decision was highly controversial among Canadian Jews, whose memories of German rearmament under Hitler were still fresh. For much of the late 1940s, Canadian Jewry opposed granting Germany suzerainty. When the Cold War

¹ For Canadian Jewish efforts to insert a bill of rights into The Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946, see Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*, ch. 8, in Christopher MacLennan *Toward the Charter: Canadians and the Demand for a National Bill of Rights, 1929-1960* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 45-46.

intensified, following the Berlin blockade and the Korean War, the Canadian Jewish leadership in the CJC shifted its position to support ending the occupation of West Germany, provided adequate safeguards were in place and that West Germany made restitution for the Jewish property it seized during the Hitler years. For many working class Jews, especially those with communist affiliations, this was an abhorrent decision that could pave the way to a second Holocaust. They claimed that antisemitism was on the rise in West Germany, that many top government officials were former Nazis, and that Canada should reaffirm itself as a moral superpower by opposing German rearmament. While the Canadian Jewish leadership appreciated this position as they too had become hyper-sensitized to instances of antisemitism, eventually the CJC purged itself of communist-affiliated Jewish organizations over the issue of German rearmament. However, the division in the Jewish community was not due to a difference of opinion over the significance of the Holocaust, but a question of sincerity. For working-class Jewish communists, the decision to back the rearmament of Germany was motivated by political pressure to back the Canadian government. For liberal Jews, communist opposition to German rearmament was a smokescreen, as was evidenced by the disturbing news that the Soviet Union was engaged in its own antisemitic campaign throughout Eastern Europe.

This chapter explores these events, showing the evolution of Jewish thought on Canada's role in the international arena. It shows that while the memory of the Holocaust was at the forefront of Canadian Jewish thought in the immediate years following the Second World War. At times, the Holocaust worked to distort Jewish perceptions, particularly regarding the resurgence of antisemitism in West Germany. Moreover, the fear of resurgent

antisemitism, be it in the Soviet Union or West Germany, caused Canadian Jews to abandon relatively idealistic positions and adopt more realistic arguments and strategies to safeguard Jewish life.

Despite the centrality of German rearmament in the rift that erupted between communist Jews and the Canadian Jewish Congress, historians of the Canadian Jewish community have paid the story little attention. One reason is that historians of the Holocaust have argued that the Cold War prevented Jews of the postwar era from speaking about the Holocaust. It seems highly implausible that Jews would want to dredge up Germany's past crimes when the Western democracies were trying to gain a *rapprochement* with West Germany. Perhaps due to this common assumption, historians in Canada have not examined the German rearmament crisis from the Jewish perspective.² When this largely forgotten chapter in Canadian diplomatic history is discussed, it is typically examined in passing to note Canada's role as a mediator between the United States and the other NATO powers, a role that Canada took in order to temper the influence of the United States.³ However, by

² In *Delayed Impact*, Franklin Bialystok leaves all discussion of postwar settlement of Germany out of his work and discusses the Canadian Jewish fear of antisemitism emerging in Germany only in the 1960s.

³ Only brief mention of the German rearmament crisis is found in the standard works on Canada and the early Cold War. See Roy Anthony Rempel, *Counterweights: The Failure of Canada's German and European Policy, 1955-1995* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); John English, *The Worldly Years: Life of Lester Pearson, 1949-1972* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1992); Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2007); Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, John English, *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). Angelika E. Sauer's otherwise interesting dissertation on the relationship between Germany and Canada in the postwar era ends too early to shed light on Canadian involvement or reaction to German rearmament. See Angelika Sauer, "The Responsible Course: Canada's Department of External Affairs, the Great Powers, and the 'German Problem', 1943-1947," (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Waterloo, 1994). The subject has been of great interest to scholars of the other NATO nations, especially the United States, Britain, and France. The two standard works on the postwar peace process are John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2006) and the more balanced and impressive Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (Toronto: Penguin, 2005). For Britain's position towards German rearmament see Saki Dockrill, *British Policy for West German Rearmament, 1950-1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For French responses to German rearmament see William I. Hitchcock,

using untapped archival sources that shed light on Jewish reactions to German rearmament, an entirely different image of Canadian Jewish thought emerges than the one currently advanced by historians. This chapter will attempt to fill this lacuna within Canadian historiography.

3.1 Canadian Jews and the Making of the New International Order

The Canadian Jewish experience during the Second World War of witnessing the Nazis strip Jews of their rights and murdering Europe's Jews led many Canadian Jews to think that the traditional method of preserving peace through a network of alliances that facilitated a balance of power was fundamentally flawed. For Canadian Jews, the Holocaust and the disruption of the peace were not isolated events, but both caused by the Nazi master race ideology which guided both Hitler's domestic and foreign policy. To ensure that such events did not happen again, Canadian Jews pressed for an international order that would ensure that countries did not have carte-blanche in how they entreated with each other or even their own citizens. Although liberal internationalism was present in Canada during the interwar period, it was not shared in Canada's Department of External Affairs, whose position was multilateral, believing that Canadian security was dependent on strong alliances for its

France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). The literature on German rearmament and American foreign policy is quite extensive. The standard works include Harold Zink, *The United States in Germany, 1944-1955* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1957); Robert McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European Defense after World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Roger Morgan, *The United States and West Germany, 1945-1973: A Study in Alliance Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); James McAllister, *No Exit: America and the German Problem, 1943-1954* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

defensive needs.⁴ Even after the Second World War, the Canadian Government had strong reservations about the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights because it would restrict Canadian authorities from effectively suppressing subversive elements in Canada.⁵ Canadian Jews, however, worked earnestly, if futilely, to reverse the Canadian position on a liberal internationalism by arguing that the Holocaust demonstrated that protecting human rights would also guard against expansionist European wars.

One of the first opportunities that Canadian Jews had to address the question of international human rights following the Holocaust was at the San Francisco Conference in April 1945. The purpose of the conference was to prepare a charter for a general international organization for the maintenance of international peace and security. The many statements that had been made over the course of the war regarding the purpose of the United Nations, including the Atlantic Charter and President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, left Canadian Jews hopeful. Saul Hayes, the national director of the CJC, was particularly eager to use this opportunity "to inform the world at large [of] the Canadian Jewish Congress' views."⁶ He lobbied the Canadian government by submitting a proposal to the Department of External Affairs. Interestingly, Hayes' initial drafts were scathing of the West's response to Hitler's war, demanding that the United Nations go beyond empty platitudes: "What do the Jewish people want in the new order? Definitely they want their leaders of the free peoples not to speak out of both sides of their mouths at the same time with regard to the

⁴ William A. Schabas, "Canada's Contribution to International Law," in Robert Bothwell and Jean Daudelin eds. *Canada Among the Nations, 2008: 100 Years of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 145.

⁵ William A. Schabas, "Canada and the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *McGill Law Review* 43 (1998): 403-41.

⁶ Saul Hayes to [CJC] National Officers, "Memorandum," 20 February 1945, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 290: "San Francisco Conference, 1945."

needs of the Jewish people.”⁷ Clearly, Hayes was tired of receiving sympathetic remarks about the plight of Jews, yet no action. However, fearing that such accusations would damage the Jewish cause, he adjusted his tone in the final draft. Hayes argued that the horrors of the Holocaust demanded that the Jewish voice be heard:

The stories of the shipments of cattle-car loads of Jewish women and children—not to speak of men slaves—from France, Belgium, Holland and Germany to the annihilation camps in Poland; the stories of the pogroms and persecutions for years, when peace ostensibly still reigned; the stories of Maidanek and Treblinka; the sagas of the Warsaw ghetto heroes—these are stories and sagas of nations of France and Holland and Belgium and of other lands. But there is an extra touch to them, a Jewish touch.... Therefore the Jewish citizens of free countries...ask the representatives of their countries in the name of the cause of equity which they would serve to do justice to the Jewish cause.⁸

Since there was no Jewish state at the time, Jews did not have a seat at the negotiating table to help shape the postwar world order and had to rely on representatives to plead their case. The CJC wanted Canadian delegates to understand that the Second World War was driven by Hitler’s ideology, which was antisemitic at its core: “anti-Semitism is made of the stuff of Hitlerism.”⁹ The submission emphasized that Hitler’s war really began in 1933 and was initially directed against Jews. Since the global military conflict was an inevitable product of Hitler’s master race ideology, an international system that did not safeguard minorities could not secure a lasting peace: “we still remember the practice of certain states before the war, of using alleged minority problems as subterfuges and excuses for provoking misunderstandings and tensions and ‘incidents’ that led to border troubles and eventually to

⁷ CJC Submission Draft, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 290, “San Francisco Conference, 1945,” 5.

⁸ “Memoranda submitted by the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Zionist Organizations of Canada to the Canadian delegates to the United Nations Conference on International Organization at San Francisco,” 19 April 1945, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 8, file 133, 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

war.”¹⁰ Therefore, the CJC contended that the eradication of antisemitism needed to be prioritized:

The constant association of virulent anti-Semitism with the incidence of Fascism and Hitlerism, either as a forerunner and spearhead of the latter, or as an invariable accompaniment justifies the assumption that the two are fundamentally interconnected. The survival of anti-Semitic concepts of practices in the lands which have been befouled by Hitler’s domination will constitute a breeding ground for a fresh manifestation of Fascism and Hitlerism. The world cannot afford to run such a risk. It is therefore essential, in the interests of realistic self-protection, as well as human progress, that the United Nations propound and proclaim a Bill of Rights guaranteeing human rights to Jewish people in all lands where such rights were undermined or violated by the Hitler disease.¹¹

The CJC also demanded that the United Nations’ “new machinery for safeguarding the rights of individuals and minorities” have “strong, sharp teeth, capable of implementing its important function.”¹²

The CJC submission had little impact on thinking inside the Department of External Affairs. Hayes had proposed submitting the statement in person to Prime Minister Mackenzie King or Secretary of State for External Affairs, Norman Robertson, but both Robertson and King declined. The Jewish delegation was shunted off to meet with Acting Secretary for External Affairs Brooke Claxton and Acting Assistant Under-Secretary Dr. John E. Read, neither of whom went to San Francisco. As per usual, the delegation was assured that their submission would be given due consideration and passed on to the Canadian representatives at the conference but there is no evidence that the submission had

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

any bearing on the conduct of the Canadian contingent.¹³ As Adam Chapnick describes in his *The Middle Power Project*, the Canadian delegation to San Francisco was “cautious,” rarely taking the lead on any issue because of the “importance of great-power harmony to future Canadian prosperity.”¹⁴ Ultimately, Canada voted to give veto powers to the permanent members of the Security Council in order to ease East-West tensions, even though the measure threatened to undermine the ability of the UN to police international relations.¹⁵

Canadian Jews were disappointed in the weak structure of the UN and with the failed efforts to insert a bill of rights into Canada’s Citizenship Bill of 1944; they came to the unsettling conclusion that most Canadians did not believe there was a need for a bill of rights in liberal democracies. Abe Arnold, editor of the *Western Jewish Bulletin*, wrote “all of us, of course, are pleased that the United Nations Charter included provisions for an International Bill of Rights, but we know that this will be valuable only to the degree that it is implemented.”¹⁶ Canadian Jews became especially disenchanted after witnessing Alistair Stewart and John D. Diefenbaker’s failed efforts to include a Bill of Rights in Canada’s constitution or amend its newly proposed Citizenship Act in 1946 to include a similar provision. In support for the need for a Canadian Bill of Rights, Stewart cited numerous Canadian violations of human rights, including racial discrimination in the National Selective Service, racial quotas for admittance throughout most Canadian universities, the

¹³ Saul Hayes to National Executive, “San Francisco Conference,” Memorandum, 19 March 1945, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 290, “San Francisco Conference, 1945.”

¹⁴ Adam Chapnick, *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 150.

¹⁵ Chapnick, 126-38; Saul Hayes also attended the conference, but accomplished very little. See Saul Hayes to U. J. R. Executive and Dominion Council, “Constitutional Rights of Jews in Europe,” memorandum, 10 August, 1945, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series ZA 1945, box 8, file 146.

¹⁶ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 15 February 1946, 2.

displacement of the Japanese-Canadians and theft of their property, and racial discrimination in Canada's immigration policy specifically relating to Jews. However, the call for a Canadian "bill of rights" in 1946 failed in part because the Canadian government did not want to restrict its powers, but also because many MPs saw no need for it. As Progressive Conservative MP, William Alexander McMaster wondered obliviously, "what defect was it [the bill of rights] intended to cure?"¹⁷ For others though, the Canadian need to safeguard individual rights was paramount. MP Angus MacInnis of the CCF was extremely distressed by Canada's treatment of Japanese Canadians and noted that "it is a well known fact that Hitler began with the persecution of the Jews, but he ended up by depriving everybody in Germany of liberty. We have come pretty close to that in Canada."¹⁸

Despite the disappointment over the Charter and Canadian attitudes towards a bill of rights, Canadian Jews did not give up trying to create an international order that was safe for minorities. Saul Hayes attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 in an effort to persuade delegates that the violence directed against Jews during the war had to be punished severely and that legal and practical sureties needed to be implemented so that neither Germany, nor any other state, could threaten minorities. However, the conference was another great disappointment for Canadian Jewry. Ill-informed, Hayes discovered upon arrival that the conference only concerned treaties with the minor Axis powers—Rumania, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, and Finland—and not Germany. More aggravating still for Hayes was that "the conference [did] not have powers," since treaty drafts were to be written by the Big Four, who were concerned with "strategic and political considerations alone." There was little care

¹⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 9 April 1946, 744.

¹⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 13 May 1946, 1521; 14 May 1946, 1548.

for either “the bitter experiences of war” or “the degree of war guilt, war criminality or war menace of the former axis powers.” With the Jewish case being a “moral one,” Saul Hayes left the conference early, realizing that Jewish interests were not going to be reflected in the treaties produced.¹⁹

Canadian Jews similarly had mixed feelings regarding the Genocide Convention and its ability to stop state-sponsored mass murder, since its purview only extended to members who signed and ratified the convention. Canada’s hesitation to ratify the convention bewildered Canadian Jews, making many suspect that the UN adoption of the Genocide Convention was an empty gesture. The *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* could not understand why anyone would question the need for such an international law. “Does any one question it? Is the murder of one man a crime, but the murder of six million merely a breach of a law which still requires to be written?”²⁰ While Hayes could think of “at least half a dozen major arguments why Canada should support the convention,” he consulted with Maurice Perlzweig of the WJC to learn the “nooks and crannies” to help make a convincing case to External Affairs.²¹ Perlzweig instructed Hayes to approach Pearson on three fronts. First, the case should be made that Canada played a lead role in establishing the “UN ideal,” and therefore was “under a strong moral obligation to align itself” with the Genocide Convention. Secondly, Canada had the opportunity to take the lead before any of the Big Five had ratified the Convention, thus securing Canada’s position as “foremost of the Middle Powers. Will it now surrender this position?” Finally, the Genocide Convention was paramount to stave off

¹⁹ Saul Hayes, “Jewish Representations at the Peace Conference in Paris,” nd., CJCCCNA, Saul Hayes Papers, box 1, file 3 and CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 290A, “Paris Peace Conference, 1946.”

²⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 5 March 1948, 3; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 March 1952, 3.

²¹ Hayes to Perlzweig, letter, 4 August 1949, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 19, file 151B, “Genocide Convention (United Nations),” 1952.

the threat of antisemitism in Germany. Since “the threat of Nazi resurgence is obvious enough to anyone,” Perlzweig believed that “there is no reason why the special Jewish anxiety in the matter should not be the subject of at least some reference.” The supposed rise of German antisemitism was not the only concern for Perlzweig as “the Jewish minorities in the Middle East are under constant threat of annihilation.” Therefore ratification needed to be urgently pursued.²²

On behalf of the CJC, Samuel Bronfman sent Pearson a letter on June 23, 1950, insisting that Canada ratify the Genocide Convention immediately so that it could take a stand against the “resurgence of anti-Semitism in Germany and anti-Semitic outbreaks in Moslem countries.”²³ Pearson’s responded that he was “hoping” to bring ratification before the House “early in the next session,” but also did not want to give tacit approval to the reservations made by the Soviet bloc when they signed the convention. Specifically they disputed Article IX , which stated that one signatory power could take another contracting party before the International Court of Justice. Soviet states only consented to be brought before the International Court of Justice if all parties of the dispute consented.²⁴ This reservation potentially made the Genocide Convention meaningless as it was highly unlikely that the offending party would submit itself to the mercy of the court.²⁵ However, Canadian Jewish leaders doubted whether Canada’s delay was due to considerations about Soviet reservations or whether the Canadian Government had its own reservations. Sensing this and

²² Perlzweig to Hayes, letter, 17 August 1949, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, Series CA, box 19, file 151B, “Genocide Convention (United Nations), 1952.

²³ Bronfman to Pearson, letter, 23 June 1950, in LAC, RG26, vol. 75, file 5475-CJ-40, part 1.

²⁴ Pearson to Bronfman, letter, 7 July 1950, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 19, file 151B, “Genocide Convention (United Nations), 1952.

²⁵ See “Note for File: Soviet and Satellite Reservations when signing the Genocide Convention” and correspondence between Pearson and Raphael Lemkin in LAC, RG 26, vol. 75, file 5475-CJ-40, part 1.

being pressured by Raphael Lemkin to press the Government, the CJC sent a submission to Pearson the next year on April 13, 1951, appealing to Canada's tradition of multiculturalism. Bronfman argued that Canada's unique multi-national makeup made it perfect to take the lead on the Genocide Convention: "Canada...reflects sober and sound attitudes in communal living and has an unblemished reputation in the relationships of the many diverse groups which combine to form the mosaic of Canadian democracy." Acknowledging the "legal problems," Bronfman asked Pearson to think long-term and understand that if Canada ratified the convention: "Canada will be recorded for its moral leadership."²⁶

When the ratification of the Genocide Convention went before the House in 1952, Canadian Jews and members of the CCF made the case that this act of international law was a useful first step, but needed to be expanded to prohibit acts of systematic racial discrimination. Advocates made the case that Hitler's extermination of the Jews did not begin with gas chambers, but with discrimination and persecution. CCF MP Alistair Stewart agreed that the convention had "no teeth" and was a mere gesture, "but a gesture perhaps has its importance in the world today." He believed that the convention would serve as a useful educational tool, and help keep genocide at the forefront of international policy: "I think the world particularly remembers the horror which happened to the Jewish people under Nazi Germany when 6 or 7 million of them were exterminated, again in the name of national policy. The question, however, is whether the next generation will remember these horrible things."²⁷

²⁶ Bronfman, "Submissions of the Canadian Jewish Congress," 13 April 1951, in CJC fonds, series CA, box 19, file 151B, "Genocide Convention (United Nations)," 1952.

²⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 May 1952, 2430-31.

The two Jewish MPs, David Croll and Leon Crestohl spoke about the need for the Convention and applauded Canada's decision to ratify it, but made it clear that more was needed to end the prospect of future genocides. David Croll justified his decision to speak on behalf of the motion to ratify the convention by recalling his experience as an officer in the Canadian Army in 1945 who visited a concentration camp and saw a gas chamber²⁸:

I have met and known men and women whose whole families have been sent to the gas chambers and who have seen them tortured and afflicted. I have seen the gas chambers.... Today, years later, I still shudder as I recall vividly those gas chambers. It was a horrifying experience long remembered which burns and sears the memory.... I recall particularly the meticulous records the Nazis kept. Nothing was left to chance. Nothing was hidden. The records were perfect. On one side of the ledger the heading was Juden; on the other side were inscribed other unfortunate persons of all nationalities. The side of the ledger headed Juden was by far the largest.

For Croll, the Genocide convention was "a step against jungle law," but more was needed. The fact that so little was done to save the European Jews before Hitler began to exterminate them was an indictment against Canada: "We are all responsible in some measure for the terrible persecution of our time.... Those of us who stand by and permit these crimes to be committed cannot escape some portion of guilt." This convention would not prevent state-sponsored mass murder, Croll warned since "a nation which signs a convention can also repudiate it." The Genocide Convention needed to be a guiding principle in Canada's immigration and external affairs policies. "It is not an insurance policy against the future. And yet it can be a real weight to throw into the moral balance of the world. It carried the

²⁸ Although gas chambers were installed almost exclusively for murdering Jews in extermination camps in Eastern Europe, when Auschwitz was liberated in January 1945 by Soviet troops, the Nazis almost immediately built gas chambers in some of the existing concentration camps in Germany to carry on the Holocaust in spite of the Nazi impending defeat. Gas chambers were built in Ravensbrück in early January 1945 and at Dachau in February 1945. See Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2011), 128-30.

seeds of a new order for humanity. But those seeds may be barren, unless the free nations cultivate the ground for them.” Although such highly flourished rhetoric rang as idealistic, Croll wanted Canada to “strike at the causes of injustices,” by which he meant racism and racial discrimination, so that “in time, a convention like this should not be necessary.”²⁹

Perhaps due to receiving a number of talking points from Hayes,³⁰ Leon Crestohl spoke more to the point and argued that the Genocide Convention should be seen as an “outcry” of world’s citizens to break down the wall of national sovereignty when it is being used to defend racial persecution. As he explained, “the theory of non-intervention in a matter of so-called domestic jurisdiction...is no longer tenable with respect to crimes which are universally acknowledged as inhuman and immoral, and this notwithstanding the fact that traditionally criminal law has been considered as an expression of the right of a state to define and punish acts, which in its judgment are contrary to public order within its borders.” Crestohl had no doubt that this upheaval in public sentiment was motivated by the world’s disgust over the Nazi atrocities: “it is no secret...that modern civilization cringes in shame when we hear of crematoria, mass graves, gas chambers and other such hideous implements of murder. The studied, scientific and systematic brutalities of the Nazis shocked the conscience of the twentieth century.” However, he found it little consolation that the Genocide Convention could only be utilized after the crime: “by the time the perpetrators can

²⁹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 May 1952, 2432-34; David Croll’s speech was covered extensively throughout Canada, and newspaper editors focused on Croll’s experience of witnessing the gas chambers. For example, the *Windsor Star* ran the story under the headline “Col. Croll Tells House of Nazi Gas Chambers,” with “U.N. Convention Outlawing Race Murder Unanimously Approved by Canadians,” running underneath as a subheading. For press clippings of Croll’s speech, see LAC, David Arnold Croll fonds, MG32-C49, vol. 55, file 20, “Genocide, 1952.”

³⁰ Hayes to Crestohl, letter, 7 April 1952 and letter, 7 May 1952, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 19, file 151B, “Genocide Convention (United Nations),” 1952.

be brought to trial, it may be too late.” He insisted that if the UN was serious about ending genocide, the UN Security Council should regularly “scrutinize” countries who may commit genocide and be given “adequate power and authority to call for an immediate cessation of those acts which may lead to, or in fact may be, genocide.” Crestohl also wanted to revamp the sanctions procedure to make it a more speedy and effective system of deterrence.³¹

While Crestohl’s proposals took no account of the Cold War power structure which hampered the UN’s effectiveness, they also ignored the possibility of one of the Big Five committing genocide.

The Canadian Government had no intention of expanding its interpretation of the Genocide Convention, as became clear following Pearson’s speech in the House. In fact, the Canadian Government’s concern was not wholly or even primarily about how to make the convention a useful tool to combat genocide, but about whether Canada could be found guilty of genocide, under its vague definition. Could acts besides mass murder be considered genocidal? Pearson assured MPs that this was not the case and that racial discrimination did not fall under the purview of the Genocide Convention, despite the United States Supreme Court ruling that it did:

The judgment did comment on the genocide convention and might have given the impression that while genocide is, of course, literally, the murder of a race by extension it could be applied to any act detrimental to the welfare of any identifiable group, whether the lines of identification are religious, racial, cultural or national, and that it might apply to crimes against such groups short of extermination and might therefore really be aimed against any concerted determined discrimination against a minority....I think that interpretation of this convention is going too far: that is, that it could be interpreted as applying to discrimination against a minority. While I would not have anything I say on this point interpreted as approving or condoning discrimination of this kind

³¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 May 1952, 2435-39.

in any shape or form, we would have our own way, I hope, of dealing with such discrimination.

What the Genocide Convention was aimed at preventing, according to Pearson, were atrocities like those committed by the Nazis: “their systematic and ruthless policy, designed to uproot and exterminate a whole people, the Jewish people, [which] makes one of the most tragic chapters in the whole of human history.” For Pearson, the purpose of the Genocide Convention was “to bring the law throughout the world up to the standard which I think we may say without boasting happily exists already in our own country.” The idea that Canada could commit genocidal crimes was absurd.³²

3.2 The Canadian Jewish Protest against German Rearmament

Although Canadian Jews were disillusioned by the Canadian Government’s response to the Genocide Convention, they remained optimistic that Canada would recognize and respond to the resurgence of antisemitism and racism in a foreign country, if not in its own. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Canadian Jews became extremely jittery that antisemitism was being rekindled in Germany and that its remaining Jewish population was being threatened with persecution. Reports coming out of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and the Canadian press regarding the conditions facing German Jews were troubling, leading many Canadian Jews to believe that Hitler’s hatred of the Jews still lingered in the hearts of Germans. However, what threw the Canadian Jewish community into a panic was that diplomatic talks were being pursued between the Western Allies and the West German Government that

³² Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 May 1952, 2439-43; see also IOI Bulletin, no. 1,369, 27 May 1952, 1-2 in OJA.

would grant Germany independence and allow it to rebuild its military. Canada's Jews attempted to warn the Western Allies that if Germany had not been purged of Nazi antisemitism, it was bound to repeat the pattern of the 1930s of first attacking the Jews and then embarking on an imperialist war for Europe.

In the first six years following the liberation of Europe, Canadian Jewry was united in its support of retributive plans dealing with the "German problem," such as the Morgenthau Plan. In 1946, the CJC submitted to External Affairs and the Secretariat of the Council of Foreign Ministers a position paper on Germany detailing a number of principles essential "if that Treaty is to be an instrument for the reconstitution of a moral society and the vindication of the principles for which the democratic world sacrificed blood and expended treasure."³³ Although a repurposed submission drafted by the American Jewish Congress, it reflected Canadian Jewish concerns. "Germany must acknowledge her shameful guilt for her monstrous crime against the Jews" or the CJC warned that any peace treaty would just "distort the records of history beyond recognition." Jews also wanted the great powers to realize that while "Germany's readjustment to the principles of democracy will be a slow process," it would only be successful if a rigorous campaign was undertaken to "cleanse her...from the invidious poison of anti-semitism" and "race superiority." In part, this meant that "Germany must effectively punish all those who had a hand in the persecution of Jews or benefited from it." To prevent a second Holocaust in Germany, "the treatment of Jews

³³ Hayes to Secretariat, Council of Foreign Ministers, 31 March, 1947, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 290A, "Paris Peace Conference, 1946-47."

within her borders cannot be safely left to her discretion” the CJC cautioned, but must be subject to international supervision.³⁴

However, it was not practical for the occupying powers to leave Germany an industrial wasteland. Not only was the economic cost of the occupational forces unsustainable,³⁵ the West was convinced that Germans would only embrace democracy and capitalism if they experienced it. To keep Germans from returning to reactionary political ideologies, such as Nazism or communism, the Americans poured billions of dollars into Western Europe, including West Germany, to revitalize the European economy and make it a profitable trading partner.³⁶ Moreover, the heating up of the Cold War led American military experts to conclude that rebuilding West Germany was necessary to offset Soviet military power in Europe. The Soviet blockade of Berlin in response to currency reform in West Germany pushed the Western Allies to create NATO, a defensive pact of democracies surrounding the North Atlantic, thus carving Europe into two hostile camps. In September 1949, the Soviets exploded their first atomic bomb and ended American nuclear ascendancy. By 1950, the military balance of power on the ground in Europe had swung decisively in the Soviet Union’s favor, making it essential that NATO quickly train and utilize West Germany’s manpower.³⁷ Especially in light of American military obligations in Korea, United States Secretary of State Dean Acheson categorically stated that any “attempt to

³⁴ “A Summary of Basic Proposals for Inclusion in the German Peace Treaty Submitted by the Canadian Jewish Congress,” in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 28, file 290A, “Paris Peace Conference, 1946-47.”

³⁵ Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy for West Germany Rearmament 1950-1951*, 5; Karl Hardach, *The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 94-6.

³⁶ Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 100-28; For Soviet opposition to the Marshall Plan see, Wilfried Loth, *Stalin’s Unwanted Child: The German Question, and the Founding of the GDR* (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 65.

³⁷ One scholar states that the “Eastern military machine was believed to be quantitatively superior by a ratio of something like 10 to 1.” See Robert McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European Defense after World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 6.

defend Western Europe without German participation was impossible.”³⁸ At NATO’s North Atlantic Council in September 1950, Acheson reiterated his government’s intention to rearm West Germany and have its forces “incorporated” into NATO under a unified command, to ensure that West Germany “would not have the capacity for independent action.” Acheson admitted that this action qualified as “a complete revolution in American foreign policy and in the attitude of the American people,” but that rearming West Germany provided the West with the only real chance to “deter aggression against any of us and repel it if it should occur.”³⁹ In May 1949, the Allies took the first step towards remilitarizing West Germany by merging the occupation zones of the Western democracies to form the Federal Republic of Germany. The new democracy conducted its first election in August 1949, electing Konrad Adenauer’s conservative Christian Democratic Party into power.

The sudden shift in the United States’ relationship with Germany brought anxiety to Canadian Jews, who were hearing reports of antisemitic actions in Germany. Polls indicated that Germans were nostalgic for the Hitler days, perhaps because the German economic revitalization in the days before the war contrasted sharply with the food shortage epidemic in postwar Germany. The newswire *Jewish Public Service* (JPS) reported that “German thinking with regard to Nazism and Nazi race theories has not changed fundamentally[;] if anything, pro-Nazi sentiment has grown since Germany’s military defeat.”⁴⁰ A widely disseminated poll carried out by the American Military Government in January 1948 found

³⁸ “Minutes of a Private Conference of the French, British, and United States Foreign Ministers and Their High Commissioners for Germany,” 14 September, 1950, United States Department of State, *FRUS*, Everett S. Gleason and Fredrick Aandahl, eds. (Washington D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 293-301.

³⁹ For extracts from Acheson’s September 15 speech see Acheson to acting secretary, telegram, 17 September, 1950, *FRUS, Western Europe, 1950*, Vol. III, 316-319.

⁴⁰ “Germans Cling to Nazi Theories Survey Shows,” *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 2 July 1948, 15.

that 54 percent of Germans agreed with “Nazi theories” and only 37 percent “declared themselves more or less opposed to Nazism.” Although the poll was vague in regards to what specific “theories” were being agreed with, the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* assumed it meant racial theories and not economic theories.⁴¹

Much of the Canadian Jewish concern over resurgent Nazism in postwar Germany originated from WJC reports and Jewish observers who visited Germany, rather than from the Jewish community living in Germany. Nahum Goldman, chairman of the executive of the World Jewish Congress, warned that “violent anti-Semitic agitation...in some German cities, especially in the Western Zone constitutes a serious threat to the lives and security of Jewish displaced persons.”⁴² In April 1949, the WJC issued a “Statement of Policy on Germany,” calling for the Allies to “complete the denazification of Germany” before “granting political sovereignty to Germany.”⁴³ The Jewish observers who travelled to Germany to assess the re-education program tended to agree. Dr. Alfred Werner, an Austrian Jew who escaped Europe in 1940, spent three months interviewing Germans to assess the level of antisemitism. When Germans did not realize he was a Jew, Werner reported that they “frequently tried to sell me the Nazi ideology.” Concluding that it would take “decades to re-educate the Germans,” especially those who had been indoctrinated in Hitler’s Youth

⁴¹ In fact, much analysis of postwar polls by the American Military Government (OMGUS) in West Germany has been made by scholars. American pollsters repeatedly found until 1949 a “massive persistence of anti-Semitism” among Germans. Scholars have attributed this antisemitism to impoverished conditions of Germans and controversies over the Western German agreement for Jewish property restitution. See Werner Bergmann and Erb Rainer, *Anti-Semitism in Germany: The Post-Nazi Epoch since 1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Historiography.

⁴² *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 July 1948, 3.

⁴³ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 6 May 1949, 2; See also WJC Political Director, Robert S. Marcus’ speech on the failure of denazification and the resurgence of antisemitism in West Germany in *Canadian Jewish Review*, 17 June 1949.

and “had witnessed nothing but the absolute rule of hatred, brutality and ignorance,” Werner travelled throughout North America warning audiences that “Hitler isn’t dead.”⁴⁴

The resurgent antisemitism that Canadian Jews were reading about was a German xenophobic reaction to the arrival of thousands of Eastern European Jews, who had fled the pogroms of post-1945 Poland and come to the American Zone, where they hoped to immigrate to the United States or Palestine. The Eastern European Jewish DPs appearance in West Germany coincided with the beginning of the American military occupation, and thus they became a symbol of defeat and occupation for Germans.⁴⁵ German Jews also distanced themselves from the *Ostjuden* DPs, partly because of religious differences but also because they feared the *Ostjuden* were “reinforcing traditional stereotypes.”⁴⁶ Antisemitic stereotypes that persisted throughout Western culture worked to tie Eastern European Jews to the corruption of social mores by facilitating the black market, organization prostitution rings and furthering public drunkenness.⁴⁷ As Anthony Kauders argues, throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, “antisemitism, not philosemitism, was directed against displaced persons; documented in polls and surveys; and rife in all walks of life, often leading to violent assaults and the desecration of cemeteries.”⁴⁸ However, it is too simple to suggest that the postwar German racism was the same as Nazi antisemitism, with the end goal of extermination.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 13 April 1949, 44-45.

⁴⁵ Maria H. Hohn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 113-14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 210-11.

⁴⁸ Anthony Kauders, *Democratization and the Jews: Munich, 1945-1965* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press for the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2004), 21.

⁴⁹ Frank Stern, “The Historic Triangle: Occupiers, Germans and Jews in Postwar Germany,” in Robert G. Moeller, eds. *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press, 1997), 213-14.

Postwar Germans tended not to lump German Jews with Polish Jews and American prejudice against blacks seeped into German mindsets, often turning nativist hatred against blacks and focusing on preventing miscegenation between Germans and blacks rather than between Jews and non-Jews.⁵⁰ Moreover, such antisemitic acts did not have the support of the newly formed Bonn Government under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, which did not take antisemitic acts lightly. It prosecuted cases of libel against Jews, cracked down on the publication and distribution of antisemitic material, and banned pro-Nazi clubs.⁵¹ Nonetheless, news stories of antisemitism in Germany immediately brought images of *Kristallnacht* to mind for Canadian Jews, and they feared that these incidents would eventually lead to gas chambers.

The outbreak of a race riot on the eve of West Germany's first parliamentary election in August 1949 cast doubt for Canadian Jews on the viability of democracy in West Germany. What initiated the riot was Munich's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper printing an insidious antisemitic letter that not only called Jews "bloodsuckers," but read that "the Americans say that they have forgiven us Germans everything except that we did not exterminate all the Jews."⁵² On August 10, 1949, an estimated 750 Jewish DPs took to the streets to march on the newspaper headquarters on Fridensengel Platz, only to be blocked by the German police. Trying to disperse the mob, police on horseback charged and opened fire

⁵⁰ Hohn, *GIs and Fräuleins*, 209-10.

⁵¹ Juliane Wetzel, "An Uneasy Existence: Jewish Survivors in Germany After 1945," in Hanna Schissler, ed. *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 138.

⁵² The *New York Times* translation of the sentence ends with "we did not gas all of them." See *New York Times*, 11 August 1949, 12; *New York Times*, 13 August 1949, 10.

on the crowd, hitting four Jews.⁵³ One Yiddish newspaper in the American occupation zone panicked and told the Jews to get out while they could: “Jews are attacked in the streets of Munich and Jewish cemeteries are desecrated as in the days of Hitler. There is no hope for Jews in the new Germany.”⁵⁴ For Canadian mainstream reporters, this fear was understandable, but hardly reflected Jewish conditions in Germany. In *Maclean’s*, Blair Fraser explained that the persecution of Jews during the war has fostered in European Jews a “persecution mania,” in which Jews have become hypersensitive to antisemitism.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, Canadian Jews interpreted this fear as justified, remembering that warnings from German Jews in the 1930s had not been exaggerated. Attacks from the Canadian Jewish press were launched at the Americans and Germans for their failure to denazify West Germany. Abe Arnold, editor of the *Western Jewish Bulletin*, wrote that there were “serious short-comings of the denazification program as a whole,” and noted that the “anti-Semitic riot in Munich leads us to believe that the prospect of revived anti-Semitism in Germany is an immediate danger.”⁵⁶ A. M. Klein called the denazification of Germany a “farce of the first order” and cautioned the Allies, saying that “the democracies would do well to postpone any thought of incorporating her [Germany] into the family of respectable nations.”⁵⁷ The *Canadian Jewish Review* was more alarmist in its assessment of the failure of the occupying forces in eliminating Nazism from Germany:

Secret Nazi organizations are extending their grip on the German people in a campaign of passive resistance against the occupying forces and deliberately

⁵³ *New York Times*, 11 August 1949, 12.

⁵⁴ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 28 October 1949, 4.

⁵⁵ *Maclean’s Magazine*, 1 November 1946, 13, 72, 74.

⁵⁶ *Western Jewish Bulletin*, 18 August 1949, 4.

⁵⁷ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 19 August 1949, 3; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 15 October 1948, 3; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 July 1948, 3; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 15 October 1948, 3.

preventing the democratization of the Germans. Germany is actually potentially stronger in respect to its neighbors than before the war because it encouraged the birth rate in Germany and held down the birth rate in neighboring states, mass-murdering non-German populations and starving occupied lands while feeding the Germans adequately....The continued existence of Jews in concentration camps makes them appear to be parasites in the German view and to confirm the Hitlerian thesis. A whole generation of Germans has been corrupted, virtually all the liberal elements have been killed off, and there are no untainted sources from which adequate leadership and sufficient teachers could emerge.⁵⁸

Certainly not every report from Jewish observers about the resurgence of German antisemitism was so dire. A close friend of the CJC's Ben Kayfetz living in Germany, wanted to correct the impression that Kayfetz might have that "Germany is a crawling nest of suppressed Nazis," but also warned that there are "lots of Arbeitslose [unemployed] who will gladly trade in their empty stomachs for a shiny new uniform or a job sorting gold teeth-fillings should the occasion arise."⁵⁹

Both Canadian Jewish Holocaust survivors and Jews who were Canadian bystanders to the Holocaust protested German rearmament and wrote to their MPs reminding them that Germany had been responsible for murdering millions of Jews less than a decade ago. On February 13, 1951, Sydney Weisbord, an accountant from Montreal and a Canadian veteran of World War II, wrote his local MP, Allan A. MacNaughton, protesting the rearming of people who "were responsible for the deaths of over six million Jews and millions of others."⁶⁰ Ben Nemin wrote to Leon Crestohl: "How are you able to remain silent when you have only to think back a few years when six million Jewish brothers and sisters were

⁵⁸ "Every Friday" column in *Canadian Jewish Review*, 25 January 1947, 12. For an article on the re-emergence of the Nazi party in Bavaria, see *Canadian Jewish Review*, 20 January 1950, 1.

⁵⁹ Sydolie [last name crossed out] to Kayfetz, letter, 4 December 1951, in OJA, Ben Kayfetz fonds 62, S. 2, file 5 "General Correspondence."

⁶⁰ Weisbord to MacNaughton, letter, 13 February 1951, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354: "Germany, 1951."

Although Holocaust survivors were rarely active in political debates in the early 1950s, the prospect of German rearmament pushed many to end their silence. The Montreal Fur Workers' Union, which represented hundreds of Holocaust survivors who had been brought to Canada through a scheme by the CJC to get around anti-Jewish immigration policies, unanimously supported a resolution that "strongly condemns the efforts of the Allied Governments to rearm Germany and vigorously protests the policy of releasing Nazi generals who were responsible for the murder of millions of our race." The Union wrote to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and Pat Conroy of the Canadian Congress of Labour, suggesting that their membership's voice be taken seriously because they had a unique perspective: "Many of them have suffered personally in Nazi concentration camps and have seen many of their loved ones murdered. We feel the policy of rearming Germany is suicidal and a complete betrayal of the things our men fought for, that is, the elimination of Fascism and the creation of a demilitarized and democratic German state that would no longer menace the peace of the world."⁶³ The Toronto branch of the International Fur & Leather Workers Union sent a similar letter to Pearson, writing: "all of us who remember the horrors of Hitlerism do not want to see the same Nazis being re-armed again."⁶⁴ The Executive Board of Canadian Garment Workers Union also wrote to local MP Chas Henry to protest German rearmament, noting that their membership was made up of many Canadians who had "fought in the last war" or who "had their families butchered by the Nazis" and were "saved from

⁶² Wisenberg, Judith, et al., to Canadian Government, letter, n.d., in LAC, David Crestohl fonds, M-5222, file, "German rearmament – newspaper and magazine clippings."

⁶³ Max Peters to Hayes, letter, 13 March 1951, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1951."

⁶⁴ P. Wedro to Pearson, letter, 14 January 1954, in LAC, External Affairs Records, RG25, vol. 7719, file 12166-40, part 2.1.

certain death in Nazi concentration camps.”⁶⁵ Michael Bosnich, a sergeant in the Canadian Army, furiously wrote Pearson, “have we forgotten the horror of the gas furnaces that burned millions of innocent people?”⁶⁶ Al Borovoy, chairman of the Toronto Youth Public relations Committee for the CJC, made the case that “we cannot risk the rearmament of Germany,” primarily because “there is no genuine sign of repentance for the crimes of the Hitler regime.”⁶⁷

The Jewish press also pressured the Canadian government do something to prevent, or at least delay, German rearmament until Nazism had been eradicated. Abe Arnold continued to present the situation in Germany as desperate: “The particular danger to the Jews in German rearmament is very grave. It means that the former murderers and exterminators of Jewish people will once again have military power in their hands, and many of them have said that it is their avowed intention to resume the slaughter of Jews.” The alarm needed to be raised and non-Jews told of the “seriousness of this matter.” Jews “can hardly remain silent,” Arnold insisted, “on such a serious matter which can actually be described as a life-and-death issue.”⁶⁸ Months later, Arnold’s message remained unchanged. He claimed that current rearmament plans continued to call for “mercy to Nazi hangmen” and “the restoring of arms to Jew-murderers.” Arnold pleaded that Jews “must consider self-

⁶⁵ S. Lapedes and H. Weihs to Chas Henry, letter, 5 January 1954, in LAC, External Affairs Records, RG25, vol. 7719, file 12166-40, part 2.1.

⁶⁶ Bosnich to Pearson, letter, 27 January 1955, in LAC, External Affairs Records, RG 25, vol. 771, file 1216-40, part 2.1.

⁶⁷ Al Borovoy Submission to the Youth Public Relations Committee, in OJA, F. 17, S. 5-2, file 15, “Youth Relations, 1951.”

⁶⁸ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 18 January 1951, 2.

interest first.” The logic seemed obvious: if arming Germany “yesterday...meant death for six million Jews—Can it mean anything else if given free reign tomorrow?”⁶⁹

The *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* likewise did not let the threat of being perceived as communist silence its editorial voice when protesting German rearmament. Although Klein had seen the signs years earlier, his anger was quite evident within the pages of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* for much of the 1950s.⁷⁰ The paper covered the controversial appointment of ex-Nazi Theodor Oberländer into the Adenauer Cabinet as Minister for Refugee and Expellee Affairs. The appointment was troubling since Oberländer had been instrumental in the Nazi ethnic deportation program in Eastern Europe.⁷¹

Although such protests had a major impact on Canadian Jews, most Canadian mainstream opinion outlets revealed that Canadians by and large saw German rearmament as necessary to oppose Soviet expansion. With a few exemptions, the Canadian mainstream public was largely unsympathetic to Jewish concerns over German rearmament, certain that Soviet aggression constituted a far greater threat than German remilitarization. In 1951, Arthur Lower, a noted history professor at Queen’s University, became an advocate for German rearmament, insisting that the Germany of the 1950s was different than that of the 1930s. While Germany had been an expansionist power during the interwar period, Lower contended that “most great modern nations have, at a given point in their development,

⁶⁹ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 1 March 1951, 2; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1951, 3.

⁷⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 29 February 1952, 3; see also *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 4 July 1952, 3; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 12 September 1952, 3.

⁷¹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 1 January 1954, 12. Decades later, Gerhardt Weinberg still found the appointment troubling, writing “The fact that in post-war West Germany the political party which represented the refugees and expellees in public selected as its leaders two men, Waldemar Kraft and Theodor Oberländer, who had both played prominent roles in earlier efforts to expel and expropriate non-Germans, effectively undermined whatever resonance German complaints might have had.” See Gerhardt Weinberg, *A World At Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 792.

suffered from acute attacks of expansionism.” For Lower, a rearmed Germany embedded in NATO was a necessary ally against the Soviet Union and a useful counterweight to American dominance in NATO councils.⁷² The Canadian Association of Adult Education, in its regular publication *Citizens’ Forum*, agreed that the dangers of a remilitarized Germany “can be minimized” through integrating West Germany into NATO.⁷³

Most of the editorial opinion in the Canadian press also supported the Government’s position that fortifying West Germany was necessary. Historian Donald Masters surveyed the Canadian press and concluded that the “Canadian press opinion did not differ from the views of the government in any major particular.”⁷⁴ The *Globe and Mail*, for instance, noted that “there are arrogant Germans, still under the Nazi spell, who will demand total military independence for Germany as the price of their help in Western defense”; however, it noted that this group was minor and not “influential.”⁷⁵ It presented France’s European Defence Community (EDC) proposal as an “ingenious solution” with “obvious merits”, namely using Germans to fill up the shortage of troops in Western Europe.⁷⁶ The *Toronto Star* stated that the “talk about a revival of Naziism [sic] and German militarism has been full of exaggeration,” since “Germany is sick to death of militarism and war.”⁷⁷

There were notable exceptions in the press. United Church minister Charles Herbert Huestis worried that the West was repeating its error of the 1930s by pursuing the

⁷² Arthur Lower, “The West and Western Germany,” *International Journal* 6, no. 4 (1951): 301.

⁷³ “Germany: Menace or Promise?” *Citizens’ Forum* (Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education, 1 March 1951) in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA box 36, file 354, “Germany, 1951.”

⁷⁴ Donald Masters, *Canada in World Affairs, 1953-1955* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1959), 132; See also B. S. Keirstead, *Canada in World Affairs, September 1951 to October 1953* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1956), 85-103.

⁷⁵ *Globe and Mail*, 29 September 1951, 6.

⁷⁶ *Globe and Mail*, 22 February 1952, 6; see also, *Globe and Mail*, 26 March 1953, 6.

⁷⁷ *Toronto Star*, December 1954, 6.

appeasement of Germany to contain Soviet aggression: “Once more in our generation Germany is to be groomed for a service which may make her once more a menace to the peace of the world.”⁷⁸ The *Montreal Star* was also not willing to forget Germany’s past and supported French opposition to German rearmament, questioning the “comfortable belief that Hitlerism was really an un-German phenomenon, that Germans generally did not entertain master race ideas.”⁷⁹ The *Vancouver Sun* columnist Jack Scott’s article on German rearmament also cast doubt on whether Germany, “a nation that exterminated more than five million innocent men and women can be expected to die in less than 10 short years.”⁸⁰ For Scott, recent incidents of antisemitism in Germany brought “back the memory that can never die, of Dachau and Ravensbruck, Belsen and Auschwitz.”⁸¹

The Canadian Jewish claim that denazification had not been pursued in West Germany was due to a difference of philosophy between the WJC—whose lectures and correspondence the CJC relied on to understand developments in West Germany—and the Adenauer Government regarding the most effective means to bring democracy to the Germans. The WJC were convinced that Nazis needed to be punished and purged from authoritative positions in society. Robert S. Marcus, Political Director of the WJC, explained that this had not happened, since “91 percent of all judges, prosecutors and court officials are...former party members.” He continued by stating that “out of almost 13 million people who registered under the Denazification Law, 9½ million were not considered suspect, nearly

⁷⁸ *Toronto Star*, 11 September 1950, 6.

⁷⁹ *Montreal Daily Star*, 4 November 1951, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, “Germany, 1950.”

⁸⁰ Quoted in *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 24 December 1954, 1, 5.

⁸¹ *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 December 1954, 38 in LAC, J. G. Endicott fonds, MG30-C130, vol 66, file, 1370, “German Rearmament, 1950-55.”

2½ million more were amnestied without trial, while 83.6 per cent of those brought to justice were also amnestied.” For the WJC, this apparent leniency was evidence that Germans were willing to forgive the Nazis’ actions.⁸² However, the WJC was altogether wrong. According to historian Jeffrey Herf, although Adenauer, in conjunction with German public opinion, “urged amnesty rather than trials and punishment,”⁸³ he was certainly not attempting to resurrect Nazism. Rather Adenauer believed that the key to securing democracy in Germany was not in punishing the vast number of former Nazi members, but in building liberal institutions. As Herf explains, “memory and justice might produce a right-wing revolt that would undermine a still fragile democracy. So democracy had to be built on a shaky foundation of justice delayed—hence denied—and weakened memory.”⁸⁴

For the Canadian Government, the real threat to European peace was Soviet aggression and therefore Canada worked steadily to derail opposition to German rearmament. As early as October 12, 1950, just a couple weeks following the American announcement that NATO intended to rearm Western Germany, the Canadian Cabinet Defence Committee had already confirmed that “Canada should support the inclusion of the West German units in an integrated force for Europe in as rapid and effective a manner” as possible.⁸⁵ Prime Minister St. Laurent and his cabinet colleagues agreed.⁸⁶ Therefore External Affairs spent much effort attempting to reassure opponents of German rearmament that there would be sufficient protections against a Nazi resurgence.

⁸² *Canadian Jewish Review*, 17 June 1949, 10.

⁸³ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 274.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁵ “Extract, from Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence Committee,” 12 October 1950, *DCER, 1950*, vol. 16, ed. Greg Donaghy (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1996), document no. 571.

⁸⁶ “Cabinet Conclusions,” 25 October 1950, *ibid.*, document no. 576.

The major opponent to German rearmament was France, which had a history of being invaded by Germany. The French were worried that if the United States reverted to isolationism, Germany's economic and military strength would disrupt the balance of power and lead to German hegemony in Western Europe. Therefore, the French proposed the creation of a European Defence Community (EDC). The EDC proposal went beyond the creation of a centralized command for the militaries of European democracies, and sought to entangle the political and economic structures of member states and weaken national autonomy through a series of trade agreements, theoretically making war undesirable between its members.⁸⁷ However, as negotiations over EDC proposals dragged on for months, the Canadians came to believe that the French were attempting to forestall German rearmament.⁸⁸ Canada's Ambassador to the United States, H. H. Wrong, pointed the finger at French Defence Minister Jules Moch for utilizing this tactic, complaining that Moch was "personally almost fanatically opposed to German rearmament" because "of his Jewish origin." The fact that Moch had experienced "German persecution" and that his son had "died a cruel death at the hands of the Gestapo" only confirmed these suspicions.⁸⁹ Pearson was also convinced that "Moch was satisfied with the deadlock...as it delayed the whole problem of German rearmament."⁹⁰ "Much disturbed" over the "intransigence" of Moch's position which "threatened to arrest the forward movement of NATO plans for the defence of

⁸⁷ See Edward Fursdon, *The European Defence Community* (London: Macmillan, 1980); Kevin Ruane, *The Rise and Fall of the European Defense Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defense, 1950-1955* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

⁸⁸ Keirstead, *Canada in World Affairs: September 1951 to October 1953*, 89; W. E. C. Harrison, *Canada in World Affairs, 1949 to 1950* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1957), 344-58.

⁸⁹ Wrong, Ambassador in the United States, to Pearson, telegram, 19 October 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 573.

⁹⁰ Pearson to Vanier, telegram, 6 November 1951, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 588.

Europe,” Pearson asked George Philias Vanier, Canada’s ambassador in France, to have a word with the French Foreign Affairs Minister, Robert Schuman, about Moch’s stance. The “building up [of] the European political and economic framework,” according to Pearson, could not be allowed to delay military planning, because “this delay may present difficulties and dangers.”⁹¹ According to Vanier, Schuman was *consterné* or “dismayed” by Moch’s stance and agreed to push forward with the military plans for the defence of Western Europe.⁹² On November 7, 1950, Moch explained to the Canadian Cabinet that his position regarding German rearmament was based on political factors in France and not personal experiences, warning that if the French Government collapsed over the EDC, it might give “French Communists a golden opportunity to attempt the destruction of France from within.”⁹³ Nevertheless, Pearson was firm that delay must be avoided at all costs since it “encourages both Soviet propaganda and American isolationism.”⁹⁴ Following his meeting with Moch, Pearson admitted that Canada needed to help allay the French fears of a resurgent Germany.⁹⁵

The Canadian Jewish community hoped to change the Canadian Government’s position and to dissuade it from backing the American plan to rearm Germany. Saul Hayes briefed the CJC national executive on July 6, 1950, contesting that the CJC’s position needed to be realistic and not sensationalistic. He understood that the “the foreign policy of Western countries depends upon a strong Germany as the central prop in the rebuilding of Western

⁹¹ Pearson to Vanier, telegram, 6 November 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 588.

⁹² Vanier to Pearson, telegram, 8 November 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 560. See also, Pearson to Claxton, Minister of National Defence, telegram, 9 November 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 591.

⁹³ “Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence Committee,” 15 November 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 589.

⁹⁴ Pearson to Wilgress, telegram, 18 November 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 596.

⁹⁵ Pearson to Wilgress, telegram, 22 November 1950, *DCER, 1950*, document no. 600.

Europe.” The Communist invasion of Korea was “casting its shadow” and the Western democracies needed to be prepared for similar aggression in Europe. The problem he wanted to raise was the Canadian Jewish concern that the West was doing “very little...to prevent anti-semitic leadership from re-establishing itself in Germany.” Hayes summed up his worries: “Our fear is that a strong nationalist Germany will once again become the central power house for the worldwide worship of the anti-semitic cult.”⁹⁶

On October 19, Sam Bronfman addressed a letter to the prime minister on behalf of the CJC, arguing that German rearmament would be an affront to the memory of Canadian soldiers who died defeating Hitler and was inconsistent with the foreign policy pursued during the Second World War:

The wounds inflicted only a short time ago in an inhuman war initiated by the Nazis and conducted by them in a most horrendous manner are not yet healed in the hearts of the citizens of our country who have made great sacrifices in order that the philosophy of the Nazis shall not prevail. Nor is it possible readily to forget the massacre of more than eight million Christian civilians and of six million Jewish civilians during the German occupation of a large part of Europe. To ignore these inhumanities in the formulation of Canada’s National policies is to ignore the sacrifices of our fighting men and of their kin and to raise a doubt about the consistency of Canada’s war aims during the conflict.

Bronfman urged Canada to use its standing in NATO “to delay admission of Germany to the family of nations until it is clear that such an act will not imply the glossing over of the wicked record of the Nazis and until it is certain that such a reinstatement will not strengthen the forces of totalitarianism in the world.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Saul Hayes to Members of the National Executive Committee, memorandum, 6 July 1950, JHC, box 276, file 26, “National Executive Committee, Western Correspondence, 1950.”

⁹⁷ Bronfman to St. Laurent, letter, 19 October 1950, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, “Germany, 1950.” The letter was widely distributed throughout the press, see David Rome to Hayes,

With letters appearing to do little to shift the Government's position, the CJC's National Executive sent representatives to meet Pearson on April 13, 1951. The delegation's presentation did not vary from the position put forth in its submissions of previous years and reiterated the Jewish concern over the reemergence of a "militaristic Germany." The CJC demanded that NATO ensure that any treaty with Germany was conditional upon "a solemn repudiation by the whole of Germany of the Nazi misdeeds and ideology; the just punishment of all those guilty; effective restitution and compensation for the victims of German persecution and equitable reparations for the losses inflicted upon the Jewish people."⁹⁸ Pearson responded sympathetically, but explained that the threat to liberty did not come from Germany, which had embraced democratic institutions: "the greatest threat to Canada's existence is the spread of Communism and that the policy of containment which has been successful must be continued.... The necessity of containment of Communism in Europe makes Canada's policy [of rearming Germany] the only possible one." That being said, he admitted that the Canadian Government is "fully aware" of the German record and therefore "safeguards are necessary to prevent the resurgence of a military clique." However, with France having "just as much reason to worry about the resurging militarism of Germany as have the Jews" and yet having "come around to the view that of two evils, you choose the lesser," Pearson could see no reason why Canadian Jews should object. Since "Germany's

memorandum, 10, 14, and 15 November 1950, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1950."

⁹⁸ Saul Hayes, IOI Bulletin, no. 1106, 16 April 1951 in CJCCNA. See also "Submissions of the Canadian Jewish Congress to the Honourable Lester B. Pearson Minister of External Affairs—Canada," in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1951."

sovereignty is dependent on joining Europe's defenses" and therefore, its military operation will not be "autonomous", the security risks were negligible.⁹⁹

With the Jewish arguments making little inroads into the Canadian decision-making process, Saul Hayes was at a loss. K. Z. Paltiel, active on the Joint Public Relations Committee (JPRC), sardonically asked Hayes: "will the war orphans, whom we of the Congress have brought to Canada with much expenditure of money and effort, will these pitiful survivors of the Nazi nightmare be asked to shoulder arms beside the executioners of their parents?"¹⁰⁰ Hayes could only respond: "I don't know what we can do further, other than the protest we have already lodged since we have to rely, now that we have recorded our views, on the opposition of the French and such other sections of European people." With no more than a "polite answer from Mr. St. Laurent," and Brooke Claxton announcing after a NATO defence ministers meeting in Paris late in 1950 that he was "for the use of a German Division in a unified European Command," the cause seemed totally lost.¹⁰¹

3.3 German Rearmament and the rift in the Canadian Jewish Community

The debate over German rearmament was a divisive issue for Canadian Jews primarily because the memory of the Holocaust was powerful throughout the community and was being used to fuel opposing positions and thereby exacerbating ideological differences between the CJC liberal leadership and the communist working class. Throughout the late

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Paltiel to Hayes, letter, 28 December 1950, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1951."

¹⁰¹ Hayes to Paltiel, letter, 3 January 1951, CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1951."

1940s, the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO) was the most significant Jewish communist organization and had mass appeal among the Jewish working class. The organization went beyond reiterating Soviet propaganda and was a vital Canadian Jewish communal institution that boasted 3,000 members. It promoted Yiddish culture in Canada through its affiliated cultural programs, such as the Jewish Folk Choir, the New Dance Theatre, the Morris Winchevsky Schools, and its Yiddish and English weekly newspaper *Vochenblatt*.¹⁰² The UJPO leadership, which included such prominent Canadian Jewish communists as J. B. Salsberg, Joseph Zucken, Joshua Gershman, Sam Lipstitz, and Morris Biderman, argued that the CJC was not adequately representing the opinions of their Jewish constituents, but only timidly speaking against German rearmament so as not to lose political favor in Ottawa.

However, the UJPO was unapologetically a communist organization that supported policy emanating from the Soviet Union. In 1949, Stalin had begun his "peace offensive," which attempted to sew dissention within NATO over the United States' defensive programs. In April 1949, the Cominform helped create the World Peace Congress, which argued that peace could only be furthered through disarmament, specifically in relation to the atomic bomb and Germany. The program had widespread appeal among progressives throughout Europe, who worried about the United States provoking a nuclear arms race.¹⁰³ The rhetoric of the appeal spoke to Canadian Jewish communists who worked closely with Canadian branches of the World Peace Congress. The Canadian Peace Congress was founded in May 1949 by James G. Endicott, a recently returned Canadian missionary in China, who drafted

¹⁰² *Vochenblatt*, 14 June 1951, 1, 2.

¹⁰³ See Alessandro Brogi, *A Question of Self-Esteem: The United States and the Cold War Choices in France and Italy, 1944-1958* (London: Praeger, 2001), 139.

the Stockholm Peace Appeal alongside Ilya Ehrenburg.¹⁰⁴ The UJPO worked with the Canadian Peace Congress, through its Jewish Peace Committee, headed up by UJPO president Morris Biderman. The two organizations attempted to use the Holocaust memory to garner signatures for the Stockholm Peace Appeal and challenge Canada's support for West German rearmament. An internal letter to UJPO members noted that the "most effective way possible" to secure peace was "by signing the Stockholm Peace Petition," and that the UJPO's goal was to secure 5000 signatures from the Canadian Jewish community in forty days in the late summer of 1950. To achieve this goal, the Jewish Peace Committee planned to canvas "all Jewish homes," distribute fliers, and hold mass meetings to raise awareness of the dangers of German rearmament.¹⁰⁵

In the early months of 1951, UJPO distributed thousands of copies of several different pamphlets condemning the West's willingness to forgive the Nazis and rearm West Germany. One flier written by Biderman had the title "NO ARMS IN THE HANDS OF THE MURDERERS OF OUR PEOPLE!" The pamphlet asked readers: "can we forget our six million martyrs, slaughtered by the Nazi beasts?"¹⁰⁶ The UJPO organized a number of protest meetings against German rearmament, all of which were well attended. On February 25, 1951, the UJPO called upon Canadians to meet at Toronto's Victory Theatre. Pamphlets promoting the event exclaimed that "the blood of six million Jews, destroyed by the Nazis, has scarcely dried. The tears of those of us who are alive are still wet. Among us here in Toronto are many who bear on their bodies the stamp of the Nazi concentration and

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 211-14.

¹⁰⁵ "We Can Win The Battle For Peace," n.d., in LAC, J. G. Endicott fonds, MG30-C130, vol. 16, file 312, "Jewish Peace Committee, n.d., 1950-51."

¹⁰⁶ See pamphlet, n.d., in LAC, J. G. Endicott fonds, MG30-C130, vol. 16, file 312, "Jewish Peace Committee, n.d., 1950-51."

extermination camps, the horror of the crematorium.” Pointing to the renewal of “Nazi gangs” in West Germany, organizers declared that West German rearmament could very well bring war and “A third world war, without doubt, would surely mean again mass extermination of all Jews.”¹⁰⁷ Eight hundred protesters attended the meeting and heard prominent, communist Winnipeg city-councillor Joseph Zuken and Holocaust survivor Pola Herman.¹⁰⁸ Zuken spoke of the success that the Canadian Peace Congress was experiencing in Canada, having secured 300,000 names in support of the Stockholm Appeal.¹⁰⁹ He told the crowd of his journey to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, where he saw mountains of shoes and clothing stripped from Jewish victims, and “hair of children.” This was a haunting reminder of “Nazi bestiality.” Following Zuken, Pola Herman stood up and pulled up her sleeve, revealing 78544 tattooed onto her forearm. She recalled how her parents had been torn from her arms and “herded off to the gas-chamber and crematorium” at Auschwitz. She had subsequently witnessed the mass murder of countless Jews and had been tortured herself. With her father’s last words ringing in her ears—“Do everything you can never to let this happen again”—she told the audience “I did not realize when I heard these words, that in a few short years, it would begin to happen again.” The protest in Toronto concluded by circulating a motion to be sent to Prime Minister St. Laurent, which read that the rearmament of Germany was “a desecration of the memory of six million Jews and millions of peoples of many national origins who lost their lives as a result of the

¹⁰⁷ “No Arms in the Hands of Murderers of Our People!” in LAC, J. G. Endicott fonds, MG30-C130, vol. 16, file 312, “Jewish Peace Committee, n.d., 1950-51.”

¹⁰⁸ “‘Never let it happen again’ is plea of ex-Auschwitz inmate at mass protest rally,” *The Canadian Tribune*, 5 March 1951, found in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, “Germany, Press Clippings, 1950-1967.”

¹⁰⁹ Doug Smith, *Joe Zuken: Citizen and Socialist* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1990), 139-41.

barbarity of the German Wehrmacht.”¹¹⁰ The Jewish Peace Committee also organized a “National Assembly to Save Peace” on the weekend of April 7-9 in Toronto, ending with a “huge mass meeting” at Massey Hall. Eight thousand leaflets were distributed in Toronto, insisting that Jews had to show up in force to show their solidarity against German rearmament: “we cannot forget our six million brothers and sisters who were murdered.”¹¹¹

The actions of the UJPO to gain sympathy for the communist peace offensive by using the Holocaust to challenge the West’s position on West German rearmament was problematic for liberal Jews, who felt that the UJPO was attempting to usurp the CJC’s role as the representative institution of Canadian Jewry. Liberal Canadian Jews understood the power of the communist message as they too had memories of the extermination of Europe’s Jews, be they from the perspective of survivors, soldiers liberating Europe, or waging the war on the home front, and they hoped that the CJC would take control of the Holocaust discourse concerning the West’s defense plans. Executive Director of the CJC’s Western Division, Heinz Frank stated that “there is hardly any Jewish meeting nowadays which would seriously consider to approve or even ignore German re-armament. The trouble is that this understandable attitude is being utilized, or rather abused by the Zukens and Salsbergs for their own political ends.” Therefore, the Western Region of the CJC added a clause to their

¹¹⁰ ““Never let it happen again” is plea of ex-Auschwitz inmate at mass protest rally,” *The Canadian Tribune*, 5 March 1951, found in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, “Germany, Press Clippings, 1950-1967.”

¹¹¹ Rose Bronsetein, “Hundreds of Millions for Peace!” in LAC, J. G. Endicott fonds, MG30-C130, vol. 16, file 312, “Jewish Peace Committee, n.d., 1950-51”; Sam Walsh, circulatory letter, 6 April 1951, in *ibid.*

anti-rearmament resolution mandating the CJC national office to protest the rearmament of East Germany by the Soviet Union to “inject a drop of bitterness for Zuken.”¹¹²

Nonetheless, the communist position on West Germany was being received sympathetically by the Jewish community in Vancouver during the winter of 1951, threatening to undermine the CJC’s position. This issue dominated the Pacific Region Congress meeting on March 1, 1951. At the meeting, Dr. Fred Katz, spokesperson for the Jewish Peace Council, a communist front for World Peace Congress, addressed CJC representatives by reiterating the arguments found on numerous UJPO pamphlets. The Committee for the Prevention of German Rearmament, sponsored by the Jewish Peace Council, had pamphleteered BC’s Jewish community in the previous weeks and criticized the CJC’s letter-writing campaign. At the meeting, Katz reminded his audience of “the terrible Nazi atrocities and of the slaughter of six million Jews” which the West “suggest[ed] we forget.”¹¹³ Other Jewish organizations represented at the meeting, such as the Jewish branch of the Legion, the Jewish Community Council of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, agreed.¹¹⁴ The Jewish Community Council of Vancouver passed a resolution stating that since “six million Jews were slain at the hands of these same Nazis,” rearming Germany meant “plac[ing] arms back in the hands of convicted Nazi murderers.”¹¹⁵ The National Council of Jewish Women even called for a return to the Potsdam demilitarization decision. At the Pacific Region Congress meeting, S. Sarkin

¹¹² Hayes to Frank, letter, 23 February 1951, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, “Germany, 1951.”

¹¹³ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 8 February 1951, 1.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ J. V. White to Hayes, letter and “Resolution for protesting the rearmament of Germany and the release of Nazi war criminals,” 29 March 1951, CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, “Germany, 1951.”

reportedly argued that communist organizations, such as the Jewish Peace Council, “arise when official Jewish bodies, such as Congress...take inadequate action on vital matters.” While most Jews at the meeting were not sympathetic to communism, they appreciated the energy that the Jewish Peace Council was devoting to the cause, and therefore asked that the Council officially represent itself at the CJC plenary session.¹¹⁶

The failure of the CJC to shape public opinion and the UJPO’s challenge led to a heated meeting of the CJC National Executive on April 29, 1951, in which the issue of German rearmament was cast along ideological lines. Saul Hayes noted that various Canadian Jews had accused the UJPO of publishing and distributing a pamphlet called *Sholom Aleichem*, which called on all Canadian Jews to sign the Stockholm Peace Petition, leading many liberal Jews to call for the expulsion of communist organizations from the CJC. On September 9, 1950, the CJC had specifically warned Canadian Jews not to sign the Stockholm Peace Appeal, which was seen as a Soviet ploy to disrupt Western defense. By pushing Canadian Jews to do the “very opposite” of CJC policy, Hayes argued that the UJPO was “undermin[ing] the position and good name of Canada’s Jews at a crucial time when intergroup strife must be avoided.” Following Hayes’ speech, the minutes record that there was a “unanimous feeling of the members that no constructive purpose can be served by left-wing elements in their further association with Congress.” The resolution was adopted that individuals and groups associated with left-wing organizations were no longer eligible for

¹¹⁶ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 8 February 1951, 1.

election at the next Plenary Session of the CJC, effectively expelling the UJPO from the CJC.¹¹⁷

The expulsion of communists from the CJC was decidedly controversial. At the next CJC Central Regional Council meeting in Toronto on June 6, 1951, attendance jumped well above the norm to one hundred, as communist and liberal leaders of the Jewish community gathered to debate and vote on accepting the National Executive's resolution to expel the UJPO. The debate focused on whether the CJC had taken adequate steps to protest German rearmament. J. I. Oelbaum, Executive Director of the CJC Central Region pointed to the meeting between Pearson and Bronfman, noting that Pearson had "considerable sympathy" for the Jewish position, but that there was "very little" Canada could do. J. B. Salsberg admonished the CJC's diplomatic strategy, stating that the issue at stake was the "re-establishment of Nazi power in Germany," and that Canadian Jewry needed to draw the public's attention "even if we had no chance of success we should not be silent." Moreover, Pearson's reception to Jewish demands was hardly surprising, since Canada "had played a leading role in lining up resisting members of the Western powers in favour of the German rearmament policy," most notably France. What was needed was an "open and concerted program of protest," according to Salsberg, not the "*shtadlonus*" [secret diplomacy] which had been in progress to date." Various CJC leaders took offense to Salsberg's comments. Sam Lipshitz made a lengthy speech noting the cultural contributions that the UJPO made to Jewish life in Canada and the work it had done in challenging fascism during the war and domestic antisemitism now. However, for the majority of delegates at the meeting, the

¹¹⁷ CJC National Executive Committee Minutes, 29 April 1951, in OJA, CJC fonds, F. 36, file 22, "Canadian Jewish Congress."

UJPO's communist ideology had no place in Jewish life. Edward Gelber said "I part company with those who hold that this ideology, foreign to Jewishness, has a rightful place in a Jewish *Weltanschauung* [worldview]." The delegates overwhelmingly passed the resolution to expel left-wing elements from the CJC.¹¹⁸

Severing the UJPO from the CJC angered many Canadian Jews, who found the action hypocritical and undemocratic. The Toronto Jewish Youth Council wrote to J.I. Oelbaum of the CJC, expressing concern that removing left-wing elements from the CJC was introducing a "doctrine of rigid conformity" into Canadian Jewry that threatened to "undermine the entire democratic nature of the Congress."¹¹⁹ For Oelbaum, the lessons of the Holocaust revealed that stifling a diversity of opinion was a small price to pay to protect democracy that was under threat by communism and necessary for Jewish survival. He wrote back: "only within the framework of a democracy is the survival of our people assured. The past two decades have brought tragic proof that Judaism and dictatorship are irrevocably incompatible, whether such dictatorship is by Fascist, Communist or any other sponsorship." His letter also explained an additional reason for the break between the CJC and communist Jews: the UJPO's refusal to acknowledge and protest the persecution of Jews behind the Iron Curtain. Canadian communist Jewish organizations "have steadfastly refused to join the rest of the community in the struggle against the breakup of religious, spiritual and cultural life of our remnants in Eastern Europe," Oelbaum wrote. They have denied their energies and of their

¹¹⁸ "Report of Second Meeting of the Dominion Council for 1951," Central Region, CJC, 6 June 1951, in OJA, RG 202, file 2, "CJC (Central), Dominion Council minutes."

¹¹⁹ Julie Wise to J. I. Oelbaum, letter, 21 September 1951, attached to Toronto Jewish Youth Council Minutes, 25 October 1951, in OJA, CJC fonds, MG8V, file, "Toronto Jewish Youth Council."

funds toward the rescue of our brethren seeking to escape from behind the Iron Curtain.”¹²⁰

The CJC’s growing concern over Soviet antisemitism would ultimately lead them to abandon their position to oppose West German rearmament.

3.4 Canadian Jews, the Threat of Soviet Antisemitism, and the CJC’s Shift From Idealism to Realism

With France’s failure to ratify the EDC in August 1954, the British and the Americans pushed for West Germany to be granted full autonomy and be admitted into NATO. To satisfy French security concerns, German rearmament would be limited numerically and prevented from developing certain weapons of mass destruction, while Britain agreed to station troops on the European continent. The agreement, signed on October 23, 1954, came to be known as the London-Paris Accords and was quickly ratified by the NATO powers.¹²¹ The thinking of liberal Canadian Jewry had evolved on the “German problem” during 1953 and 1954 to understanding the need to build up West Germany in support of European democracy and Jewish life in Israel via West German restitution payments. This shift in thinking was due in part to the Canadian Jewish liberals stepping back from the idealism that had characterized their goal of building a just international order, as evidenced by their retributive stand against Germany in past years and their campaign for international legal

¹²⁰ J.I. Oelbaum to Julius Wise, letter, 25 October 1951, in OJA, CJC Central Region fonds, MG8v, file, “Toronto Jewish Youth Council.”

¹²¹ Stephen Kirby, “Britain, NATO and European Security: The Irreducible Commitment,” in John Baylis, ed. *British Defence Policy in a Changing World* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 102; *Toronto Star*, 3 September 1954, 6; see also Masters, *Canada in World Affairs*, 134-35. Memorandum to Secretary of State for External Affairs to Cabinet, cabinet document, 18 October 1954, *DCER*, vol. 20, ed. Greg Donaghy, document no. 348. For discussions of negotiations leading to the London-Paris Protocol, see Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *America and the Cold War, 1941-1991: A Realist Interpretation*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 221-22; Judt, *Postwar*, 245-46.

institutions, such as the UN and Genocide Convention. While Canadian Jews wholeheartedly supported these international devices, the fact that these institutions were powerless to protect Jews behind the Iron Curtain motivated Canadian Jewish leaders to take a more realistic approach, built on national interest and gaining a position of strength. For Jewish communists in Canada, the shift in the CJC's position was evidence of the corruption within liberal Judaism, where they abandoned the alleged threat to German Jewry in order to stay united with Canadian political leadership. At the center of the rift in the Jewish community lay two opposing interpretations of the Holocaust. Whereas communists insisted that German Jews were again being sacrificed on the altar of power politics to bolster Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, as some had argued in the 1930s, liberals saw the totalitarian Soviet regime as the new threat to Jewish life, where Jewish rights were being stripped.

It was clear to liberals that the Holocaust was being used by Soviets, not to protect Jewish minorities, but to garner Jewish support for a political agenda. Revelations of Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign throughout the Soviet Union caused many liberal Jews to question the sincerity of protests from communist Jews who protested German rearmament while turning a blind eye to the Soviet Union. Stalin had become increasingly suspicious over the loyalty of Jews in the Soviet Union. Perhaps fearing that Jews were aligning themselves with the United States, Stalin unleashed a vicious antisemitic campaign throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s that swept through Eastern Europe. First, Stalin set his sights on destroying the Jewish organizations. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC) was targeted. Solomon Mikhoels, Chairman of the JAFC, was assassinated on January 12, 1948. Thirteen of the

J AFC’s leading figures, after being imprisoned for three years at Lubyanka prison and suffering torture, were tried and executed by firing squad on August 12, 1952 for “bourgeois nationalism” and treason.¹²² Second, Stalin eliminated Jewish intelligentsia throughout various Soviet states. Leningrad’s Jewish intelligentsia were murdered in 1948.¹²³ Stalin then progressed to purging Jews from the Czechoslovakian Soviet government in 1952. Rudolf Slansky, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, his Deputy Premier, and twelve other top officials in the Czechoslovakian Communist government were arrested, tortured, and made spectacles of in an eight day show trial in Prague. All but three of the condemned were Jews, including Slansky, and all were executed. It was clear to international observers, including the Canadian Government, that Stalin was purging Jews from the upper echelons of the Czechoslovakian Communist government.¹²⁴ To whip up frenzied antisemitic crusades among local populations, Stalin reinvigorated the medieval trope of the Jew as a poisoner of wells by accusing Jewish doctors of poisoning leading members of the Politburo. Historian Elissa Bemporad argues that the Doctor’s Plot resonated with much of the public because it tapped into traditional Christian fears of an international Jewish conspiracy to control the world as well as the *Blood Libel* accusation: “in the popular response to the supposed plot at the local level, the image of the blood- and

¹²² The J AFC was initially authorized in 1942 by Stalin to gain material support in America for the Soviet war effort against the Nazis. It consisted of prominent Jewish poets, doctors, and trade unionists. See Joshua Rubenstein, *Stalin’s Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

¹²³ Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov, “From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism: Stalin and the Impact of the ‘Anti-Cosmopolitan’ Campaigns on Soviet Culture,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 66-80.

¹²⁴ Jules Leger, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to L. A. D. Stephens of the Canadian Delegation of General Assembly, “Additional Background Information,” memorandum, 24 February 1953, in LAC, file 5475-DW-25-40, pt. 1.3, “Anti-Semitism in Czechoslovakia, 1953” ; Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations, 1953-1967: From Confrontation to Disruption* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 13.

power-thirsty Jewish enemy could merge and re-enact the killing of any member of the Russian (and Soviet) people, not just one of the elite.”¹²⁵ Hundreds of Jewish doctors were arrested between October 1952 and February 1953.¹²⁶ Historians Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Naumov have argued that the “Doctors Plot” was not “the irrational product of the aging dictator’s mind,” but a strategic maneuver that consumed Stalin’s mind for nearly two years to ensure that his power remained unchallenged. Had Stalin not died, Brent and Naumov are convinced that he would have unleashed his own Final Solution: “Soviet intellectuals and artists, particularly Jews, would have been mercilessly repressed; and the surviving remnant of Soviet and Eastern European Jewry would have been gravely (perhaps mortally) imperiled.”¹²⁷

Although many of the details regarding the Soviet campaign against Jews remained unclear until after Stalin’s death, Canadian Jews were keenly aware that the Soviet Union was persecuting Jews. In January 1953, in the face of the doctor trials, Jewish MP David Croll asked Pearson to comment on the “growing anti-Semitism” in the Soviet Union. Pearson indicated that he took the doctor show trials to “be very serious indeed,” and noted that they bore a striking similarity to the origins of the Nazi persecution of Jews: “Terrible atrocities stemmed from unbridled anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. It would be a tragedy and a crime if the rulers of Communist Russia were now planning to revive this dark and evil

¹²⁵ Elissa Bemporad, “Empowerment, Defiance, and Demise: Jews and the Blood Libel Specter under Stalinism,” *Jewish History* 26 (2012): 343-361.

¹²⁶ Mordechai Altshuler, “More about Public reaction to the Doctors’ Plot,” in *Jews in Eastern Europe* 30 (1996): 54-55; Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin’s Last Crime: The Doctors’ Plot, 1948-1953* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

¹²⁷ Brent and Naumov, *Stalin’s Last Crime*, 1.

force from the past and to make use of it for their own ends.”¹²⁸ David Loven reported in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* that Jews were being expunged from the official Soviet historical narrative. Loven noted that at an exhibition in Warsaw in 1955, centered on the rebuilding of the city following the devastating occupation of Nazi Germany, he found it “striking” that there was “neither sign nor mention of the Warsaw Ghetto.” This was in accordance to “reports trickling through to Switzerland from behind the Iron Curtain that the Polish Government is doing its best to wipe out all traces of a formerly rich Jewish heritage.” Although Loven estimated that 70,000 Jews still lived in Poland, Soviet reconstruction of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw had ensured that the “new streets no longer b[ore] any resemblance to those of the former Jewish quarter. In fact, there is nothing remaining to remind one of the rich Jewish cultural life which once bloomed there.”¹²⁹ Similarly, Mendel Mozes’ report of Jews behind the Iron Curtain painted a picture of misery for Jews who constantly faced an antisemitic populous. He described that Jews in Poland were so isolated that no representative of a Jewish organization had been permitted entry to visit the Jewish communities in Poland, nor had a single Jew been allowed to leave “for Israel or any other country of the Diaspora” during the year 5714 of the Jewish Calendar. Soviet trials against Zionists had led to lengthy sentences, according to Mozes, and had “created panic.” While Hungarian Jews were being deported, Mozes had little information on hand. Romania’s Jewish population fared worse, having at least “several hundred Jews...arrested on ‘treason’ charges.” In Czechoslovakia, especially during the Slansky trials, Jews were “shunned [in]

¹²⁸ *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star*, 16 January 1953, in LAC, David Croll fonds, MG32-C49, vol. 54, file 15, “Anti-Semitism in USSR, 1953.”

¹²⁹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 September 1955, 12.

public places” in Prague, where signs had been put up that read “hang the Jews” and “The Jews are Czechoslovakia’s Misfortune.”¹³⁰ Yet despite irrefutable evidence of deteriorating conditions for Jews in the Soviet Union, the UJPO’s mouth piece, *Vochebnblatt* continued to present Jewish life positively behind the Iron Curtain.

While evidence of Soviet antisemitism in the early 1950s was growing, West Germany’s decision to pay restitution for property stolen from Jews during the Hitler regime helped liberal Jews re-evaluate the German Government’s position on antisemitism. Initially, some Canadian Jews were cynical over the negotiations, perceiving the reparations as blood money. On October 26, 1951, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany opened with the purpose of negotiating restitution for Jewish property loss during the Nazi era. Edward E. Gelber, newly-elected President of the Zionist Organization of Canada, attended the opening of the conference in 1951, and believed that the conference posed “no moral implications” since negotiations were concerned with property losses and not human deaths: “the question of absolving German guilt must be left for later generations; it can never be done in our own time.” For Gelber, if the amount negotiated was only “several million dollars, the Jews might forego this sum on the grounds of honour, but when it reaches the proportions of a billion dollars and the possibility that this billion arouses for the continued existence of the Jewish state, then it becomes another matter.”¹³¹ Samuel Bronfman, who sat in on the Claims Conference in 1951 assured Canadians “that the negotiations were confined to material claims only, and that no general political or ethical

¹³⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 22 October 1954, 4-5.

¹³¹ CJC Central Region minutes, 25 January 1952, 4-6 in OJA, RG 200, file 16B, “CJC (Central), Executive Minutes.” A similar statement made by Edward E. Gelber can be found in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1955, 4.

issues were involved. It is not suggested that the crimes which had been committed have been expiated by those who are guilty or have been forgiven.”¹³² The CJC also issued a statement explaining that “German reparations can in no way be accepted as expiation for the massacres and horrors inflicted by the Nazis on the Jewish people.”¹³³ The accepted figure of \$822,000,000 to be used to offset the cost of settling survivors in Israel and rebuilding Jewish institutions destroyed in the Holocaust was seen as necessary for sustaining Israel’s economy. Journalist Sam Miller explained that with Israel’s trade deficit, German imports formed the “keystone” of Israeli economic development.¹³⁴

However, restitution payments did little to move Canadian Jewry to forgive the Germans. In a press release following the signing of the Claims agreement, the CJC reassured members that “the satisfaction of such claims is not intended by any responsible party in any way to expiate the crimes of the destruction of human life and Jewish cultural values by the Nazis or to atone for the agony of the men, women and children they had tortured and put to death by every inhuman device.”¹³⁵ Moreover, restitution payments did not lower animosity towards Jews among the German population.¹³⁶ Eleonore Sterling in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* took notice of a publication out of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt by Friedrich Pollock that explored the psychological defense mechanisms that ordinary Germans were using to avoid feeling complicit in the Holocaust, such as claiming ignorance of varying degrees, even when evidence was abundant: “The

¹³² IOI Bulletin, no. 1438, 12 September 1952 in OJA, F. 36, file 30 “Letters and Minutes from Inter-Office Information, CJC.”

¹³³ *Congress Bulletin*, 22 December 1953, in JHC, box 253, file 7, “Congress Bulletin.”

¹³⁴ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 28 May 1954, 8.

¹³⁵ Memorandum, n.d., in OJA, RG 281, file 27, “CJC (Central), general.”

¹³⁶ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 17 June 1955, 13.

reports of Allied pilots who said that they had seen Jews laboring in Auschwitz, were not accepted as authentic proof. ‘How could they see,’ a group participant stated, ‘from their height that Jews were going through the chimneys in little clouds of smoke?’” Pollock’s study also noted that Germans were using “transference,” and arguing that their crimes differed only in scale to the “lynching of Negroes in America,” and claiming helplessness since the ordinary German was “subjected to the terrorization methods of the Nazi elite who threatened him with punishment if he aided the Jews.”¹³⁷ Although such evasion of guilt left Canadian Jews convinced that ordinary Germans were not repentant for their crimes, the fact that this research was being published in Germany and being supported by German politicians was encouraging. The willingness of West Germany to establish the Claims Conference was evidence that the Bonn Government was willing, in a small way at least, to admit guilt. West German President Theodor Heuss’s statement that Germany bore “collective shame” for the crimes of the Nazis, and that the Claims Conference was the first step in “moral as well as material restitution” was applauded in Terence Prittie’s column in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*.¹³⁸

But growing pessimism over the state of international justice and the ability of the international community to protect human rights motivated many Canadian Jews to accept that the bolstering up of West Germany was necessary. This pessimism was shared by the WJC, who was beginning to shift away from advocating for universal human rights and

¹³⁷ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1955, 12-14.

¹³⁸ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1955, 8, 9, 13.

towards focusing on specific threats to Jewish rights.¹³⁹ WJC President Nahum Goldmann made a passionate speech at the United Nations Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations on Prejudice and Discrimination about the disparaging state of human rights in the world that would require the West to remilitarize Germany. Rather than human rights being a priority for the international sphere, “brutal power, political expedience, purely egocentric diplomatic manoeuvres, with the last resort on all occasions to reliance on armed might, and the horrifying menace of modern atomic warfare, these determine the climate of international relations in these days.”¹⁴⁰ Arthur Lewis of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* was also disgruntled by the absence of consideration for human rights in the international sphere, as evidenced by the lack of support for the Genocide Convention. Writing in June 1954, Lewis thought it “beyond belief” and “surely the greatest irony” that the Soviet Union and West Germany had ratified the Convention before Britain, the United States, and Israel.¹⁴¹ In the same year, the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* emphasized the need to think strategically when considering the German problem, editorializing that keeping West Germany a “vacuum...was obviously dangerous to the peace of Europe.” Regardless of how repugnant rearming Germany felt to the West, to do so was better than “to leave them to their own devices, or to permit them to fall within the Communist orbit.”¹⁴²

¹³⁹ There is research to suggest that Jewish enthusiasm for international human rights waned in the mid-1960s following the Six Day War “due to conflicts among their commitments to international human rights, Jewish nationalism, and domestic pluralism.” However, there were cracks already in the strategy to protect from antisemitism through the advocacy of universal human rights. See Michael Galchinsky, *Jews and Human Rights: Dancing at Three Weddings* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 22 April 1955, 4.

¹⁴¹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 18 June 1954, 6.

¹⁴² *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 4 February 1955, 3.

When the London Paris Agreements came before the House of Commons to be ratified on January 20, 1955, public opinion firmly supported integrating Germany into NATO. Pearson introduced the motion by stating that accepting German autonomy and rearmament within the confines of NATO was a “calculated risk,” which had safeguards, including Germany’s adherence to the Genocide Convention.¹⁴³ Oppositional parties tended to agree.¹⁴⁴ While Solon Low, leader of the Social Credit Party could understand that some Canadians found West German rearmament “morally wrong,” he reminded the House that they were delving into the field of “power politics” and that the West needed to take a position of strength and not appease totalitarian regimes. “Just as it was true that Hitler and his objectives were made clear by his own publication, *Mein Kampf*,” Low said, “today the objectives and determination of the leaders of the Bolshevists are made quite clear by the things they do and the documents they publish.” Since “the only thing the communists understand and respect is strength,” Low was convinced that “the most important deterrent to communist aggression is the knowledge of the unity of western Europe.”¹⁴⁵ The socialist CCF was split on the issue due to its lingering idealism that progressive values needed to be infused into the international arena. M. J. Coldwell, leader of the CCF, agreed that German rearmament was necessary due to the Soviet Union’s poor record on human rights.¹⁴⁶

Not all those opposing German rearmament had been convinced. The most adamant protest came not from the two Jewish MPs, but from the CCF in the voice of MP Stanley Knowles of Winnipeg. Knowles, who did represent a large Jewish constituency, argued that

¹⁴³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1955, 361-73.

¹⁴⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1955, 373-79.

¹⁴⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1955, 382-87.

¹⁴⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1955, 379-82.

German rearmament would trigger an arms-race with the Soviet Union and weaken Canada's "moral strength" by arming "ex-Nazis." While he understood the need "to negotiate from strength," Knowles insisted that Canada should not align itself with Germany: "We will never forget the names Dachau, Buchenwald and Belsen. We will never forget those six million Jews who were slaughtered during the Hitler regime in Germany." Rather than risk provoking the Soviet Union, Canada ought to be trying to "remove the causes of war,"—defined by Knowles as primarily social inequality that produced poverty and starvation—and follow the guidelines "outlined in the Charter of the United Nations."¹⁴⁷

The two Jewish MPs, Leon Crestohl and David Croll, supported the motion to ratify the London-Paris Agreements, arguing that the communists posed the greater threat to Jews. Crestohl expressed that he was emotionally torn on the issue. "I know of nothing more tormenting or more difficult," he began, "than the clash between a man's emotions and his urge for rationalization. In the one case he is prone to deal with a problem in response to his feelings, his passions and his conscience and in the other he faces it with an almost precise mathematical calculation based on logic and pure reason." He admitted that his family's experience in Nazi Germany made it difficult for him to contemplate granting Germany autonomy:

I know, Mr. Speaker, that all my colleagues in the house will bear with me if they find that I have spoken with some emotion on this subject. If I did so, it is perhaps due to the fact that, to a greater extent than anyone else in the house possibly, I have personally been a victim of Nazi cruelty. My rather distressed feelings result not only from the fact that I belong to that ethnic group which suffered most, but also because my own uncles, aunts and cousins, consisting of a family of over 60 persons, were tormented and put to death by the Nazis.

¹⁴⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1955, 393-97.

Nonetheless, Crestohl told the House that flaws in the international system must not be ignored. Without West Germany's submission to international laws protecting minority rights, national sovereignty could once again give Germany a free hand to massacre its citizens and drag the world into war:

We recall, during the Hitler regime, the cries from world Jewish leadership to the democracies that inhuman laws were being enacted and implemented in Germany. The world remained silent. This silence encouraged the horrible legislative process of exterminating millions of innocent people. Under international law, very little could then have been done. There could be no interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state.

Nonetheless, the leaders of the free world, "fully mindful of the inherent dangers in arming Germany, but in their wisdom, to avoid an even greater danger," were prepared to grant West Germany sovereignty to protect against the threat of the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁸ A couple days later, Croll reiterated Crestohl's points and stated that he too was "torn," but prepared to do "what needs to be done at this time, but without joy." He suggested that his decision was not taken lightly: "there is scarcely a home in one section of my riding that has not suffered from Nazi persecution of Jews." In spite of this, Croll supported the London-Paris Agreements, in the hope of "preventing a third blood bath."¹⁴⁹

The appeals of Crestohl and Croll to ensure that the rearming of West Germany was combined with safeguards for the treatment of minorities, was met with widespread approval, both in Parliament and in the daily press.¹⁵⁰ Responding on January 26, Pearson noted that

¹⁴⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 20 January 1955, 397-401.

¹⁴⁹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 24 January 1955, 459-61.

¹⁵⁰ Crestohl's speech received a standing ovation in the House. Members crossed the floor to shake his hand and thank him for his candour and the national press was particularly impressed. Both Croll and Crestohl were

Crestohl's speech in particular "moved us all" and that Canada would push the Federal Republic of Germany to "subscribe to some of the international conventions which have been worked out under the United Nations charter, and more particularly the genocide convention." In fact, West Germany had already signed the Genocide Convention by 1954, and Pearson claimed that West Germany was adhering to the United Nations Charter, particularly where it discussed "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or race." Mainly satisfied with the Canadian government's stance, later that day the House voted overwhelmingly in favour (213 to 12) of ratifying the London-Paris Agreements and supporting German rearmament within the confines of NATO.¹⁵¹

Canadian Jewish communists believed that Croll and Crestohl were currying political favor and had betrayed the interest of their Jewish constituents. The *Vochenblatt* launched an assault on the two Jewish MPs, comparing them to Nazi collaborators. Sam Lipshitz equated Crestohl's actions with those of the despised "Judenratler," Nazi-appointed Jewish leaders whom many contemporary Jews believed had collaborated with the Nazis for their own personal good. "This man [Crestohl] had the temerity to get up and defile the memory of 60 of his family, who perished in the gas chambers, in order to justify his betrayal of trust," Lipshitz fumed, "we are quite satisfied to assign him to his 'honorable' position alongside

lauded in the press. See "Commons Resumes Debate on West German Rearmament: Croll 'With a Heavy Heart,'" *Regina Leader-Post*, 25 January 1955, 8; "Voices in the House," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 January 1955, 17. "Jewish MP Takes Dramatic Stand: Speech on German Arms Stirs House," *Calgary Herald*, 25 January 1955; "Croll to Support Bonn Arms Pact," *Montreal Gazette*, 25 January 1955; "Making Us Understand France," *The Ottawa Journal*, 24 January 1955. The later three articles are found in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1955."

¹⁵¹ "Speeches of Hon. L. B. Pearson on Canada, Germany and NATO," *Canadian House of Commons Debates*, Official Report, 26 January 1955 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1955) in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 36, file 354, "Germany, 1955."

Rumkowski, Ganzvich, the Zeifman Brothers and their ilk.”¹⁵² The *Vochenblatt* wrote that “Canadian Jews will never forget this shameful betrayal” and that Croll and Crestohl had “forfeited their right to speak for us.”¹⁵³ The *Vochenblatt* conducted an unscientific poll of Jewry, asking twenty-four Torontonians at random from the Toronto Directory: “Do you agree with the action of the two Jewish MPs who voted for the rearmament of Germany?” Fifteen replied “no”; five said “yes” and four had “no opinion.” When those who answered “no,” were asked why, the *Vochenblatt* said the usual response was “aren’t six million dead Jews enough?”¹⁵⁴ In front of 600 Torontonian Jews on January 30, J. B. Salsberg called the position taken by the Jewish MPs “infamous and disgraceful.”¹⁵⁵

The failure of Canadian Jewish leaders to oppose German rearmament ruptured the Jewish community, not only because left-leaning Jews believed that Germany’s Jews would face a dire situation as a result, but also because the West’s agreement to rearm Germany reawakened the painful memories of the Allies’ inadequate response to the persecution of Jews in the late 1930s, before the Nazi extermination began. These memories and fears were quite evident at the emotionally-charged assembly during Toronto’s Annual Memorial Meeting for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1955. The memorial featured a number of speakers from the UJPO as well as Orthodox Rabbis. The gathering was organized by the Canadian Federation of Polish Jews, was conducted in both Yiddish and English, and

¹⁵² *Vochenblatt*, 27 January 1955, 1, 2. Chaim Rumkowski in particular was a highly controversial figure in the Lodz Ghetto and was widely condemned by Jews in the postwar era for collaborating with the Nazis for personal gain by industrializing the ghetto and facilitating the deportation of Jews out of the ghetto to Chelmno and later Auschwitz, although in recent years some historians argued that Rumkowski was working for the survival of Jews by making them economically useful to the Nazis. See Isaiah Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto: A History* trans and ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (Blomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

¹⁵³ *Vochenblatt*, 3 February 1955, 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Vochenblatt*, 3 February 1955, 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Vochenblatt*, 3 February 1955, 1.

attracted 700 Jewish Canadians. The Jewish Folk Choir sang heroic ghetto anthems, such as Hirsh Glick's 1943 *Zog Nit Kainmol* and Itzik Fefer's 1948 *Di Naye Hagoda*, which celebrated human acts of resistance against the Nazis.¹⁵⁶ Rabbi Aaron Price, widely regarded as the most influential Orthodox Rabbi in Toronto,¹⁵⁷ stated that despite "the memory of the Ghetto becom[ing] more vivid and the pain more intense as the years go by," the West's rearming of Germany constituted "strengthening our executioners. We declare before the whole world: 'Don't give them arms.'" Price demanded that Canadian Jews "protest in the streets of every city and particularly in Ottawa." "It is our duty to speak up," Price declared, "A real outburst from the heart will be heard. We must never forget."¹⁵⁸ Mel Shipman, a recent addition to the *Vochenblatt* editorial board, then spoke and demanded that Canada's Jews continue to raise the clarion call against West German rearmament. Giving credence to absurd rumours that the Germans were "manufacturing equipment for atomic weapons," Shipman warned: "The builders of Oswizciem, the organizers of brutal tortures and mass murder, the people who could make lampshades out of human skin, the exterminators of the Ghetto would have no scruples about plunging the world into an atomic bloodbath."¹⁵⁹

The memory of the Holocaust fueled the panicked response from the left wing of the Jewish community and opposing interpretations regarding the significance of the Holocaust served to drive a wedge amongst Canadian Jews. For members of the UJPO, the Holocaust provided a warning that Germany could not be trusted and that the West was more interested in securing its national interests than in protecting minorities. In other words, Jewish

¹⁵⁶ Translations, renditions, and analyses of Yiddish songs of the Holocaust can be found at the Milken Archive of Jewish Music, <milkenarchive.org>.

¹⁵⁷ Stuart E. Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), 201.

¹⁵⁸ *Vochenblatt*, 21 April 1955, 1.

¹⁵⁹ *Vochenblatt*, 14 April 1955, 1.

communists saw parallels between West German rearmament and the 1930's appeasement of Hitler, both of which they interpreted as efforts to challenge the Soviet Union. In both cases, Western diplomacy was interpreted by left-wing Jews as corrupt, but perhaps worse was that the established Jewish community's response was in line with the "appeasers." The *Vocheblatt* believed that the CJC was not taking heed of Germany's history and could not understand why the CJC would even want to commemorate Jewish resistance in the Holocaust. Its editor wrote that while Canadian Jews would "welcome" the CJC's commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, "in the light of the developments of the past few months, many must find in this decision a paradox." By "maintaining a studied silence in the face of the revival of the Wehrmacht," the *Vocheblatt* thought it would be more logical if the CJC would "play down the heroism displayed by the ghetto fighters."¹⁶⁰

3.5 Conclusion

The Holocaust played a pivotal role in the formulation of Canadian Jewish thinking on European postwar diplomacy. From the formation of the United Nations Organization in 1945 to the ratification of West Germany's accession into NATO, the Holocaust shaped how Jews understood international relations and the postwar settlement. Due to dubious reports that Nazism had infiltrated every aspect of German society, Canadian Jews were leery of granting German autonomy for fear that the Germans would launch another assault on their Jewish population. First, Canadian Jews demanded that antisemitism be eradicated in Germany through a rigorous re-education program that would severely punish Nazis and give

¹⁶⁰ *Vocheblatt*, 14 April 1955, 2; *This Is No 'Gamble'—This means disaster!* (Toronto: United Jewish People's Order, 1954) in OJA.

justice to the Jews whom they had murdered.¹⁶¹ Second, Canadian Jews sought to create an international body that would be grounded on democratic and socially progressive ideas and would ensure that human rights were protected and that state sovereignty did not become a shield for genocide. However, with both of these goals failing to materialize by the 1950s, Jews desperately sought to stop the West's plans to rearm West Germany, fearing that the conditions in West Germany and in the international arena were not significantly different from those of the 1930s and 40s.

Contrary to the opinion of historians, the fear of being viewed as a communist fifth-column in Canada did not prevent Jews from protesting German rearmament through official channels or through more grassroots demonstrations. That being said, the CJC leadership was also motivated to protest German rearmament to dissuade Jews from joining communist organizations, such as the Peace Councils, and thereby sully the Canadian Jewish community's reputation. Thus, the worry of an antisemitic backlash worked in the curious way of pushing the Holocaust into national discourse. Perhaps Canadian opposition to American McCarthyism also left Jews more free to discuss the Holocaust in relation to German rearmament.

The Jewish failure to stop West German rearmament was not evidence that Canadians had forgotten Hitler's crimes. Although historians are right in that the dominant Canadian political discourse tended to minimize Germany's history of atrocities, these assertions

¹⁶¹ Parallel to this development, Canadian Jews also organized a rigorous campaign to eradicate antisemitism and racial discrimination in Canada. See James W. St.G. Walker, "The 'Jewish Phase' in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002): 6; Irving Abella, "Jews, Human Rights, and the Making of a New Canada," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 11, no. 1 (2000), 8; and Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager, "'This is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns," *The Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (March 2002): 2.

require more nuance. Certainly, many Canadians believed that Germany's past should not interfere with solidifying the West's defence since the new bipolar power system negated the threat of Germany challenging American or Soviet hegemony. However, that is not to say that Canadians did not glean important lessons from their experience fighting Nazism. For Canadian policy-makers, the foremost lesson of the Second World War was the necessity of negotiating from a position of strength with totalitarian states that were ideologically expansionistic. It seemed clear that if the West had been united in the 1930s and risked war to contain Nazism early on, Hitler's war, first waged against the Jews before evolving into a global conflict, would have been short-lived.

Chapter 4

The Hitler of the Nile: Canadian Jewry and the Fight to Prevent a Second Holocaust

The Holocaust's impact on Canadian Jews was not only evident in their creation of international institutions to combat human rights injustices and their opposition to incorporating Germany into NATO, its presence can also be detected in the Canadian Jewish interpretation of Cold War diplomacy in the Middle East. For fifteen years following the creation of Israel in 1948, the Canadian Jewish community engaged in an intense campaign to save Jews throughout the Middle East. They believed that Arabs were determined to destroy Israel and exterminate Jews in Palestine, and also that Arab leaders had a wider aim of purging the Middle East of its long-established Jewish communities. Shaped by their experience as bystanders during the Holocaust, Canadian Jews saw patterns that pointed to the coming of a second Holocaust and worked frantically to prevent it.

By exploring Canadian Jewish efforts to save their Middle Eastern brethren in the 1950s, this chapter hopes to make an important contribution to Canadian historiography. Surprisingly, Canadian historians rarely explore Jewish reactions to events in the Middle East during the 1950s, despite a number of controversial developments during this period that caused consternation within the Canadian Jewish community. Of great concern was the rise of the dynamic Egyptian leader, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, who would back a revolution and eventually become dictator of Egypt in the early 1950s. Behind Nasser's rise and the budding of Arab nationalism, Canadian Jewry sensed antisemitism and believed that the Arabs dreamed of removing Israel from the map. The escalation of border tensions, failure

to find a peace settlement, and the shift of power and world opinion away from Israel, caused Canadian Jews to train their eyes on the Middle East throughout the 1950s. Focus turned to fixation in late 1956, when events in the Middle East seemed to spiral out of control. Egypt gained a huge arsenal of weapons in September 1955 and bucked Western influence in the region by nationalizing the Suez Canal in July 1956. In response, Britain and France colluded with Israel to invade Egypt, hoping to depose Nasser and regain control of the waterway. With the outbreak of war, Nasser retaliated against his own Jewish population, stripping them of their property, citizenship, and liberty, and thereby instigating a massive refugee crisis. The rapidly deteriorating conditions of Jews in the Middle East and the lackadaisical response from Canada and the United States stunned the Canadian Jewish community. These events helped suture the political division between communist Jews and the liberal Jewish community. Both wings of Canadian Jewry rallied around Israel and used the memory of the Holocaust to shift public opinion in the hope of averting another genocide.

Most scholarly accounts of the Canadian-Jewish community, even those that emphasize the role of the Holocaust in constructing Jewish identity, tend to minimize the importance of the 1950s Middle Eastern struggles in their analyses. Although numerous texts discuss the Canadian-Jewish response to the fight for Israeli independence in 1948¹ or the panic that ensued in June 1967 when the West seemed to turn its back on Israel in the face of a united Arab threat to its survival, there is almost no commentary on Canadian Zionist thought in the 1950s. This gap in the literature is caused by two assumptions. First,

¹ See David J. Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A Study in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

that the Holocaust had largely been suppressed by the Jewish community in Canada.² The second assumption that pervades this literature is that Israel did not figure prominently within Canadian Jewish consciousness during the 1950s.³

The only historian who has devoted much energy to discussing Canadian Jewish reactions to Canadian-Israeli diplomatic relations during the 1950s is Zachariah Kay. In *The Diplomacy of Prudence: Canada and Israel, 1948-1958*, Kay gives an account of Canada's diplomatic relationship with Israel, noting that Canada's approach was "cautious" and rarely deviated from American policy. Since Canada had no specific political interests in the Middle East, its foreign policy was less concerned with aiding Israel than with reconciling British and American positions in order to maintain a united front against the Soviet Union. According to Kay, Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson's chief interest in the Middle East was to promote stability and peace in the region, which he believed could be best facilitated by the UN.⁴ However, Kay's account is limited, relying almost exclusively on diplomatic correspondence and primarily discussing the formation of Canadian policy towards Israel in the Department of External Affairs. Thus, short shrift is given to the Canadian Jewish community's understanding of the threats facing Israel in the 1950s, or how the 1956 crisis molded Canadian Jewish identity.

² Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 69-70; Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

³ No mention of the Suez Crisis or the Sinai War is found in Franklin Bialystok's *Delayed Impact* and it is similarly minimized in Gerald Tulchinsky's *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Studdart, 1992) and his *Canada's Jews: a People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

⁴ Zachariah Kay, *The Diplomacy of Prudence: Canada and Israel, 1948-1958* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), xiii-xiv, 100-110.

Most Canadian scholarship on the Middle East in the 1950s has almost exclusively focused on the perspectives of the Canadian Department of External Affairs in order to shed light on Canadian nationalism. Traditionally, Canadian historians have presented Pearson's crisis diplomacy as the apex of the golden age of Canadian foreign policy, in which Canada carved out a "middle power" role during the Suez Crisis. Guided by national interests and the principles of collective defense exhibited by the institutions of the UN and NATO, historians have argued that Pearson moved Canada's foreign policy beyond its supposed slavish allegiance to imperial Britain. This body of literature is grounded within the "realist school" of diplomatic thought and focuses on Canadian triangular diplomacy, with Canada acting as the fulcrum between Britain and the United States.⁵ Such an angle has been useful in showing that the political atmosphere in Canada following the Suez Crisis marked a shift in Canadian nationalism away from identifying itself as a British colony and towards becoming more North American. While Pearson was celebrated abroad with a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in defusing the Suez Crisis, Canadian public opinion turned against

⁵ James Eayrs, *Canada in World Affairs: October 1955 to June 1957*, vol. 9 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1959), 182-5; Edward M. Pompa, *Canadian Foreign Policy During the Suez Crisis of 1956* (Ph.D. diss., St. John's University, 1969); John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, eds. *Mike: the Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, 1948-1957*, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), see Chapters 10 and 11; John W. Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957*, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1982), 356-7; Michael G. Fry, "Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the United Nations," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences*, eds. W. M. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 308; John English, *The Worldly Years: the Life of Lester Pearson, Vol. 2: 1949-1972* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 107-45; Geoffrey A. H. Pearson, *Seize the Day: Lester B. Pearson and Crisis Diplomacy* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), chapter 9; Tareq Y. Ismael, *Canada and the Middle East: The Foreign Policy of a Client State* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1994); John Melady, *Pearson's Prize: Canada and the Suez Crisis* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2006). For a work that highlights the limits of middle power diplomacy, see Marc J. O'Reilly, "Canadian Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Reflexive Multilateralism in an Evolving World," in *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy*, eds. Patrick James, Nelson Michaud, and Marc J. O'Reilly (Toronto: Lexington Books, 2006), 337-636; Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2007), 124-33.

Pearson and his party, with the Liberal Party being trounced in the 1957 elections, ending their twenty-year governorship of Canada.

Historians have begun to add nuance to this interpretation by noting that a large portion of Canadian public opinion still favoured loyalty to Britain. Most notably, José Igartua analyzes Canadian newspaper editorial opinion in 1956 and argues that the Suez Crisis was key to the ‘Cultural Revolution’ that transformed English Canada during the 1950s. According to Igartua’s theory, while English Canadians moved from identifying themselves as citizens living in a British colony to defining themselves as a nation based on democratic and liberal values, they remained rooted in the public belief that Canada needed to uphold “British” traditions of individual rights and liberties.⁶

With historians focused primarily on Canada’s relationship with the British Empire and how Canadians understood Israel’s attack on Egypt, little attention has been given to how Canadian Jews responded to the Middle Eastern tensions. This chapter attempts to fill this gap in the historiography by examining how Canadian Jewry responded to the rise of Arab nationalism in Egypt in the 1950s. Through examinations of Zionist discourse and the lobbying efforts in Ottawa for Israel, it becomes clear that the Canadian Jewish community was far from disinterested in Israel’s plight, nor were they cautious in bringing the memory of the Holocaust into the public sphere. Rather, they interpreted developments in the Middle East from the perspective of the Holocaust. Nasser, whose willingness to use antisemitism to further his power, was seen by Canadian Jews as the reincarnation of Hitler. The political

⁶ José E. Igartua, “‘Ready, Aye, Ready’ No More? Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press,” in *Canada and the End of Empire*, ed. Philip Buckner (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 47-65.

situation was also perceived by Canadian Jews to be dangerously analogous to the late 1930s when there was an antiwar atmosphere, fueled by the fear of mass bombings and mutual annihilation. Similarly, in the mid-1950s there was concern that a regional war in the Middle East could easily drag in the superpowers and lead to a global nuclear catastrophe. Canadian Jews feared that the West was repeating its appeasement mistake of the 1930s with Nasser, with equally dastardly consequences: the destruction of the Egyptian Jewish community and the last remnant of Europe's Jews who had escaped to Israel. Although new international structures, such as the UN and NATO, were in place and could be used to protect minorities and defend democracy, Canadian Jews were worried that other priorities would take precedence and that Jews would be sacrificed again to preserve the West's political interests. While they hoped that the lessons of the Second World War would ensure that the world would protect the human rights of minorities, they feared that little had changed. Nation states that supported these rights needed to exert their power to rescue the persecuted. The fact that Canada did not stand beside Britain and Israel to fight a new threat to the Jewish people compelled Canadian Jews to embark on a massive public relations campaign to fight for the preservation of the Jewish sanctuary in the Middle East. Communist and liberal Jews united to convince the West of the mortal danger that Nasser posed to civilization. Although the Canadian Jewish lobby lacked clout in Ottawa and did little to influence Canadian foreign policy, its efforts were instrumental in understanding the mentality of Canadian Jews, the degree to which the Holocaust was fixed within their collective memory, and their beliefs regarding the role that Canada ought to play in international affairs.

4.1 Isolated Israel in a Sea of Antisemitism

The Canadian-Jewish fear that Egyptian antisemitism would move the Arabs to purge the Jews from the Middle East emerged during the Israeli Independence War, before Canadian Jews had heard of Nasser. Although historians have shown that the Arab nations were by no means united in their war efforts to squash the newly formed Israeli state, Zionist observers saw a tiny Israel besieged by a tenacious enemy. This fear was not only rooted in the actions of the Arab military campaign in Palestine during the Independence War, but also in the policies instituted by Egyptian authorities on the home front, which were perceived by Canadian and American Zionist organizations as an Egyptian effort to wage war on all Jews.⁷

While events in Egypt during the Israeli Independence War were worrying to many Jewish observers in Canada, not all were ready to conclude that racial discrimination against Egyptian Jews necessarily would lead to genocide. Put simply, the situation facing Egypt's Jews in the late 1940s and Germany's Jews in the late 1930s were strikingly different. Most notably, Egypt was not being driven by a fanatical dictator bent on exterminating Jews. Rather, since the First World War, Egypt was nominally a constitutional monarchy, following a similar parliamentary system to Great Britain. Egypt's King Farouk was seen by his populous as a British puppet, not a nationalist revolutionary. Egypt's parliament was dominated by the Wafd Party, which resented Farouk's pro-British leanings, but ultimately held a liberal ideology and had been instrumental in bringing democracy to Egypt.

⁷ Michael M. Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict* (New York: NYU Press, 1993); see files in AJCA, FAD-1, file "Egypt."

Therefore, to compare the Egyptian regime in the late 1940s to Nazi Germany in the 1930s stretched the imagination.

The defeat and displacement of the Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis in 1949, known throughout the Arab world as *al-Nakba* or “the grievous catastrophe,” pushed the Arab world towards revolution, with nationalists determined to throw off the shackles of European imperialism. Regimes that kowtowed to the West were overthrown. In 1949 alone, Syria experienced three coup d’états. Prime Ministers in both Lebanon and Egypt were assassinated in the same year. In Egypt, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser harnessed this malcontent by forming the Free Officers Corps after he returned from Rhodes in 1949, where he witnessed Egypt sign the ceasefire with Israel.⁸ Alongside General Muhammad Naguib, he led the Free Officers Corp in a coup d’état on July 23, 1952 in the so-called “bloodless revolution.”

Since Nasser’s rhetoric and policies were aimed initially at removing British influence from Egypt, rather than demonizing Jews, the Egyptian Jewish community felt at ease. Israeli-Egyptian relations soon broke down. Israel was worried that with the phased withdrawal, from 1954 to 1956, of the British occupation of Egypt, Nasser would be free to focus Egypt’s military power on the destruction of Israel. Therefore Israel used propaganda and espionage in an effort to destabilize Anglo-Egyptian relations.⁹ Egypt, meanwhile contributed to tensions through the enforcement of a naval blockade and the perpetuation of border conflict. Not only did Egypt’s interference in Israeli trade contravene international law, Israel viewed the blockade of the Israeli port at Eilat as a form of economic warfare.

⁸ Said K. Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 18-28.

⁹ Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*, ch. 7, 8.

While the Israelis saw the Egypt-Israel Armistice Agreement of February 1949 as the Egyptian capitulation to the existence of a Jewish sovereign state in Palestine, the Egyptians ascribed to the literal wording of the Agreement, interpreting it as nothing more than a truce in their continuing war over Palestine.¹⁰ Israel retaliated to the lingering state of war by activating a spy ring in Cairo, tasked with bombing American and British embassies and tourist spots to disrupt the rapprochement between Britain and Egypt. The plan, however, backfired when the plot was quickly uncovered by Egyptian authorities, and only worked to strain tensions further between Israel and Egypt.¹¹

By late 1955, Israeli-Egyptian relations had suffered to such an extent that Nasser hoped to use Israel as a scapegoat to explain Arab economic stagnation and military weakness.¹² His strategy had the two-fold purpose of solidifying his own position in the Revolutionary Command Council in Cairo and presenting Egypt as the chief defender of the Arab world against Western imperialism. In pairing antisemitism with pan-Arab nationalism, Nasser sought to cease the rivalries and inter-state conflicts that had plagued the Arabs during the Israeli Independence War. However, in order to challenge Israel, he needed to secure modern weaponry, specifically air power, and so turned to the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, had re-oriented the Soviet Union's foreign policy towards supporting anti-colonial nationalist movements in the Third World. By providing weaponry and funds, Khrushchev hoped to steer recently independent states towards Communism,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, chapter 5. See also Michael B. Oren, "Escalation to Suez: The Egypt-Israel Border War, 1949-56," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 2 (April 1989): 347-8.

¹¹ See Aviezer Golan, *Operation Susannah* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Shabtai Tevet, *Ben Gurion's Spy: The Story of Political Scandal That Shaped Modern Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Jael Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 90-120.

¹² Keith Kyle, *Suez* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 65.

thereby gaining valuable allies to improve the Soviet Union's position vis-à-vis the West, both strategically and ideologically.¹³

In the fall of 1955, Nasser announced that he had signed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia that made Israel's situation appear critical to Canada's Jews. Although reports varied over the specifics of the arms transaction, it was clear that the sale ruptured the balance of power between Israel and Egypt. The sale included one hundred fight jets, hundreds of tanks, artillery pieces, anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank guns, and armoured personnel carriers. In the autumn of 1955, Israel only possessed fifty jet fighters: the British Meteor and the slightly better French Dassault Ouragan, both outclassed by the MiG-15 fighters that the Egyptians had acquired.¹⁴ According to Mordechai Bar-On, Egypt's new purchases would make its arsenal "three times larger than what Israel had or could expect to acquire in the near future" both in the air and on the ground.¹⁵

Canadians support for Israel became evident in January 1956, when a fierce debate consumed parliament regarding Canada's policy towards shipping armaments to the Middle East. In the Liberal caucus, Pearson was joined by Jewish MP Leon Crestohl in attacking the motion from the Progressive Conservative Party to cease all arms shipments to the Middle East. Crestohl scoffed at claims that Nasser was acquiring weapons to protect Egypt from an attack by the "tiny state of Israel and its handful of people." Rather Crestohl believed that Nasser's ambitions were that of a "Moslem Bismarck," whose purpose was territorial

¹³ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 20; Gu Guan-Fu "Soviet Aid to the Third World, an analysis of its strategy," *Soviet Studies* XXV, no. 1 (Jan. 1983): 71-89; Hashim S. Behbehani, *The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism: 1917-1966* (London: Routledge, 1986), 117, 129-30.

¹⁴ Guy Wint and Peter Calvocoressi, *Middle East Crisis* (Toronto: Penguin, 1957), 60.

¹⁵ Mordechai Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955-1957* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 16-17.

expansion across the Arab world and into Africa. The West could not abandon its morals as it had done in 1938 and betray Israel to Nasser's militarism, but needed to "promptly challenge it [Egypt] not merely by talk nor by appeasement and certainly not by sacrificing important human values and principles which form the cornerstone of our civilization." Arming Israel was the only safe course to maintain the peace and check Nasser's ambitions: "to proceed further by appeasement at this critical time is again unrealistic and a deplorable show of western weakness." Moreover, Crestohl was convinced that the Jewish memory of "having only recently escaped from the great atrocities in history," had left Israel "horrified by the thought of further assaults." While Israel exhibited a "willingness to negotiate a peace with the Arabs anytime and anywhere," Nasser's territorial ambitions continued to perpetuate a state of war along Israel's borders. Crestohl warned that "if appeasement now is to take the form of attempting to throw the tiny state of Israel... to the marauding Arabs," the Israelis would fight "to the last man, woman and child," and would not be "Muniched." Echoing the rhetoric of the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, Crestohl argued that Israel was a bastion for Western civilization in the Middle East: "If Israel is an experiment that failed, then I say, Mr. Speaker, with horror and with shame, that the whole of our civilization is doomed to utter failure."¹⁶ Crestohl's speech immediately became a rallying cry for Jews throughout Canada and beyond, being reproduced and praised repeatedly.¹⁷ The American magazine *The Jewish Spectator* published the speech in its issue titled "The Sin of Forgetting," a clear call to

¹⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 31 January 1956, 733-39.

¹⁷ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 3 February 1956, 2; *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 9 March 1956, 13.

remember the Holocaust or risk the destruction of Israel.¹⁸ Newspapers as far as Brazil printed copies of the speech.¹⁹ In the wake of this strong speech, the Liberals killed the motion to boycott all arms shipments to the Middle East.

Following the House debate, Israeli ambassador to Canada, Michael Comay, met Pearson on February 3 to propose that Canada permit twenty-four F-86 Sabres to be sold to Israel. These aircrafts were vital to defending Israel's cities from Egypt's recently acquired bombers, according to Comay.²⁰ At least on paper, air power seemed to lean dramatically in the Arabs' favour. Although Egypt's air force outnumbered Israel's, many experts in the west questioned Israel's supposed inferiority. A widely distributed *New York Times* report even suggested that Israel was "better equipped than almost all Arab countries combined."²¹ To Comay's chagrin, Pearson was still reluctant to release the aircraft, because of pressure from experts within the Department of External Affairs, who argued that supplying Israel with arms would undermine Canada's position as a neutral moderator.

Throughout the summer of 1956, Israel and the United States worked together to convince Canada to release two squadrons of F-86s.²² The American position was that the United States could not send aircraft to Israel, but its allies could.²³ Secretary of State, John

¹⁸ Leon Crestohl, "The Middle East: Zero Hour," *The Jewish Spectator*, April 1956, 9-12, in LAC, Leon Crestohl's fonds, M-5224, file "Published Articles by & About Leon David Crestohl."

¹⁹ Lucien H. Fisher to Crestohl, letter, 20 March 1956, in LAC, Leon Crestohl's fonds, M-5223, file "General Correspondence, 1956-1963."

²⁰ The F-86 was a state-of-the-art jet interceptor that was superior to the French Mystère IIs and the British Vampires that were being supplied to various Arab states and had proven equal to the Soviet MiG-15s during the Korean War. See Michael B. Oren, "Canada, the Great Powers, and the Middle Eastern Arms Race, 1950-1956," *International History Review* 12, no. 2 (1990): 285.

²¹ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 7 October 1955, 1.

²² Livingston T. Merchant, "Telegram from the Embassy in Canada to the Department of State," 23 July 1956, in *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956, document. 488, 881-882.

²³ American Zionists were also engaged in lobbying the US State Department to equip Israel's air force. On 13 February 1956, novelist Louis Bromfield and Peter Bergson announced at a press conference the formation of

Foster Dulles told Pearson that the U.S. Government was not ready yet to send arms because it wanted to maintain its position as a possible mediator between the two parties; nor did the US desire to initiate an arms race with the Soviet Union. Dulles admitted that he “found it difficult to maintain an impartial attitude because the Jews were using all their influence within the U.S. in favour of Israel.” While members in the Canadian Cabinet sympathized with Israel’s position, noting that “the most probable objective of the Arab countries was to eliminate Israel,” and that the “most immediate danger was the isolation of Israel,” they believed that arming Israel was fraught with risk, for if war broke out, then Canada’s

the “Committee to Save the Middle East from Communism.” Bergson was to be executive vice-chairman, with the committee co-chaired by Bromfield and Pierre Van Paassen, a former *Toronto Star* correspondent who had been instrumental in bringing news to Canadians of Nazi atrocities against Jews following Hitler’s rise to power. Peter Bergson was a highly controversial figure in Jewish circles due to his violent, revisionist Zionist views. As a prominent member of the Irgun, which claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist activities in Palestine to secure Israel’s independence, Bergson was shunned by the mainstream American Jewish organizations. Nonetheless, throughout the Second World War, Bergson had been active in bringing the plight of Europe’s Jews into the spotlight in the United States and in urging the American government to admit Jewish refugees. Nevertheless, such efforts were frowned upon by many American Jewish organizations that were concerned that Bergson was usurping the leadership of American Jewry and that his boisterous tactics might awaken antisemitism within the United States. Bergson announced that his new organization would be focused on “obtain[ing] arms for Israel” by “influencing public opinion” in the United States in the hope of “setting up a Congressional committee committed to an arms-for-Israel program.” Like many North American Jews, Bergson saw many similarities between America’s disastrous 1930s diplomacy and the course of its diplomacy in the 1950s. Whereas in the 1930s it was Hitler who signed a military alliance with the Soviet Union, now it was Nasser who was aligning himself with the Communists in order to forge his own empire. According to AJC reports, “Bergson stressed the ideological compatibility of feudal lords and military dictators with the Kremlin which makes for a natural alliance, not unlike the Hitler-Stalin pact.” And, again the West was “making the same mistake now in their failure to understand Communist penetration that they made in 1937 vis-à-vis Germany.” Bergson argued that Jews were doing a “disservice to America” by placing the debate over Israeli armaments in the framework of whether the United States should take a “pro-Israel or pro-Egypt” stance, thus “making it seem a matter of ‘domestic policy.’” Internal Jewish discord over being seen as too closely aligned with Israel could “only serve Russia’s interest.” See report, 15 February 1956, in AJC Archive, FAD-1, January-February 1956, “Committee to Save the Middle East from Communism: A New Peter Bergson Organization.” For Van Paasen’s coverage of Nazi atrocities towards Jews, see Ulrich Frisse, “The ‘Bystanders’ Perspective’: The *Toronto Daily Star* and Its Coverage of the Persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust in Canada, 1933-1945,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 39, no. 1 (2011): 213-43. For Bergson’s efforts to bring the Holocaust to the forefront of American debate during World War Two, see David Wyman and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 101-8.

decision to send arms to Israel “would be interpreted as a direct contribution to a possible explosion.”²⁴

The Canadian Government’s intransigence towards sending the F-86s shocked the Canadian Jewish community. When Pearson was invited to speak at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto on February 20 for the Brotherhood Night Dinner, reactions to his speech were mixed. To Pearson’s claim that Canada maintained friendly relations with Israel and that Canada was working “closely” with its NATO allies regarding the question of arms shipments, Myer Sharzer, Director of Public Relations at the UZC, was skeptical and complained that “the Canadian Government does not recognize at the moment the pitfalls of certain United States-British policies, or at least is not willing to use its influence against such policies.”²⁵

On May 22, 1956, Samuel Bronfman shot off a letter to Pearson expressing the CJC’s concerns over Israel’s strategic vulnerability. Bronfman had visited Israel briefly in March as part of a Mediterranean cruise and met with David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir, and shared their worries.²⁶ “It truly appears that the one way which may forestall war,” Bronfman wrote, “would be if the State of Israel could demonstrate, through its inventory of defensive weapons, that it can meet aggression quickly and effectively.”²⁷ Bronfman’s letter received a short reply from Pearson thanking him for sharing his “views on the subject.”²⁸

²⁴ Cabinet minutes, 10 May 1945, in LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, vol. 5775, RG2, series A-5-A-a, file “Cabinet conclusions.”

²⁵ Myer Sharzer, bulletin, March 6, 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC Collection, series CA, box 62, file 581, “Public Relations Bulletin.”

²⁶ Michael R. Marrus, *Samuel Bronfman: The Life and Times of Seagram’s Mr. Sam* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1991), 435-6.

²⁷ Bronfman to Pearson, letter, May 22, 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC Collection, series CA, box 55, file 533.

²⁸ Pearson to Bronfman, letter, 25 May 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC Collection, series CA, box 55, file 533.

Unsatisfied with being brushed off, Bronfman and Michael Garber of the UZC, wrote to Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent on June 14, 1956. This letter's tone was grave, expressing the danger that faced Israel in the aftermath of the Czech-Egyptian arms deal and stressing the urgency of selling the jet interceptors to Israel immediately. They wrote that "the threat to Israel's safety and the desire of her Arab neighbours to exterminate Israel is as grave a threat today as it has been for the past many months." In fact, Israel's peril was increasing "as the capacity of Egypt to use the newly acquired Soviet bloc arms increases to a point of effective military efficiency."²⁹ Again, the Canadian Government's response was non-committal. St. Laurent assured Bronfman that Cabinet was "giving earnest and hard-searching thought to all aspects of this difficult question" and that the Jewish community "may remain confident that there need be no doubt about the sympathetic understanding of the Canadian government for the difficulties and problems which are being faced so resolutely by the people of Israel."³⁰

Both the communist and liberal wings of the Canadian Jewish community saw the Czech-Egyptian arms deal in the light of Hitler's 1930s remilitarization of Germany and were convinced that Nasser had similar genocidal aims against the Jews of Israel. Communist Jews were also furious at Canada's unwillingness to support Israel with arms and used the memory of the Holocaust to challenge the Canadian government's decision. Canada's Jewish communist weekly, *Voehenblatt*, splashed "To Germany—Yes, For Israel—No" across the front page on July 19, 1956 in response to Canada's decision to grant 75 F-

²⁹ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 29 June 1956, 1.

³⁰ St. Laurent to Pearson, letter, 21 June 1956, in CJCCNA, CJC Collection, series CA, box 70, file 629, "Israel; CJC and UZC Submission, Suez Canal Crisis."

86s to West Germany, which had recently become a member of NATO. The article proceeded to question the morality behind Canada's foreign policy. Germany, "a state responsible for the death of 60,000,000 people, including 6,000,000 Jews" gets F-86s, but Israel, "which emerged as a state on the ashes of Hitler's determined effort to completely destroy the Jewish people, is snubbed and made a pawn in U.S. and British Middle East power politics."³¹ Charles Law, writing for *Vochenblatt*, believed he saw Dulles' "overbearing influence" behind Canada's refusal and, despite the Liberals' "verbal protestation," believed that in the realm of Canadian foreign policy, Pearson had "decided on obeisance to the U.S. State Department."³²

Jews on the left of the political spectrum began lobbying the West not to abandon Israel, but to lend its support through an alliance and the supplying of armaments. The Canadian Peace Congress was quite vocal in their condemnation of the Czech-Egyptian arms deal, despite its close ties to the Labour Progressive Party and frequent antagonistic position towards the West. Canadian communist James Endicott wrote that "it would be a terrible crime if we forgot the lessons of the failure to get disarmament when things looked so bright in the 1920's. Complacency then led to World War II and the extermination of peoples. We have a better chance now to take away the means of a worse holocaust from those who dream

³¹ *Vochenblatt*, 19 July 1956, 1. *Toronto Telegram* correspondent, Reuben Slonim also found that Canada's position of sending 75 F-86s to increase West Germany's air force to 1,350, yet denying Israel's modest request was problematic: "Israel is not a member of NATO, but there is no denying that its interests are bound with those of the West. Its people, more than half of whom are victims of Nazi tyranny, oppose totalitarianism under any guise.... If Canada's policy is to give Sabre jets to Germany, it should at least sell jet fighters to Israel." See Reuben Slonim, editorial, 17 July 1956, in LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, vol. 15, MG31 F7, file, "Editorials and articles written by R.S. for *The Telegram*, 1957."

³² *Vochenblatt*, 26 July 1956, 3.

of revenge.”³³ Speaking at the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) Convention on October 11, 1955, Rabbi Abraham Feinberg asserted that organized Canadian labour faced three challenges, which he termed the three “R’s”: 1. Re-Union; 2. Race-discrimination; 3. Red Arms to Egypt.³⁴ Feinberg insisted that the Czech-Egyptian arms deal also be on the Canadian Labour’s agenda as it imperiled world peace. Feinberg was convinced that the deal showed the hypocrisy behind the Soviet Union’s “peace movement” and that Khrushchev was using Arab antisemitism to force Israel to start an arms race “as the only way to survive.” Feinberg was also concerned that Egypt had become a “meeting-ground for revived German militarism and Communist imperialism.” He asserted that “the jobless Nazi officers and generals Cairo has hired during recent years will have Russian weapons. An unholy alliance of Hitler and Stalin over prostrate Poland in 1938 led to World War Two. Shall this compact over an imperilled Israel be permitted to breed the Third and final war?” For Feinberg, the only solution for saving Israel was to supply it with defensive weapons: “as long as Israel is well-equipped to fight they [Arab states] will not dare to attack her.”³⁵

The CCL adopted Feinberg’s position as its own. Before the end of the year, President A. R. Mosher and Secretary-Treasurer Donald MacDonald submitted a memorandum to the Canadian Government that shared their policy recommendations. In

³³ *Vochenblatt*, 13 September 1956, 2.

³⁴ The first two “moral challenges” Feinberg raised were hardly surprising. The 1955 Convention was, after all, convened to discuss the “Re-Union” or merger of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada with the Canadian Labour Congress in order to end the rivalry between the organizations and to cut redundant costs. It was hoped that the merger would give organized labour more clout in their lobbying efforts to end racial discrimination. With the failure of the Ontario courts to enforce the newly legislated Ontario Fair Accommodations Act in the face of continuing racial discrimination in Dresden, Ontario, Feinberg hoped that the new Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) could pressure the government to add “a new set of teeth” to the Act.

³⁵ Abraham L. Feinberg, “Three R’s For Canadian Labour,” 11 October 1955, in LAC, Jewish Labour Committee of Canada fonds, vol. 14, MG28-V75, file 2, “Canadian Congress of Labour, National Committee on Human Rights, correspondence – 1955.”

regards to the Middle East, the CCL noted that the tension between Israel and the Arab states was “fraught with danger to the peace of the whole world.” Although they hoped that Soviet arms would not reach Egypt and that a peace settlement would be achieved over Israel, since “Israel [is] the one really democratic state in the area,” the CCL implored the Canadian government that Israel “not be left without sufficient means to defend itself.”³⁶

It was not just the left-wing elements within the Canadian Jewish community that were concerned that the West had not learned from the Holocaust to stand up to dictators. Worrying rumours filled the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* that the pestilence of Nazi antisemitism was at the heart of Egyptian policies. In his regular column “Heard in the Lobbies,” Milton Friedman continually argued that Arab antisemitism did not originate with the Israeli Independence War, but was deeply rooted in Islamic thought. Many Arab statesmen had cozied up with Nazi Germany and they continued to share Hitler’s antisemitic vision of a *Judenfrei* world. Friedman stated that the “loudest Nazi expressions today come from the Egyptian Government,” as Nasser denounced the United States as being under “Jewish control” and his Minister of State Anwar Sadat proclaimed “Hitler is my hero.” Friedman also pointed out that the state-controlled Egyptian radio broadcast *Voice of the Arabs* was trying to undermine the moral legitimacy of Israel by minimizing the Holocaust and suggesting that *al-Naqba* was a worse humanitarian crisis. Across the Middle East on October 19, 1955, listeners tuned in to hear that “America must not find excuses for Israel and say the Israeli people were persecuted by Hitler. All Arabs know that the American

³⁶ “The Congress Memorandum” 15 December 1955, in LAC, Jewish Labour Committee of Canada fonds, vol. 14, MG28-V75, file 2, The Canadian Congress of Labour, “Canadian Congress of Labour, National Committee on Human Rights, correspondence – 1955.”

support to Israel has a worse effect on Arab refugees and the people of occupied Palestine than Hitler's persecution of the Jews. Hitler did not send the Jews out of their country. He did not deprive them of their father's lands. He did not confiscate their money."³⁷ The Arabs' efforts to dismiss the Holocaust were worrying to Canadian Jews who believed that the Arabs were attempting to emphasize their own victimhood in order to justify future crimes against Israel.

The course that the West was following by refusing to prevent Nasser's armament deal and by arming Israel to mend the apparent imbalance of power in the region smacked of the interwar appeasement of the dictators for Canadian Jews. They perceived that appeasement had given Hitler free reign to rearm, annex Germany's neighbours, and pauperize Europe's Jews, resulting not only in a far larger military conflict required to halt German expansion but also a greater catastrophe for European Jewry. Just as the Jewish diaspora had warned the West about Hitler's Nazi ideology and ambitions, Canadian Jewry believed that Israel was issuing a similar warning in 1955, which, if left unheeded, would have dire consequences for Western civilization and Middle Eastern Jewry. Mass meetings were quickly organized across the country. On December 7, the Vancouver Jewish community gathered at the Schara Tzedek Auditorium for an "emergency meeting" to pass a number of resolutions protesting the Czech-Egyptian arms deal and to call on the Canadian Government to send defensive arms to Israel.³⁸ Two months later, Jacques Torczyner, of the Zionist Organization of America, also spoke in Vancouver to a supportive audience. He condemned British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's Baghdad Pact as "appeasement of the

³⁷ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 4 November 1955, 10.

³⁸ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 2 December 1955, 1.

Arabs.” Since Israel could not “afford a second round” with its Arab neighbours, Torczyner insisted that the West needed to supply Israel with defensive weapons in order to “show strength” and deter an Arab assault.³⁹ Such arguments were echoed at the Zionist Organization of Canada’s 33rd National Convention in Ottawa. Israeli Ambassador to Canada, Michael Comay, was keynote speaker and propounded the Israeli case that the West not only needed to formalize an alliance to guarantee Israel’s security, but also needed to arm Israel to ensure its protection: “Unless Israel is put in a strong defensive position, the talk about intervention may be academic, as it was with Czechoslovakia in 1938 and with Poland in 1939.”⁴⁰

Such sentiments were echoed by numerous prominent Canadian Jews. In a speech at the Negev Dinner in Edmonton, Senator David Croll argued that Israeli fears of a coming war were justified as the “noose of isolation is tightening around Israel.” While noting that various UN Security Council members had spoken against the *Fedayeen* raids and the illegal blockade of Israeli shipping, he lamented that no UN resolution condemning these acts had been passed because the West was “afraid to antagonize Arabs.” In fact, Croll believed that with the focus on containing the Soviet Union by “entering into regional security agreements” and the “arming of the Arabs,” the West was “giving the Arabs exactly what they want—arms and the building of military power—while at the same time, they are ignoring Israel.” With the destruction of “the delicate balance of strength,” there was no “determent to the Arab second round against Israel.” The prospects for Israel seemed bleak

³⁹ *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 10 February 1956, 3, 6.

⁴⁰ Michael Comay, “Zionist Public Relations, 1954-1956,” speech, 11 March 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 62, file 581; *Canadian Jewish Review*, 16 March 1956, 16.

for Croll, as Israel stood “alone in the Middle East without a single defence agreement or defence alliance.” Croll, too, saw Canada’s duty as a “middle power” in the traditional role of mediator to “spearhead a movement to bring Israel and the Arab nations to the conference table.”⁴¹ For Croll, the “American obsession with world communism” and the threat of the Soviet Union “engulfing that strategic, oil-rich area” had worked to “blind” the United States to realizing that a peace settlement concerning Israel was the best hope of maintaining Western influence in the region: “here is the bastion of democracy so sorely needed; here the virility, the courage and the competence to meet the challenge of communism. An Israel at peace with its Arab neighbors would help to weld the Middle East into a single thriving entity.”⁴²

Harry J. Stern, the eminent rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in the wealthy Westmount district of Montreal, insisted that if the West failed to take account of the warnings of the Jewish community as it did in the 1930s, the world would again be driven into a devastating war. Speaking to the Montreal Lion’s Club on April 26, 1956, he noted that due to Israel’s democratic and liberal institutions, it provided the only hope for stability in a region that was “a sea of feudalistic states wherein some slavery is still in existence, where a low standard of living prevails and where absentee landlordism reigns supreme and where the masses lead a serf existence.” However, Israel was “now threatened with destruction” because of the rise of “a new dictator that has come to Egypt” who was being supplied with “dreadful weapons.” Stern noted that Jews had not forgotten that “the conscience of the free world failed when the

⁴¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 April 1955, 3064.

⁴² David Croll, “Israel,” 1 May 1955, in LAC, David Croll fonds, vol. 61, MG32-C49, file 1, “Speeches, 1955-1956,” 260-268.

Nazi dictator sent to the slaughter six million of the Jews of Europe.” Although it was unclear whether the Western powers would abandon Israel, Stern assured Canadians that the Jews would defend themselves this time: “We ask now will the conscience of the free world fail again in the face of an Egyptian dictator and his allies planning the destruction of the State of Israel? Alas, this, the world must know, that the Israelis will not yield like sheep to the slaughter. If war comes and we pray that it be prevented, the embattled people of Israel will defend every inch of ground with their blood and with their lives.”⁴³

The Jewish community in the Maritimes was equally disturbed by the Arab-Soviet threat to Israel and by the apparent indifference of the West. According to *The Evening Time-Globe*, New Brunswick’s Jewish community gathered in Saint John to protest the Czech-Egyptian arms deal on November 8, 1955. Benjamin R. Guss, Q.C., gave such a dynamic keynote speech that it made front-page headlines in the local newspaper. In accordance with the thoughts of Jews living in major Canadian urban centres, Guss interpreted the threat to Israel in the context of the situation facing Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. This was especially poignant for Guss since he realized that many of the Jews in Israel who were facing the Arab threat were the same individuals who had fled Hitler’s genocide: “let us then glance back: Six million Jews were wiped out during the Second World War. The stragglers found a haven only in Israel.... Yes, those who survived the death chambers of the crematories of Europe, out of the crucible of their affliction found a haven at last and that haven was faced with an encircling attack on all its borders.” Despite the reassurances of military intelligence that Israel still maintained

⁴³ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 4 May 1956, 2.

overwhelming military superiority, Guss presented a grim comparison of Israel to an isolated Britain that was dependent on American arms following the defeat of France in 1940. As the only “bastion of democracy in the Middle East” and “confronted with overwhelming odds,” Israel “too has the right to expect the Western world to give it weapons with which to defend itself.” Following the same vein of argumentation as Harry J. Stern, Guss cautioned the West that heeding the cries of Israel was not just in the interest of Jews, but in the interest of Western civilization: “Let us look back again when Hitler was attacking the Jews in Germany. The Jews warned the world that that was only the beginning, that there was more at stake than just the Jews and now at this juncture in history the Jews may again warn the Western World.”⁴⁴

With comparisons being made between the Nazis and the Arabs, many Canadian Jews did not see the Egyptian threat of an invasion of Israel as merely a threat to democracy and the Jewish political structure in Palestine. The memory of the Holocaust left the chilling prospect that Nasser posed a mortal threat against all Jewish lives in the Middle East. Sam Jacobson, a frequent contributor to the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, painted an especially ominous description of the fate that awaited Jews if an Egyptian invasion of Israel took place. He described how the situation in Egypt was becoming similar to the situation in Nazi Germany that led to “the annihilation of six million Jews by Hitler.” According to Jacobson, Nasser was following a similar course to Hitler in using antisemitism to gain hegemony in the Middle East and Africa. Despite the creation of the United Nations, Jacobson was despondent about its ability to maintain peace. Although he thought it was “right and

⁴⁴ *The Evening Times-Globe*, 9 November 1955, in CJCCCNA, CJC Collection, series CA, box 55, file 534, “Israel—News Clippings,” 1.

proper” that the UN make genocide illegal, he questioned whether such international legislation was sufficient to end genocide since it did not address the cause of the problem: racism and national chauvinism. As Jacobson put it:

Does this really solve the problem? The annihilation...of the Jews in Nazi Germany just did not happen overnight. It took a long period of ‘conditioning’, of indoctrination, of propaganda, before the people of the Nations were convinced that the annihilation of the Jews...was justified and the right thing to do. The real crime therefore was in the propaganda, the lies that were not allowed to be refuted. This propaganda planted the seed that made the murder of the Jews by Hitler a natural consequence.

What was particularly worrying to Jacobson was that antisemitism was currently being propagated in Egypt to precipitate genocide. Not only was there “the rise in the Middle East of a new little Hitler, a new dictator, hungry for power,” Jacobson was also convinced that “the seeds for future wars which will justify genocide, are being planted in the minds and hearts of millions, by the poisonous words that are being broadcast from Cairo daily.” For Jacobson, “this is the real evil, it creates the motivation for future crime. It is arousing hatred among hundreds of millions of the hungry backward Nations that will justify murder, destruction and wars in years to come.” As if the spread of Nazi propaganda throughout the Arab world was not enough, Jacobson was horrified that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who had “helped Hitler in his campaign to annihilate the Jews,” was an advisor to Nasser. Jacobson could not see anything that the UN was doing to stop Nasser from “poisoning the minds of human beings” and thus it was up to Israel to “act on her own behalf.” He believed that Israel needed to immediately acquire armaments to defend itself, but also in the long

term to create propaganda that undermined and laid bare the antisemitic lies being peddled in the Arab world.⁴⁵

4.2 Arming Israel to Defend Civilization

In the summer of 1956, Nasser's actions moved beyond threatening Jews, to imperiling the British Empire, a move that dramatically altered Canadian public opinion of the Egyptian-Israeli conflict. The United States initiated peace talks in January 1956 but despite the United States offering economic and military aid to Egypt, Nasser hesitated at the suggestion of beginning talks with Israel without prior commitments of Israeli territorial concessions and promises from the United States of rescinding support for the Baghdad Pact.⁴⁶ On March 5, Nasser accused the Americans of caving to “Zionist influence” and “aligning themselves with Israel.” Upon being asked whether he would meet with a representative of the Israeli Government or a prospective American citizen of the Jewish faith who Anderson believed might be “influential with the IG [Israeli Government],” Nasser refused, explaining “he would still be a Jew.” The Americans concluded that Nasser was deliberately impeding a peace settlement in the Middle East and perpetuating the tensions in order to unite the Arabs under Nasser's leadership.⁴⁷ The British were frustrated with Nasser's “double dealing” with the Soviet Union and agreed that the West needed to change

⁴⁵ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 18 May 1956, 9.

⁴⁶ The Baghdad Pact was a coalition of states—Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan—under Great Britain's leadership, who were given access to British weaponry in order to stave off Soviet advances into the Middle East region. For the most comprehensive history of the Baghdad Pact that focuses on the rivalry between the various Arab states for dominance, see Elie Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World: The Struggle Over the Baghdad Pact* (Zeiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1995).

⁴⁷ Anderson to Dulles, “Message from Robert B. Anderson to the Secretary of State, at Karachi,” 6 March 1956, *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956, 310-11.

their policy towards Egypt and not worry about “alienat[ing] Egypt.”⁴⁸ Therefore, both countries shifted to a new approach, codenamed Project Gama, which consisted of punitive actions including cutting aid monies to Egypt and denying their requests for arms sales.⁴⁹ Most significantly, by mid-July, the United States decided to deny funding for the Aswan High Dam project on the Nile River.⁵⁰ Nasser told journalist M. H. Heikal that America’s retraction of funds was “not a withdrawal, it is an attack on the regime and an invitation to the people of Egypt to bring it down.”⁵¹ One week later, at a rally in Alexandria celebrating the fourth year anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, Nasser made a dramatic speech in which he announced that Egypt was nationalizing the Suez Canal Company to use its tolls to finance the Aswan Dam construction: “We shall build the High Dam on the skulls of 120,000 Egyptian workmen who died in building the Suez Canal.”⁵² Nasser also lambasted America’s foreign aid policy as a form of imperialism, with Israel being labelled the “the vanguard of imperialism.”⁵³ While Nasser spoke for two and a half hours to a 100,000 person crowd, Egyptian military personnel seized the offices of the Suez Canal Company and froze its assets.

Although Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal was strictly legal, since owners were properly compensated for their shares, the seizure was highly controversial. The British

⁴⁸ Makins to Dulles, “Note from the British Ambassador (Makins) to Secretary of State Dulles,” note, 21 March 1956, *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956, 385.

⁴⁹ Dulles to Eisenhower, “Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President,” 28 March 1956, in *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956, 419-21.

⁵⁰ “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, July 19, 1956,” *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956, 867-871.

⁵¹ Laura M. James, “When Did Nasser Expect War? The Suez Nationalization and its Aftermath in Egypt,” in Simon C. Smith ed. *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 149-52.

⁵² *The Montreal Gazette*, 27 July 1956, 1.

⁵³ Nasser Speech, Alexandria, 26 July 1956, in Noble Frankland, ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1956* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 80.

Government was the canal's major shareholder, owning 44 percent of the common stock. The Canal was also an extremely profitable enterprise with an annual revenue of \$25 to \$35 million. Seventy percent of Western Europe's oil went through the Suez.⁵⁴ However, the Suez was viewed as more than a business or a canal. With the company headquartered in Paris and the canal built during the age of imperialism when Europe ruled most of the globe, it represented the apogee of Western civilization. Thus, its loss was presented in apocalyptic terms. British Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd declared that "if Nasser wins or even appears to win we might as well as a government (and indeed as a country) go out of business."⁵⁵ Eden agreed and warned that Nasser "has his thumb on our windpipe."⁵⁶

The French Government immediately compared Nasser's seizure of the Suez to Hitler's 1930s diplomacy. The day after Nasser's announcement, French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau informed the Americans that France saw Nasser's action in a similar light "to [the] seizure of [the] Rhineland by Hitler." If the West did not respond "strongly," the French Government worried that Nasser's next move would be to grab "all of the Middle Eastern pipelines," leaving Europe dependent on Arab goodwill for its oil supply.⁵⁷ The French Prime Minister, Guy Mollet, was hesitant to make such a "banal" comparison, but thought that the similarities between Nasser and Hitler were "extremely close" and therefore warranted attention. Although making no reference to Hitler's antisemitism, Mollet believed that Nasser's "The Philosophy of Revolution" was "a perfect parallel to 'Mein Kampf'" with

⁵⁴ Diane B. Kunz, *Butter and Guns: America's Cold War Economic Diplomacy* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 78-9.

⁵⁵ David Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 45.

⁵⁶ Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-56* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 213.

⁵⁷ C. Douglas Dillon to Charles Sparks Thomas, "Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State," 27 July 1956, *FRUS*, vol. XVI, Suez Crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956, 7-8.

regards to the nationalist ideology of both dictators. Although Egypt's military power was deficient compared with that of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union exerted far more power in 1956 than it did in 1939. Thus the Soviet arms deal with Egypt would be considered similar to the "Hitler Stalin pact of 1939." Concerned about their colonial entanglements in Algeria and agitated by their recent memory of German conquest in the Second World War, the French were convinced that the "US was embarking on the same course of error by appeasement that had been followed toward Hitler in the 1930's."⁵⁸

The British Government also looked to the diplomacy of the 1930s to understand how to deal with Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal. As a firm opponent of the appeasement of Nazi Germany during the 1930s, it was not surprising that British Prime Minister Anthony Eden was against allowing Egypt to keep the Canal. On July 27, the British Cabinet decided that they would use force if necessary to undo Nasser's seizure of the Canal.⁵⁹ For Eden, Nasser's seizure of the canal was "designed to impress opinion not only in Egypt but in the Arab world" with the goal of heading a Muslim Empire allied to the Soviet Union. In a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Eden stated that Britain was willing to use military force to ensure Nasser's "removal" and the "installation in Egypt of a regime less hostile to the West." Although Eden believed that the comparison of Nasser to Hitler was not accurate, since Nasser "has no warlike people behind him," the relinquishing of the Canal to Nasser "would be catastrophic," as the "whole position in the Middle East would thereby be lost

⁵⁸ Dillon to Department of State, "Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State," 31 July 1956, *FRUS*, vol. XVI, Suez Crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956, 74-77.

⁵⁹ Robert James Rhodes, *Anthony Eden: A Biography* (New York: Weidenfeld 1987), 459-61.

beyond recall.”⁶⁰ It was hoped that international pressure would compel Nasser to relinquish the Canal, which in turn would undermine his popular support in Egypt, precipitating the downfall of his regime and making a military expedition into Egypt unnecessary.

Canadians were apprehensive about how the Great Powers would respond to Nasser’s provocation, but were also mindful that the nationalization of the Suez had economic ramifications. In particular, Canadians were concerned that Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez would affect the price of oil and could exacerbate an already high inflation rate. Panic swept across North America that the disruption in oil production would send inflation soaring. Despite the national focus on inflation, Canadian Jews immediately saw the nationalization as further evidence that Nasser was following Hitler’s aggressive road to national expansion. Once again Leon Crestohl made an ardent plea on the floor of the House of Commons, insisting that in light of Nasser’s seizure of the Suez Canal, Canada needed to approve the sale of two dozen F-86s to Israel. He criticized the previous diplomatic efforts by Britain and the United States to prop up Nasser and bring Egypt into a Middle Eastern defensive alliance, noting that they had created “a Frankenstein.” Negotiating with Nasser was futile since dictators do not abide by the conventions of civilized nations. In fact, Crestohl was convinced that Nasser was following the same worrying “pattern of Hitler” and his next step would be the invasion of Israel.⁶¹

Rabbi Solomon Frank made the same comparison, noting that in 1936, if France had responded to the “impending danger created by the presence of Nazi hordes on her

⁶⁰ “Message from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower,” 5 August 1956, 146-8, *FRUS*, vol. XVI, Suez Crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956.

⁶¹ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 10 August 1956, 11, 2 August 1956, n.p., in LAC, Leon Crestohl fonds, M-5225, *The Ottawa Journal* file “clippings-political and parliamentary matters.”

immediate border” and invaded Germany, Hitler “would have fallen,” and the tragedy of the Second World War would have been avoided. Although Frank hoped that “the recourse to armed intervention will not prove necessary,” he believed that “by far too much is at stake to temporize or to appease.” Only if the West was prepared to use “force as a last resort” would peace be secured.⁶²

The fear that Israel might take military recourse against Egypt before Nasser’s newly acquired arsenal became operational was being voiced in the U.S. State Department. American intelligence also realized that “if the Israelis were to lose hope of obtaining Western arms at a time when they still had substantial military superiority, the situation would enter a crucial phase. Israel might then decide on ‘preventive action,’ in a desperate effort to destroy Arab military power while there was still time.”⁶³ United States Secretary of State Dulles’ plan to prevent a pre-emptive Israeli strike while maintaining good relations with the Arab states was to earmark a stash of weapons, primarily F-86 interceptors, in Europe that could be flown to Crete and made available to Israel in case of Arab aggression. Code-named *Stockpile*, the proposal was contingent on American allies, such as Canada, selling F-86s to Israel so that their pilots could be trained to fly the aircrafts.⁶⁴

Canada had decided to permit the sale of Sabre Jets prior to the nationalization of the Suez Canal, a decision that was based largely on propping Israel up to discourage it from launching a preventative war. However, Nasser’s unpopular seizure of the Canal had

⁶² *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 10 August 1956, 3.

⁶³ Department of State, U.S., SNIE 30-56, 28 February 1956, 252, *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956, “Critical Aspects of the Arab-Israeli Situation,” “Special National Intelligence Estimate.”

⁶⁴ Paper Prepared by the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant (Russell), “Proposal for statement by the United States that it will make Weapons available to victim of aggression in the Middle East,” 25 April 1956, 575-7, in *FRUS*, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956.

delayed the announcement that the fighter jets would be shipped to Israel. With the Suez Crisis seemingly cooling down and the real possibility that negotiations would drag on for months, the Canadian government decided on September 20 to announce its intention to ship the F-86s to Israel.⁶⁵ The United Zionist Council of Canada's official comment was that Canada had made "an important contribution to stability and peace" because the jets would act as a deterrent and "help overcome the serious imbalance of armed strength which has greatly increased the danger of war in the Middle East in recent months."⁶⁶ Winnipeg native, Jewish Theological Seminary of America graduate, and *Toronto Telegram* correspondent Rabbi Reuben Slonim agreed, praising Canada's decision to sell the Sabre jets to Israel. However, in a speech given in front of Windsor's Jewish community on October 14, he cautioned that Israel's situation remained dire and that Canadian Jews should buy Israeli bonds to support the financial burden caused by Israel's need to buy defensive military equipment. He also discussed his recent disconcerting interview with Nasser and, according to *The Windsor Daily Star*, recalled that his impression was that this "new Hitler [was] filled with hate for the Jewish race." If war did break out between Israel and Egypt, he stressed that "it would be a war of survival for the Jewish people."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Minutes, 20 September 1956, in LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, vol. 5775, series A-5-A-a, RG2, file "Cabinet conclusions."

⁶⁶ *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 26 September 1956, 16.

⁶⁷ *Windsor Daily Star*, 15 October 1956, in LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, vol. 15, MG31-F7, file "Editorials and articles written by R.S. for The Telegram, 1957," 3.

4.3 Interpreting the Sinai War in light of the Holocaust

Unbeknownst to St. Laurent or the Canadian Jewish community, Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal caused Britain and France to collaborate with Israel to take military action and retake the Suez Canal. They looked to Israel to launch a pre-emptive strike against Egypt, a move that they had been planning since October 1955. Ben-Gurion had ambitious war aims that included not only breaking Egypt's naval blockade and crushing the Egyptian Army before it fully integrated the recently-purchased Soviet weaponry, but what he termed a "comprehensive settlement in the Middle East." Hoping to precipitate Nasser's downfall, Ben-Gurion envisioned redrawing the Middle Eastern map by chopping off a part of Lebanon to establish a Christian state, annexing part of Jordan, and handing the rest to Iraq provided they settle the Palestinian refugees in their territory. Israel would gain security and a peace settlement, and the European powers would gain useful allies in the region to secure their oil and colonial interests.⁶⁸ From October 22 to 24, 1956, in Sévres, just outside Paris, Ben-Gurion met with French Prime Minister Guy Mollet and British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd to solve the tricky problem of starting a war without being condemned as aggressors by world opinion. The European powers furthermore did not want to be seen as acting in concert with Israel and thereby alienate Arab opinion. France and Britain asked Israel to stage a large-scale raid against Egypt on October 29, drive through the Sinai desert, and secure the Suez Canal within twenty-four hours. Under the pretext of an international police force, Britain and France would appeal to both belligerent states to agree to a ceasefire and

⁶⁸ David Ben-Gurion, "Ben-Gurion's Diary: The Suez-Sinai Campaign," in Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds. *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956, Retrospective and Reappraisal* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), 306-7.

demand that all military forces withdraw at least ten miles from the Suez Canal. Nasser would presumably refuse these terms, giving Britain and France *casus belli* against Egypt. Thus, the Egyptian threat would be neutralized under the façade of Western democratic values.

On October 29, 1956, Israel launched Operation Kadesh, the pre-emptive strike on Egypt. Israeli paratroopers were dropped 156 miles into the Sinai desert to clear the Mitla Pass. Meanwhile Israeli armour and infantry threaded its way down the east coast of the Sinai Peninsula for Sharm el-Sheikh and the Straits of Teran to neutralize the Egyptian shipping blockade at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba. However, the invasion force was soon bogged down. On October 30, the British and French issued their ultimatum calling for the withdrawal of military forces along the Suez Canal within twelve hours. After Nasser ignored the threat, French and British forces launched an amphibious assault on Port Said and an aerial campaign against Egypt's airfields.

World public opinion immediately turned against the warring democracies for apparently resorting to imperial gunboat strategies. The façade that the British and French were intervening as part of an international police force quickly crumbled when they called for the belligerents to withdraw from the Suez while Israel was still miles away. Moreover, when Britain and France vetoed the American demand for Israel's immediate withdrawal of its forces on October 30 in the Security Council, it was clear that some conspiracy was in place.⁶⁹ On November 1, the United States took its demand for a ceasefire to the General Assembly of the United Nations and tabled Resolution 997, which called for an immediate

⁶⁹ Kyle, *Suez*, 353-64.

cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and charged that the Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld report back to the Security Council to recommend “further actions as they may deem appropriate in accordance with the Charter.” In other words, the UN could place sanctions on Israel if it did not abide by its ruling. This resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 2 despite Canada abstaining.

Britain’s deception was a bitter pill to swallow for Canadians. The Canadian Government shared America’s opinion that Western aggression in the Middle East had lost the West the moral high ground.⁷⁰ Dulles phoned Pearson on October 30 and complained that Britain and France “undid everything” because “it would be argued, [British and French military intervention in Egypt] was comparable to the kind of action which the Russians had taken or were accustomed to take in situations which they claimed to be of an emergency kind.”⁷¹ The Canadian Government worried that the West had undermined its position in the Arab world. L. V. J. Roy, Canada’s Chargés d’affaires in Beirut, reported that “the West has appeared to the Arabs as eminently resourceful in tricks, lies, and deceit,” causing the Arabs to lose “faith in the West.”⁷² Canada’s official response to Britain emphasized that there was a “danger of a war which might spread,” and also pointed out that the British-French military exploits undermined the UN, threatened the unity of the Commonwealth, and risked undermining the alliance between Britain and the United States, a relationship that “is the

⁷⁰ Escott Reid, *Hungary and Suez 1956: A View from New Delhi* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1986), 38.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 33, 39-41. Dulles’ prediction was quite accurate and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru went a step further by turning a blind eye to Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe while attacking the British and French invasion: “I cannot imagine a worse case of aggression. If this aggression continues and succeeds, all faith in international commitments and the United Nations will fade away, and the old spectre of colonialism will haunt us again.”

⁷² Roy to Pearson, dispatch, 6 February 1957, in LAC, RG25, vol. 5826, file 50131-A-40, “Collective Security in the Middle East, part 5.1.”

very foundation of our hopes for progress toward a peaceful and secure world.”⁷³ It was concern over the Western alliance, not Israel’s imperilled position, which motivated the Canadian Government to mediate the crisis.

Canada’s abstention was a highly controversial diplomatic manoeuvre as many conservatives felt that Canada ought to stay in line with the Commonwealth and support Britain, which had been a bulwark against illiberal forces since before the Second World War. In the early hours of November 2, Pearson explained that Canada’s decision to abstain was because the American resolution did nothing to ensure the preservation of peace following the withdrawal of Israel’s forces. After consulting with American and British officials, Pearson introduced Resolution 998, which called for an international police force to preserve the peace between Israel and Egypt. Pearson’s diplomacy permitted Britain and France to save face by passing off their supposed policing operation to the UN and to withdraw.

Both the Canadian public and the government were polarized over the war against Egypt, but opinion was divided over Canada’s position vis-à-vis Britain, not Israel. A Gallup Poll confined to Toronto found that forty-three percent of Canadians approved of the British and French Middle Eastern policy, while forty percent disapproved and only seventeen percent had no opinion.⁷⁴ James Eayrs reported that “few events since the second world war have aroused so much concern in Canada.” He recalled “foreign policy being discussed in the streets” and the numerous public libraries “reported a run on Colonel Nasser’s *The*

⁷³ Monroe and Inglis, *Mike: the Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, 1948-1957*, vol. 2, 238-39.

⁷⁴ Robert William Reford, *Canada and Three Crises* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1968), 109.

*Philosophy of the Revolution.*⁷⁵ However, Dale Thomson's description of Canada's mood towards Britain as comparable to one "finding a beloved uncle charged with rape"⁷⁶ is an exaggeration. Efforts by the Canadian Jewish community to shed light on the antisemitic nature of Nasser's nationalism made Liberals sympathetic to the motives driving Britain's invasion of Egypt. The problem was not that Britain was defending a democracy in the Middle East, but that its duplicitous diplomacy threatened to tear apart NATO and prevented a united stand against the Soviet Union in the wake of the Hungarian Uprising. Conservative newspapers across the country were outraged that Canada had abstained on the U.S. Resolution rather than vote against the motion and support Britain.⁷⁷ In the government, many opposition members on both the left and right many applauded Britain's willingness to confront a dictatorship.⁷⁸

Like most non-Jewish Canadians, Canadian Jews were eager to support Israel due to its democratic values. Even the pages of *Vochenblatt*, which had previously criticized Israel, began to contain articles that argued that Israel's preemptive strike was necessary to avert extermination.⁷⁹ While not wholly pardoning Israel's occupation of the Sinai, Rabbi Feinberg was critical of the UN for not forcing the Arabs to agree to a permanent peace settlement, thus leaving Israel vulnerable to destruction: "Israel had grounds for believing that the only final alternative to a bold move was extinction at the hands of the Arab states dominated by a power dictator, appeased by the oil-hungry West and armed by the Soviet

⁷⁵ James Eayrs, "Canadian Policy and Opinion during the Suez Crisis," *International Journal* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1957): 102-3.

⁷⁶ Dale Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), 461-9.

⁷⁷ Igartua, "'Ready, Aye, Ready' No more?"

⁷⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 27 November 1956, 50.

⁷⁹ *Vochenblatt*, November 1 1956, 1.

Union.”⁸⁰ Although Mel Shipman was initially torn about whether Israel’s attack was justified, he found Feinberg’s analysis convincing. While he could not “condone aggression” and was worried that regional conflict might turn nuclear, Shipman believed that the super powers were ultimately responsible for the war. Particularly “disappointing” was the fact that the Soviet Union had been as guilty as the West in not challenging “Arab nationalism’s fanatical refusal to accept Israel’s existence.” For Shipman, it was “obviously Arab intransigence” that explained why “every effort at starting basic peace negotiations has failed.” In fact, Shipman admitted that “we progressives have tended to minimize or ignore the real threat to Israel inherent in the policies of the Arab leaders.”⁸¹ Regular columnist Charles Law echoed David Croll’s position that “if your enemy holds a knife to your throat and you knock it out of his hands, you can’t be the aggressor.” Law found that Canadian Jews were “incensed at the seemingly callous indifference of the world to Israel’s precarious existence in the midst of nations dedicated to her destruction,” and that “it is better Israel should stand with friends...than fall alone.” In other words, since “Israel had every reason to fear for her life,” it was better that Israel collude with France and Britain than submit to destruction. Law still hoped that Israel would be able to come to a peace settlement over Palestine with the Arab states through the UN.⁸² Although many Canadian Jewish

⁸⁰ *Vochenblatt*, 1 November 1956, 2.

⁸¹ *Vochenblatt*, 22 November 1956, 1-2. Just a few weeks earlier, Shipman’s tone was very different: “So let me give Messrs. Eden and Komay a bit of free advice: Don’t pretend that Israel’s interests lie in crushing Nasser’s striving for independence. Israelis know only too well that a war over Suez would reach global proportions. In such a war the little Jewish state would be crushed and destroyed. So a little less tears for Israel; a little less bemoaning the fate of ‘western civilization’; and a lot more hard thinking before your obsession with Nasserism sets the whole world aflame.” See *Vochenblatt*, 20 September 1956, 4.

⁸² *Vochenblatt*, 8 November 1956, 3.

communists still remained loyal to Moscow, they were less eager to present a partisan position on the issue.

The Jewish community in Canada was, on the whole, relieved that Britain and France had come to Israel's aid and had averted a potential second Holocaust. In the days following the pre-emptive strike, they invoked images of the destruction of Europe's Jewry to justify Israel's pre-emptive strike. On Saturday morning, November 3, 1956, Rabbi Stuart E. Rosenberg got behind his pulpit at Canada's largest Conservative synagogue, Toronto's Beth Tzedec, and lambasted the Arab states for refusing to recognize the sovereignty of Israel and for destabilizing the region through their "ceaseless war" since May 1948. Rosenberg stated that the Arabs had the "the express purpose of annihilating [Israel]." Egypt's intentions could not be denied, as Arab broadcasts for the past eight years had been "calling for the destruction of Israel" and warning Jews that "Egypt will grind you to dust." Moreover, such language was not just empty rhetoric, since Egyptian-trained "death commandoes" had been frequently crossing over Israel's borders and murdering Jews and "terrorizing children." For Rosenberg, Egypt's relationship with Israel was characterized not just by "belligerency" but by war: "war by attrition, war by propaganda, war by threat and by death." With "little Israel, isolated from all the world, given no assurance of mutual defense pacts by any nation, large or small, alienated constantly by the Western policies which permitted the arming of the Arabs," it was faced with the terrifying question: "how will we survive in the midst of such a hostile sea?" Rosenberg believed that the Holocaust experience demonstrated that Jews had to "battle for the survival of Israel." He concluded his sermon by reminding his

audience that this was not the first time that the Jews had been faced with a determined dictator “bent on Israel’s extermination”:

while the world stood idly by, millions of Jews were killed or enslaved by the power of Hitler. If people did care, they did little to show it. While the world debated, and while the world said that Hitler had the legal right to do with his citizens as he wanted, millions of Jews went to their death. Israel has now taken this tragic, but necessary, step because the world seems again indifferent to Israeli blood [sic] and to Israeli lives....The victims of Hitler cannot fight back. They are dead and cold in their graves. But the children, the brothers, and the sisters of the victims—they can fight back in self-defense, using the natural and moral right of human beings to preserve their own life.⁸³

For Rosenberg and many other Jews, the Holocaust was a constant reminder that threats to Jewish survival had to be taken seriously.

As the representative organization for Zionists, the United Zionist Council of Canada (UZC) quickly issued a press statement on November 3, 1956 justifying Israel’s attack. While they hoped that peace would be restored soon, the statement emphasized that the Israeli attack was a necessary response to Nasser’s continued efforts to “destroy Israel.” Pointing to the *Fedayeen* strikes which “sought to terrorize the people of Israel,” the UZC claimed that “the avowed aim of Egypt has been to whittle away by these tactics the ability of Israel to maintain its own security, until the moment was ripe for united military action with Jordan and Syria to resume full-scale hostilities aimed at the destruction of the State of Israel.” Although Israel launched a pre-emptive military strike against Egypt, the UZC

⁸³ Stuart Rosenberg, “Why Israel Went Into Egypt,” Sermon, 3 November 1956, in LAC, *Stuart E. Rosenberg Papers*, vol. 24, MG31-F7.

cautioned Canadians not to see Israel as the aggressor since it had constantly sought a peace settlement.⁸⁴

Relying on similar argumentation, on November 29 the Jewish community of Calgary gathered and adopted a resolution in which they pledged “all possible moral and material support to the people of Israel.” To understand Israel’s military action, Canadians needed to understand that Israel’s “very existence” was threatened by Soviet arms flooding into the Middle East. *Fedayeen* raiders regularly crossed into Israel to murder and sabotage in the hope of “undermining her [Israel’s] security and rendering her vulnerable to a concerted large-scale invasion.” With Israel isolated and unable to secure a defensive alliance with any state or gain “vital arms necessary for her air and land defence,” Canadians needed to realize that Israel’s attack “represents nothing more or less than the exercise of the primary right of self-defence available to every people and every nation under international law and morality.”⁸⁵

Parliamentarian Leon Crestohl was not immune to the hysteria that eclipsed the Canadian Jewish community following Israel’s invasion of Egypt. At a “Demonstration for Israel” assembly hosted by Montreal’s Chevra Kadisha-B-nai Jacob Synagogue on November 21, Crestohl criticized Canadians who failed to understand that Israel attacked in order to protect its citizens from a second Holocaust. According to reports in Montreal’s *Gazette*, Crestohl propagated the incredible rumor that “huge quantities of potassium cyanide and some crematoria had been found by Israeli troops on the Sinai.” “Well conceived plans”

⁸⁴ Press statement, 3 November 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC Collection, series CA, box 12, file 69, “United Zionist Council of Canada.”

⁸⁵ Calgary Jewish Resolution, 29 November 1956, in Glenbow Museum and Archive, CJCC Collection, series 1A (5), 1954-56, file 9K “Press Releases, etc., 1956-1961.”

had been formulated by the Egyptians, Crestohl told an astonished audience, “to pour the potassium cyanide into the drinking water of Israel” in preparation of a planned military assault on Israel on November 15.⁸⁶

Adding fuel to the hysteria was the threat that the UN would place sanctions on Israel if it did not immediately withdraw from Egyptian territory. Israel had no intention of withdrawing if it faced the prospect of renewed *Fedayeen* attacks and the resumption of an Egyptian naval blockade.⁸⁷ The estimated effect of sanctions would devastate Israel.⁸⁸ The Israeli Foreign Ministry announced its plan to lay off five percent of civil service immediately should sanctions be imposed and implement a massive surtax on upper income families, with the high income bracket taxed ninety five percent.⁸⁹ Israel launched a propaganda campaign to demonstrate the legitimacy of Israel’s invasion and the necessities of delaying withdrawal until its security was guaranteed. Perhaps the most worrying pamphlet published by the Israelis was entitled “Nasser’s Pattern of Aggression,” which reproduced and translated a number of Egyptian documents captured by the Israeli armed forces. The documents revealed that the Egyptians were preparing a war of extermination in

⁸⁶ *The Gazette*, 22 November 1956, n.p., in LAC, David L. Crestohl fonds, M-5225, file “Clippings Re: Activities in Jewish Affairs, Israel, etc.”

⁸⁷ See David Ben Gurion’s speech in the Knesset, 7 November 1956, where he declares: “Israel will not consent, under any circumstances, that a foreign force called whatever it may take up positions whether on Israeli soil or in any area held by Israel. The armistice with Egypt is dead, as are the armistice lines, and no wizards or magicians can resurrect these lines which cloaked Egyptian murderers and sabotage.” Meron Medzini, ed., *Israel’s Foreign Relations: selected documents, 1947-1974* (Jerusalem: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1976), 562. The Israelis informed Canadian commander of the UNEF E. M. L. Burns that they intended to proceed with a “phased withdrawal” over an unspecified timetable. Edward Michael Pompa, *Canadian Foreign Policy During the Suez Crisis of 1956* 9 (PhD Thesis, St. John’s university, 1969), 149-50.

⁸⁸ Since the invasion of Egypt, America had already suspended transfer of \$75 million in economic aid and further reciprocity could include halting private donations from American citizens, amounting to \$92 million per annum. See Pompa, *Canadian Foreign Policy During the Suez Crisis of 1956*, 161.

⁸⁹ “Israel Prepares to Sustain Impact of Possible Freeze of U.S. Aid,” JTA Daily News Bulletin, 7 February 1957, 2, < http://pdfs.jta.org/1957/1957-02-07_027.pdf>

the same vein as that which Hitler had conducted on the Eastern Front in the Second World War. As early as February 1956, the commanding officer Liwa Ahmed Salem of Egypt's 3rd Infantry Division was sending directives that training was to prepare "to overpower and destroy Israel in the shortest possible time and with the greatest brutality and bestiality in battle." Apparently training pamphlet no. 42, written under the auspices of the Training and Education Branch of the Egyptian Army in April 1955, used Nazi Germany's *judenfrei* philosophy as a model for the anticipated Palestinian war: "Germany convinced herself that the Jews are traitors and could not be trusted, and so she expelled them from her land...but out of Palestine they could not find any refuge.... The Arab countries continue to proclaim their hatred of the Jews and are preparing to drive them out of the Holy Land. Thus, history repeats itself. The Arabs refuse to leave even a single Jew in Palestine so that the country will be all Arab. Today it is we who are in the first line, preparing ourselves for the battle which will end in the annihilation of Israel." The Israelis claimed that regularly found among the belongings of captured Egyptian officers were Arabic translations of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The Israeli pamphlet contextualized these findings with the rhetoric being spewed on Cairo radio, such as on August 31, 1955, which called on Israel to "ready yourselves: shed tears, cry out and weep, O Israel, because the day of your liquidation is near." Based on these findings, the Government of Israel argued that "the oft-stated Egyptian plan of invading Israel and annihilating her was not mere bluff" and therefore justified Israel's pre-emptive strike.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ *Nasser's Pattern of Aggression: Captured documents reveal Army and Fedayeen roles in Egyptian plot against peace* (New York: Israel Office of Information, Feb. 1957): 1-32, in LAC, Rueben Slonim fonds, MG31-F7, vol. 22, doc. 28.

This information confirmed what Canadians Jews had feared, and prompted Canadian Jews to lobby their Government to complain about the unfair treatment of the U.N. The Board of Jewish Ministers of Greater Montreal⁹¹ voiced its “grave concern” over the pressure being brought to bear on Israel to withdraw. They reminded Pearson of the “continued impassivity of the United Nations” when Israel was subjected to “the infiltration of groups for destructive purposes and the acts of murder,” which had “led to the desperate attempt on the part of Israel to protect itself.” The “code of double moral standards” by the U.N. was abhorrent, and they charged Canada with “bespeaking the cause of international justice” to “formulate a positive program which will ensure for the State of Israel the security it seeks.”⁹² Similar appeals were sent to Pearson from the CJC and ZOC, taking the stand that “it would be immoral to employ the force of sanctions against Israel while leaving Egypt which has been in defiance of the United Nations for years free to reassert the irresponsible belligerency which is the root cause of the present crisis.”⁹³ Ellsworth Flavelle, National Chairman of the Canada-Israel Association, was even more inflammatory in his rhetoric, calling the proposed sanctions “an ill-advised and cowardly act.” “It would mark a beginning of the end of freedom of all people on this earth and ring the death knell of all

⁹¹ The Board of Jewish Ministers of Greater Montreal was founded in 1947 and met once a month to determine the Rabbinat’s position on various secular issues that faced Canadian Jewry. The Board was presided over by Harry J. Stern in 1957 and its members included Charles Bender, Samuel Cass, Maurice S. Cohen, Jesse Schwartz, and Isaac J. Teicher. See Wilfred Shuchat, *The Gate of Heaven: The Story of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim of Montreal, 1946-1996* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 333-334.

⁹² Harry J. Stern and I. J. Teicher to Pearson, letter, 27 February 1957, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 7772, file 12472-40, part 6.1.

⁹³ Samuel Bronfman and Michael Garber to Pearson, telegram, 10 February 1957, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 7772, file 12472-40, part 5.2.

democratic ideals,” Flavelle warned. “What would befall Israel as a result of such a vote would certainly be the fate of every freedom-loving democratic people in the world.”⁹⁴

The Canadian Jewish appeal to the public was quite successful, finding many sympathetic Canadians who wrote to Pearson and St. Laurent presenting Israel’s justification for not returning to the situation prior to their invasion. Nearly one hundred telegrams were sent to Pearson from across Canada demanding that Pearson oppose sanctions against Israel.⁹⁵ Ben Nobleman, Vice President of the Trinity Liberal Association in Toronto, was one of many Liberals, who found the Jewish case convincing, sending a telegram to Pearson: “Canadian public opinion and rank and file Liberals will not support Middle East Munich which will sacrifice Israel on alter of Arab appeasement. Nasser is a communist dictator and stooge...Urge Canada to at least abstain on African-Asian resolution in interests of justice and democratic principles.”⁹⁶ Pearson responded that he agreed “how unreasonable it would be to ask Israel to withdraw simply to the situation that existed before the recent outbreak of fighting,” but that Canada believed Israel’s security would be secured with the UNEF in place.⁹⁷

4.4 Canada’s Response to a Second Jewish Refugee Crisis

Certainly one of the most significant reasons why the left-wing segment of the Canadian Jewish community shifted to support Zionism was the worrying evidence that the

⁹⁴ H. A. Mowat to Pearson, letter, 26 February 1957, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 7772, file 12472-40, part 5.2.

⁹⁵ Enclosed envelope contains the telegrams, n.d.; see also Grant Dexter’s editorial in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 February 1957, 6, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, Vol. 7772, file 12472-40, part 5.

⁹⁶ Ben Nobleman to Pearson, telegram, 18 January 1957, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 7772, file 12472-40, part 4.3.

⁹⁷ Pearson to Nobleman, letter, 21 January 1957, in LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, vol. 7772, file 12472-40, part 4.3.

Americans were digging up that Nasser was using Israel's invasion to expunge Jewish life from Egypt. This startling revelation reinforced the notion that the memory of the Holocaust was not irrelevant, but an important warning to the West that international antisemitism needed to be attacked by the civilized world before its hatred spawned death and destruction not just to Jews, but to all peoples who enjoyed freedom. Rather than hoping that Egyptian Jews might continue to survive the persecution, both Canadian and American Jewish communities mobilized immediately, and efficiently and accurately uncovered the facts of the attack against Egyptian Jews. They sounded the clarion call that Egyptian Jewry was being targeted for extermination. Both communities pressured their respective governments to open their doors to Jewish refugees to avoid another Holocaust. By noting the similarities between Nasser's and Hitler's anti-Jewish policies, Jewish communities justified Israel's recent military excursion as necessary to avoid a second genocide and argued that immediately withdrawing from occupied territory in Egypt would recreate the circumstances that led to the necessity of military intervention in the first place. Jewish discourse, however, did not agree with Canadian and American political priorities, which were less concerned with the Middle East and more focused on the Hungarian revolt and the fight against communism in Europe.

The American Jewish community first heard of the forced deportation of Egypt's Jews on November 22, 1956 from an "influential leader of the French Jewish community" who had it on good authority from a non-Jewish Frenchman who had recently returned from Egypt and wished to remain anonymous. According to this witness, numerous Jews had been ordered to leave by November 25 or risk imprisonment in a "desert concentration camp."

When officials from the AJC Paris office question the “Frenchman,” he informed them that the Egyptian government had also “sequestered the properties and assets of a number of the most important Jews and Jewish firms in Egypt.”⁹⁸

The American Jewish Committee immediately launched a fact-finding mission to gauge the extent of the anti-Jewish campaign in Egypt. John Slawson and William Frankel went to Naples in early January 1957 to interview Jewish refugees from Egypt. The refugees “fully confirmed the now generally known facts of large-scale economic harassment, internment, forced and ‘voluntary’ expulsion of Jews in Egypt.” Upon hearing the stories from refugees, the AJC speculated that Nasser’s strategy bore a striking similarity to the Nazi tactics used in prewar Germany and was “calculated to render the situation of Jews in that country unbearable and hopeless, and to create, indirectly, an almost hysterical mood of mass exodus.”⁹⁹ Photostatic copies of the sequestration orders were also obtained, giving the AJC a clear picture of “the pattern of anti-Jewish measures now being applied by the Egyptian government” by the end of November. The AJC had collaborating evidence that while the Egyptians had not issued “decrees of mass expulsion,” they hoped to accomplish as much “by imprisoning, expelling, and economically harassing individual Jews.”¹⁰⁰

The Egyptians had implemented a number of wartime measures that were allegedly to prevent a Zionist fifth column from operating in Egypt. These anti-Jewish measures in reality worked to rid Egypt of its Jewish population and in the process seize Jewish property inside Egypt. The process was fourfold: (a) wide ranging discretionary police authority to

⁹⁸ Abraham S. Karlikow to Zachariah Shuster, letter, 23 November 1956, in AJCA, Foreign Affairs Department fonds, FAD-1, file: “Egypt/Reports/Paris Office.”

⁹⁹ Eugene Hevesi to Irving M. Engel, memorandum, 15 January 1957, in AJCA, FAD-1, file “Egypt.”

¹⁰⁰ Paris Office to Foreign Affairs Department, memorandum, 30 November 1956, in AJCA, FAD-1, file “Egypt/Reports/Paris Office.”

arrest potential traitors, (b) denaturalization of Egyptian Jews (c) sequestration of Jewish property, and finally (d) “voluntary” expulsion. The purpose of these measures was to have Jews leave Egypt without issuing a general deportation order that would be scrutinized by the UN. By manipulating the laws to make Jewish life in Egypt untenable and thus create the conditions in which Jews must flee Egypt, Nasser hoped not to lose favour with world public opinion. The rewriting of Emergency Law No. 5333 of 1954, specifically article 3, paragraph 7, to authorize “the arrest and apprehension of suspects and those who prejudice public order and security,” was used to round up large numbers of Jews without bringing charges against them. By November 7 1956, more than nine hundred Jews were imprisoned in the Cairo metropolis alone; less than a month later five hundred Jews were stateless, having their citizenship stripped from them. The Egyptian Government also revised the Citizenship Law in order to strip Jews of their rights and liberties more easily. On November 22, Egypt amended Article 1 of its Citizenship Law, which defined who qualified as “Egyptian,” to exclude “Zionists”: “Neither Zionists nor those against whom a judgment has been handed down for crimes of disloyalty to the country or for treason, shall be covered by this provision.” The law continued by stating that “no request for the delivery of a certificate of Egyptian nationality will be accepted from persons known as Zionists.” In other words, suspected Zionists who applied for citizenship were denied and citizens who were suspected to be Zionists were to be treated in the same way as traitors by having their citizenship forfeited. The assault on Jewish property was also made possible by Military Proclamation No. 4, in which article 1 stated that the government could “assume the management of the properties of the following persons and institutions: 1) all physical persons who were

interned or placed under surveillance in execution of the law relative to the state of siege; 2) every company, association, or foundation, whatever its purpose may be, functioning under the control of any single person cited above...; 3) all persons who reside outside the Republic of Egypt and function under the control of any of the aforementioned person...”

Not only did this provision deprive Jewish property owners of their livelihood, the first order of business once a company was placed under government control was to fire all Jewish employees, thereby impoverishing a massive portion of Egyptian Jewry.¹⁰¹

Through depriving Jews of their liberty and property, Egyptian authorities hoped that Jews would flee. The World Jewish Congress estimated that 3,000 Jews had been placed in concentration camps by mid-November 1956. Charges brought against interned Jews ranged from having had their lights on during a blackout or spreading false rumors. The AJC rightly noted that as the new citizenship law “gives no definition of the term Zionism, it is obvious that the Egyptian authorities can apply it as they will, to the detriment of any Jew they choose.”¹⁰² By June 30, 1957, over twenty thousand Jews had been deported, out of a total Jewish population of 60,000. Many of these people were destitute, stateless, having fled with just the clothes on their back and 20 pounds of Egyptian currency, which was useless outside the Middle East.¹⁰³ Alex Easterman, political secretary of the WJC’s British office, noted that Egypt’s anti-Jewish policies “might be thought to be emergency measures taken as a result of the conflict with Israel,” but were in fact “the climax of a long period of anti-Jewish

¹⁰¹ Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*, 253-61.

¹⁰² Paris Office to Foreign Affairs Department, memorandum, 30 November 1956, in AJCA, FAD-1, file “Egypt/Reports/Paris Office.”

¹⁰³ Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*, 261-63; Michael Laskier, “Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime, 1956-70,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1995): 573-81.

moves in Egypt” and were “very reminiscent of the anti-Semitic propaganda of the Nazi regime in Germany and the measure taken against the Jews there.”¹⁰⁴

For the Canadian and American Jewish communities, it was hardly a coincidence that Egypt’s anti-Jewish tactics bore a resemblance to Nazi Germany’s practices before the “Final Solution.” Reports were circulating that some Nazis who had fled Germany following the Second World War had converted to Islam and found sanctuary in Egypt. The World Jewish Congress estimated that 2000 German Nazis were in Egypt by 1957. A widely distributed article in the August 25th issue of *Frankfurter Illustrierte* contained alarming information that the Soviets were siphoning off Nazis in East Germany and shipping them to Egypt through a front organization named the “Allkhwān Al Akmaiyah el Arabiyah” [German-Arabic Brotherhood]. Leopold Gleim, the former SD-Chief and head of the Department of Jewish Affairs in the General Government of Poland during the Second World War, had resurfaced as head of Egyptian security forces. The article also noted the existence of five concentration camps within Egypt. Moreover, attached to the Samara Camp was a medical research facility headed by former Nazi doctor Heinrich Willermann, who some speculated was conducting medical research on Jewish prisoners.¹⁰⁵

The American Jewish community published several pamphlets that presented Nasser as a greater threat to Jewish life in Egypt than Hitler had been for Germany’s Jews. One of the most widely distributed was the AJC’s *The Black Record: Nasser’s Persecution of*

¹⁰⁴ “World Jewish Affairs, News and Feature Service,” bulletin no. 562, n.d., in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 62, file 583, “Egypt, Persecution of Jews, 1954-1956, part 1.”

¹⁰⁵ N. Robinson to CJC Executive, “Nazis in Egypt,” memorandum, 16 November 1957, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 62, file 583, “Egypt, Persecution of Jews, 1954-1956, part 1”; see also OJA, *United Jewish Relief Agency Fonds*, F.17, S. 4-3, file 47, “UJRA-Egypt,” Institute of Jewish Affairs, World Jewish Congress “Egypt in September 1957.”

Egyptian Jews. Printed in the early months of 1957 and resembling similarly titled books about the Nazi Holocaust, it presented Nasser's crimes against Jews as parallel to Hitler's.¹⁰⁶ The AJC believed that the Egyptians' attack was "patterned on Nazi techniques" and had "been conducted with ruthless efficiency and disregard of the minimal moral standards that civilized nations embrace." However, they also stated that Nasser "has learned from Hitler's example that it cannot afford to ignore world opinion and that it is more expedient to conduct its anti-Jewish campaign in a manner that would avoid international notoriety." Hence, they argued that Nasser was disguising his motivations by insisting that only Zionists who posed a security threat were being deported. For the AJC, the Holocaust provided a warning that antisemitism was only the first step taken by dictatorships in their quest for domination: "It should be recalled that the Nazi regime struck out first at the Jews and then proceeded against other groups. Similarly, the assault by the Nasser regime on the Jews, its most defenseless minority, inaugurates a process which can extend to every group which bars the way to the grandiose Pan-Arabic design under Egyptian leadership." Just as Hitler sought to create an Aryan empire, the AJC believed that Nasser's ambitions were to create an Arab empire.¹⁰⁷

Because Nasser attempted to disguise his racist persecution of Egyptian Jews as a reasonable precautionary wartime act, Jews throughout the diaspora were concerned that governments were unaware that Egypt was targeting Jews. When a consortium of various Zionists institutions met under the banner of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris on

¹⁰⁶ See Jacob Apenszlak et al., *The Black Book of Polish Jewry: An Account of the Martyrdom of Polish Jewry Under the Nazi Occupation* (New York: The American Federation of Polish Jews, 1943); The Jewish Black Book Committee [World Jewish Congress, Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Vaad Leumi, and American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists], *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime Against the Jewish People* (New York: Del, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946).

¹⁰⁷ Israel Goldstein, Will Maslow, and Phil Baum, *The Black Record: Nasser's Persecution of Egyptian Jewry* (New York: American Jewish Congress, 1957), in LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, vol. 22, MD 31, F 7, file 63.

January 7, 1957, Jewish advocates around the globe complained that the tragedy befalling Egypt's Jews was not being publicized. Claude Kelman, vice president of the Fonds Social Juif Unifié, the French Jewish welfare agency, "deplored the fact that the Egyptian crisis has not been given adequate coverage in the newspapers of France in order to arouse public opinion against the indignities which have been committed." Political director of the World Jewish Congress, Gerhard Riegner worried over what "appears to be a 'conspiracy of silence' on the entire Egyptian situation." With the "United States government...not using its best offices in pressuring Nasser to modify his actions against Jews," Riegner saw the Jewish situation in Egypt as "all black"; presumably his pessimistic impression was due to his own futile efforts to raise awareness of the impending destruction of Europe's Jews during the Second World War.¹⁰⁸ Now, nearly fifteen years later, Nasser was "committed to expel Jews from Egypt" and was creating the "legal mechanisms" necessary to "achieve this objective." The Paris meeting quickly devolved into a cacophony of "unfriendly remarks made about

¹⁰⁸ In August 1942, Riegner had been informed by banker Isidor Koppelman and journalist Benjamin Sagalowitz that a leading anti-Nazi industrialist, later identified as Eduard Schulte, had learned of the German plan to deport all of Europe's Jews to the East and gas them *en masse*. On 10 August 1942, Riegner visited the American consulate and sent his famous telegram to the British Foreign Office and American State Department in order to inform WJC President Stephen Wise and American President Franklin Roosevelt. The telegram read in part, "a plan has been discussed, and is under consideration, according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany numbering 3½ to 4 million should, after deportation and concentration in the East, be at one blow exterminated, in order to resolve, once and for all the Jewish question in Europe." Despite stating that the plan was to be put into "action" within the next couple months, his "alarming report" took nearly a month to reach Wise, who decided to keep it from the public. The information was not made public until the veracity of the telegram's fantastical contents could be confirmed by the State Department, a process that took another three months. The most detailed history of the events surrounding the Riegner Telegram is Walter Laqueur and Richard Breitman's *Breaking the Silence* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986). For works that argue that the American Government and the American Jewish community were negligent in how they handled the Riegner Telegram and the news of Hitler's plan to exterminate Europe's Jews, See Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution'* (New York: Penguin, 1980) and David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: American and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: The New Press, 2007), especially Chapter 3. Yehuda Bauer has spoken out against the condemnation of Wise's decision to have the telegram's information verified by the State Department. See Yehuda Bauer, "The Holocaust, America, and American Jewry," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* VI, no. I (2012): 65-68.

American Jewish organizations and their somewhat lackadaisical efforts in this matter,” according to Fred Baker, the AJC representative in Paris.¹⁰⁹ Although Baker was able to cool down the delegates by highlighting some of the work the AJC had done in recent weeks, all were frustrated by the seeming indifference of world opinion to yet another Jewish refugee crisis.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the WJC was determined to “continue our efforts in all parts of the world to break through the shameful cloak of silence behind which an ancient community is being liquidated,” and the helped establish the Central Registry of Jewish Losses in Egypt.¹¹¹

In fact, Jewish organizations in both America and Canada were furiously attempting to prevent a second Jewish catastrophe from occurring in Egypt by advocating that Western governments permit entrance to Jews who had already fled from Egypt and demand that Nasser cease persecuting Jews. On November 27, 1956, nearly every major Jewish organization in the United States signed a joint appeal to President Eisenhower insisting that America needed to act before Jewish corpses began to pile up in Egyptian concentration camps. The letter began by appealing to Eisenhower’s memory of touring concentration camp Ohrdruf on April 12, 1945:

Less than eleven years ago, you were a shocked witness to the consequences of racist persecution by the Nazi regime and of man’s inhumanity to man. Your words and conduct at that time bespoke the outraged conscience of the American people and its determination to prevent the repetition of such unspeakable crimes. In recent days...we have become aware of the Egyptian Government’s conduct, which, if unchecked, may lead to a repetition of the Hitler era. Thousands of men, women and children, whose only alleged crimes is that they are of the Jewish faith, have been served notice of deportation or hurled into internment camps and divested of their possessions.

¹⁰⁹ John Slawson and Frankel of the AJC Paris Office to the AJC Foreign Affairs Department, memorandum, 10 January 1957, in AJCA, FAD-1, file “Egypt.”

¹¹⁰ John Slawson and Frankel of the AJC Paris Office to the AJC Foreign Affairs Department, 10 January 1957, memorandum, in AJCA, FAD-1, file “Egypt.”

¹¹¹ Perlzweig, “Political Report,” n.d., in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, file 583.

The letter concluded by urging the President to express the American “shock” through its Ambassador in Egypt and to send an “immediate warning to the Egyptian rulers that our country, our people, and the civilized world generally will not countenance this inhumanity.” The appeal was signed by Philip S. Bernstein of the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, Moise S. Cahn of the National Council of Jewish Women, Maurice N. Eisendrath of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Miriam Freund of Hadassah, Israel Goldstein of the American Jewish Congress, Naham Goldmann of the Jewish Agency, Philip M. Klutznick of B’nai B’rith, and nearly a dozen other organizations.¹¹²

In Canada, panic swept through the Jewish community. Maurice D. Schouela, a volunteer at the Joint Campaign of the Combined Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal had family roots in Egypt and consequently received dozens of urgent requests from concerned Canadian families who had relatives in Egypt. On November 29, 1956, Schouela contacted Hayes to exclaim that forty people had already reached out to him for help, each knowing multiple families destitute and needing rescue, “and the list is growing rapidly.” Feeling helpless and seeing the situation spiral out of control, Schouela demanded to see Hayes in the next couple days to find out what coordinated plan the CJC was pursuing: “I certainly don’t have to tell you how concerned we all are here for the dear relatives left behind; and unable to help except to count plainly on your kind co-operation and the good graces of the Canadian Government.”¹¹³ Over the next several weeks, Schouela contacted

¹¹² “Appeal to President Eisenhower on Behalf of Egyptian Jews,” 27 November 1956, in CJCCCNA, FJP fonds, MB 1, series C, box 60, AJCS files, file 6, “Refugees-Egyptian.”

¹¹³ Schouela to Hayes, letter, 29 November 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 62, file 583, “Egypt, Persecution of Jews, 1954-1956, part 1.”

Hayes repeatedly, relaying evidence of the Egyptian Government's assault on Jewish liberties for him to pass on to the Canadian Government. By December 7, Schoula's correspondence had become desperate and he lamented that "The other alternative would be [for Egyptian Jews] to live in Egypt, without freedom or livelihood, in the constant fear of what the next move of the Egyptian Government will be. What can we do for these Unfortunates? We must act quickly and give them recomfort and some hope. Please help us----." ¹¹⁴

Early requests for the Canadian Government to act and forestall a humanitarian crisis precipitated little response. On November 28, during question period in the House, MP Leon Crestohl called on Pearson to "take effective steps to safeguard these people against illegal and inhuman treatment before it degenerates to Nazi proportions." Pearson agreed that reports coming out of the Middle East suggested that Egypt's 50,000 Jews faced the "gravest disaster" and thus could not be ignored. Pearson therefore instructed the Canadian embassy in Cairo to investigate the situation to determine if these reports were valid. ¹¹⁵

Saul Hayes hoped Canada might open its doors to Jews fleeing Egypt and sent a telegram on December 3 to Deputy Minister Colonel Laval Fortier of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration asking that they give "sympathetic action" to Egyptian Jewish refugees. Acting Minister and Leader of the Government in the House Walter Harris' response was anything but reassuring. He remained unconvinced that there was an attack against Jews in Egypt. Despite Harris' claim that "the Government is doing its utmost to

¹¹⁴ Schouela to Hayes, letter, 7 December 1956, in CJCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 62, file 583, "Egypt, Persecution of Jews, 1954-1956, part 1."

¹¹⁵ *Montreal Star*, 28 November 1956, in LAC, David Crestohl fonds, M-5225, file "Clippings—Political and Parliamentary Matters."

ascertain precisely what the situation is in Egypt,” he expressed the belief that the CJC was perceiving a pattern of antisemitism where there was none: “the occurrences which cause you concern are the outcome of a general anti-foreign feeling following the attack on Egypt and are not part of a specific program aimed against Jewish people.” Clearly unaware of the fragile position of the Egyptian Jewish community since Israel’s War of Independence, Harris attempted to reassure the CJC by saying: “as you probably know, Egypt has had a good record in the matter of treatment of minority groups and anti-Semitism has not been a feature of public life in that country.” Nonetheless, the Immigration Branch stated that it was willing to compromise and allow Egyptian Jews who had first-degree relatives in Canada “consideration” for immigration, but that it was not “practicable” for Canada to offer sanctuary to a significant proportion of the Egyptian Jews in a similar fashion as it was doing for Hungary’s rebels. According to Harris, the situation for refugees in Egypt was “somewhat different from that of the Hungarians who fled from their home under desperate conditions and have no country to which they might legitimately claim refuge.” For Harris, Jewish refugees should go to Israel.¹¹⁶

Disturbed that Harris was oblivious to Egypt’s poor track record with regards to human rights, especially with regards to Egyptian Jews, Saul Hayes switched to a different front and contacted the Department of External Affairs, hoping that the Canadian Government would put pressure on the Egyptian Government in the UN to end its persecution of Jews. However, when Hayes phoned External Affairs’ Middle East desk on December 11, he learned that the Canadian diplomatic corp was of the same mind as Harris,

¹¹⁶ Harris to Hayes, letter, 6 December 1956, in CJCCCNA, CJC fonds, series CA, box 62, file 583, “Egypt/Persecution of Jews, 1954-1946, part 1.”

noting that since “the situation also involves non-Jewish residents of Egypt” there was no pattern of antisemitism. Since Israel’s military invasion of Egypt was to blame for the persecution of Egyptian Jews, the “speedy withdrawal of foreign forces from Egypt will prevent outbursts and anti-Jewish discrimination.” Canada would not protest in the UN against Egypt’s anti-Jewish measures, Hayes was informed, because a protest “might aggravate the situation.”¹¹⁷

The Canadian Government’s dismissal of Egyptian antisemitism contrasted the information they were receiving from the Canadian Ambassador in Egypt, E. Herbert Norman. On November 30, he telegraphed Pearson about the “plight of stateless Jews in Egypt” with the subject line: “immediate assistance for Jews from Egypt.” Fearing that another refugee crisis was about to emerge, Norman wrote “The purpose of this message is simply to stress the urgency of the case for early implementation of any special provision that might be made for the admission to Canada of some of these people.” While South Africa and Brazil may take some of the refugees, Norman said “we are being literally swamped by applicants here and we are also being hard pressed by friendly missions concerning any step that the Canadian govt may have decided to take with a view to admitting a number of these stateless Jews.”¹¹⁸ Norman’s emphasis on the crisis facing Jews suggests that the Canadian government was cognizant of the fact that Nasser’s domestic policies after the outbreak of war were directed at the expulsion of Egypt’s Jews and not simply an outpouring of anti-foreign sentiment.

¹¹⁷ IOI Bulletin, vol. 25, no. 2112A, 11 December 1956, in CJCCCNA.

¹¹⁸ Norman to External Affairs, telegram, 30 November 1956, in LAC, RG 26, vol. 131, file 3-33-38, part 1.

Throughout the winter of 1956 and 1957, Canadian Jews devoted considerable energy to learning about the conditions facing Egypt's Jews, in part to present to the Canadian Government. Saul Hayes got in touch with Canadian freelance journalist Donald R. Gordon, who was in Egypt to cover the Suez Crisis, but was also writing for the *Jerusalem Post* about the persecution of Jews. Gordon revealed the emergence of a "new Gestapo rule," bent on stealing Jewish property and then removing Jews from Egypt. He was not optimistic that the situation would improve and even found it "surprising that open violence has not broken out," though he warned that "it still could."¹¹⁹ Another valuable source of information was *Toronto Telegram* correspondent Reuben Slonim. He flew to Cairo in late November 1956 to investigate reports of Jewish persecution. Despite being put under surveillance by Egyptian authorities and having his phone monitored, he managed to give his trackers the slip and visited a synagogue to interview Jewish residents. "With all their precautions, officials could not keep from me the answer to a burning question," Slonim reported in his column in the *Toronto Telegram*, "How are the Jews faring as Egypt's chief scapegoat? The answer was not hard to find. Terror cannot be hidden—one smells it in the air."¹²⁰ However Slonim was forced to flee Egypt because he felt "his life was in danger." His observations of the Jewish crisis in Egypt and the international situation in the Middle East were in demand by many Canadians. In an address to the Canadian Club in Toronto's Royal York Hotel, on January 7, 1957, Slonim theorized that Nasser was threatening the lives of Egypt's Jews to extract concession from Israel: "Perhaps Nasser means to hold the Jews as hostages in his

¹¹⁹ Donald R. Gordon, "Report from Egypt," n.d., in OJA, F. 17, S. 5-2, file 26, "Persecution of Jews in Egypt."

¹²⁰ *Telegram*, 7 January 1957, *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1957, Article is reprinted in *The Jewish Post*, 6 December 1956, in LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, vol. 15, MG 31 F7, file, "Editorials and articles written by R.S. for The Telegram, 1957."

bargaining with Israel. If this be so he would be guilty of the dastardly acts of Hitlerism at its worst. Such a cold, cruel act would render him a stench in the nostrils of every decent human being.”¹²¹ A few months later, Slonim was convinced that Nasser still “intends to eliminate Israel,” and reported that Soviet armament shipments to Egypt had resumed.¹²²

Alongside raising public awareness of the Egyptian Jewish crisis, Canadian Jews also instigated intense fundraising campaigns to help bring refugees to Canada and support destitute Jews stranded in foreign countries. The central focus of the United Jewish Relief Agencies fundraising campaign was the failure of the West to save Europe’s Jews from Hitler’s gas chambers. Pamphlets called on Canadians to financially support rescue efforts before it was too late.

¹²¹ LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, vol. 15, MG 31 F7, file, “Editorials and articles written by R.S. for The Telegram, 1957.”

¹²² *Telegram*, 1 February 1957; *The Jewish Post*, 4 April 1957, 3 in LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, Vol. 15, MG 31 F7, file, “Editorials and articles written by R.S. for The Telegram, 1957.”



Calgary Jewish Welfare Fund, 1957, Campaign pamphlet, Glenbow Museum and Archive ¹²³

While the United Israel Appeal's fundraising goal received a bump in 1956, it increased even more for the 1957 campaign in light of the humanitarian crises in Egypt and Hungary. In Toronto, the goal was raised from 2 million to 2.5 million dollars. Winnipeg's goal was raised by fifty percent.¹²⁴ The Canadian campaign was part of the American United Jewish Appeal plan to raise an additional one hundred million dollars to accommodate the needs of both Hungarian and Egyptian Jewry. According to delegates who opened the American UJA campaign in November 1956, "this is an hour of consummate peril for hundreds of thousands

¹²³ Pamphlet, n.d., Glenbow Museum and Archive, CJCC Collection, series 1 (A), 1952-62, file 1-J "United Israel Appeal, General Correspondence."

¹²⁴ *The Jewish Western Bulletin*, 29 March 1957, 2.

of Jews overseas, and for the free and democratic people of Israel, who are threatened by naked and rampant totalitarians to a degree unmatched since the days of Hitler.”¹²⁵

The Egyptian Jewish crisis, in tandem with fear that hatred of Jews was seizing the Arab world, helped to draw progressive Jews away from Communism and back into the Canadian Jewish Congress’ fold. To understand Canadian Jewry’s break with communism, historians have focused on J. B. Salsberg’s quest to uncover Stalin’s crimes against Jews in his later years, which culminated in a personal interview with Khrushchev in August 1956 and was followed by a series of nine articles in *Vochenblatt* which outlined the continued systematic program to eliminate Jewish culture from the Soviet Union. These revelations have been used to explain the break between Jewish progressives and the Labor-Progressive Party.¹²⁶ However, this rift should also be seen in the context of the threat to Jews in the Middle East. Following UJPO leadership meetings in Toronto and Montreal, a statement was released that outlined the organization’s past failings. While the UJPO apologized for turning a blind eye to the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union, it also noted its problematic Zionist perspective: “We recognize that while we have said that we have a positive attitude to the State of Israel, we did not demonstrate this in any constructive way in the last number of years. Concern for the State of Israel, and its people, its existence, its development, must not in any way be confused with the policies of its government, with which one may or may not agree.”¹²⁷ Morris Biderman, president of the UJPO, sent a letter to St. Laurent and Pearson calling for Canada to “demand in no uncertain terms” that Nasser

¹²⁵ *The Canadian Jewish Review*, 7 December 1956, 1.

¹²⁶ See Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 95-119; Gerald Tulchinsky, “Family Quarrel: Joe Salsberg, the ‘Jewish Question’” *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (2005): 149-174; Irving Abella, “Joshua Gershman,” *Labour/Le Travail* 2 (1977): 209-11

¹²⁷ *Vochenblatt*, 20 December 1956, 1-2.

end his policy of Jewish persecution, which “should have no place in a civilized nation.”¹²⁸

Even Joshua Gershman, editor of *Vochebblatt* and one of the few Canadian Jewish progressives who remained loyal to the LPP throughout the 1960s and early 1970s in order to fight against Soviet antisemitism from within the party, insisted that the persecution of Egyptian Jews only served to undermine the Arab nationalist cause:

We have been generally sympathetic to national movements sweeping the Arab world.... But a righteous cause is not license to persecute whole communities for the alleged crimes of individuals.... Nasser gives credibility to charges his methods border on those of fascism. We join those governments and organizations demanding of the Egyptian government respect for human rights and dignity. A sound basis for peace in the Middle East will be so much harder if such inhumanities continue.... No matter how Israel came into being, the young Jewish state is here to stay, and must stay unless the world would be willing to accede to the expulsion and eventual extinction of Israeli Jewry. The Arab refugee problem can be solved because the Arab world is big enough to absorb them.¹²⁹

The creation of a Jewish disaster in Egypt led Gershman to conclude that there was validity to Israel’s position that the Palestinian refugee crisis was being perpetuated by the Arab states to mobilize the Arab world against the Israeli state.¹³⁰

In any case, faced with an intransigent Canadian government, Hayes turned to Canadian Jewish Congress’s president Samuel Bronfman and requested that he send a letter

¹²⁸ *Vochebblatt*, 6 December 1956, 1.

¹²⁹ *Vochebblatt*, 6 December 1956, 2.

¹³⁰ The Canadian Jewish Congress’ position on Palestinian refugees, presented by Louis Rosenberg in the pamphlet *The Arab Refugees*, argued that while Israel was not in an economic position to integrate the refugees back into the new state, security posed an even greater problem. Rosenberg quotes numerous Arab leaders, but highlights Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammed Salah el Din speech on October 11, 1959: “Let it be known and appreciated that in demanding the restoration of the refugees to Palestine the Arabs intend that they return as masters of the homeland and not as slaves. More explicitly, they intend to annihilate the State of Israel.” The reason why the Palestinian refugees have not been absorbed into the Arab countries, according to Rosenberg, was because Arab leaders want the crisis to continue. Rosenberg even uses UNRWA Director Alexander Galloway’s now famous quote in 1952: “It is perfectly clear that the Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront against the United Nations, and a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don’t give a damn whether the refugees live or die.” Pamphlet can be found in LAC, Reuben Slonim fonds, MG 31 F7, vol. 22, item 62, “The Arab Refugees,” n.d.

to Pearson presenting the CJC's position on Egyptian Jewry. Bronfman asked Pearson to go beyond the official denials of antisemitism from the Egyptian Government "which are known by all objective sources to be dust thrown into the eyes of all wishing to enquire into the malefactions of its present regime." Bronfman explained that Egypt was going to extraordinary length of keeping a member of each refugee family hostage to intimidate those who had escaped from speaking. "It is not coincidental that this sounds like a page out of a Nazi notebook of terror," Bronfman explained, since numerous Nazis had found employment in Nasser's regime, including Johann Von Leers. Bronfman warned that "it is an ineluctable conclusion that if the present situation goes unchallenged and unchecked it could well be the prelude to a catastrophe, the result of which would be the imperiling of the lives of the entire non-Egyptian population of Egypt and which encompass, also, all Jews in Egypt whether people born Egyptian, denationalized or stateless."¹³¹ To support Canadian Jewish concerns, Bronfman attached a lengthy dossier, containing detailed evidence of the methods Egyptians were using to persecute Jews, including an Egyptian sequestration law.¹³²

Regardless of how convincing Bronfman's rhetoric was, the Canadian government's thinking on the Egyptian-Jewish situation had already changed before they received the letter. While maintaining that Israel could welcome all Egypt's Jewish refugees, Under Secretary for External Affairs, Jules Lesage, asked Pearson on December 20, 1956, the question of "whether or not it is to our interest to insist that Jewish refugees should look to

¹³¹ IOI Bulletin, vol. 25, no. 2116, 24 December 1956, in CJCCNA.

¹³² Bronfman to Pearson, letter, 24 December 1956, in OJA, F. 17, S. 5-2, file 26, "Persecution of Jews in Egypt." Bronfman's arguments echoed Israel Goldstein's address in New York a few days earlier, when he said, "The violation of fundamental human rights which begins by victimizing Jews in Egypt may have as its next step the victimization of Christians in Egypt. In the history of tyrannical dictatorship, it has happened again and again that Jews have been in the vanguard of the victims." See *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 21 December 1956, 1.

Israel for help whether they wish to do so or not.” One of the stumbling blocks to a peace settlement in Palestine was the movement to expand Israel’s border into the West Bank towards the Jordan River. These “active elements in Israel,” according to Lesage, “want as rapid an increase of the population as possible in order to justify this expansion of territory.” Therefore, Lesage counseled that Canada ought to accept the CJC’s request to sponsor a number of Egyptian Jews to enter Canada: “there seems to be something illogical about our putting a great deal of effort into the task of bringing peace to the Middle East through the United Nations if our immigration policy is based on the assumption that all Jewish refugees should go to Israel, whether they wish to do so or not, when we know that the increased pressure of immigration to Israel will make the achievement of a peace settlement a longer and more costly operation for the United Nations.” This was especially important if Canada was to “lend [its] forces to the United Nations to keep peace in the Middle East.” Although the CJC promise that the settlement would be paid for by CJC helped convince the Department of Immigration, this shift in position was also helped by the racial stereotype that most of these Jewish refugees will have “above average intelligence.”¹³³

The following day, a large delegation from the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS) visited J. W. Pickersgill at the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.¹³⁴ The delegation was encouraged when the Minister agreed to extend refugee status to Jews fleeing Egypt who had relatives in Canada, allowing them immediate

¹³³ Lesage to Pearson, “Memorandum on Jewish refugees,” December 20 1956, DCER, vol. 22, doc. 205.

¹³⁴ The delegation included Saul Hayes, Leon Crestohl, Lavy Becker, Albert Eaton, Max Wolofsky, and Joseph Kage.

admission to Canada provided each refugee passed the security and health inspection.¹³⁵ By January 29, Hayes had presented four hundred names to the Immigration Department who fell into the prescribed regulations; however, the security regulations meant that refugees had to wait “up to two years in a European country” while the checks were completed.¹³⁶ Despite being warned by the RCMP that this requirement was necessary to prevent entry to communists, criminals, and “opportunists who just move from one country to the other,”¹³⁷ Pickersgill decided to waive these security requirements for immigrants whose relatives had lived in Canada for at least two years to expedite the process and take the heat off the Department.¹³⁸ However, he remained unwilling to consider any policy that would go beyond rescuing Canadian relatives.

4.5 Conclusion

Both the Holocaust and Israel dominated Canadian Jewish thought during the 1950s. Rather than seeing the Holocaust as a tragic enigma in German history, Canadian Jewry approached Israel and diplomacy in the Middle East from a post-Holocaust mindset. Canadian Jews made crude comparisons between Arab nationalism and Nazi ideology, deriving lessons from the Hitler era. Reinforced by Israeli propaganda, Canadian Jewry became convinced throughout the 1950s that Nasser was tacking the same murderous line that Hitler had taken fifteen years earlier. The narrative of Hitler harnessing latent antisemitism within his culture

¹³⁵ IOI Bulletin, vol. 25, no. 2116, n.d., in CJCCNA; Details of the meeting are outlined in *Congress Bulletin*, January 1957, in LAC, Leon D. Crestohl fonds, M-5225, file, “Clippings regarding activities in Jewish Affairs, Israel, etc.”

¹³⁶ Laval, memorandum for Pickersgill, “Re: Admission of Refugees for Egypt,” 29 January 1957, in LAC, RG 26, vol. 131, file 3-33-38, part 1.

¹³⁷ Laval, memorandum for Pickersgill, 24 January 195, in LAC, RG 26, vol. 131, file 3-33-38, part 1.

¹³⁸ C. E. S. Smith, Acting Deputy Minister to Saul Hayes, letter, 8 February 1957, in LAC, RG 26, vol. 131, file 3-33-38, part 1.

to solidify his own power by using the Jew as a scapegoat for Germany's woes was presented as analogous to Nasser rallying support for Arab nationalism around *al Nakba* and the displacement of Palestinian Arabs.

The events in the Middle East in the 1950s helped to heal the rift in the Canadian Jewish community between former communists who were critical of Israel's leadership and the Canadian Jewish Congress. With most Canadian Jewish communists breaking their ties to Moscow in light of the continued antisemitism within Khrushchev's administration, the anti-Zionist Communist propaganda that Israel was an imperial outpost of American capitalism lost some of its luster. The worrying rumors that Israel would have faced extermination had it not colluded with Britain and France to launch a preemptive strike to destroy Egypt's military capabilities won many Canadian Jews over to Israel's cause.

Disturbing for Canadian Jewish observers was the West's response to Nasser's antisemitism and the threat it posed to Israel's existence. The notion that the international environment and the attitudes of bystanders had changed little since the 1930s, content to sacrifice Jews in order to appease dictators to preserve peace, was a constant feature in Canadian Jewish circles throughout the 1950s. It was distressing for Canadian Jews to be reminded once again that the democracies would only avert a humanitarian crisis in Israel or save Egypt's Jews if it served their own national interests. Although Canadian Jewry did not realize that the Canadian government had decided to sell the F-86s to Israel prior to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the announcement of the sale following the Suez Crisis reinforced the view that the Canadian Government would only act to protect democracies abroad when British interests were at stake. While Canadian Jews were at the forefront of

promoting international governance that could spread democratic ideas and safeguard minority rights, they lacked confidence in the ability of the democracies and the institutions of the UN in safeguarding Israel and Jewish minorities in the Middle East. The dangerous position of Jews in Egypt by Nasser's domestic anti-Jewish measures following the Sinai War and the stunted Canadian response to the refugee crisis was a troubling indication that racism still persisted in Canadian immigration procedures. The repeated inability of international bodies to breach the sanctum of national sovereignty to stop Egyptian rearmament and persecution of minorities pushed Canadian Jewry towards taking a more realist diplomatic position, going so far as to advocate for arms shipments to Israel and the invasion of Egypt.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that, contrary to established scholarly opinion, the Holocaust was an important feature of postwar Canadian Jewish thought and was crucial to the construction of Jewish identity in Canada. The Canadian Jewish understanding of the Holocaust was shaped both by national discourse concerning Nazi atrocities and also by the subsequent crises facing Jews in Europe and the Middle East. Throughout the Second World War, Canadian Jews concurred with mainstream opinion that the origins of the Jewish Holocaust lay in the Nazis' anti-liberal philosophy. The dominant position in Canada was that the experience of Nazi Germany warned countries to uphold liberal principles, such as the rule of law and individual right. Canadians also disparaged the European democracies' appeasement policy and the American isolationist stance of the 1930s, which permitted Nazi Germany to pursue antagonistic policies against its own citizens and disregard international conventions and treaties. However, with the United States firmly pursuing a policy of containment against the illiberal Soviet Union in the postwar years, the danger of revisionist states pursuing expansionist foreign policies was seen by Canadians to be somewhat mitigated.

For Canadian Jews, the Holocaust demonstrated that aspects within liberal society, such as racism and antisemitism, were flawed and needed to be expunged to safeguard Jewish life abroad. The Canadian Jewish community sought to present antisemitism not merely as a danger to Jews, but to international peace. They bemoaned the state-centric perspective that democracies applied to international relations, which operated to diminish

humanitarian considerations in favor of great power politics and national self-interest. However, in the early 1950s, as evidence mounted that liberal internationalism was failing to gain ground both in the democracies and in the communist states, the Jewish liberal establishment pressed for more a realist position. They were determined that Jews never again be placed in the vulnerable situation where they had to rely on the moral integrity of the West to safeguard them from annihilation. For communist Canadian Jews, this shift in focus constituted an abandonment of the lessons of the Holocaust. Entrenched alliance systems and remilitarization was moving the world in the opposite direction of safeguarding Jewish life. Instead, they called on the West to redouble its efforts to eliminate antisemitism and ease international tensions.

Therefore, Holocaust memory proved contentious in Canada in the decade following the Second World War since its lessons were not self-evident, but varied to reflect ideological worldviews. For liberal Jews, the memory of reading about the persecution and extermination of Europe's Jews from the relative safety of North America demonstrated the superiority of liberal democracy. With evidence emerging that antisemitism in the Soviet Union and in the Arab states was rife and largely unchecked, many Canadian Jews remained convinced that liberalism, despite the failings of democracies, was essential to Jewish survival. Therefore they supported the West's containment policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Dictatorships that exhibited antisemitism needed to be sanctioned immediately to ensure that the pattern that led to the extermination of Europe's Jews was not repeated. In the absence of meaningful reform to international law to protect the rights of minorities groups by breaching the sanctity of state sovereignty, Canadian Jewish liberals came to support a more realist

agenda regarding West German rearmament. The Canadian Jewish liberal establishment therefore conjoined its campaign for human rights with efforts to strengthen specifically Jewish interests, notably through economically and politically supporting Israel. This transition was due to the belief that a pattern was evident in the Holocaust narrative: specifically, that dictators exploit antisemitism within society to solidify their power both internally and externally, and that Western democracies are more keen to preserve peace than risk war to safeguard Jewish communities.

While communist Canadian Jews agreed with this pattern, they were even less inclined to believe that liberal-democracies were interested in protecting Jewish rights abroad, as was evidenced by the West's diplomacy towards Nazi Germany and its abysmal record on rescuing Jewish refugees before the outbreak of the Second World War. Communist Canadian Jews remained convinced that economic and political expedience would always trump humanitarian action and that any humanitarian intervention would cloak imperialist aims. They were not only angered by evidence of leniency within the denazification programs of West Germany and the remilitarization of West Germany and its integration into NATO in 1954, but they were appalled that Canadian Jewish liberals had politicized the Holocaust to support of American foreign policy. However, by the mid-1950s, with overwhelming evidence revealing that the Arab states, backed by the Soviet Union, were not only hostile to Jews, but threatening to unleash a second genocide throughout the Middle East, many Canadian Jewish communists abandoned their political allegiance to communism, largely uniting Canadian Jewry in its support for Israel and its emphasis on the importance of the Holocaust towards Western civilization.

The prevalence of Holocaust memorials today has obscured earlier, more modest, efforts to politicize the Holocaust in the late 1940s and 1950s, and have left the impression among later observers that the Holocaust was simply unimportant to Canadian Jews in the immediate postwar era. Yet it is important not to discount the impact that the Holocaust had on the generation of Canadian Jews who were bystanders to it. Canadian Jewish memorials to the sacrifices made by fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising offered templates for contemporary Holocaust memorials and were organized to help Canadian Jews grieve. Canadian Jews attempted to draw attention to the mass murder of their brethren not only because they thought it was important, but also because they believed that the diplomacy and policies that led to the extermination of European Jewry contained important lessons that the world needed to understand if Jews were to survive. Realizing that they were fortunate enough to emerge from the crisis of the rise of fascism largely unscathed, the Canadian Jewish community felt a moral responsibility to safeguard other Jewish communities who did not live within liberal democracies. Rather than feeling guilty for enjoying the safety of North America while reading about millions of Jews being murdered in Europe, Canadian Jews came to understand that Jewish survival depended on promoting democratic rights abroad and at home.

In fact, the mass murder of their European brethren served as a lens through which Canadian Jewry interpreted their identity, despite the ideological divisions that split the community. During the 1930s and 1940s, Canadian Jews interpreted Hitler's war against European Jewry from a Canadian perspective, as an assault on the liberal order. Believing that Hitler was persecuting and killing Jews to exploit common antisemitic attitudes in

Germany, Canadian Jews attempted to change Canada's restrictive immigration policy in the hope of saving Germany's Jews. The outbreak of war was interpreted as an expansion of Hitler's domestic antisemitism and racism to the international sphere. While the Canadian government did its utmost to disassociate Canada's war effort from Hitler's destruction of European Jewry and the mainstream press suggested that the mass murder of European Jews was just one of many Nazi crimes against humanity, for Canadian Jews, the struggle to defeat Nazi Germany and bring democracy and liberalism to the European continent was inseparable in their minds from the effort to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. Jews trapped in Europe were perceived by Canadian Jews as both victims of Hitler's antisemitism and as casualties in the struggle for freedom. It was within this framework that Canadian Jews memorialized the millions of Jews murdered. Not only did this interpretation of the Holocaust justify the need for a Jewish state as a bulwark for liberalism in the Middle East, but it also helped slow the growing realization that millions of Jews had been senselessly murdered. Due to the perception that they were fully participating in a war to save their brethren, Canadian Jews were certainly angry that Canada had not opened its gates to Jewish refugees, but there was little guilt to assuage within the Canadian Jewish community. Canadian Jews remained proud of their contributions to the war effort. There was no reason to repress memory of the Holocaust.

Although Canadian Jewry remained united throughout the Second World War to contribute effectively to the defeat of Hitler, ideological divisions within the community began to emerge. While Canadian Jews tended to find meaning in Jewish resistance during the Holocaust in the early years of the Cold War and sought to strengthen liberal

international institutions to safeguard Jews and other minorities from genocide, by the late 1940s, this interpretation was coming under attack by left-wing Jews who had lost confidence in the West's ability to safeguard Jews from persecution and even a second genocide, as many initiatives to protect human rights—such as the Genocide Convention—gained little traction. One of the most substantive effects of the Holocaust was the unrelenting anxiety among Canadian Jews that Jews would suffer from another Holocaust. This fear became a divisive force amongst Canadian Jews throughout the early postwar era, but especially during the German rearmament debate in the late 1940s and early 1950s and throughout the Suez Crisis of 1956. Although the Holocaust was politicized to shift Canadian opinion regarding Israel's defensive needs, the memory of the Holocaust also heightened Canadian Jewish emotions and fostered a frenzied atmosphere within Canadian Jewish circles. In other words, the Holocaust became a fixture in the thinking of Canadian Jews not only because of its importance in transforming Jewish life, but also because Canadian Jews believed that it held important lessons for statesmen. Most significantly, the failure of the West to prevent the annihilation of Europe's Jews became a warning for those witnessing renewed threats to Jewish safety in Eastern Europe and the Middle East in the 1950s that waiting for the United States to sanction action to protect Jews could be too late.

There are a number of reasons why Holocaust memory in the immediate postwar era has been discounted by historians, not least of which is because earlier responses were eclipsed by the enormity of Holocaust commemoration within the last thirty years. First, Holocaust discourse was primarily limited to the Jewish community in the decade following the Second World War, although Canadian Jews politicized the Holocaust and brought it into

the public forum. It was only in the late 1970s and early 1980s that the Holocaust became a central feature of North American life. Major film productions, such as the NBC miniseries *Holocaust* (1978), Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), Roberto Benigni's *La Vita è Bella* (1997), and Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002), brought visual representations of the Holocaust into Canadian popular culture.¹ Also, with the publication in 1983 of Irving Abella and Harold Troper's *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, the Holocaust gained a Canadian angle that uncovered Canada's complicity in trapping Jews in Europe and challenged the widely-held opinion that Canada was a tolerant society. Moreover, the attention garnered through the highly-publicized Canadian trials of Holocaust deniers and the corresponding sensationalist media coverage led many Canadian Jews to question whether Canadian educational institutions had done enough to teach the history of the Holocaust to the next generation of Canadians.² Revelations of Canadian public apathy towards Jewish refugees in the 1930s and 1940s and the belief that Canadians were unaware of the dangers of antisemitism, even the widespread

¹ Key texts on Western responses to Holocaust film are Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002); Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, eds. *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005); Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

² One study of textbooks in the early 1980s found that the Holocaust was often minimized or completely ignored in curricula. See Yaacov Glickman and Alan Bardikoff, *The Treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian History and Social Science Textbooks* (Toronto: B'nai Brith, 1982). For other studies on Canadian responses to Holocaust deniers, see David Bercuson and Douglas Wertheimer, *A Trust Betrayed: The Keegstra Affair* (Toronto: McClelland-Bantam, 1985); Steve Mertl and John Ward, *Keegstra: The Issues, the Trial, the Consequences* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985); Alan Davies, "The Keegstra Affair," in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davies (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992); Manuel Prutschi, "The Zündel Affair," in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davies (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992).

misperception that many Canadians doubted the Holocaust had even happened, compelled many Holocaust survivors to share their testimonies for the first time.³

Second, historians have been remiss in discounting early Holocaust memory in Canada because the widely held assumption that the Holocaust was first politicized by survivors has caused historians to neglect examining the archival records of the existing Jewish community. Certainly from the 1960s onwards, survivors have taken the reins in organizing memorials and by the 1970s they were instrumental in the promotion of Holocaust education. Today the few survivors alive are revered as authoritative voices on the dangers of antisemitism and are sought out by the media. However, during the late 1940s, most of these survivors were still in Europe, and by the 1950s the thousands who had arrived in Canada were often consumed with mundane issues such as finding housing, gaining employment, and learning languages. Tensions over religious practices and the financial burdens associated with incorporating proportionately large numbers of destitute Eastern European Jews led to some ill-will between the established Jewish community in Canada and the newcomers.⁴ Although many survivors participated in Holocaust commemorations, they rarely organized these events. Since survivors were not in a position to shape the community's agenda, it is necessary to examine the actions of the existing Jewish community. These Canadian Jews, who were the first to politicize the Holocaust in an effort to protest the apparent rise of antisemitism in West Germany and Arab threats

³ Most of the Holocaust documentation projects in Canada occurred in the 1980s not only because of the fear that testimonials would be lost as survivors passed away, but also to challenge the concern that baby-boomers and later generations were ignorant of the Holocaust and thus unconcerned with the rise of racism. For a study of Canadian public opinion on the Holocaust and perceptions of antisemitism see Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn, *Hate on Trial: The Zundel Affair, the Media and Public Opinion in Canada* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1986).

⁴ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 42-94.

against Israel in the late 1940s and 1950s, were born around the turn of the Century to parents who emigrated from Eastern Europe and were steeped in Yiddish culture.⁵

The third reason why early Holocaust memory is discounted by historians in Canada and the United States is because many advocates for human rights deride the culture of victimization that appears to consume North American Jewry. Franklin Bialystok comments that “for an ethnic community to wrap its identity around its own victimization is counterproductive to its vitality.”⁶ Centering Jewish identity on the Holocaust fails to encapsulate the numerous aspects of Jewish culture and tradition. Other historians have questioned the usefulness of the Holocaust in combatting human rights violations, especially considering that subsequent genocides have occurred in every decade following the Second World War. Most notably, Peter Novick has questioned whether the Holocaust “sensitizes” the public to “lesser atrocities” or whether it makes democracies more inclined “to take a more welcoming attitude towards those fleeing oppression.” He notes that American policy regarding genocides and refugee crises remain determined by national self-interest and politics.⁷ By presenting Holocaust memory as a modern construct, these historians infer that Jews do not feel the need to bind their communal existence to the Holocaust, especially if Holocaust memory does little to advance human rights.

⁵ A sampling of the birth place and years of prominent Jews during the 1940s and 1950s reveals the close historic ties Canadian Jewry with Eastern Europe. For example: Sam Bronfman (b. 1889, Soroki, Bessarabia), H. M. Caiserman (b. 1884, Piatre-Neamt, Romania), Leon Crestohl, (b. 1900, Warsaw, Poland), David Croll (b. 1900, Moscow, Russia), A. J. Freiman (b. 1880, Wirballen, Lithuania), M. A. Gray (b. 1889, Gomel, Russia), Kalmen Kaplansky (b. 1912, Bialystok, Poland), A. M. Klein (b. 1909, Ratno, Ukraine), Sam Lipshitz (b. 1910, Radom, Poland), A. A. Price (b. 1900, Stopnitz, Poland), J. B. Salsburg (b. 1902, Lagow, Poland), Harry J. Stern (b. 1897, Eragoly, Lithuania), and Joseph Zuken (b. 1912, Gorodnize, Russia). Of course there are numerous exceptions, not least of which were Abraham Feinberg (b. 1899, Bellaire, Ohio), Saul Hayes, (b. 1906, Montreal), and Stuart Rosenberg (b. 1922, New York).

⁶ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 249.

⁷ Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 244-61.

It is perhaps not surprising that Jewish thought in the postwar era was so consumed by the Holocaust when considering that its ties to Eastern European Jewry were closer than that of the United States. Eastern Europe was neither remote in the imaginations of Canadian Jews nor of little importance. Louis Rosenberg's detailed demographic study of Canadian Jewry during the interwar period shows that a high proportion of Canadian Jews traced their ancestry to Eastern Europe. The highest level of Jewish immigration into Canada occurred prior to the First World War, between 1880 and 1920, when Jews fled primarily from *shtetls* in "The Pale of Settlement," in response to political upheaval and pogroms. Therefore most Canadian Jews during the Second World War were either first-generation Jewish Canadians who had first-hand memories of the Old World or second-generation Canadians who still had relatives in Eastern Europe. In 1931, 50.7% of the 156,726 Canadian Jews had been born outside of the British Empire and the United States.⁸ Although this percentage had shrunk between the turn of the century and the 1930s, as more Canadian Jews were born in Canada and Jewish immigration dried up thanks to the Great Depression and antisemitic immigration restrictions of the 1930s, Jewish immigrants in Canada from Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, and Romanian Jewish immigrants tended to have a "much higher" birth rate than Canadian-born Jews, rapidly orientating the Jewish community away from German and Dutch towards Eastern Europe roots. Of Canadian Jews born outside of the country in the 1930s, over a quarter were born in Russia and another fifteen percent were born in Poland. Over half of all Polish Jews in Canada during the 1930s lived in Toronto.⁹ These trends in the ancestral ties of Canadian Jewry were fairly consistent until the 1950s since Jewish immigration to Canada

⁸ Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 71.

⁹ Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 75.

during the late 1930s and throughout the Second World War were minimal. With Canadian Jewish families so closely connected to Eastern Europe, it makes sense that they kept a keen eye on developments under Nazi rule and did not forget the familial losses they experienced when the war concluded.

While it is true that the word “Holocaust” was not a term regularly used in Canada during the 1940s and even 1950s to describe the Nazi judeocide, the ideas that would epitomize the Holocaust had their origin in the discourses of the immediate postwar era, specifically in the notion of sacrifice. Geoff Eley has probed the etymology of the word ‘holocaust’ and found that its roots are religious, deriving from the Hebrew word *olah*, which was translated into the Greek *holokaustos* in the third century BC to mean a “totally burnt” sacrifice to God.¹⁰ Since the Nazis were clearly not “sacrificing” European Jews in a religious offering to God but murdering them, some Holocaust thinkers have suggested that the employing of a religiously-loaded term like ‘Holocaust’ is an effort to separate the Jewish annihilation from other genocides, making it unique and incomprehensible. As Elie Wiesel has written, “the universe of concentration camps, by its design, lies outside if not beyond history. Its vocabulary belongs to it alone.”¹¹ Other historians have rejected such efforts, noting that the placing of the Holocaust outside of history strips it of practical lessons to be applied in the prevention of genocide and racism. This has led historians to argue that the emphasis on religious sacrificial connotations within the term ‘Holocaust’ are misplaced, noting that the word was used popularly prior to the Second World to denote massive

¹⁰ Geoff Eley, “Holocaust History,” *London Review of Books* 5, no. 4 (1983), 6-9. See also Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, “Why Do We Call the Holocaust ‘the Holocaust’? An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels,” *Modern Judaism* 9, no. 2 (May 1989): 197-211.

¹¹ For an example of this Elie Wiesel, “Now We Know,” in Richard Arens, ed. *Genocide in Paraguay* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 165.

destruction due to war.¹² However, this thesis illustrates that Canadian Jewry came to see the destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War as an unwitting sacrifice made first by the Western democracies in their vain attempt to preserve the peace by appeasing Hitler in the 1930s, and then as the supreme sacrifice by world Jewry for the cause of defeating Nazism and bringing liberalism to Europe. Subsequent crises surrounding the fragility of the Jewish diaspora and insecurity of Israel were hardened by the sentiment that Jews should never again be placed in a position to sacrifice themselves to the interests of national great power politics.

¹² Jon Petrie, "The secular world HOLOCAUST: scholarly myths, history, and 20th century meanings," *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 1 (2000): 31-63.

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