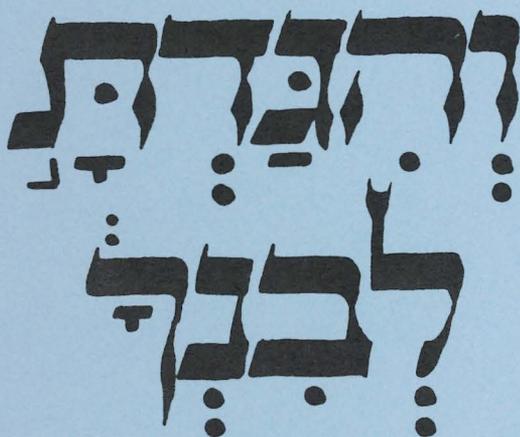


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Shalom Uvracha to Dr. Jonathan Plaut

This issue of the *Journal* is in itself a significant historical event. Our Founding Editor, Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Plaut is leaving Canada to become the Senior Rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in San Jose in California. In congratulating him for this important translation from Windsor, Ontario, we are deeply aware of what this means to us in the Canadian Jewish community. Simply put, it means that we have lost him, and that the Canadian Jewish Historical Society has lost him. We will miss him and the *Journal* will miss him. Jonathan Plaut has given the *Journal* its character, its excellence, its viability and its virility. In the esoteric area of Jewish journals, there are many births and almost as many deaths, but very few survivors. Our *Journal* is not only a survivor, but a steady developer.

Starting from scratch in April 1977 as Volume 1, Number 1, with high hopes and a small circulation, we are now at Volume 8, Number 2 in the fall of 1984, and all 16 issues have appeared under the name of Dr. Jonathan V. Plaut, Editor. In the course of these 8 years, the *Journal* has improved its high academic level, has increased its circulation, and has increasingly been sought after as an authentic mirror of Jewish life in Canada in the 230 years of our presence.

So what can we say to Jonathan Plaut. "Thank you" is hardly enough. We ask him to allow us to keep his name permanently on issues of the *Journal* as Founding Editor, and we wish him SHALOM UVRACHA. We wish for him a life of Peace, and a life which is Blessed, and we hope that these elements will always surround him.

Shalom Uvracha to Dr. Stephen Speisman

Dr. Stephen Speisman has been the Contributing Editor of this *Journal* since the beginning, and he has now agreed to become the Editor. By losing the word "Contributing" he has acquired many challenges, and we are reminded of the words of Winston Churchill from other circumstances, and we can say to Dr. Speisman "This is not the end, nor the beginning of the end, just the end of the beginning".

The *Journal* is now in the hands of one of the leading Canadian historians, one who has amply demonstrated his devotion both to Canadian Jewish history, and to this *Journal*. We welcome Stephen Speisman to his new responsibilities with the same Hebrew words SHALOM UVRACHA, but in addition to the meaning we chose for Dr. Plaut, sending the message of "Welcome" as the meaning for Shalom, while having in mind for "Bracha" that he will bless us with his ability and devotion.

Victor Sefton, President
Canadian Jewish Historical Society
October 1984

Editor's Note

Over the past eight years, since its founding in April, 1977, I have been very pleased to be the Editor of this exciting and informative record of Canadian Jewish history. Our list of subscribers has grown over the years and includes libraries and institutions throughout the world.

I am very proud of the many authors who have contributed their excellent articles and the patrons and sponsors who have supported the *Journal* from its infancy to the present time. I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Speisman, Leila Panzer, Victor Sefton and Elaine Cohen for their assistance and devotion to the development of the *Journal*. Together, we have seen the *Journal* become a permanent and respected extension of the Canadian Jewish Historical Society. The *Journal* is indebted to the Oscar Yolles Foundation for the very generous contributions the Foundation makes each year, which have enabled us to maintain the high quality of this publication.

Dr. Stephen Speisman becomes the Editor of the next *Journal*. I wish him a warm welcome and know that under his leadership, the *Journal* will continue to flourish.

Jonathan V. Plaut
Editor

The United Church and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era 1933-1945

ALAN DAVIES & MARILYN FELCHER NEFSKY

Résumé

Les auteurs du document intitulé: *The United Church and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era*, tentent de prendre le contrepied du volume intitulé: *None is Too Many* publié par Irving Abella et Harold Troper, volume où il est fait état d'une accusation portée par les auteurs contre le silence qu'observèrent les églises au Canada.

F11 Pour rétablir l'équilibre face à une accusation qui leur semblait par trop injuste, Alan Davies et Marilyn Felcher Nefsky ont entrepris des recherches sur ce problème qu'ils soumettent à l'attention des lecteurs, déclarant entre autres que l'Eglise Unie garda le silence soit, mais qu'elle ne l'observa pas totalement. Par ailleurs et selon les auteurs de ce document, le SILENCE est un phénomène social complexe dont des auteurs du document donnent et développent quatre interprétations possibles.

In their exposé of the nativism and antisemitism that lurked behind the refusal of the King cabinet and its bureaucratic minions — notably the then Director of Immigration Frederick C. Blair — to open the gates of Canada to Hitler's Jewish victims, Irving Abella and Harold Troper accuse the Canadian churches by and large of silence. "Although some organizations and high-placed members of religious groups, such as the Anglican and United Churches, actively campaigned on behalf of Jewish refugees, most Canadians seemed indifferent to the suffering of German Jews and hostile to their admission to Canada." This judgment from *None is Too Many* is later amplified: "As long as the churches remained silent — which they did — the government could dismiss the (Canadian National Committee on Refugees)

members as well meaning but impractical idealists to be patronized but not taken seriously.² One highly placed United Churchman who, as Abella and Troper acknowledge,³ does not fall under this indictment was the Rev. Claris E. Silcox; there were, as we shall see, some others as well. But what of the denomination as a whole? How silent, in fact, was the United Church of Canada during this critical period, and what exactly did its silence mean — and not mean? Did the nativism and antisemitism that had wrapped its tentacles around the government also hold the most liberal (theologically, socially and politically) of the major Canadian churches in its grip? Was the silent majority an antisemitic majority, or would that be a false inference from the historical evidence? Undoubtedly, antisemitism had risen significantly in Canada during the Great Depression,⁴ and the church could not have avoided some infection, but is this a sufficient answer? Or was the silence of the church — if, in fact, the church *was* silent — a more complex matter?

To probe these questions, a certain amount of historical reconstruction is necessary, both of the period itself and of the attitude of the United Church with respect to (a) Jews and Judaism (b) the fascist social order (c) the Nazi persecutions in Europe (d) the refugee crisis. We shall examine these in turn.

As far as the general period was concerned, Paul Tillich's famous dictum seems to apply. When, "at the end of an era", familiar structures disintegrate, a mood of neurotic anxiety arises, and society feels itself caught between the past and the future: the past with its "horror of being trapped" and the future with its fear of falling "without a place to fall upon".⁵ Canada, like the rest of the Western World, only less acutely than the European nations that had experienced the ravages of war on their soil, was in a state of crisis. The Great Depression, in the words of an eminent historian,⁶ was a catastrophe that had descended on all of the orders at once: economic, social, political and constitutional. In Alberta, it spawned the Social Credit movement, which (despite William Aberhart) soon became entangled in a certain amount of antisemitism.⁷ In Quebec, it spawned Adrien Arcand and his *Parti National Social Chrétien*, a compound of German and Italian fascism that had promised to save the nation from a "bankrupt" democracy.⁸ On the other hand, it led to both reformation and radicalism on the left, including the birth of the C.C.F. party with its Regina Manifesto and the flirtation on the part of some Canadians with more extreme forms of anti-capitalism based on alien models. With such rumblings from both ends of the political spectrum, a fear of revolution began to stir in Canada.⁹ These fears were never really justified, but their existence was no minor symptom of a troubled era.

As far as the United Church was concerned, except in one possible respect,

the period was scarcely one of profound religious thought and great moral perspicacity. The exception was the formation of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order by such men as John Line, J. King Gordon, E. Crossley Hunter (who, incidentally, later took up the cause of Jewish refugees in his pulpit at Trinity United Church, Toronto),¹⁰ R.B.Y Scott and Gregory Vlastos. This socialist medicine for an ailing capitalist system, in spite of what Stewart Crysedale has called its idealistic “underemphasis on the extent and consequences of sin”¹¹ was virtually the only serious theological attempt to face the real problems of the age in a constructive fashion. Otherwise, the church largely sank into an escapist and reactionary mood, turning to panaceas such as the Oxford Movement (Moral Rearmament) for relief from the conflicts and confusions of a society *in extremis*.¹² The contemporary rise of Neo-orthodoxy was ambiguous; in one sense it represented part of the same flight from reality, but in another sense it represented the recovery of a larger spiritual perspective on the present historical situation. At its best, therefore, Neo-orthodox theology was truly profound, even if the Neo-orthodox theologians (except for Reinhold Niebuhr) were rarely adept at handling social issues. Although Karl Barth himself was by no means a political conservative, “Barthianism” tended to become a more or less reactionary and negative influence in the social arena. Even more reactionary in social and political terms was the resurgence of Protestant fundamentalism, especially in western Canada. However, the fundamentalists were mostly outside of the United Church.

On the subject of Jews and Judaism, the United Church, in spite of the social gospel strains that helped to create the denomination in 1925, remained strongly imbued with older pietistic and evangelical assumptions concerning the alleged superiority of Christianity to Judaism and the necessity of converting Jews to the true religion. Moreover, as so often in the past, these missionary aspirations frequently contained an implicit antisemitism. Thus in 1927 (two years after church union) the official yearbook described the Jewish presence in Christian nations as a “problem” that could only be solved by means of conversion:

Wherever the Jew has settled in any part of the world he has created new problems, political, social, economic and religious . . . The power these people wield among the nations is out of all proportion to their numbers. They have attained positions in finance, commerce, industry, science, philosophy, law, politics, statecraft and in the press, enabling them to mold thought and public opinion and to influence the life and destiny of nations . . . In Montreal there are 76,000 Jews, in Toronto, 60,000, in Winnipeg 16,000, and in all of Canada, 160,000 . . . No democratic nation can survive unless its roots sink deep into the soil of moral religious truth. It is the task of the Church to teach these things unto the people and especially unto their children.¹⁴

Clearly, the only acceptable Jew was a Christian! Of course, this statement did not mean that *all* United Church members shared the sentiments of the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Some were worse and some were better. The following decade would divide the wheat from the chaff. A regular columnist in *The New Outlook* (the official organ of the United Church), for example, still regarded the Jews — on whom the shadow of persecution was starting to fall — as a “bigoted people” with a “narrow” and “selfish” religion.¹⁵ While he attached these epithets to first-century Jewry, his meditation supplied no reason for supposing that modern Judaism was in any way less bigoted and less narrow than its spiritual ancestor. Even during the war itself, when the Final Solution was gathering rapid momentum, there were still United Churchmen capable of responding to a rabbi’s plea for better Jewish-Christian relations by charging the Jews with deicide, and consequently with responsibility for their own sufferings.¹⁶ In the generally liberal ethos of the United Church,¹⁷ such views were surely exceptional; nevertheless, they did exist, and this fact must be acknowledged. Their expression, however, was sporadic and invariably prompted by editorial or other church proclamations of support for the Jews in the contemporary situation. More characteristic of the main spiritual currents of the United Church at this time was the following paean from the Rev. Richard Roberts:

For consider the case of the Jews. Here was a nation endowed with a peculiar genius for religion, and if there is a Divine Providence in the ordering of the world, we should say that this people was ordained to bring to mankind the knowledge of God. First among the nations they learned the towering truth of the One God of all the earth . . . their abiding historical distinction lies, firstly, in their discovery of the divine unity, in that great succession of inspired giants who laid the foundations of the religion of the Western world, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, St. Paul and many another; and supremely, in fact that out of the loins of Jewry came Jesus of Nazareth, who is still the hope of the world.¹⁸

This of course, still rests on Christian triumphalistic assumptions, since the Jews (and Judaism) are praised chiefly because they produced Jesus and indirectly the even greater religion of Christianity, but Roberts meant well. In the context of the era, such statements were intended to evoke Christian sympathy for Hitler’s victims.¹⁹ An editorial published in *The New Outlook* shortly before Roberts uttered these words in 1933 confirms this interpretation: “Hence, Gentiles should never be unmindful of their indebtedness to the people who gave them their scriptures and their Redeemer . . . and their continuity as a people, despite the fact that for nearly 2 millennia they have been without a national home, is one of the outstanding enigmas of all time . . . the people face a new crisis . . . for in the present world situation the normal channels of emigration and immigration are blocked.”²⁰ Admittedly, this

United Church version of the “Spiritually we are Semites theme” (Pius XI, 1938) was blissfully unaware that the new crisis and the blocked channels of emigration and immigration had something to do with the long ages of Christian anti-Judaism, but such insights were rare (although they did exist) among Christians until after 1945. Despite this deficiency, the statement represented the best that Protestant liberalism could do at the time.

On the subject of fascism, the widespread loss of faith in the democratic social order that was so acute during the Great Depression sent its tremors throughout the churches as well. Because of its British traditions, and because also of its social gospel associations, the United Church was strongly committed to Western political doctrines. Nevertheless, among the rank and file, and even among certain ministers, the attractions of other political (and economic) models either on the left (communism) or on the right (fascism) were certainly felt. The number drawn to fascism was no doubt small, but, in the early 1930s at least, it was no less possible to idealize Italy and Germany than it was to idealize Soviet Russia if one saw only what one wanted to see. For example, the Rev. H.B. Hendershot, an ardent Germanophile, wrote in glowing terms during the first summer of the Third Reich of German “idealism”, especially among university students “the very finest” of whom (at Marburg, where the author had recently studied) “were the most indignant against the Jews”.²¹ If a few injustices were being committed, Canadians should remember that Germany itself had been treated unjustly, and that Hitler, whatever his faults, was only putting the nation’s house in order. That Hendershot was not alone in expressing these sentiments is demonstrated by various letters published in *The New Outlook* from time to time. One is worth citing:

A lot is being written these days about Fascism in Canada and the danger it may hold for democracy. One wonders if democracy is not its own greatest danger, and whether a period of Fascism would be all bad . . . The whole system of government and social order needs revamping . . .

A strong and unselfish man or group of men, having real vision of a country’s well-being, given powers to correct mistakes and set up an order adapted to modern needs, could effect changes in the social and economic set-up easily and quickly. If one dictator could give a broken and dismayed people a soul, could not another keep a hopeless and weary one in possession of theirs? Blood purges and regimentation of life appear abhorrent. But one must always die for the nation, and more of orderly discipline would be a real blessing.²²

The church editorial staff, however, denounced these and similar views regularly. “It is quite the fashion nowadays to criticize and find fault with democracy, and there are no doubt very many things that may be said and said with truthfulness, when one is talking on that subject. But it may be the part of wisdom . . . to consider what we have to put in its place if we should decide to

get rid of it. The more closely we look into the substitutes . . . which are being tried, the less are we convinced that they are really an improvement.”²³ Hendershot’s account of German idealism was refuted by an acute description of the “German psychosis” by Silcox.²⁴ Other defenders of democracy such as King Gordon warned Canadians that the seeds of fascism existed in Canada itself — an observation that was certainly true.²⁵ Still others warned of its spiritual as well as its political dangers.²⁶ During the actual war years, when, for obvious reasons, the fascist temptation was scarcely in vogue, these denunciations were intensified and multiplied. “The Fascist state is founded on contempt for the living person . . . and Germany has followed this contempt to its logical conclusion by doing away with free elections, free exchange of ideas, representative government, responsible government as well as trade unions, free co-operatives, free professional associations, etc. . . . Fascism is the death of democracy.”²⁷

On the subject of the Nazi persecutions, the United Church press usually reacted to the treatment of the Jews as swiftly as Hitler’s boycotts, Aryan laws and other anti-Jewish measures occurred.²⁸ At the beginning, however, the editors of *The New Outlook* could not refrain from finding the “deep distrust and hatred” toward the Jews in Germany somewhat “understandable.”²⁹ It was this qualification that Hendershot pursued in his pro-German, anti-Jewish article (August 9, 1933). Consider the following startling lines:

Our own Canadian hearts burn with indignation when we hear of Jewish atrocities in Germany — yet the fact stands that when the heat of released passions will have subsided the Jews in Germany will be seen to be happy compared with the lot of the Chinese in our own land . . . A reasonable German would argue with us that the Jews had unfairly pushed themselves to too great prominence during a period of dislocation and unrest, and the present situation is a rather natural reaction . . . The galling irritation of the whole situation to the Germans was not merely the *de-facto* situation of Jewish supremacy, but the knowledge that the Jews had climbed to the seats of the mighty since 1914 . . . If we place ourselves in the position of the young German — educated — seeking a position and finding none, and finding unpatriotic Jews — war profiteers — in control, it can scarcely be wondered that he would readily be disposed to make the Jew a scapegoat for his own misfortunes. *For be it remembered that every deposed Jew means a job for a good Nordic German.* (Italics ours)³⁰

Obviously Hendershot accepted without demurrer the old romantic *volkisch* worldview of Paul de Lagarde³¹ and others that the German Jews were not really Germans but an alien *Volk* whose very presence was in some mysterious way harmful to the Fatherland. The Germanophile Canadian also seems to have accepted at face value the antisemitic notion that the German Jews had evaded their patriotic duty during the First World War and engaged in illicit profiteering at the expense of the “Nordic” Germans. It is not much

wonder that Silcox was obliged to remind Hendershot of pre-war antisemitism, especially Houston S. Chamberlain's 1899 racist classic *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.³² To what extent Hendershot found support for his views in the church at large is difficult to determine. He was not alone,³³ but he was probably not representative either.

Antisemitism, notably the modern racial variety, was certainly disapproved of both in theory and practice by every eminent United Church preacher who raised the subject in his pulpit and in the church press during the era, including the Rev. Richard Roberts, the Rev. G. Stanley Russell, the Rev. E. Crossley Hunter and the Rev. Ernest Marshall Howse.³⁴ While preachers are generally ahead of their congregations in most issues, there is no reason to suppose that a Canadian religious community with liberal as well as evangelical roots was prepared to endorse without serious reservations a "German point of view" with its peculiar shibboleths even in an abnormal period. On the other hand, it would be foolish to deny that antisemitic feelings existed in the United Church; even those who publicly decried events in Germany tacitly made this admission. The *Zeitgeist*, as Silcox warned repeatedly, was saturated with antisemitism everywhere, and the fate of democracy hung in the balance.³⁵

Moreover, the United Church had an additional reason to keep a close watch on German affairs: the growing church struggle. Even if they had wished to do so, the persecution of Christian and other political dissenters together with the construction of concentration camps made it virtually impossible for outside observers to ignore the Jewish plight. By 1936, as far as the United Church was concerned, the two forms of oppression merited the same general condemnation. The church struggle was becoming an international scandal, and the anti-Jewish policies of the Third Reich had reached "a pitch of brutality and injustice" that the world could tolerate no longer.³⁶ Certainly, the editorial pages of *The New Outlook* rang with periodic denunciations of persecution everywhere, but especially in Nazi Germany: now the object of universal "contempt".³⁷ When Mussolini began to imitate Hitler in 1937, relief was expressed that thus far he had not embarked on a direct purge of Italy's Jews.³⁸ Careful note was taken of the escalation of anti-Jewish decrees and the "aimless cruelty" in which the Nazis seemed to delight.³⁹ The infamous *Krystallnacht* (Nov. 11-13, 1938) was described in the following words: "The primitive savagery of totalitarian state methods was fearfully illustrated in last week's news from Berlin. Germany, determined to crush out unwanted citizens, descended to new depths of infamy in her brutal campaign versus the Jews."⁴⁰ That something was terribly wrong was evident not merely in the pogrom itself but also in its bizarre justification as an expression of "young"

Germany's "healthy instincts."⁴¹ Now the future was indeed ominous both for the Jews and the world. "We may be facing the "mood and method of violent revolution", and the horror of the onslaught on the Jews may be dwarfed by its significance as an indication of the new powers and purposes of the Third Reich."⁴² Christians could also expect to suffer, and, indeed, were already suffering, as the deepening German church struggle — the object of constant scrutiny — was ample proof.

The first public intimation of the true fate awaiting the European Jews came with Hitler's *Reichstag* speech on January 30, 1939, in which he predicted that, in the event of war, the Jewish race could not expect to survive. As Paul Hilberg has commented,⁴³ the concept of mass murder had now apparently matured in the Fuhrer's mind. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Did the United Church of Canada hear? Not quite. Judging from its February 3rd editorial, *The New Outlook* at any rate, like most of the world, failed to grasp the real import of Hitler's words. The antisemitic accent was not overlooked, nor the role of scapegoat that the regime intended for the Jews, nor even the sinister suggestion that the Jewish problem had to be solved before peace could be achieved.⁴⁴ But what Hitler was really saying was not heard. Even the brilliant editorial that appeared one week later, in which the refugee question and its moral ramifications for the Christian conscience was raised in the face of a probable catastrophe for "at least a million men and women" and in which even the "final end of Jewry, its total destruction" was dangled before the church,⁴⁵ did not entirely succeed in understanding the German leader. That a definite intention to annihilate rather than simply persecute the Jews actually lurked behind Hitler's prophesy was too incomprehensible a thought for outside observers to embrace at that moment in time. Not until reports of the death camps — the Holocaust itself — started to circulate in the West in 1942 did the true significance of the *Reichstag* address start to become apparent. According to Robert W. Ross,⁴⁶ virtually no detail of the Final Solution discovered in 1945 had not been previously mentioned somewhere in the American Protestant press by 1943, except for the total number of extermination centres and their more refined cruelties. Protestant Americans therefore were informed by 1943; Protestant Canadians, especially those (a large number of United Church clergy) who read American church journals such as *The Christian Century*, must also have been informed. How did the United Church react to this information? It reacted — when it did react — with passion.

On October 11, 1942, when the fires of extermination were already burning at Treblinka and Auschwitz, the Rev. Ernest Marshall Howse of Westminster

United Church in Winnipeg addressed a public meeting at the Civic Auditorium:

Now the new suffering comes to the Jew first, and to the Jew it comes most terribly. The scourge has fallen upon defenceless people as perhaps earth has not seen it since at the siege of Jerusalem a savage soldiery in one night ripped open the bellies of 2000 Jews to see if they had swallowed the gold of the temple. After two milleniums [sic] of history it becomes the loathsome distinction of the Nazi party again to shame the memory of man with the degenerate ferocity of those by-gone days.⁴⁷

How widely this cry of outrage was echoed in Canada's Protestant pulpits at the time is now impossible to ascertain. Few sermons of the period have survived, and the distrust of atrocity tales — a legacy of the propaganda of the First World War — was still prevalent. Nevertheless, Howse was not alone. On April 15, 1943, Silcox, who for at least a decade had been the United Church's most vigorous and effective foe of antisemitism, employed the term "holocaust" in referring to events in Nazi-occupied Europe long before most of his contemporaries, and lamented the fact that so few brands had been plucked from the burning.⁴⁸ On May 28, 1943, at a Jewish-Christian service convened in Montreal's Temple Emanu-El in order to protest, in the words of the main speaker, the "greatest crime in history . . . the murder of a nation and the deliberate extermination of Jews, particularly throughout Europe"⁴⁹, Professor R.B.Y. Scott of the United Theological College declared his "solidarity" with the suffering children of a "religion so closely associated with our own."⁵⁰ Finally, on September 15, 1944 — the date is important because it apparently took this long for all doubts to be dispelled in the collective mind of the United Church establishment — the *United Church Observer* (successor to *The New Outlook*) published this confession:

For some time we were reluctant to accept at face value the accounts which occasionally leaked out of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis against conquered people . . . But Lidice changed all that . . . There have been statistics . . . that of three million Jews in Poland, all but one hundred thousand have been exterminated by the Nazis. The publication of these figures did not arouse the conscience of the world, perhaps again because we were defending ourselves against propaganda. But now that reputable American correspondents . . . give us eye witness accounts of the scientifically brutal way in which men, women and little children were destroyed in mass murder gas chambers, there is no escaping the conviction that in our own generation there has been carried on the greatest murder plot of all ages. The story told by correspondents of Lublin's extermination camp in Poland . . . is too brutal and horrifying beyond description.⁵¹

One gathers that Jewish reports alone were insufficient to convince sceptical United Churchmen; American reports, however, were a different matter. Obviously hearing is *not* the same as knowing; information is one thing, knowledge is another thing. At last the church *knew*!

On the critical subject of Jewish refugees, which arose quickly on the heels of the persecution crisis, some calls for Christian action appeared in the church press at least as early as 1935 (prompted, incidentally, by the International Missionary Council and its Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews — a body, one presumes, with conversionist aspirations).⁵² Only the Quakers, according to Conrad Hoffman of the IMC, were taking up the cause of Jewish relief in the form of practical assistance at the time.⁵³ Other Christian groups, *The New Outlook* argued in 1936, should take a “realistic look” at their own discipleship and do likewise.⁵⁴ During the dangerous year of 1939, when, behind the scenes in Ottawa, an “unofficial, unholy triumvirate” consisting of the Immigration Branch, the federal cabinet and the Department of External Affairs was doing everything in its power to prevent Jewish refugees from entering Canada,⁵⁵ the pro-refugee forces, headed by Senator Cairine Wilson’s Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, were attempting to move the mountains that blocked the path of Jewish freedom.⁵⁶ In January, Silcox urged Canadians to welcome King George VI to Canada by demonstrating to their sovereign that the “spirit of British fair-play” was “still alive in this Dominion by our answer to the challenge of the refugees”.⁵⁷ The same writer also adroitly turned the tables on the Anglo-Saxon nativists who railed against the racial dilution of Canada’s native stock by defending the German Jews as better “Anglo-Saxons” than the Anglo-Saxons: “. . . what do we need most on this continent — the Anglo-Saxon blood or the Anglo-Saxon spirit? Is it not primarily the Anglo-Saxon spirit, the love of freedom, the capacity for discipline, the regard for fair-play, the intellectual eagerness, the respect for cultural and scientific attainment, the political *savoir-faire* that knows how to deal with all kinds of minorities? Is it not this which we most need in Canada? And where in all the world are we more apt to find it than among these refugees now seeking a new home?”⁵⁸

In February, *The New Outlook* denounced the federal government for its procrastination, especially in the face of Quebec nationalism: “To keep out others when our own house is largely empty is to be guilty of a political immoralism as grave in its implications as the crude immoralism of the Nazis.”⁵⁹ The same editorial criticized the Canadian churches, including the United Church, for their “disconcerting silence”.⁶⁰ In April, Howse preached two sermons in his Winnipeg church on the refugee situation, using the Matthaean text (25:40): “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” The refugees, he declared, particularly the Jewish refugees, far from swamping the country with undesirable types, represented “refined gold from a very fierce crucible”.⁶¹

The first signs of official concern from the United Church were emitted in 1937 when, prompted by Silcox, the Board of Evangelism and Social Service decided to urge its constituency to urge the government to provide a “haven for at least a reasonable number of selected refugees from certain countries in Europe.”⁶² These selected refugees, of course, would not be Jewish only, although Jews were certainly in mind. In 1938, the same Board endorsed the activities of the newly formed National Committee (which, incidentally, its own newly appointed secretary, the Rev. J.R. Mutchmor, had already joined).⁶³ Moreover, local presbytery committees throughout the church were encouraged to give the problem “careful and constructive thought” and to work toward the “creation of a favourable public opinion” in order to strengthen Senator Wilson’s hand.⁶⁴ Some presbyteries began passing resolutions in favour of the refugees in an attempt to pry open the gates that the Immigration bureaucracy was secretly determined to keep shut.⁶⁵ In 1939, Jewish refugees were explicitly mentioned for the first time as the Board started to worry about Canadian antisemitism in light of the passionate opposition to a more generous policy from the nationalistic St. Jean Baptiste Society in Quebec.⁶⁶ In 1940, it commended the National Committee once again to the church, stressing the “tragically changed conditions in Europe”, and the need to persuade Canadians that “German-born” refugees could be desirable immigrants.⁶⁷ Since antisemitism and xenophobia had not diminished in Canada, the struggle against these evils could not be allowed to diminish either. The fact that many of the refugees were children lent a poignant character to the the entire crisis, and rendered both ridiculous and outrageous the (as we now know, deliberate) obstructionism of Ottawa in requiring certificates of release from their vanished parents before they could be awarded sanctuary.⁶⁸ In 1941, the Board once again recorded its opposition to all those who are “imbued with hatred of the Jewish people” — although not without adding the reflection that Christian attitudes today “will be the strength of the Christian Gospel message among Jewish people tomorrow”⁶⁹ — and in 1943, it called for the rescue of a number of Jews then stranded in Portugal before it was too late.”⁷⁰

Conclusion

In answer to the question of the church’s silence, while Abella and Troper are more or less correct as far as the denomination as a whole was concerned — there was certainly no mass outcry on behalf of the refugees — they are incorrect in confining the voice of conscience to only a few highly placed and perhaps relatively isolated individuals. The United Church was silent, but not that silent. From the first signs of persecution, the dark side of the fascist political system, notably antisemitism, racism and the progressive destruction

of democratic institutions, was noted and denounced in the church press, despite the appeal of the new European social order for a segment of its readership. As German anti-Jewish activities grew more evident and more sinister, these denunciations intensified. Even before the war, on both the local and the national levels, the United Church demonstrated a keen interest in saving Hitler's victims, both Jews and non-Jews, in the face of the anti-immigrant sentiments and policies of the era; this interest deepened as the crisis mounted. Finally the struggle against antisemitism itself grew more resolute as the church leaders and opinion-makers realized that this insidious disease was not restricted to the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean. It had to be contended with at home.

The silence of the church, however, is not the only important question. To the extent that Canada's largest Protestant denomination really *was* silent, what did its silence mean? Silence is a complex phenomenon, with more than one possible connotation: (a) it can arise from simple ignorance; (b) it can arise from willed ignorance, *i.e.*, from hearing but not knowing; (c) it can arise from knowing but not caring; (d) it can arise from knowing and tacitly approving the crimes that others are committing. In the United Church, with the many reports of an escalating persecution during the pre-war period, and the later accounts of mass murder during the war period (1942-45), there could not have been much simple ignorance on the part of its more literate and more alert constituency. But what the church membership read and heard, and what it chose to believe are quite different matters. There were numerous reasons, some plausible, for rejecting the information that was being presented: fake World War I atrocity stories, propagandistic exaggerations, the suspicion of witness reliability, the conviction that civilized nations cannot act in a grossly uncivilized fashion (after all, the ban on gas warfare had been accepted by both sides), the conviction, typical of religious liberals, that humankind is intrinsically moral and rational in spite of everything, the memory that German soil and German culture had given birth to the Protestant Reformation as well as to great theologians, great philosophers, great artists, so that Germany could not descend to the depths of total evil, etc. Even amid the jingoism of war fever, it was easy to find reasons for not believing the unbelievable. Most of the silence found in the United Church is probably explained by this kind of willed ignorance rather than by conscious or unconscious antisemitism.

Yet, of course, since antisemitism — real antisemitism — did exist in Canadian society, it was also present in the church as well. We have already cited some evidence for this assertion. Indifference was therefore a factor — the same indifference that induced Blair (incidentally, a Protestant elder), in

perfect awareness of the probable fate of the Jews he deliberately pushed away from the safe haven they were seeking, to shrug off the entire crisis as “almost wholly a Jewish problem”.⁷¹ Such hardness-of-heart had virtually a religious flavour: the self-righteousness of the elect community — White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant — which, confident of its own moral superiority, need not concern itself unduly with the plight of peoples who dwell outside the sphere of divine grace. These time-honoured Calvinist sins (so different from the humane and humanitarian spirit of John Calvin himself, with his compassion for the refugees who crowded sixteenth-century Geneva) were, and still are, embedded in much Canadian Protestant piety, not merely in the so-called Calvinist churches. The United Church, in spite of its liberal ethos, was no exception. Self-righteousness permeated its inherited condescension to Jews as fodder for conversion (1927 Yearbook), and, even when these earlier attitudes were modified, a sense of Christian religious superiority subtly intermingled with Anglo-Saxon racial superiority remained. The silent majority was never an antisemitic majority; nevertheless, there were some antisemites in both the ministry and in the congregations. As far as they were concerned, the Jews were not worth rescuing.

Did anyone in the United Church tacitly approve of the Holocaust? We do not know. We will probably never know. We do not even wish to guess.

NOTES

1. Irving Abella & Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982, p. 51.
2. *ibid.*, p. 284.
3. *ibid.*, p. 51.
4. Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties*, Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975, *passim*.
5. Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, p. 62.
6. Donald G. Creighton, *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944, p. 484.
7. Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982, pp. 154-158.
8. Betcherman, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
9. H. Blair Neatby, *The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties*, Toronto: Macmillan, 1972, p. 34.
10. Interview with Dr. Ernest Marshall Howse, October, 1983.
11. Stewart Crysdale, *The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada: A Survey of Changing Power Structures and Christian Social Ethics*, Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1961, p. 90.
12. Keith Clifford, “Religion in the Thirties: Some Aspects of the Canadian Experience”, *The Dirty Thirties in Prairie Canada*, D. Francis & H. Ganzevoort (editors), Vancouver: Tantalus Research Ltd., 1980, pp. 128-132.
13. Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1971, p. 256.
14. *The United Church of Canada Year Book (1927)*, Toronto, pp. 116-117.
15. “Mr. Black’s Bible Class”, *The New Outlook* (August 26, 1936) p. 797. In 1934 this

- columnist charges the Jews at Christ's time with a "narrow nationalism" which had grown to presume "that God had chosen them, not for responsibility and service, but to special privilege and opportunity". That he implicitly refers to Jews in general is evident in a later statement from the same article. "How deadly upon the Jewish people themselves the effect of this attitude of mind had become the whole history of the years before and *after the coming of Christ* very clearly reveals". "When Patriotism Goes Bad", *The New Outlook* (March 2, 1934) p. 322; italics added.
16. See W.H. Colclough, "Gentiles Only", *The United Church Observer* (March 15, 1943) p. 10; G.G. Harris, "Christian Toleration", *ibid* (September 1, 1944) p. 17; R.H. Baxter, "Challenges Rabbi's Statement", *ibid*. (October 1, 1944) p. 13.
 17. For representative citations of this liberal ethos, see the following: "Editorial in Brief" *The New Outlook* (March 4 & 18, 1936) pp. 205, 261; "Jewish Tradition and Peace", *The New Outlook*, (April 2, 1937) p. 309; "Missing the Point: IV The Torah" *The United Church Observer* (December 15, 1940) pp. 13, 35; "What Our Readers Say" — "The Racial prejudice in Our Hymnary", *The United Church Observer* (June 1, 1944) p. 13.
 18. Richard Roberts, "The Quiet Hour", *The New Outlook* (November 29, 1933) p. 845.
 19. In "The Ethical Teaching of Jesus: In Its Jewish Background", S. MacLean Gilmour insisted that Jesus' ethical teaching must be presented against the background of contemporary Jewish piety, so that it is better understood "as the fulfillment of the best in the Mosaic tradition, as the full flowering of the Hebrew prophetic insight . . ." *The United Church Observer* (May 15, 1939) p. 13. See also C.A. Lawson, "Christianity's Debt to Judaism" *The United Church Observer* (January 1, 1942) p. 11: "In a day when terror has been spread around the world among the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I say this tribute to how much we awe them in the hope that it may add to the peace of our Jewish brethren . . ."
 20. "The Jewish New Year, 5694", *The New Outlook* (September 13, 1933) p. 660.
 21. H.B. Hendershot, "The German Point of View", *The New Outlook* (August 9, 1933) p. 584.
 22. See 'Our Readers' Forum', *The New Outlook* (July 8, 1938) p. 658.
 23. "Editorial in Brief", *The New Outlook* (November 21, 1934) p. 1029.
 24. Claris E. Silcox, "The German Psychosis", *The New Outlook* (August 16, 1933) p. 598.
 25. "Warning Against Fascism", *The New Outlook* (January 1, 1936) p. 11.
 26. "Wake Up, Canada!", *The New Outlook* (April 22, 1938) p. 385.
 27. "Citizens' Forum — Democracy in Action", *The United Church Observer* (December 1, 1943) p. 11.
 28. For example: "Anti-Jewish Bigotry", *The New Outlook* (March 29, 1933) p. 267; "Tragic Lack of Humour", *ibid* (July 11, 1934) p. 547; "Flies in German Ointment", *ibid* (May 21, 1937). H.B. Letterly, "German Youth Trained for War" *The United Church Observer* (May 1, 1939) p. 22.
 29. "Editorial in Brief", *The New Outlook* (April 12, 1933) p. 301. See "Facing the Storm", *ibid* (May 6, 1938) p. 432; "In a vague way we agree that it is wrong to penalize the Jews but . . ."
 30. Hendershot, *loc. cit.*
 31. Paul de Lagarde, *Deutsche Schriften* (1878); Eugen Dühring, *Die Judenfrage* (1881); Wilhelm Marr, *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentum* (1873), etc. This view found initial expression in J.-G. Fichte in Napoleonic times.
 32. Silcox, *loc. cit.*
 33. See "Our Readers' Forum — Germany and the Jew", *The New Outlook* (February 5, 1936) p. 130. Ironically, the letter in question is signed "Fair Play".
 34. Of course, there may have been others as well. Except in a few well-documented cases, the evidence is fragmentary and survives mostly by word-of-mouth. See, for example, Richard Roberts, "If Jesus went to Germany?" *The New Outlook* (November 15, 1933) p. 805; "German Barbarity Deplored", *ibid* (May 17, 1933) p. 387; see the penetrating article by Devere Allen "Back of Hitler: and Beyond", *The New Outlook* (April 12, 1933) p. 302; also

- “Beyond Protest”, *ibid* (November 25, 1938) p. 1114; E. Crossley Hunter “The Marks of Anti-semitism” *The United Church Observer* (March 15, 1941) pp. 10-28.
35. Silcox, *The Challenge of Anti-Semitism to Democracy*, an address delivered before Canadian Clubs in Western Canada, January, 1939; Even Silcox “privately grumbled that Jews should ‘learn some manners so they would be more acceptable.’”, Abella and Troper, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
 36. “The Limit Has Been Reached!” *The New Outlook* (January 22, 1936) p. 73.
 37. “Appeal for the Persecuted”, *The New Outlook* (August 12, 1936) p. 73.
 38. “You Must Keep in Step”, *The New Outlook* (June 4, 1937) p. 509.
 39. “Keeping the Money at Home”, *The New Outlook* (June 24, 1938) p. 603.
 40. “Scared by a Mouse”, *The New Outlook* (November 18, 1938) p. 1092; see also “A New Phase in Germany”, *ibid* (November 25, 1938) p. 1116.
 41. “Healthy Instincts”, *The New Outlook* (November 18, 1938) p. 1095.
 42. “A New Phase in Germany”, *The New Outlook* (November 25, 1938) p. 1116.
 43. Paul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, New York: New Viewpoints 1973, p. 257.
 44. “Hitler Tells the World” *The New Outlook* (February 3, 1939) p. 99.
 45. “Is It Nothing to You?”, *The New Outlook* (February 10, 1939) p. 120. At the time of this publication Gerald R. Cragg was the editor of *The New Outlook*.
 46. Robert W. Ross, *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and The Nazi Persecution of the Jews*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, p. 170.
 47. Ernest Marshall Howse, *I Speak for the Jew* (October 11, 1942). Unpublished manuscript.
 48. “Let My People Go!”, *United Church Observer* (April 15, 1943) p. 11. See also “Conference on Post War Role of Religion”, *The United Church Observer* (May 1, 1943) p. 26 which treats of “millions of human beings . . . tortured to death in Nazi-occupied land”. Atrocities were reported but not believed.
 49. Ven. A.P. Gower-Rees, *Religion Pleads the Cause of Refugees* (May 28, 1943), p. 7. Privately published pamphlet.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
 51. “The Atrocities”, *The United Church Observer* (September 15, 1944) p. 4. See “Terrible but True”, *The New Outlook* (December 30, 1938) p. 1273: “the sooner the rest of the world realize this fact the better.”
 52. Margaret Wrong, “International Missionary Council”, *The New Outlook* (October 23, 1935) p. 1025.
 53. “Practical Christianity”, *The New Outlook* (March 11, 1936) p. 267.
 54. *Ibid.*
 55. Abella & Troper, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
 56. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45. In October 1938 the Canadian League of Nations Society announced that it would “place the strength of [its] entire organization behind a move to aid the Jewish refugees . . . by requesting the Canadian government to take immediate action.” The society’s president Senator Cairine Wilson took on the duties of president for the Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution upon its creation in December of 1938. (Abella and Troper, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5.)
 57. Silcox, *The Challenge of Anti-Semitism to Democracy* Toronto: The Committee on Jewish Gentile Relationships (January, 1939) p. 16.
 58. Silcox “Should Canada Provide Sanctuary for European Refugees?”, *The Canadian Friend* (December 1938/vol. 36/#6) p. 11; originally broadcast on CFRC radio, Kingston, Ontario, November 1, 1938, 7:15-7:30 p.m.
 59. “Is It Nothing to You?”, *The New Outlook* (February 10, 1939), p. 120.
 60. *Ibid.*
 61. Howse, “Christian Canada and the Refugees” and “The Refugees — A Policy for Canada”,

- Westminster United Church, Winnipeg (April, 1939) p. 13. Privately published pamphlet.
62. *HE is Mightiest in the Mightiest*, Thirteenth Annual Report (1937), Board of Evangelism and Social Service, *The United Church of Canada*, p. 37. See also General Secretary's Report to the Christian Social Council of Canada, 1938, p. 5 which deals with "Refugees". On April 1938 the Executive dispatched a communication to the Honourable Thomas Crerar, calling attention to the plight of the refugees and urging the Canadian Government to take the necessary steps "to find a needed and adequate solution of a condition which, by reason of the factors of persecution and hopeless suffering, is at variance with all our cherished ideals." Rev. Dr. Claris Edwin Silcox file, National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
 63. On October 17, 1938 the Canadian Jewish Congress — Central Division printed a confidential "Resume of Activity in Connection with the Refugee Situation" which stated that after consultation with Rev. Mr. Silcox in September, "it became apparent that a number of non-Jewish bodies were prepared to take some action to secure the entry of refugees to Canada." The final product of this concern was the Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution (Rev. Dr. Claris Edwin Silcox file, National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal).
 64. *Let The Church Be The Church*, Fourteenth Annual Report, Board of Evangelism and Social Service, The United Church of Canada, p. 52.
 65. *Ibid.* The Montreal Presbytery, for example, deplored "the continued and bitter persecution of the Jewish people by certain European Governments, chiefly Germany and Italy, that is driving into exile and making homeless hundreds of thousands of helpless men, women and children, thus creating a world problem in suffering of the last degree of poignancy; the Presbytery, therefore, earnestly calls on the citizens and Government of Canada to do everything in their power . . . to help the persecuted and hopeless by opening the gates of Canada to as large a number as possible of such expatriated and pitilessly plundered people." (September 16, 1938). Cited in David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties: On Anti-Semitism in Canada 1929-1939*, Section 12, National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal, 1980, p. 691.
 66. *There am I in the Midst*, Fifteenth Annual Report (1939), Board of Evangelism and Social Service, The United Church of Canada, p. 55.
 67. *The Eternal . . . The Contemporary*, Sixteenth Annual Report (1940), Board of Evangelism and Social Service, The United Church of Canada, p. 66.
 68. *Ibid.* p. 67. The following letter from the personal file of Dr. Howse is highly illuminating:

Department of Health and Public Welfare
 Child Welfare Division.
 657 Portage Avenue,
 Winnipeg.

File No. Misc.224

July 14th, 1979.

Rev. Ernest Howse,
 Honary Secretary-Treasurer,
 Canadian National Committee on Refugees,
 120 Maryland Street,
 WINNIPEG, Manitoba.

Re: Jewish Refugees.

Dear Mr. Howse:

With further reference to our correspondence herein, I beg to advise that I am now in receipt of a ruling from the Department of Immigration in which they state in part, "If there is any movement of refugee children they must be orphans in the true sense of the word [sic]. If the cases which you have on record cover children that are not orphans (in the true sense of the word) there is no use in any further action being taken with respect to their admission to

Canada.”

It would appear, therefore, that it would be necessary for you to provide us with a *certificate of death of both parents* of any refugee children being admitted to this country. I shall therefore be pleased to hear from you further in this respect.

Yours faithfully,
(signed) Mildred B. McMurray
Legal Supervisor

69. *Hope in God*, Seventeenth Annual Report (1941), Board of Evangelism and Social Service, The United Church of Canada, pp. 27-28.
70. *Right Relations Among Men*, Nineteenth Annual Report (1943)/Board of Evangelism and Social Service, The United Church of Canada, p. 62.
71. Abella & Troper, *op. cit.*

The Prehistory of the Founding of The Canadian Jewish Congress 1897-1919*

JUDITH NEFSKY

Résumé

Dans ce premier document sur l'histoire de la formation et de la création du Congrès juif canadien (CJC), Judith Nefsky, Directrice du Service National des Archives du CJC, s'est inspirée de documents d'archives déposés dans son Service de même que sur l'interprétation qu'en donne deux historiens réputés MM. David Rome du CJC de Montréal et le Dr. Stephen Speisman du Service d'Archives du CJC région Ontario qui ont respectivement publié deux volumes importants, soit *Early Documents on the Canadian Jewish Congress 1914-1921*; et, *The Jews of Toronto, a History to 1939*.

Ce document s'inspire des procès-verbaux de réunions de même que des traductions de précieux documents Yiddich. J. Nefsky retrace les événements sur une période de 20 ans, soit depuis les débuts d'un rapprochement d'organisations juives aussi diverses que différentes jusqu'à la première création du CJC en 1919 (mars 16-19). Cela donna lieu à de nombreuses tâches qu'il dût assumer dont entre autres: l'immigration (JIAS), la défense des droits de tous les Juifs quel que soit le pays où ils résident, défense des droits nationaux c'est à dire égalité des droits pour les juifs, etc. Cependant, malgré les bonnes volontés réunies, la fondation définitive du CJC n'aura lieu qu'en 1934 soit 15 ans après les premières entatives de fondation.

The Canadian Jewish Congress met for the first time in March, 1919, 65 years ago. This paper is based on documents in the National Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress in Montreal and their interpretation by historians,

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two of whom are Mr. David Rome of CJC in Montreal, and Dr. Stephen Speisman of Canadian Jewish Congress Ontario Region Archives who touches on this subject in his book *The Jews of Toronto, a History to 1937* (Toronto; McLelland & Stewart, 1979). I have used Mr. Rome's volume entitled *Early Documents on the Canadian Jewish Congress 1914-1921* extensively, and the English translations of Yiddish documents which I'll be referring to come from that volume. I would also like to thank Mr. Rome for his assistance in helping me clarify the story and make sense of the many events in it.

In March of this year, we marked rather quietly the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Canadian Jewish Congress. The establishment of any institution does not come about easily or quickly, particularly when it is established at the grass roots level, without funds or political or institutional force behind it. The story of the establishment of the CJC is no exception. Today I will trace the events over a 20-year period which led to the establishment of the organization which attempted what no organization had previously tried to do: to represent on a democratic basis, all the Jews of Canada and act on their behalf.

The story begins around 1897, at the time of the first Zionist Congress in Vienna. It was in these last years of the 19th century that the idea of a congress representative of all members of a community first struck the Jews of Western Europe. Traditionally, Jewish community leaders were those powerful and influential men who chose to speak for their communities, but who were not necessarily chosen by the members of their communities.

The concept of a congress of Jewish people to represent their constituents and to meet to solve their collective problems was a novel idea which soon spread to Eastern European Jews.

Jews discovered that organization in itself is a powerful tool and that it was not necessary to have wealthy or politically-connected people to speak for them as long as there was a representative universal structure through which they could speak.

After the 1897 Zionist Congress, Jews recognized that the concept of organization could be usefully applied to other matters besides Zionism. This idea took hold in Canada, in the minds of a few forward-thinking people who pushed for its implementation. They encountered strong opposition and some hostility but eventually the two factions recognized that their goals were almost identical even if their means of achieving them differed, and they were reconciled.

Meanwhile, until a representative body of Canadian Jews was established, other organizations that were locally based took on a national or at least a wider

scope when matters out of their immediate jurisdiction arose that required external assistance.

As soon as the first wave of Jewish immigrants came to Canada in 1882, there was a response in the small Jewish community — which for the most part had been established only 20 years or so earlier — to help them to settle and to integrate into Canadian society. When British Jews sent refugees to Canada in 1882 they were received by a Montreal Committee of the Anglo-Jewish Association which was formed in 1881 with branches in Montreal and Toronto. (See G. Tolchinsky, “Immigration and Charity in the Montreal Jewish Community before 1890” in *Histoire sociale — Social History*, vol. XVI, no. 32, Nov. 1983: 359-80).

The second group which arrived in Canada was settled by another organization, the Young Men’s Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montreal.

In the next few years the Baron Maurice de Hirsch became involved in immigration as a solution to the problems of Eastern European Jewry. In 1891 he founded the Jewish Colonization Association or JCA to settle impoverished Jews in agricultural colonies around the world. In Canada, the JCA acted through the Baron de Hirsch Institute of Montreal, (formerly the Young Men’s Hebrew Benevolent Society) until a separate Canadian committee of the JCA was established in 1906.

By the 1890’s there was a steady flow of refugees who had to be settled across the country. The Baron de Hirsch Institute acted as the distributing agency, dispersing the immigrants throughout Canada.

It should be added that at this time the immigrants acted as much on their own as with the assistance of the Institute. The problem for the historian is that he or she can only learn from the records that exist of the past. Whatever was not recorded and kept does not remain in our historical consciousness so we are left with a distorted vision of past events. With the story of early Jewish immigration to Canada what we have in our archives are the records of the organizations that assisted immigrants. What we don’t have, or only have to a very limited extent, are the personal records of individual immigrants and their families, with their perceptions and experiences told from their perspective. We therefore are liable to exaggerate the role of institutions in the settlement and integration of immigrants and not give enough credit to the immigrants themselves. That being said, our story is about the creation of national Jewish institutions in Canada, so we will put aside the perspective of the individual immigrant.

The Baron de Hirsch Institute organized and financed the reception of refugees in ports other than Montreal and organized receiving committees at

each location. In the early 1900's the Institute established a legislative committee to deal with such problems as the Sunday Observance legislation of 1906. This was a national issue that was a major challenge to Canada's Jews for whom hindrance to religious observation was a deep concern. The campaign for Sunday observance became anti-Jewish.

In order to counter this legislation Jews from several Canadian cities formed a committee to make presentations to the government. After parliamentary debate a solution was arrived at whereby provinces were granted the authority to pass their own legislation should they choose to differ from the federal law.

The legislative committee of the Baron de Hirsch Institute continued to act on national problems such as the Plamondon libel case in Quebec City, and the discriminatory charter of Queen's University in 1913.

Throughout these early years of the century, the leadership positions in Canadian Jewish institutions continued for the most part to be held by the wealthier "uptown" members of the older Jewish families who had established in Canada one or two generations before. They spoke English and were well integrated into Canadian society. The immigrant generation of "downtown" Jews who were Yiddish-speaking, poor, and tied by heart and soul and blood to their relatives and friends in Eastern European communities, were numerically dominant but without power in decision-making positions. The outbreak of World War I, however, pushed them to take a more prominent position in community affairs and to clash head-on with the "uptown" Jews.

The dominant organization of the "uptown" Jews was the Federation of Canadian Zionists which functioned well but was not democratic in its structure. From the 1890's to 1917 Clarence de Sola held the presidency of this organization.

When the war broke out in 1914 both groups were deeply affected. The Yiddish-speaking community feared for their families and friends who were dispossessed of their homes on the front and with whom they had lost contact. Although the tragic state of the displaced European Jews was a concern to the uptown Jews, their primary concern was the local relief needs of the poor members of the community. They were, however, able to raise more funds for overseas relief among their ranks, than the poorer, but more numerous "downtown" Jews. It was during the war years that both groups engaged in fund-raising campaigns that were to be the backbone of a single community institution. Dr. Speisman examines the organizing of fund-raising efforts of the two groups in Toronto which paralleled the developments in Montreal and elsewhere in his book *The Jews of Toronto, a History to 1937*.

In Montreal the "downtown" group adopted Reuben Brainin as its leader. It

would have been more likely that Brainin, the articulate scholar, writer and Hebraist from Vienna, would have been taken into the "uptown" group with which he had more in common; however, they showed but little interest in his talents and wisdom, and Brainin developed a following amongst the Yiddish-speaking people, for whom he worked very devotedly.

David Rome in his volume entitled *Early Documents on the Canadian Jewish Congress, 1914-1921* refers to Belkin's analysis of the division between uptown and downtown Jews on local and overseas relief.

"A difference in emphasis developed as early as 1914 between the "Up-Town Jews" and the "Down-Town Jews" as to the relative importance of aiding, on the one hand, Canadians who were suffering from the effects of war-caused dislocation and, on the other hand, sending relief to Jews in the war zones stricken by the conflict.

"Early in 1915 a united effort by the entire community, conducted by a committee representative of both sections, raised \$24,000. Of this amount \$1,000 was sent to Palestine, \$6,000 to Lord Rothschild as president of the War Victims Committee in London to aid Jewish war sufferers in allied countries, and the balance to charitable organizations in Montreal. (S.K.B. in D.A. Hart, ed., *The Jew in Canada*. Toronto, 1926. P. 524)

"This division deeply disappointed the Down-Town Jews, particularly the men and women of the Poale Zion Organization and its affiliate, the Alliance. It was this that led Branch 8 to issue the invitation to the conference of February 21, 1915,

"The invitation reads,

"As you doubtless know, we were absolutely ignored in the distribution of the Assistance Fund to which each of us has contributed his share. Thus the voice of those who are suffering was mercilessly suppressed. But the situation is too terrible for us to cease our efforts, as have our Up-Town benefactors. Something must be done. It is our obligation to ensure that the cry of the hungry and of the suffering shall not be a voice calling in the desert. Send your delegates so that together we may develop plans to help those who seek help." (Rome, p. 2)

Rome goes on to translate the Yiddish minutes of this meeting, which he says is of fundamental concern because it is out of this conference that the Canadian Jewish Congress was born.

"L. Zuker presided over the gathering of thirteen organizations which was convened, as he formulated it in his opening remarks, to secure the means of aiding our suffering brethren immediately, to unite all Jewish organizations into a single alliance which would make it possible to send delegates to the Jewish Congress so that individual persons will not be able to claim to represent the Jewish masses, and to take a position in regard to immigrations problems.

"The delegates to the conference protested against the unjust distribution of the funds of the earlier relief committee. It was proposed that a tax be imposed on all organizations in aid of the suffering, that a one-cent stamp be printed for the same purpose, and that women in particular be organized for collection of relief funds." (Rome, p. 3)

A man by the name of Welicovitch proposed that the conference declare itself a permanent body and Judah Kaufman proposed that the gathering should issue an appeal to all Jewish organizations in the community to meet in

conference on March 7 of that year. The name given to the meeting was the Canadian Jewish Alliance. A "Call to all Jewish Organizations" was printed in the press in advance of the March 7 conference in which the conference convenors outlined the huge tasks before the Jews of North America:

"Only the young, 3,000,000-strong Jewish settlement in America has remained free of the Great Destruction, and a weighty triple obligation has fallen upon its shoulders.

"First, to respond to the great need that has been created in the lands of war, to still its hunger pangs, to heal its wounds, and to provide for the old, the aged parents and for the orphans and the widowed.

"This aid must come now, this moment. We must also prepare for the post-war years.

"Our help must reach there, in the front line areas, and it will need to bring its assuaging healing wherever the Jewish migration will bring them.

"Secondly, we must be ready to speak in the name of the entire Jewish people. We must announce to the entire world that the time has come for our voice to be heard. We must ensure that at the Peace Conference to be convoked after the hostilities are ended, the entire Jewish people will be represented as one. We must mobilize fully so that this conclave will hear the true Jewish protest against the crime that all mankind has sinned against us. We must demand assurances of civil, political and national rights for the Jews in the warring countries, especially in eastern Europe and in Palestine.

"Thirdly, now that the cultural influence of our European centres has ceased to nurture us and when the reconstructed communities there will have to depend so heavily upon us, we will of necessity need to make ourselves culturally strong by organizing our communities into firm institutions and build our national and social life here on healthier foundations.

"These are great tasks before us: economic, political, cultural." (Rome, p. 4a)

Rome translates a Yiddish document entitled "To all Jewish organizations in Canada" printed on the letterhead of the Canadian Jewish Alliance, signed by Rueben Brainin and dated March 23, 1915 and remarks on its prophetic quality.

"The Jewish Congress has become the slogan of the Jewish society — a Congress to be convened by the people itself, where those chosen will express the powerful, iron will of the people to struggle for its freedom.

"At this Congress there shall be heard the cry of a people long robbed of its human rights. At this Congress the nation will declare openly to the entire world that, in spite of all persecutions and humiliations of centuries and of millenia, it has not ceased to exist as a people and still believes in its right to such an existence.

"At this Congress we shall clearly and specifically state what we wish and what we expect from the Great Powers at the moment when the fate of nations is being determined for centuries to come.

"We are more than convinced that the Congress will define objectives which are not as yet clear to us; that it will seek to resolve questions we have not yet dared to raise, that new horizons will open for us, and that the new age will begin in Jewish history with its convening.

"In Canada . . . various strata of our people have begun to feel the need to unite. In Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec, Winnipeg and elsewhere there have been set up — or are being set up — committees that seek, that strive to do all that is possible to participate in this great, sacred task.

"We have therefore come to feel that we must unite all these single trends into one

mighty stream which will bear all classes, all parties, all movements in Canadian Jewry to one great political-national act.

“Thus there came into being the idea of The Canadian Jewish Alliance with the following platform:

“The Alliance seeks to unite Canadian Jewry in the interests of the communal, political and economic responsibilities of the present moment so historic for the Jewish people.” (Rome, pp. 6-7)

Brainin goes on to appeal to people in each city and town across Canada to convene a conference for all Jews in the community for the purpose of joining the Canadian Jewish Alliance and preparing for what he called the “Convention of all Canadian Jews.”

We have papers documenting the meeting of a “Toronto Conference of All Jewish Institutions in aid of those of our people suffering from the war”, which convened and voted on August 22, 1915 to become “to all intents and purposes a branch of the Canadian Jewish Alliance.”

Rome cites A. Rhinewine’s comments on the difficulties of creating the Canadian Jewish Alliance.

“As A. Rhinewine, historian and editor of the *Toronto Hebrew Journal*, wrote to Kaufman on August 24, ‘It did not come about easily, but it passed.’

“This letter refers to the difficulties encountered by the Alliance from not having its own periodical. He notes that ‘the Montreal Yiddish *Eagle* is closed to the Alliance. If you wish to accept my proposal, you may utilize the *Journal* in the interests of the Alliance insofar as space will permit. I am anxious that you should not suspect that I am seeking to benefit for my paper. As you see, for my part I write on behalf of the Alliance at every opportunity. If my proposal appeals to you, please let me know.’” (Rome, pp. 13-14)

In a report from Goldstick to Kaufman, Goldstick describes the problem between the Alliance and Zionist movements:

“It is the sincere wish of the Conference that you enter into negotiations with the Federation of Canadian Zionist Societies having as their object the creating of a better understanding between the Federation and our Alliance. The chief object of such negotiations to be that the Federation should give up its plan for a competitive convention which the Federation has decided to convene . . . We shall visit all Zionist organizations to insist that the Federation give up the competitive scheme.” (Rome, p. 14)

Some correspondence from Hamilton exists in which the division between the two movements is echoed. Rabbi J.S. Minkin wrote to the Alliance in April 1915:

“No prominent names of Montreal men who are leaders in Jewish affairs, with the exception of Kaufman and Brainin appear in the circulars; and the members thought this very strange . . . We have received instructions (from the Zionist Federation) that as a Zionist Society we cannot take an active part — that is, as a body. Besides, the Federation is considering the advisability of taking up the work in due course.” (Rome, p. 15)

Correspondence regarding the organizing of the Canadian Jewish Alliance

exists in our records from various other communities such as London; Chatham; North Bay; Quebec City; Saskatoon; Edenbridge, Sask.

Meanwhile, as the movement was strengthening, the Zionist disapproval of the Alliance was becoming more vocal and widespread. Rome states that the difference was not ideological and that the men on both sides were Zionists. He describes it as an institutional rivalry and says "The Zionists, the only national Jewish organization in the dominion, feared the rise of a second." (Rome, p. 17)

Rome, and Caiserman before him, point to a letter from Leon Goldman, Chairman of the Zionist Bureau, in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* of December 27, 1918 as the explanation of the Zionist stand:

"The Zionist Federation had strong reasons for abstaining from taking any official part in organizing a Congress until after the signing of the treaty of peace. Negotiations that were at present being carried on with European Governments by the Zionists were of too delicate a nature to admit of the Zionists running the risk of jeopardizing their position by being compromised by possible inimical or unwise resolutions that might be passed by the Congress." (Rome, p. 18)

While the organizing of the Canadian Jewish Alliance was progressing, on the other side, Clarence de Sola, Lyon Cohen and S.W. Jacobs formed the "Organizing Committee of the Conference of Canadian Jews" also known as the Canadian Jewish Committee (p. 19). This was to have basically the same objectives and goals as the CJA.

In a letter which the Zionist group sent to the Mizrahi Society in Montreal, they state:

"At a meeting held last week of the council of the Federation of Canadian Zionists, it was decided that such a Conference be held at Montreal on November 7, 1915, and that the Canadian Zionist Federation take the initiative on account of its large organization throughout Canada in calling this Conference.

"The Conference is to consist of all Jews of Canada representing all opinions and classes. The Conference must consist of all Jews, whether they be Zionist, non-Zionist or anti-Zionist. The Zionist Federation, in taking the initiative for the calling of this Conference, is merely lending its organization as the mechanism for the calling of the Jewish Conference and this must not be construed otherwise.

"In order to make this gathering as democratic and as broad as possible, it has been decided by the organizing committee to invite one delegate from each Jewish Organization throughout Canada having a minimum of twenty-five members, the organizations invited being synagogues, charitable organizations, labour unions, socialist bodies, national bodies, educational and literary societies, etc.

"If you are in sympathy with this idea, will you please call together a meeting of your society (when we shall be pleased, if you so desire it, to send someone to elaborate on the objects of the Conference) and elect from among yourselves a delegate whose name you will kindly mail to our secretary as soon as possible." (Rome, p. 20)

As Rome notes, the date of November 7 was chosen to coincide as nearly as

possible with the date of the national convention of the CJA.

The following letter was sent from the Montreal office of the Zionist Federation to Zionist societies in regard to an upcoming Alliance conference:

“As we understand that invitations have been sent out without our authority to some of our organizations by self-constituted parties who do not represent the community and who have no authority to represent us; Zionists are requested to be on their guard, to send their delegates only to the Conference summoned by the Zionist Federation and to pay no attention to invitations received from any other source.

“We trust that you will see that all other Jewish bodies in your city join you in this and give you their adhesion to the Conference called by this Federation and not to any other call, in order that our Conference may be thoroughly representative.” (n.d.) (CJC collection, series ZA, 1915)

Mr. Fitch of the Conference committee received a letter from Marcus Hyman of Winnipeg remarking on their community’s response to the two almost concurrent invitations:

“Without any formal motion, it was strongly urged with unanimity that, as the purposes of both of the proposed Conferences are presumably identical, and as both are also at least in the first instance, merely deliberative, it is vital that there should be but one Conference.

“We in Winnipeg strongly disapprove of being called upon to break up our united forces on an occasion of such paramount urgency for Jews of every class and origin. Winnipeg Jewry, in common with the Jews of the whole world, is seeking light in this momentous hour of darkness and of hope. In this Dominion we naturally look to Montreal for the lead. That deliberation and action shall be united is of supreme importance.

“We, at this juncture, therefore, demand from Montreal unity — no more and no less.” (Rome, pp. 21-22)

There were a number of failed attempts to unite the two leading groups in Montreal before the FCZ finally conceded to the Alliance its place as the representative body of Canadian Jewry.

We have an undated document, probably from late 1916 or 1917 in which it is reported that men from both movements met to discuss the necessity of forming a Canadian Congress distinct from the American Jewish Congress then in formation.

CJA in Toronto called a meeting on May 21, 1916 and had invited two men from New York to address the group. But when the men learned of the divided state of the community they refused to address the CJA and demanded instead to have representatives of all groups in Toronto attend a special meeting and there they put forward the following resolution which were reportedly “heartily approved”:

“1. A committee composed of equal representatives from the Canadian Jewish Committee and the Canadian Jewish Alliance shall immediately take the necessary steps to organize the Jews in Canada for the purpose of convening a Congress as soon as possible and not later than September, 1916.

“2. The said Committee shall, as soon as possible, submit to the British Government a memorandum through the Canadian Government with reference to the condition and situation of the Jewish people, and the said Committee shall also immediately communicate with representative bodies of Jews in the other British Dominions and Colonies urging upon them similar action.” (Rome, pp. 29-30)

Thus a momentum developed pulling the two groups together on the stronger base of the CJA.

When it was apparent that the war was drawing to a close and the parties would be meeting in a Peace Conference the Jews of the world began debating what their role should be in the peace negotiations.

The two groups of Canadian Jews both wanted the same things, but differed in their choice of action. Whereas the CJA/Congress group wanted to demand minority rights for Jews in the emerging post-war nations as well as recognition of Palestine as the national Jewish homeland, the Zionist group was not hopeful of the course of protecting Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and preferred to stake their hopes on Palestine.

In late 1918 we begin to see signs of the Zionist Federation moving toward the congress.

A document dated December 4, 1918 from the “Council of Zionist Federation” resolved:

“That the Council appoint a committee to watch and keep informed on the Congress question in conjunction with Congress Committee now existent, and that at some future date after the signing of the treaty of peace; the time should prove right in the opinion of the Federation for a Congress, the Federation will then take steps to cooperate with the Congress Committee to call a Congress, the action of the Committee of the Federation be, of course, subject to the approval of the Council. (Rome, pp. 40-41)

In January 1919 the Montreal Conference for the Jewish Congress took place as a pre-conference gathering at the Baron de Hirsch Institute.

An appeal for electing representatives by popular ballot states the purposes of the newly-born CJC:

“The Canadian Jewish Congress will, therefore, first and foremost deliberate upon the issue of a homeland in Palestine for the Jewish people. It will also deliberate upon the question of national rights for our brethren in all countries wherein they dwell, as well as the necessity of constructive relief work for our war-suffering co-religionists.

“Its significance will, for the Jews living in the Dominion, be tremendous; for issues bearing upon our rights as a national minority, will be raised and resolved upon; vital issues, for us in Canada. As well, the question of immigration shall form part of the proceeding of the Congress.” (Rome, p. 49)

The first Canadian Jewish Congress met March 16-19, 1919 at the Monument National Theatre in Montreal. At the opening session Rabbi Dr. Abramowitz welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Jewish community of

Montreal.

He stated that the gathering:

“ . . . reminded him of the injunction of our sages — he who sees a multitude of Israelites should pronounce the blessing: ‘Blessed be the wise Knower of Secrets, for just as the faces of these do not resemble each other, so also are their minds dissimilar . . .’ So the beauty of this Congress is in the fact that it is representative, not only of the masses, but also of the classes and of every school of thought, and of all the elements that constitute our varied Jewish population. And the blessing of this Congress lies in the fact that we who are assembled here feel that greater than the things which divide us, are the things that unite us.” (CJC collection, series A, 1919)

Two hundred and nine delegates attended the Congress who elected by ballot Lyon Cohen as President and H.M. Caiserman as the permanent General Secretary; officers were elected to represent Eastern, Central and Western Divisions of Canada.

The important resolutions passed at the Congress dealt with the following:

1. *Permanency of Congress* — that the CJC was declared a permanent body with its members to be elected from time to time on the universal suffrage system,
2. *Immigration* — that Canada should maintain an open-door policy — and that CJC should establish an immigration bureau with branches in all cities and ports to give assistance to immigrants — thus was JIAS born.
3. *Palestine* — That CJC should join with the World Zionist Organization and other Jewish Congresses in support of the Balfour Declaration at the Peace Conference.
4. *Relief and Rehabilitation* — for Jewish communities in war zone — that governments where Jews suffered compensate their Jewish citizens on the same basis as non-Jews. — that CJC regards relief not as charity but as a national duty of constructive relief to rebuild those communities.
5. *National Rights* — that in the creation of new or enlarged states and in the admission of all states into the League of Nations, all civil, political, religious, and national disabilities be removed by constitution, that is — equal rights for Jews.

The Zionists, despite their reservations about getting involved in debates over minority rights, were swayed and all resolutions passed.

The Congress, having resolved to make representation at the Versailles Peace Conference regarding minority rights of Jews in Eastern Europe and Palestine as a homeland for the Jews, wired Judge Mack of the AJC who was in Paris:

“Canadian Jewish Congress decided to present Jewish rights and Palestine resolutions,

and protest treatment Eastern European Jews to Peace Conference. Kindly advise if necessary to send special committee or will you undertake to act in our behalf." (CJC collection, series ZA, 1915)

Though it was resolved that CJC be established as a permanent body, it was not to be so for another 15 years.

Following its convening in March, the CJC continued to act on its resolutions for a short time. Specifically, it established the JIAS and submitted a memorandum to the Canadian Government on proposed amendments to the Immigration Act; it continued with fundraising for overseas relief. But essentially it lay dormant for 15 years.

It was only in 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and the threat of virulent anti-Semitism in *Western* Europe hit the consciousness of Canadian Jews that the CJC was reconstituted in 1934. But that is another chapter in our story.

The Jew of St. Denis: An Introduction

HARVEY MANN

Résumé

D'aucuns ont entendu parler de Samuel Jacobs. Non pas de Samuel W. Jacobs avocat brillant et membre du Parlement mais bien de Samuel Jacobs qui est peut être le premier Juif à être venu s'établir au Québec. Son histoire complète n'a pu être encore écrite car on présume que de nombreux documents existants sont encore dispersés. Les Archives Publiques du Canada ont des lettres et des documents ayant trait à la vie d'homme d'affaire de Samuel Jacobs, à partir de ceux-ci, il est possible de retracer sa vie d'environ 1750 à 1786.

Toutefois, il est à espérer que l'histoire complète de sa vie pourra nous donner une idée des errances d'un Juif dont les 40 premières années demeurent un mystère. Les documents que l'auteur a analysés donnent un tableau très net du mode de vie au Québec entre les années 1760 et 1786 mettant tout particulièrement l'accent sur le milieu des affaires de cette époque.

Ceci n'est qu'un préliminaire à la vie de Samuel Jacobs et à l'époque qu'il vécut.

Lorsque ses papiers seront catalogués et analysés il nous sera possible d'en savoir plus long à l'égard d'un être qui ne renia pas sa religion et qui par bien des côtés nous apparaît comme étant fascinant.

Some of you have heard of Samuel Jacobs. No, not Samuel W. Jacobs, well-known lawyer and Member of Parliament who died in 1938, but rather the Jacobs who may have been the first Jew to legitimately settle in Quebec. David Rome has written several vignettes about this Jacobs in the *Canadian Jewish News*¹ and Marcus mentions him in *Early American Jewry*.² By the same token, Vaugeois speaks about him in *Les Juifs et la Nouvelle-France*³ and is his

biographer in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.⁴ Nevertheless, the complete story of Samuel (Schmuel) Jacobs has not, as yet, been written. The reason for that is probably that the vast amount of material about Jacobs that has survived, has never been adequately catalogued and analyzed, a process that is just now taking place.

When Jacobs died in Quebec in 1786 at the age of 76, his estate was handled by Michael Cornud and Edward William Gray, and his will probated in Montreal. One of the Ermatingers was the executor for Gray's estate, and so the Jacobs' papers came to form a substantial part of the Ermatinger Estate Papers. Approximately forty volumes out of two hundred and forty-six of the Ermatinger-Jacobs Estate Papers (MG19, A2, Series 3) at the Public Archives of Canada consist of letters, business documents and other paper pertaining almost exclusively to Jacobs. From these documents it is possible to trace his life, in broad details, from about 1750 to 1786, with only a few uncertain gaps. The first 40 years of his life, though, are still shrouded in mystery. Eventually, however, it is hoped that the complete story of Jacobs' life will give us some idea of one Jew's wanderings. The material presently available will, nevertheless, provide us with a clear picture of the way of life in Quebec from 1760 to 1786 with particular emphasis on the business environment, as well as some inkling of the type of accounting records and methods used at that time.

Jacobs first comes to our attention as a shopkeeper and trader in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Most of the references come from actions taken by and/or against Jacobs for various sums connected with his buying or selling activities. Of particular interest is a writ⁵ taken out by Israel Abrahams on February 21, 1752 against Jacobs for £5.16.3. The statement of account attached to the writ shows £1.16.3 for merchandise purchased during March and April, 1751 and "to 6 months board, Sabbaths & holy days" for £4.0.0. This last entry indicates that Jacobs was practicing his faith at this time and also dates his definitive appearance in Halifax as late as 1750. Since no writs appear in the records of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas (a kind of small claims court), Halifax County after 1752, it seems that he did not stay in Halifax too long. Nevertheless, on March 20 1752 he does buy a half lot with buildings at the southeast corner of what is now Sackville and Granville Streets in downtown Halifax.⁶

The next few years are blurred. There is some unconfirmed evidence that a Jacobs, maybe ours, supplied Gage's troops out of Albany. It is known that Jacobs dealt with the troops at Staten Island, New York,⁷ but there is definite evidence that he was back in Nova Scotia in 1759. This time, he appears as a partner in a brewhouse at Louisbourg with William Buttar and Alexander Mackenzie.⁸ This venture was not too successful as, on settlement at Quebec on

March 10, 1761, each of the partners has a loss of over £100. It is also known that Jacobs lived at Fort Cumberland⁹ during 1758, but arrived at Quebec, most likely aboard his schooner “Betsey”, late in 1759. Although there is no evidence that he ever went back to Nova Scotia, he did have some property at Fort Cumberland in 1772, under the care of William Allen.¹⁰ Nevertheless, in November, 1761 his moveable effects at Fort Cumberland were sold at Public Vendue, raising almost £200 in the process.¹¹

Settled in Quebec City, Jacobs became very active in trade and commerce. By late 1761 he was involved in the building of a distillery in partnership with Benjamin Price and John Hay.¹² Rum was being produced three years later in 1764. This distillery, located near the Intendant’s Palace, also served as a tobacco manufacturing plant and as a base for buying and selling wheat. During this time Jacobs also shipped over £3,200 of merchandise to an employee, Charles Ferdinand Curtius, who was running a general store for him at St. Denis sur Richelieu.¹³ Before too long, Curtius decided to go into business on his own; he was not too successful and lost his home in Quebec City to Jacobs for non-payment of debts.¹⁴ Within several years Jacobs transferred his headquarters to St. Denis. The reason for this move is not quite definite. Jacobs was getting on in years and as he complained to one friend had “too many irons in the fire”.¹⁵ He was also having cashflow problems, particularly with Brook Watson, Olive and Rashleigh, a London firm to which he owed a considerable debt. Conversely, he wrote that he now had “A place in the country, well established a pleasant situation and flourishing regard to trade”.¹⁶ Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that Jacobs appreciated the strategic significance of St. Denis for trade between Montreal and Quebec in the north to Albany, New York and Philadelphia in the south. The location of St. Denis on the Richelieu River, which runs into the St. Lawrence River but has its roots in Lake Champlain, put it on a natural highway to the south, since the Hudson River runs out of this lake and eventually to the Atlantic Ocean at New York City.

As the quintessential entrepreneur, Jacobs did not rest at St. Denis. He operated a chain of general stores at St. Charles, St. Ours, Sorel and also sold merchandise at Crown Point on Lake Champlain. He was constantly acquiring real estate and owned houses in Quebec City, Montreal and Sorel, as well as considerable property around St. Denis. He seems to have always been involved with the military, either selling to individual soldiers and officers or as assistant commissary to the Prince Frederick’s Regiment, the Prince Louis Dragoon Regiment and many others stationed on the Yamaske River and around St. Denis from 1776 to 1783. His considerable success as a businessman can be attributed to his dedication in that direction. As he,

himself, put it in a letter written to a friend in 1785, “Your esteemed letter of the 12th ins. I was favoured with this day which gave me much pleasure as the Topic was business which I prefer to politics.”¹⁷

Insofar as his personal life was concerned, Jacobs is known to have fathered nine children with only two predeceasing him. At least six of these children were born in St. Denis to his common-law wife Marie Josephte Audet dite Lapointe. He did marry Marie Josephte in 1784 with no less a dignitary than His Excellency Frederick Haldiman, Governor in Chief of the Province of Quebec, etc. etc. and Protestant Minister, officiating at the wedding, which would tend to indicate his standing in the community.¹⁸ Despite his involvement in business, he seems to have had enough time to at least be concerned with his brood. His eldest child and son, also called Samuel, caused him quite a bit of pain and was disowned for a time, but they reconciled before too long. (This Samuel died July 19, 1824 and is buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Chambly, Quebec.) He wrote to his two eldest daughters who were being boarded at the Ursuline Convent in Quebec City to be good girls, but he disowned his oldest daughter and wrote her out of his will when she persisted in marrying someone not to his liking. Nevertheless, he did hire a dancing teacher and a French teacher for his children at St. Denis and ordered books and atlases for their use and education.

It is quite obvious that once Jacobs settled in Quebec City, he was no longer an observant practitioner of his religion. As indicated previously, contrary to usage, his eldest son bore his name and his daughters were brought up as Catholics. It can be postulated that one of the reasons that Jacobs is not as well known as his confrere Aaron Hart, with whom he corresponded and traded, is that Jacobs is the last of his line in his religion. Although not emphasized, there are several references throughout his papers that refer to this religion. He apologized to Samuel Judah in Montreal when his man disturbed the Sabbath and mentioned the Talmud. He further indicated to Judah that he wanted to be on good terms with him more than anyone other of the “tribe”.¹⁹ In one case, he felt that he was being discriminated against because of his Jewishness but didn’t seem to let it bother him to any great extent. All in all, however, it is certain that Jacobs never forgot that he had been born a Jew. One of the volumes belonging to the estate has several pages written in Hebrew script, almost certainly by Jacobs. These pages are written in some kind of code and have not as yet been deciphered, but give some indication that they pertain to the invasion of Quebec from the south. More to the point, throughout his life Jacobs signed his name with several ostentatious flourishes and in one of these flourishes there invariably appears the word “Schmuel” in Hebrew script.²⁰ It almost seems that

he was sending out a message to anyone “in the know”. His signature very strongly signaled his origins.

This has been a short introduction to the life and times of Samuel Jacobs, but it is only a beginning. Once his papers have been catalogued and analyzed a great deal more will be learned about this enterprising and fascinating man.

NOTES

1. For example, see “Rice, Juice, Skates-and Slaves Made Samuel Jacobs Healthy,” (28 Oct. 1977) and “Early Canadian Jew Married Catholic Girl”, (18 Nov. 1977).
2. Jacob Rader Marcus, *Early American Jewry* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1961), p. 203, et seq.
3. Denis Vaugeois, *Les Juifs et La Nouvelle-France* (Boréal Express, Trois Rivières, Québec, 1968).
4. Denis Vaugeois, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, V. IV (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1960), pp. 384-6.
5. *Inferior Court of Common Pleas*, Halifax County, No. A, 1749-53, RG37, Actions, March 1752 #39.
6. *Deeds Registry*, Halifax County, Vol. 2, p. 90.
7. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 2, pp. 95-6.
8. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 61, p. 63.
9. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 61, p. 62.
10. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 2, p. 3.
11. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 61, pp. 116-7.
12. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 62, p. 155.
13. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 62, p. 149.
14. *Quebec Gazette*, 27th August, 1767.
15. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 2, p. 7.
16. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 2, pp. 2-4.
17. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 4, p. 158.
18. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 22, pp. 308A & B.
19. *Public Archives of Canada* (MG 19, A2, Series 3) Vol. 3, pp. 148-150.
20. This signature can be seen throughout the many volumes of this series, but readers can see this phenomena quite easily on Jacobs' Will (Vol. 5, p. 72).

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