

Kay, Zachariah. *The Diplomacy of Impartiality: Canada and Israel, 1958-1968*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010. 127 pp.

At the time of the writing of this review, Israel has been subjected to a great deal of criticism from many governments. One place where the Israeli Prime Minister can find friendly faces, however, is Canada. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is one of the politicians friendliest to Israel, and Canada is among the more friendly countries to Israel at a time when there are not very many like it among the nations. Reading Zachariah Kay's concise and to-the-point monograph, one learns that this situation was not always the case. The title tells it all: *The Diplomacy of Impartiality*; to sensitive Israeli ears, "impartiality" in those sensitive days when Israel was still very young and trying to find its place in the world amounted to almost open hostility.

Canada's way in the international arena was set by Prime Minister Mackenzie King (1921-1930, 1935-1948), who had established "a cautious and scrupulous tone in international relations" (3). That line was followed also in the years to come, including those covered in this book. It was based on the principle of legality and respect for international law and bodies: foremost, at the time, the United Nations. Tilting between the optimism nourished by the creation of the United Nations and the prospects it offered for the resolution of conflicts, and the reality of the Cold War, Canada's foreign policy tended to be prudent and impartial. Canada sought to have a diplomacy that would allow it to work on both sides of a conflict, hoping to close gaps and helping to solve conflicts through its unbiased politics: that was how it also approached the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The period chosen by Kay for this book starts with the election of the conservative John G. Diefenbaker, who had inflicted a heavy blow to the rival Liberal party. The new Prime Minister was a supporter of the nascent Jewish state, but that did not lead to a change in the fundamentals of the "scrupulous

impartiality” policy toward Israel. First, it was considered to be the right policy, and second, “regardless of the party in power, the formulation of governmental attitudes and policies will be bureaucratically generated” (10). The “scrupulous impartiality” policy was devised by the professional body of the External Affairs ministry, that remained in power even with the change of government. Thus when the Liberal Lester B. Pearson (former External Affairs Minister) replaced Diefenbaker as Prime Minister, the “scrupulous impartiality” policy remained in force.

What really emerges from this book is the author’s observation that Israeli-Canadian relations during the period under discussion were mainly formal. Israel did not really expect Canada to act in its favor. Canada, for Israel, was a friendly country, and certainly better than hostile. However Canada did not really have assets it could provide to Israel; these were not available because of the “scrupulous impartiality” policy. The coming to power of the Liberal Lester B. Pearson in April 1963 did not lead to a profound change in Canada’s attitude towards Israel. Mr. Kay’s description of the way the Pearson government continued the line of the departing government is in line with the general theme of this book: the endorsement of a pragmatic and calculated policy towards Israel by consecutive Canadian governments. But that observation adumbrates to a great extent one major feature of the book: it is not really about Israeli-Canadian relations, it is rather a book on Canada’s foreign policy, which in this case is directed toward Israel. There is very little emphasis on the Israeli part of the equation, and we hardly learn about the way the Israeli-Canadian interaction was created and functioned. The story that this book tells us is the story of one side of what were mutual relations. It uncovers the fundamental line of policy taken by the Canadian government but it doesn’t tell us to what extent the Israelis made efforts to influence the making of Canadian policy regarding Israel. When the Israeli part of the story is told, it is mostly done in a strictly descriptive way. No serious attempt

is made to deal with the Israeli decision-making process that helped to shape mutual relations.

It is for that reason that the main advantage of this book is the light it sheds on several aspects of Canada's foreign policy, and the way it was formulated. It is less informative on the mutual relations between the two states, Israel and Canada.

**David Tal**

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King, Joe. *Fabled City: the Jews of Montreal*. Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 2009. 200 pp.

This book is the latest in a series of tributes to Jewish Montreal flowing from the pen of Joe King. As an experienced journalist and a talented storyteller, King has made the most of a rich body of material in order to evoke the personalities, incidents and anecdotes that mark the rich history of the Jews of Montreal over two and a half centuries. He knows a good story when he sees it and tells it well. The book is the result of a great deal of research and consultation, which the author graciously acknowledges. *Fabled City* is well designed with copious illustrations on nearly every page. Both those who are new to the historical memory of Montreal Jews and those who are already familiar with the subject will be entertained and instructed.

**Ira Robinson**

*Concordia University*

Levine, Allan. *Coming of Age: A History of the Jewish People of Manitoba*. Winnipeg: Heartland, 2009. 511 pp.

Almost fifty years after the publication of Arthur Chiel's *The Jews in Manitoba*, Allan Levine gives us a chronicle of astounding scope, supplemented by wonderful photographs from the archives of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada. The task of writing a regional history is no small one. The story must have sufficient depth and breadth so that readers from inside the