

In keeping with the Jewish National Fund's philosophy that there should be Jewish laborers, Motl, now called Mordechai, worked in construction, though he had no formal construction experience. Of course, both Mordechai and Chienke were also involved in defense and guard duty.

Unhappiness with rival factions in the kibbutz added to the hardships and led them to try private life in Haifa. They rented a room with a tiny kitchenette where they shared a shower and a toilet with four families. It was difficult to maintain a job outside of the kibbutzim and there was not enough food to eat. Hence, when parents sent tickets, they returned to Montreal for a visit; but the year was 1939 and with the advent of World War II, they could not return to Palestine.

In Montreal difficult times continued; they lost a one-month-old baby boy and Motl could not get permanent work until he got a job as superintendent at Adath Israel Congregation. He remained at the synagogue for thirteen years where he had a good relationship with the clergy and congregation, but eventually left his position and synagogue apartment to go out on his own in the installment merchant business, known as custom peddling. Custom peddlers represent an aspect of Jewish history in Montreal, a niche of business no longer in existence.

They did return to visit Israel in their older years. Chienke died in Montreal and Motl, at eighty-nine, moved to Toronto to be with his children. It is a story of idealism meeting reality, of having a dream, but being unable to live it. The main point of the memoirs, according to their son, is that they remained *chalutzim* in all phases of their life.

**Maxine Jacobson**

Troper, Harold. *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. xi + 356 pp.

Harold Troper's latest book, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics and the Canadian Jewish community in the 1960s*,

begins on the threshold of the sixties, in 1959. In this year, the Canadian Jewish Congress marked the bicentenary of Jews in Canada with a series of exhibitions and activities across the country. These events illustrated the many contributions made by Jews to this country, starting well before Confederation. The bicentenary was thus designed to rebrand Canada's Jews as "historical partners" rather than "alien interlopers" in the process of nation-building. The year 1959 was chosen based on the year in which Aaron Hart, Québec's first official Jewish settler, arrived in Trois Rivières and became active, among other things, in trading in furs. This choice of year avoided publicly associating the arrival of Canada's Jews with the arrival of the British army and the defeat of the French regime, which had prohibited Jews and other non-Catholics from settling. Although it was the new policies that came in the wake of the British victory that opened the doors to Jews in Canada, it would have been politically undesirable to associate Jews with "la Conquête".

Troper makes the point that the Bicentenary was aimed politically outwards, towards Canada's non-Jews. In the direct, lively style he adopts throughout this book, he explains that the Yiddish-speaking European immigrant Jews and their children didn't care about the Bicentenary: "Hart, schmart. What did most Jews know or care about Hart, Trois-Rivières, or the beaver trade? Did it help the mortgage? Did it help get a son into McGill or a daughter into the University of Toronto?" (11) Troper's telling of the story of the Bicentenary in the introductory chapter incorporates the perspectives of the Canadian Jewish leadership and the "Jewish street" as well as those of English Canada and of Québec. Through the six additional thematically organized chapters and Conclusion of *The Defining Decade*, Troper continues to chronicle the identities in play, the political stakes, and the issues that challenged Canada's Jews through the sixties. He demonstrates how, in rising to these challenges, the community reshaped its power structures, and how its identities, personal and collective, were molded.

Troper's second and third chapters tell a "tale of two cities", Montreal and Toronto. The context in terms of politics and identities in the 1960s is quite different in each. Troper demonstrates this by highlighting the issues that preoccupied each city's Jews. In the Montreal of the 1960s, a city that "pulsed with a vibrant cultural and intellectual life of its own," (41) Troper focuses mainly on two issues. First, he provides a succinct account of the complicated question of schooling for Montreal's Jewish children. Second, he traces the deliberations of the Canadian Jewish Congress on the issue of whether to participate in Canada's Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission. In addition to a clear, uncluttered presentation of this complex of inter-related issues, Troper's Montreal chapter offers a brief but nuanced overview of the arrival and integration of thousands of French-speaking Sephardim. In Toronto, where at the end of the 1950s "even the Jews were Presbyterian", the context was different. The central story in this chapter revolves around the emergence of the Holocaust survivor community as a voice in organized Jewish life. This is the context in which the movers and shakers, the "machers" of the organized Jewish community are forced to reconsider their policy of quiet diplomacy with respect to the non-Jewish power structure. Troper gives a detailed account of the neo-Nazi rally planned to take place at Toronto's Allan Gardens on May 30, 1965. This incident reveals the "never again" determination of the survivors, who believed that their Jewish leaders were negligent. Troper argues that the Allen Gardens incident and its aftermath helped to bring a new kind of "in your face" activism onto the Canadian Jewish landscape.

With the groundwork laid and the players in place, Troper set the stage for the issue he sees as central to the new agenda that emerged for Canadian Jewry during the 1960s. Troper had originally intended that this issue, the Canadian Jewish response to the 1967 Six-Day War, should be the single focus of his book. He later decided that a broader perspective was necessary to an appreciation of the distinctive character of

Canadian Jewry as it emerged during the 1960s. Nonetheless, Troper argues that the Six-Day War was the pivotal point of the “defining decade”. Just when the invisible walls, that had continued to keep Jews out of the top WASP law firms, social gatherings and country clubs, had really begun to crumble, and community leadership had begun to worry about assimilation, visceral fear for Israel’s survival galvanized Jews across the country. There was a close to universal “gut certainty that one’s own fate was inseparable from that of Israel and the Jewish people.” (129). Troper details the changes that this situation brought about within community leadership structures, on campuses, and in relationships with former partners such as the United Church. He further devotes his next chapter, entitled “Prestige Pride”, to the effects of the Six-Day War victory. These include the creation of a Jewish lobby as well as substantial increases in day school attendance, tourism to Israel, and Jewish student demand for university-level Jewish studies courses. Another consequence of the Israeli victory was the emergence of divergent opinion both within and outside Israel, as to how best to handle the territory conquered in the war.

The final two chapters before the Conclusion of *The Defining Decade* are entitled “The Maddest and Most Passionate Fling”, which focuses on Pierre Trudeau and his government, and “Let Them Have It”, looking at the ways in which the Jewish community developed and demonstrated a new toughness and backbone, “no more silent Jews”. Troper’s conclusions remain open-ended. On the one hand, he demonstrates that the sixties brought renewal and strength to Canada’s Jews. This included a shift from remembering to doing, from being Jewish, to “doing Jewish”. For the new generation, there was a new level of engagement: “being Jewish was not what they inherited from parents; it was what they wanted for their children.” At the same time, many of the issues raised by the sixties, about Israel, about intra-community relations, inter-community relations and others, remain unresolved.

Two outstanding features of *The Defining Decade* are its use of sources and its style. Troper makes skilful use of newspapers, journals, archives and personal papers as well as over 75 interviews with a wide range of participants. This gives texture and credibility to the stories he tells by adding anecdotes and perspectives from “the street”. As well, Troper brings us behind-the-scenes at the centres of power, thanks to archival research supplemented by interviews with government ministers and community leaders. Among others, Troper recounts several anecdotes about Pierre Trudeau. He also tells the story, for the first time publicly in this book, of the Trudeau government’s negotiations with Iraq, to bring Iraqi Jews to Canada. Troper’s account details the Trudeau government’s persistence and eventual success in reaching an agreement with the government of Iraq. However, this plan was superseded by events and was not carried out. Even when he does not bring new material, Troper’s succinct and lively retellings of key events are important. These include large issues such as that of Soviet Jewry, or the schools issue in Québec. Troper also knows how to use the detail of specific, smaller-scale events to illustrate larger themes that reveal leadership structures and community functioning. This is the case in Troper’s focus on the Reverend A.C. Forrest, influential editor of the *United Church Observer*. Forrest’s editorials critical of Israel caused a rift between the Jewish community and its former ally, the United Church. Another example is Troper’s account of how the Jewish community pressured Toronto’s exclusive Granite Club to change its practice of excluding Jews.

*The Defining Decade* is an important addition to the overview books on Canadian Jewish life that include Tulchinsky’s *Taking Root* (1997) and *Branching Out* (1998), and his update of these books in *A People’s Journey* (2008), Weinfeld’s *Like Everyone Else but Different* (2001) and, though its focus is narrower, Bialystock’s *Delayed Impact* (2000). All of these books, as well as Troper and Abella’s 1982 classic *None is Too Many*, are written by Canadian Jewish scholars of Canadian