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Holocaust Journalism in 1950s Toronto: The Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, and The Vochenblatt

Abstract

Historians and polemicists have debated the existence of a "conspiracy of silence" surrounding the Holocaust in 1950s North America, with some arguing that the Cold War and ethnic assimilation led to avoidance of any public discussion of German crimes or Jewish suffering. To evaluate this, this article looks at 1950s articles about the survivors, the aftermath and recollection of the Shoah, and remembrance ceremonies, in three Toronto newspapers: the liberal-leaning Star, the more conservative Globe and Mail, and the English-language section of the Vochenblatt, a left-leaning weekly affiliated with the United Jewish People's Order. This article shows that the Holocaust was a significant topic of discussion by analyzing how it was discussed by the different papers, and by considering that the motives given for silence shaped coverage but did not smother it. Therefore the claims for a conspiracy of silence, rather than being simply an evaluation of the cultural climate of the era by latter-day historians, in fact originated in denunciations of silence that were already being made in the post-war era, part of a moral debate over the aftermath of the war that even in the 1950s was far from quiet.

Résumé

Les historiens et les polémistes ont débattu de l'existence d'une « conspiration du silence » autour de l'Holocauste dans l'Amérique du Nord des années 1950, certains soutenant que la querre froide et l'assimilation ont conduit à éviter toute discussion publique des crimes allemands ou de la souffrance juive. Pour évaluer ce phénomène, ce texte examine les articles des années 1950 sur les survivants, les suites et le souvenir de la Shoah, et les cérémonies de commémoration, dans trois journaux de Toronto : le Star, de tendance libérale, le Globe and Mail, plus conservateur, et la section anglophone du Vochenblatt, un hebdomadaire de gauche affilié au United Jewish People's Order. Cet article démontre que l'Holocauste était un sujet de discussion important en analysant la façon dont il a été abordé par les différents journaux, et en considérant que les motifs invoqués pour le silence ont façonné la couverture médiatique, mais ne l'ont pas étouffée. Par conséquent, les revendications d'une conspiration du silence, plutôt que d'être une simple évaluation du climat culturel de l'époque par des historiens de l'après-querre, trouvent en fait leur origine dans les dénonciations du silence qui avaient déjà été faites dans l'après-querre, dans le cadre d'un débat moral sur les conséquences de la querre qui, même dans les années 1950, était loin d'être silencieux.

Between the end of the war and the 1960s, as anyone who has lived through those years can testify, the Holocaust made scarcely any appearance in American public discourse, and hardly more in Jewish public discourse... By any standard... nobody in those years seemed to have much to say on the subject, at least in public.

- Peter Novick, 19992

Qui pouvait oublier Dachau?

- Gabrielle Roy, 1954³

How did Toronto newspapers of the 1950s write about the Holocaust?

According to some, we should expect to find little writing about it at all. It has been argued that the Holocaust received minimal public recognition during the Cold War and that major Jewish institutions and groups maintained a "conspiracy of silence" during a period that ran from the fall of the Iron Curtain to as early as 1958 or as late as 1978.

This article tests that proposition against discussions of the Shoah in three Toronto-based newspapers, from 1949 until early 1960. I take note not just of the extent to which the concentration camps and their survivors were talked about, but also how they were talked about, identifying which aspects became news and which did not. I take the reasons given for silence during the Holocaust, such as Cold War ideology and a cultural distaste for the role of victim, and show how they shaped Holocaust discourse but did not eliminate discussion.

In contrast with the turbulent and revolutionary decade that followed it, the 1950s in North America are often looked back on, perhaps nostalgically, as an optimistic and innocent time. However, it was also a decade haunted by ghosts of the Second World War and fears of a Third. The concentration camps were invoked repeatedly amidst warnings of a recrudescence of Nazism or in debate over the rearmament of West Germany, and in reports on the trials of Nazi war criminals. The Holocaust was also invoked repeatedly outside the context of the War, as a measure of and metaphor for evil.

Scholars have analyzed extensively how the Nazi persecution of Jews was covered by journalists during the Hitler years and the war's immediate aftermath, but historians have paid little attention to the reporting of the 1950s. This article fills in some of that gap. I offer an alternate explanation of how the "myth of silence" came to be; but my primary purpose is simply to recover some of the discussion and stories that have been overlooked due to a belief in the era's complacent silence.

A Historical Debate

The most extreme claim of post-war silence was advanced in Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life*.⁴ He asserted that the Holocaust was not a topic of interest for Americans in the postwar period, Jewish or not, except among survivors themselves, and that when discussed it was presented as a universal human tragedy of war rather than a specifically Jewish catastrophe. He attributes the silence to a distaste for being seen as victims, and to Cold War politics that prioritized the struggle against communism over memories of the sins of America's new ally West Germany. Norman Finkelstein's widely circulated book *The Holocaust Industry* condensed and vulgarized Novick's argument in the service of a more restrained thesis. Unlike Novick, he does not consider popular opinion but focuses only on the positions taken by vaguely defined Jewish elites.⁵

Where earlier writers had used a claim of silence to critique the materialism and amnesia of post-war culture, Novick and Finkelstein turned the argument around, denouncing the preoccupation with the Holocaust from the late 1970s onwards as abnormal.⁶

Both Novick and Finkelstein see the communist movement of the 1950s as a vocal exception to the rule of silence. Indeed, Novick sees the desire to avoid a perception of any link between Jews and Communism as another reason why more mainstream Jewish organizations avoided talking about the Holocaust.⁷ His brief discussion portrays the Communist Party as having Jewish members but no Jewish identity. Yet many Jewish communists were not simply communists who happened to be Jewish; they were advocates of secular Yiddish culture who believed that communism was intertwined with Jewish history and values.⁸ The existence of Jewish left-wing groups that spoke out loudly about the Holocaust contradicts Novick's central claim.⁹

More recently, there was a backlash in American scholarship against the existence of any period of silence, in books whose titles carry their message: Hasia Diner's We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945–1962, and the anthology After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence. Nonetheless, the narrative of silence maintains a strong hold, particularly among those who focus on the experiences of immigrant survivors and the gulf of incomprehension between survivors and their co-religionists raised in North America. Individuals who spoke out about the Holocaust during this period are often described as heroic exceptions to the rule, without calling the general rule into question. Page 1972 and 1972 and 1972 are often described as heroic exceptions to the rule, without calling the general rule into question.

In light of this subsequent research, it is tempting to say that Novick did not literally mean that the Holocaust was not talked about, but rather to interpret him as

dramatizing a claim that it was less talked about than in later decades or discussed superficially without comprehending the experiences of those who suffered in it. Yet a careful reading of his book suggests a consistent pattern of trying to gloss over, rather than understand, significant elements of American culture that contradict his thesis, as if trying to prove his broad statements that the Holocaust was not a topic of public discussion by omission. John Hersey's well-researched and best-selling 1950 novel of the Warsaw ghetto, The Wall, is acknowledged only in a footnote, in which Novick suggests that the book sold well because of the reputation of its author rather than the subject matter.¹³ He minimizes the significance of the tremendous popularity of The Diary of Anne Frank and the play based on it by pointing out that she was an assimilated Jew with little interest in religion and that the theatrical version portrayed her story in universalist terms.¹⁴ Yet Nazi Germany targeted Jews on racial rather than religious grounds, and the reality of the Holocaust was that secular Jews and Christians of Jewish ancestry, even members of Christian holy orders, were equally victims.¹⁵ Other books concerning the Holocaust that achieved wide popularity in the United States during the decade are not even mentioned.¹⁶ Overall, Novick's apparent intention was to lead a path to a Jewish identity that was not based on the identification with the Holocaust that has so much characterized it in recent decades. To serve that purpose he put forward an extreme vision of the 1950s, one according to which the Holocaust, downplayed by Jewish organizations and communal leaders of the post-war era, "could not become a public communal emblem" and "tended, at least for many, to decline in salience."17

Franklin Bialystock and Max Beer outline a pattern in Canada similar to that found by Novick: a period of historical amnesia that came to an end in the early 1960s.¹⁸ Bialystock acknowledges that left-wing and labour Zionist Jewish schools taught about the Holocaust during this period but sets this against a larger pattern of neglect in the Jewish community, including in the Jewish press. He attributes this to a disconnect between the survivor community and other Canadian Jews, although he directs most of his analysis to explaining why the Holocaust re-emerged as a topic of concern beginning in the 1960s, rather than why it was so little talked about before.¹⁹

Beer's work focuses on the leadership of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Scholars studying the grassroots of the Jewish community find a concern for Holocaust discussion and commemoration that raises doubts about the extent to which Bialystock's and Beer's conclusions apply to the larger Jewish population.²⁰ Norman Erwin maintains, contrary to Bialystock and Beer, that the Holocaust was "a central component of Jewish life in Canada in the immediate postwar era," and describes how Canadian Jews viewed issues such as the debate over West German rearmament, the treatment of Jews in Arab lands, and the Suez Crisis through the prism of Holocaust memory.²¹

Studies of newspaper reporting on the Holocaust have focused on the 1930s and 1940s.²² They address painful questions about whether the press lived up to its responsibilities to inform the public about the horrors of Nazi Germany and often involve discussions of whether the West could have done more if the Nazi extermination program had been better publicized. Coverage of the topic in English-language newspapers of the 1950s has rarely been considered.²³ Novick categorizes the few newspaper stories he mentions as rare exceptions.²⁴ Yet a search through the *New York Times*' index volumes for the decade, under topics like "displaced persons," minorities," and the names of individual concentration camps, indicates that the aftermath of the camps and ongoing Nazi war crimes trials were recurring topics throughout the decade.²⁵

I test the thesis of silence against reporting in the newspapers of one Canadian city, Toronto, which was then catching up to Montreal as Canada's immigration destination and business centre. At the beginning of the decade the 67 000 Jews who lived in Metropolitan Toronto were 6% of the total population, enough to make them the largest ethnic minority in this very British-rooted city, and to give Toronto the third largest Jewish community in the British Commonwealth. More than 7 000 Jews had immigrated there in the years 1946–51, suggesting that refugees and survivors accounted for over a tenth of the 1950s Jewish population.²⁶ The size of the Jewish community increased further over the decade, reaching 88 648 by 1961.²⁷

Toronto had three daily broadsheets: the liberal-leaning *Toronto Star*, the conservative populist *Toronto Telegram* and the patrician conservative *Globe and Mail*, alongside a number of specialized and foreign language papers serving smaller communities within the city.

The *Telegram* went out of business in 1971 and its back issues are available only on microfilm; I focus on the more readily searchable *Star* and *Globe*. I also look at a leftwing Jewish newspaper, the *Vochenblatt*.

The *Vochenblatt* was a small circulation bilingual Yiddish/English weekly, funded by and affiliated with the United Jewish People's Order, or UJPO, a national cultural and fraternal organization that grew out of the Jewish labour movement. It supported the Labor Progressive Party, as the Communist Party of Canada called itself during the Cold War, although the extent to which the paper adhered to the Soviet line diminished mid-way through the decade.²⁸

Consideration of the *Vochenblatt's* reporting sheds light on a significant omission in Novick's book: the way the Jewish left spoke out about the Holocaust. It also fills a gap in the analysis of Bialystock, who suggested that the paper did not devote much space to the Holocaust based on an ambiguous comment made by the *Vochenblatt's* manager.²⁹ Finally, the 1950s condemnation of silence by the Jewish left foreshadows

Novick's arguments and is a missing link in the history of ideas, connecting the 1990s narrative of a conspiracy of silence to its likely origins in the outrage of 1950s activists.

The newspapers, as a public forum responsive to the events of the day, offer an ideal test case for the thesis, advanced by Novick and others, that the Holocaust lacked public salience during the 1950s. Beyond that, they offer insight into how the people of Toronto were learning about and discussing what we now call the Holocaust. They announce and describe memorials and other related community events, and give voice to members of the community through letters to the editor, op-ed pieces and interviews. This information is, in the nature of publishing, filtered through an editorial process and subject to the choices and personal interests of editors and publishers, but the coverage in the newspapers is a useful if imperfect mirror reflecting facts on the ground.

Hasia Diner has attributed the "myth of silence" to generational change. She describes how 1960s Jewish radicals eschewed the conformism of their parents and denounced them for downplaying the Holocaust in the same way that their peers in other minority groups were denouncing their own parents for having been too assimilationist and accommodating to the Establishment. In time, she argues, their rhetoric became established as history.³⁰ I suggest a different explanation. The accusations of silence are not reified doctrine of 1960s radicals; rather, they are continuations of accusations already being made by left-wing groups in the 1950s.

I take the standard reasons given for silence—a disdain for the status of victim, the nature of Cold War politics, a tendency to universalize the concentration camps as one more horror of war rather than to allow them to be seen as a purely Jewish tragedy—and discuss how they played out in the press coverage of the survivors and their experiences. But I use those arguments as a framework rather than just for the purpose of rebuttal; my goal is to contribute to a granular understanding of how the Holocaust was understood and described in a city whose growth was being fuelled in part by the immigration of European Jewish refugees.

The Politics of the Vochenblatt: Context and Background

The 1950s were a time of conflict and change within the progressive Jewish left, and those conflicts and changes were mirrored in the paper's editorial slant and coverage. In order to understand their coverage of the Holocaust and related issues, some background is helpful.

The Vochenblatt's long-time editor was a Communist party member and the paper was generally sympathetic to the Communist Party line on international issues during the first half of the 1950s. At the time, the pro-Zionist stance of the late

1940s had given way to a pro-Arab policy that characterized Zionism as a bourgeois nationalist ideology and Israel as an agent of imperialist powers.³¹ Accordingly, although the paper expressed support for the country of Israel it denounced the Ben Gurion government and emphasized building Yiddish culture in the Diaspora over emigration to Israel.³²

The staff of the paper were aware that the Soviet line on Israel discouraged many who were otherwise sympathetic with their beliefs from joining the movement. In the March 18 1954 issue under the heading "Welcome Dissenters," B. Silbert wrote that "There are many who are not ready to accept entirely the analysis of events in Israel as they have been presented by progressive elements in this country." Then he added in bold "But this does not mean that such people would not make welcome additions to the ranks of the UJPO and could make a very fine contribution to the life of the organization."³³

The suppression and execution of Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, among other issues, raised doubts in the minds of many members of the Party, which were crystallized by Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin's cult of personality. For a brief time, a faction arguing for an independent progressive line won out, and their voices were also reflected in the editorial policy of the *Vochenblatt*.³⁴ J. B. Salsberg, elected to the Ontario provincial legislature as a Communist Party candidate, had been expelled from the Party's National Executive Committee in 1953 for "his Zionist sympathies" although he remained a member of the Party.³⁵ He rejoined the Central Committee in 1956, and the *Vochenblatt* published a statement that Salsberg had been right and that those who had him expelled had been wrong to do so.³⁶ Nevertheless, overall disillusionment and frustration with in–fighting led many of the more independent members to quit the Party entirely, allowing hard line loyalists to the USSR to regain control and expel and shun most of the remaining independent voices by the end of the decade.

Although the UJPO was not formally linked to the Party, there was an overlap in their membership. In late 1959 and early 1960, Salsberg and about a quarter to a third of the UJPO members, who saw the UJPO as too closely tied to pro-Soviet policies, formed a separate body, the New Fraternal Jewish Organization.³⁷ This struggle over the direction of the UJPO and the *Vochenblatt* corresponded with similar struggles and ruptures in American left-wing organizations and newspapers of the time.³⁸

The editor of the *Vochenblatt* remained a member of the Party for decades while maintaining an independent editorial outlook, particularly on Jewish issues. However, in 1977 he was censured by the Party's Central Committee and, under pressure to retract criticism of the Soviet Union's treatment of Russian Jews, chose instead to resign his membership in the Communist Party.³⁹

Decrying Silence: The Debate Over Memory in the 1950s

Some 1950s writers insisted the Holocaust was too well-known to require special memorial. The *Globe's* critical review of *The Wall*, John Hersey's best-selling novel of the Warsaw ghetto, explained that "Surely if there is one thing unnecessary, it is to go out of one's way to try to persuade the public that the vicious slaughter of Jews in Poland took place. It is about the best known among recent human disgraces."⁴⁰

Nonetheless, voices in the 1950s were already denouncing the silence of others.

The name of Abraham Feinberg, the rabbi of Toronto's prestigious Reform synagogue, the Holy Blossom Temple, was frequently in the newspapers, both as a writer and as a subject of articles. In 1951 he argued against a proposal to release a Nazi war criminal held in Canadian prison to Germany, decrying it as "a tragic and shocking comment on the lapse of memory and morality which mark our time". As the decade ended, he expressed concerns that Germany was "anxious to forget the past and its own misdeeds; it wants to lose consciousness of inflicting war and genocide on the world and is forcing these memories into its collective subconscious." He believed that "the world should not be allowed to forget the Nazi slaughter of Jews, 'the most cruel, callous and colossal crime in history."

The claim that memory of the genocide was obliterated by the Cold War was already being made during the course of the decade. "In some ways," wrote British journalist Philip Toynbee in the *Globe*, "the quarrel between East and West, which followed almost immediately on the discovery of the German extermination camps, has been a psychological boon to Western minds. Our hostility to a different group of human beings enabled us to forget that revelation of human bestiality. Most of us were glad enough to co-operate with the Germans in that brisk task which they at once embarked upon of forgetting the past.... it was agreed to forget about the camps, and any reminder of them was greeted either with indignation or with boredom." And yet, for all the moralizing about collective amnesia, the article takes for granted a basic comprehension of the Nazi extermination policy in its readership; the litany of "Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Belsen and Theresienstadt" is presented in a paragraph that omits any statement that these are concentration camps, expecting the readership to appreciate the horror evoked by recitation of the names alone.⁴⁴

Concerns about loss of collective memory were shared by others. In 1959, the *Globe* reported on a speech at an Orthodox Toronto synagogue by a visiting New York rabbi, who lectured "that the world and even the Jewish community have almost wilfully forgotten...the Nazi massacres of Jews." Another *Globe* article, on the 15th anniversary of the liquidation of the Bialystock ghetto, concludes that "Fifteen years is [...] much too soon to forget. Perhaps it is still too soon to start remembering. But until

we bring ourselves to face this whole operation in all its evil we are really refusing to face ourselves."⁴⁶ The *Star* reported how even then-vice-president Richard Nix-on, visiting the rubble of the Warsaw ghetto on an official visit to Poland, expressed concern that people were forgetting the lessons of the Holocaust.⁴⁷

Others saw it from the opposite perspective: the *Star* reported a claim from Nazi apologists in Germany that excessive preoccupation with escaped war criminals was "part of a plot to divert public attention from dangers of communism."⁴⁸

In the summer of 1959, the *Star* ran an article about a resurgence of Nazism in West Germany, describing incidents of antisemitic hostility and vandalism.⁴⁹ In response, one letter to the editor portrayed the Germans as the real victims and declared that "all stories of mass-killings in concentration camps are propaganda lies." The letters page in the following days showcased indignant replies, and the *Star* soon ran an interview with one of the letter writers, a "vivacious housewife and mother", about her own experiences in the camps.⁵⁰

The Vochenblatt frequently expressed concerns about Nazi revival in West Germany and spoke of how Cold Warriors sought to obliterate the memory of the Holocaust in order to pursue the struggle against the USSR.51 A 1953 article maintained that "It is clear that the government of West Germany, and its Washington sponsors, are trying to make humanity forget the crimes of nazism, so that West Germany can be rearmed, and renazified for a new world slaughter."52 The denunciations were consistent with both Soviet foreign policy and Jewish remembrance, but continued even after the initial debate over West German rearmament had ended. In 1956, the Vochenblatt contrasted Canada's gift of Sabre jet fighters to Berlin with its refusal to sell military aircraft to Israel, mentioning Germany's responsibility for the death of six million Jews and stating that Israel "emerged as a state on the ashes of Hitler's determined effort to completely destroy the Jewish people."53 On the 20th anniversary of the start of the Second World War, the editor wrote of how "forces at work in the Western World . . . want us to forget the brutal acts of the German Nazis, Italians [sic] fascists and Japanese imperialists" and "are arming the very same surviving war criminals in preparation for a third, and still greater, world slaughter." He mentions the six million Jews who died in the "Nazi death camps, gas chambers and ghettos" as part of a larger discussion of all the deaths caused by the war.⁵⁴ A Yiddish short story translated into English gave Vochenblatt readers a fictional account of a German soldier who had emigrated to Canada. A recipient of medals for having killed Jews and others, reduced to living in a boarding house, he commits suicide in despair because a Greater Reich to which he could dedicate himself had not arisen again in Germany.55

The *Vochenblatt* strongly asserted that Jewish communal organizations were keeping silent about the Shoah in order to maintain good relationships with the West Ger-

man government.⁵⁶ It lauded communist East Germany, claiming that "the East German government does not want the horrible facts about Hitlerism to be forgotten. On the contrary the East German government wants these facts to be deeply embedded in the minds of the German youth—that they should forever remember them!'⁵⁷

For the *Vochenblatt*, forgetting was not an option: '... the memory of [Kristallnacht] and all that followed in the ensuing 16 years can never be erased from the minds of the Jewish people.'58

Reports From Germany: Old Nightmares and New Fears

Concerns about memory and amnesia also surfaced in reporting from Germany. Journalists visited the sites of former concentration camps and described them to Toronto readers.

One Globe reporter, visiting Germany five years after the war ended, remarked on the cognitive dissonance of dealing with the 'average German [...] affable, clean and industrious' against the backdrop of knowledge of the Holocaust. He felt almost apologetic on seeing the destruction by Allied bombs of a magnificent department store only to "discover that the owner never knew what our bombers had done to his store. He was a Jew and died several years before in a German concentration camp, perhaps after being herded like an animal into a gas chamber by his Nazi persecutors." ⁵⁹

In 1952, another *Globe* journalist visited the Dachau concentration camp, preserved as a memorial, where a tourist's graffiti 'warns grimly: "It will happen again. Only wait." In 1953, a *Star* writer investigating the resurgence of Nazism in West Germany went to Belsen and told how "even in its present state the camp chills you with horror." His front-page above-the-fold story, which made no mention of the race or religion of the victims, described how Germans in nearby Hannover were in denial: "They smiled. They said I was too credulous; they said it was all propaganda. Hitler never did such things. As far as I could see thousands of Germans have hypnotized themselves into believing just what they want to believe and forgetting what they want to forget." In 1952, which is a memorial to the present the propagand of the propagand of the victims.

Four months later, the *Globe's* city editor reported on his own visit to Belsen, explaining that "These days almost nothing remains of the buildings and equipment used by the Nazis in exterminating, by starvation, beatings and a huge crematorium, an estimated 50 000 prisoners most of whom were Jews." Also in 1953, the *Vochenblatt* reprinted an article by a Soviet war correspondent, Vasily Grossman, on "the Hell that was Treblinka."

A Globe reporter visiting Warsaw in 1958 asked to be taken to the ghetto area, and

saw that it had disappeared, replaced by rubble and a few new buildings; he saw a monument dedicated to the Jews who had died under Nazi occupation and noted that less than I per cent of the pre-war Jewish population of Poland remained in the country.⁶⁴ A 1959 travel story in the *Star's* "Women" section similarly includes mention of the ghetto, where new buildings had been constructed "over the levelled ruins, under which lie thousands of bodies of people, whose only crime was to belong to the Jewish race."⁶⁵ Arthur Koestler, who had grown up in Vienna, described in a *Globe* feature article what it was like to see a metropolis whose pre-war culture had been "Austro-Judaic" now turned into a city without Jews.⁶⁶

In 1952 *The Globe* criticized Rabbi Feinberg for urging his Holy Blossom congregants not to attend a concert by a German pianist alleged to have been an ardent Nazi. It also reported on efforts by the Canadian Jewish Congress to inform the public of the musician's past, and made note of counterclaims that the pianist had actually been a member of the resistance, "an undercover anti-Nazi who aided many Jews to escape from concentration camps." In an editorial the following day under the title "Not the Canadian Way," the paper expressed its disappointment in the rabbi's "vindictiveness and intolerance" and adding that "persecution of individuals is not to be condoned by those of the British tradition." Jewish people, it opined, should be particularly sensitive to the use of boycotts: "With all sympathy, there are examples in the past of Hebrew and Jewish people which have given Hitler and earlier persecutors the legends and myths on which they sustained the boycotts and prejudice they used with such brutal effect."

In response, one letter to the editor described this last sentence as "the most malicious statement I have ever read in the free press" while another expressed "more than astonishment" at the "biased opinion," asking "How can the Jewish people, in a few short years, forget what the Nazis have done to their people—killing over 6,000,000 by the most diabolical and inhuman methods ever fermented in a human brain."

It is a measure of change at the *Globe* that by the end of the decade Feinberg had become a frequent op-ed writer for the paper.⁷¹ His contributions included a weeklong series under the provocative title "A Rabbi Visits Germany". The paper touted the series in advance, first with an article announcing that Feinberg would be going on a fact-finding mission to Europe and then an interview with him on his return that announced the forthcoming series.⁷² The articles in the series were displayed prominently in the newspaper; they evoked the horrors of the Nazi extermination program and featured discussion about whether the conjoined twins of Nazism and antisemitism could revive in West Germany.⁷³ He wrote about his observations of East Germany, and although his analysis of the moral qualms and geo-political realities of Israel's growing trade and relationships with West Germany included discussion of Cold War politics, the Cold War did not cause him to hide revulsion at past atrocities.⁷⁴

The Nuremberg trials and the other war crimes trials conducted by the Allies' international military tribunals were a hot topic in the years immediately after the war and into the early 1950s. When the tribunals were shut down, the *Vochenblatt* protested their closing, quoting with approval the words of the Western Jewish News: "The smoke from the crematoria has barely faded from the skies but allied diplomats are ready to allow German courts to review the cases of German war criminals." The editorial added that 'the feeling of horror at the thought of a rearmed, renazified Germany permeates all honest Canadian people, and Canadian Jews especially." After responsibility for the prosecution of war crimes shifted to European national courts, journalists continued to cover the ferreting-out of Nazi war criminals and their ongoing war crimes trials in Germany and elsewhere under front-page headlines, and these topics continued to be casually mentioned in articles on related subjects. The reactions and public demonstrations of the Jewish former victims, and explanations of the wartime atrocities against Jews, were part of the story.

War crimes could also have a North American angle, as journalists expressed concern over the presence of Nazi war criminals on North American soil.⁷⁸

Reporting from Germany regularly expressed concern over signs of Nazi resurgence. The revival of neo-Nazi publishing in West Germany was reported on as a danger signal in 1952.⁷⁹ Concern was expressed as former Nazis re-entered West German public life.⁸⁰ Incidents in West Germany of antisemitism, or indicating a resurgence of antisemitic Nazi ideology, were reported in all three papers.⁸¹ When Jewish cemeteries in Germany were desecrated, it was news.⁸² In 1959, the Star published a report from the London *Standard's* German correspondent, expressing concern about resurgent incidents of antisemitism and how Nazi ideology was spreading to the young.⁸³

The Survivors

Refugees from the displaced persons camps continued to arrive in Canada throughout the decade. The newspapers told of their living situation in the camps, covered debates over how many should be admitted, and reported their arrivals in Canada.⁸⁴

Journalists wrote pieces about refugees integrating into Canadian life. The *Globe* did a story in 1949 on a soccer team of concentration camp survivors competing in the Toronto Senior's League, a team sponsored by the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Young Men's Hebrew Association, and interviewed their star fullback who had spent two-and-a-half years in Buchenwald.⁸⁵ At the start of the 1950s, under the front-page headline "Reich Terrors Still In Their Minds...", the *Star* solicited money for its fresh air fund to send refugee children living in Toronto to summer camp, where "the sun will tan the white skin of their forearms and partly erase the tattooed

reminder of Buchenwald." The efforts of Ontario's Association of Professional Engineers to accredit trained engineers who had been "victims of concentration camps" were described in a 1953 *Globe* article, which did not mention religion, only the engineer's former nationalities. A front-page 1955 story on a citizenship swearing-in ceremony highlighted a concentration camp survivor who had come to Canada at the age of 14, the last survivor of his family. A full page *Globe* article celebrating the achievements of the Jewish Family and Child Service, a Toronto social work agency, found that "Particularly noteworthy for its historical interest is the successful adjustment into Canadian communities of 500 young European refugees, most of them rescued from Nazi concentration camps ..."

Refugees became eligible for German reparations in the 1950s and debates over the morality of accepting compensation as well as the personal stories of the people who received it were covered in the local papers. In 1953, The *Star* ran a front-page article whose headline proclaimed: "2000 Toronto Jews to Share \$2 000 000 For Reich Suffering." Discussion of compensation payments was framed in a way that would discourage any antisemitic stereotypes connecting Jews and money. An Associated Press wire story in the *Star* on compensation for Nazi victims pointed out that "Not only Jews were involved, but all those who rose up to fight Nazism and suffered as a result." A *Globe* article on the compensation process included the story of one survivor living in Canada, the loss of his family and the slave labour he was forced to perform. The story emphasized that the compensation was meagre and that the claimants' motivation was to obtain some kind of retribution for their suffering. 92

Human interest stories of family members reconnecting years after the war were of special fascination. The Canadian Press wire service told of a Winnipeg survivor who recognized a woman who walked into his grocery store as his daughter, whom he had thought lost to German slaughter when she was separated from him as a five year old child.93 The two dailies reported on a Hungarian Jewish couple who had each remarried after thinking the other murdered in the camps, only to find each other again in 1958; they left their new spouses intending to "take up their life again as man and wife."94 The following day the Globe told us of the husband's change of heart, reporting he had decided not to pursue the annulment of his second marriage.95 Custody litigation in French courts involving the Finaly brothers, two Jewish children who had been baptized while hidden in a Catholic orphanage during the war, made international headlines and was reported by Toronto papers.⁹⁶ Other articles of the period include a front page story of a Romanian concentration camp survivor who murdered the killer of his family after spending ten years tracking him down, 97 and the visit of 28 female survivors of Ravensbrück from Poland to the United States, where they were given medical treatment for the scars and injuries they had received from "pseudoscientific" experiments in the camps.98

In 1955, the *Globe* reported on the opening of a new synagogue whose founding rabbi had lost all his family in Dachau. The synagogue was named Beth Yitshak to commemorate his father Isaac, also a rabbi, and symbolically the other "6,000,000 Jews who perished in Europe during the Second World War." Two years later, on the occasion of the rabbi's citizenship swearing in ceremony, the *Star* celebrated his achievement of publishing an etymological English dictionary despite his not being a native speaker. In the article they mention that the rabbi's entire family had perished in the camps, without any need for further explanation. The history of the Holocaust had become part of the Canadian cultural conversation.

News stories unrelated to the Shoah could involve refugees, and their Holocaust experiences were often included as background to the story. In 1956, the *Vochenblatt* ran a piece on how antisemitism was blocking permit approvals for construction of a new synagogue in the Toronto suburbs. They described the synagogue rabbi's past: "When the Nazis invaded his country, Rabbi Oelbaum and his family were thrown into concentration camps. After three years of living hell he was eventually liberated. But his wife and five children perished in the Hitlerite genocide cauldron."

Many stories of survivors showed them as having achieved the revenge of living well. Trauma is mentioned in discussions of the challenge Israel faced as a nation in integrating survivors into the new country, but for the most part interviews with Canadian survivors tended to be success stories, or descriptions of refugees trying to make better lives in a new country. In 1952, for example, the *Globe* ran a rags-to-riches story of refugees who had built up a 10-million-dollar business.¹⁰² A 1956 *Star* article told how a prominent Canadian ballet dance couple had become engaged while in a concentration camp.¹⁰³ Accounts of what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder, or of immigrant Jewish failures, are harder to find. Instead, there was a reluctance to accept that North Americans would be unwelcoming to refugees. For example, one Toronto reviewer thought the descriptions of antisemitism in Ruth Chatterton's novel *Homeward Bound* were exaggerated, writing that "it seems rather far-fetched that so many of the Gentile characters could not associate with Jews without becoming derisive, insulting and in some cases, positively brutal."¹⁰⁴

One rare discussion of trauma can be found in a *Globe and Mail* story describing an apparent suicide attempt in 1949 by a survivor of Nazi and Soviet concentration camps who had recently arrived in Canada. The woman, identified as Ukrainian with no religion mentioned, climbed out on a pole outside the window of a downtown office building, before firemen wrestled her down a ladder to safety. According to the article, "Employment officials believe a too-sudden change from the concentration camps to the free life of Canada proved too much for her mind." [710]

The bitter hostility of survivors towards *kapos*, prisoners who acted as functionaries in the camps and were seen as collaborating with the Nazis, sometimes bubbled into the press. In 1949, the Toronto courts tried two survivors charged with beating and kicking an alleged collaborator who, one of the assailants shouted, "was responsible for the death of my sister and her five children." The magistrate appears to have had some sympathy for the assailants, whose defence—that the man started screaming when he saw the two accused, and hurt himself when he tripped on the sidewalk and fell—seemed feeble. Although the magistrate patronizingly commented about "people who come to this country and sometimes bring their troubles with them," he dismissed the assault charges. ¹⁰⁶ The trial of a Jewish collaborator in New York was covered in the Toronto press, as were the court cases in Israel surrounding accusations that Rudolph Kastner, an Israeli government official, had collaborated with the Nazis during the war. ¹⁰⁷

The most detailed discussion of the problems faced by refugees was in the Vochenblatt, which published a column discussing the negative side of immigrants' experiences. The majority, who found work in the garment industry, were described as "among the most exploited of the Jewish workers." They kept silent about political and social issues, at least until they were able to get full citizenship, '[f] earful of possible reprisals by the government and police, terrorized by cold war propaganda and the threats of Jewish reactionaries.' The new Canadians were not always welcomed by the established Jewish community: "Their faults and differences were often magnified; their problems in getting their bearings in new surroundings either ignored or ridiculed; their grievances in the shops often ignored by union leaders." Some on the left were critical of the refugees' decision to come to capitalist North America rather than return to help rebuild their homelands, a critique to which the Vochenblatt was opposed: "Why did they not go back to People's Democratic Poland, instead of coming here?' was a common question, which completely evades the issue of the years of nazism in Europe, and the responsibilities of the progressive movement towards the new Canadians."108

These tensions were not on display in the Toronto dailies, which preferred stories of immigrants who reestablished professional careers or succeeded in business and the arts over ones of new arrivals working at sewing machines for 40 or 50 cents an hour. It may have been, as some North American survivors and their children would record in later years, that they were treated as damaged goods, crippled by their experiences or by inherited trauma, yet the image presented in the broadsheets was most often that of a "model minority". Tensions between survivors and native-born Americans were discussed in 1950s literary fiction, but not in the *Star* or the *Globe*.¹⁰⁹

The Memorials

Some have claimed that Jews avoided talking about the Holocaust in the 1950s to avoid seeing themselves as victims.¹¹⁰ If this was true, then it did not lead to total silence, but rather to framing the stories of survivors in ways that focused on their accomplishments rather than their pain.

The *Vochenblatt* often described those who had died in the Holocaust as martyrs, a term that was commonly used in Jewish religious discussions and occasionally in the daily newspapers. The word was not literally applicable, in that the people who died were not killed for their faith or beliefs, but because of their ancestry regardless of their beliefs. Nevertheless, the word gave a greater sense of dignity to their deaths by describing them as something more than simply victims.

Public memorial culture focused on instances of courage and resistance. Articles that commemorated events of the Holocaust most often described the anniversaries not of massacres, but of rebellion. To One such *Globe* article told the story of the revolt in Bialystock, "the last time Jewish combat groups, a handful among the millions who had submitted passively to the gas-chambers of Poland and the execution squads of occupied Russia, conducted an organized revolt."

The paradigmatic example of Jewish resistance was the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Its start date of April 19 1943 coincided with the beginning of Passover, allowing commemorations to be incorporated into holiday rituals in homes and Jewish schools. Leven before the war ended, more than 30,000 honoured its first anniversary in a gathering on the steps of New York's City Hall, while in Toronto 2 000 Jews gathered at a commemoration ceremony at Massey Hall in what the *Globe* described as "an expression of stalwart faith in the future of their race." By the early 1960s, it could be said that "the ghetto rising assumed the significance of a symbol and legend which has already passed into the history of Jewish martyrology."

Annual commemorations of the revolt took place in Canadian cities throughout the 1950s. They were announced beforehand in the daily papers, both as individual news stories and items of "church news" or "church briefs." Reporters attended commemoration ceremonies and published accounts of the events, and the papers ran syndicated wire stories about similar ceremonies abroad.¹¹⁸

In the Springs of 1949 and 1950, the UJPO rented Toronto's prominent concert venue, Massey Hall, to present The Jewish Folk Choir's interpretation of *Di Noye Hagode, or The Glory of the Warsaw Ghetto*, a choral interpretation of an epic Yiddish poem about the uprising. The concerts were advertised and reported on in the *Globe*, ¹⁹ and commemorations organized by the UJPO in other years were reported in the

Vochenblatt. In 1953 the Vochenblatt described one ceremony in Montreal, where a high school student proclaimed to the audience that "The Jewish people must never forgive and never forget." Other speakers at the event drew socialist lessons from the Hitler era, describing the Nazi creation of puppet Jewish counsels and police forces as "ingenious appeals to nationalism" and emphasizing the need for working class unity. UJPO's 1954 commemoration of the uprising, held in Montreal, was interrupted by police officers seeking to seize the slides showing photographs of ghetto ruins and Auschwitz, although according to the Vochenblatt they backed down due to opposition from the audience. They paper celebrated the anniversary in 1957 by running a poem entitled "Remember" beside a front page headline of "Eternal Glory to the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters, and on the 15th anniversary in 1958 publishing a five part series by one of the ghetto fighters profiling significant figures of the uprising.

Rituals evolved specific to Holocaust commemoration. The number 6, signifying six million, was invoked in candle lighting ceremonies. At a Remembrance Day ceremony in 1957, according to the *Star*, "Six women of the Habonim congregation kindled memorial lights in memory of those who died in Nazi concentration camps." The *Globe* similarly reported the lighting of six memorial candles in a 1959 synagogue ceremony. Judging by the brief descriptions in the newspaper articles, memorials held in houses of worship generally combined the traditional Jewish mourner's service with lectures and discussion. UJPO's secular commemorations omitted prayers, but preserved the traditional Jewish mourning symbol of candle lighting. These rituals were not unique to Toronto, but followed patterns established internationally.

Several of the ceremonies featured out-of-town speakers, most often from New York. In 1951, an organization of Polish Jews hosted Henry Shoshkes as guest speaker at a gathering in a downtown synagogue. An early member of the Warsaw *Judenrat*, Shoskes had escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in 1939, but returned after the war on behalf of the Jewish Labor Committee to help the survivors of the camps. He published several books on his pre- and post- war experiences there. A 1954 commemoration held by the Canadian Federation to Aid Jews in Poland brought in Ignacy Schwartzbart; a member of the war-time Polish government in exile, he had written a book about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and worked during the War to bring information about the Holocaust to the attention of the Allied countries. In 1958, the New York guest speaker at a memorial service held in Toronto's Ostrovitzer Synagogue described how drawings of life under Nazi occupation, preserved in a long-buried rusty tin can, were unearthed by construction workers clearing a building site in the former ghetto. He called them "one of Warsaw's most treasured Jewish relics today [...]. They show Jews making knives and spears with which they fought the Germans."

In the spring of 1960 Zivah Lubetkin, a veteran of the ghetto revolt who had settled on a kibbutz in Israel after the war, came on a lecture tour of North America, raising funds

for the creation of a Holocaust museum. After attending a commemoration ceremony in Los Angeles, she visited Toronto in May to give a lecture in one of the ballrooms of Toronto's King Edward Hotel and was interviewed by the *Star* beforehand.¹³⁰

To the extent that post-war Canadian Jews did not wish to see their people in Europe as victims, their concern did not lead to amnesia, but rather to a focused commemoration of those who fought against their persecutors. Their choice to fight against impossible odds was characterized as a kind of victory in and of itself. According to one of the organizers of a 1958 memorial ceremony, their "superhuman courage" was a "sacred demonstration of faith which brought about the rebirth of the Jewish people through the creation of Israel." On the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising The *Globe* published a syndicated column by Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist who had reported from Germany in the 1930s. She believed that, by choosing to fight, the people of the ghetto transformed themselves from victims to martyrs. In dying on their own terms they were "writing an immortal chapter in the history of the Jews and of mankind" which records that "over and above this transient life man is master of the fate of his soul. That too," she wrote, "is victory."

The popular awareness and symbolism of the Warsaw revolt is underscored by how it was invoked in other contexts. *The Globe*'s stamp collecting column devoted a 1954 article to how "Warsaw Jews Operated PO Service in Ghetto", combining a history of the liquidation of the ghetto with descriptions and images of the handstamps used by the ghetto post office to cancel mail. More passionately, on the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the *Vochenblatt* reported that speakers at a demonstration in front of Toronto's American consulate "gave the vow of the Warsaw ghetto martyrs: Never Forget, Never Forgive!" Never Forgive!

The papers reported on memorial services unrelated to the uprisings, in Canada and other countries, although these did not have the prominence given to the Warsaw ghetto commemorations. In 1949 the *Globe* reported on a commemoration held at a Toronto synagogue by the Israeli Cultural Society, a group consisting mostly of Hungarian refugees. Six years later, in 1955, the *Globe* publicized another ceremony for Hungarian Jews, in an article which focused on the history of one pair of husband-and-wife survivors who were running a clothing shop in Toronto. That same year, Rabbi Feinberg of the Holy Blossom Temple honoured the tenth anniversary of the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp by rededicating Torah preserved from the Warsaw ghetto and brought by a former German soldier to Canada, saying that Jews are trying to discipline their hearts to forgive. But we dare not forget, or allow the world to forget [...].

International commemorations also merited attention. The *Vochenblatt* and the *Globe* both featured articles in 1959 on the consecration in Germany of a memorial to those

who died in the Ravensbrück camp.¹³⁹ A year earlier, the *Globe* had run a syndicated story about a Buchenwald memorial, as part of which "blood-stained earth from the Nazi concentration camp was entombed . . . in a stone bell tower" on the site of the camp in East Germany.¹⁴⁰ The *Globe* also reported on memorials held in Israel, and the *Star* made note of a reunion of Auschwitz survivors in New York.¹⁴¹

Other types of memorials went without press notice. The *landsmanshafin*—organizations of immigrants from the same European city or region—held memorial ceremonies on the anniversary of the liquidation of their particular ghettos. These were occasions of mourning however, not of heroic memory. With the possible exception of the Hungarian memorials mentioned above, they were not announced in the Toronto newspapers or publicized in the press apart from mentions in the newsletters of the *landsmanshafin* themselves. The same states are the sam

Anne Frank

Everyone loved Anne Frank; her *Diary*, the Broadway play and the international productions of it, and finally the film adaptation were all immensely popular. The dailies explored every possible angle to feature her name in their headlines. They reviewed *The Diary* itself as well as other books about its author.¹⁴⁴ The *Globe* reported on the reaction in Germany to the 1956 Berlin production of the play, and when the original English version was mounted in Toronto in 1958 it garnered avid local coverage.¹⁴⁵

The play and film were occasions for considerable discussion of both Anne and of Nazi oppression in general.¹⁴⁶ The *Globe's* theatre reviewer recounted the struggle between Meyer Levin and Otto Frank over the script of the Broadway play, including Levin's accusation that the stage production glossed over Anne's Jewishness.¹⁴⁷ One could not accuse the daily newspapers of any similar deracination; Anne was described in the *Star*'s review of a book about her, for example, as "the symbol of the six million Jewish people who were hideously exterminated by the Nazis during World War II."¹⁴⁸

Reporters used many different hooks to keep doing stories about her. The *Globe* published an article about her childhood best friend attending the Jerusalem theatre production. One of the figures mentioned in *The Diary*, Victor Kugler, had emigrated to Canada after the war and a syndicated Canadian magazine supplement carried in the *Toronto Telegram* published his memories of Anne and her family on the eve of the movie's release. The *Globe* and the *Star* both took notice of the inauguration in 1959 of a village in Germany for displaced persons named after Anne Frank, for which her father helped lay the cornerstone. That same year they also printed a story on how the Frank family's secret annex in Amsterdam was being restored and turned into an international youth centre by the Anne Frank Founda-

tion.¹⁵² Other articles gave publicity to the play or film in different ways, including actor profiles.¹⁵³

The dailies of course reviewed other books about the Holocaust, not just the obvious best-sellers such as Hersey's *The Wall*, but also historical studies and less well-remembered novels. Ruth Chatterton's *Homeward Bound*, a novel about an II-year old war orphan resettled in New England, "probably Jewish," "who knew no life except that of Nazi concentration camps and displaced persons centres," was reviewed in *The Globe*; other book reviews discussed the horrors of the concentration camps without specifically mentioning the ethnic or religious identities of the victims. ¹⁵⁴

The Holocaust Out of Context: The Concentration Camps as Metaphor

Public awareness of the Shoah is demonstrated by how it became part of the dialogue in stories on unrelated topics. A 1952 Star photographic feature on United Nations day, depicting Toronto high school girls with roots in Japan, Italy and various Eastern European countries dressed up in their "colourful native costumes" for a pageant, also mentions that "In the . . . history classes [at Bloor Collegiate] . . . four students described how United Nations had helped them when they were held in Europe concentration camps."155 The Vochenblatt invoked the camps in a discussion of antisemitic stereotypes in The Merchant of Venice, writing that "insofar as Jewish people are concerned, anything that smacks of anti-Semitism or racial prejudice is a very serious affair indeed.... particularly so after the horrifying experience we Jewish people went through as a result of Hitlerite anti-Semitism." 156 Philip Toynbee, in an article from Tel Aviv that otherwise makes no reference to the Holocaust, describes a community of Italian converts to Judaism as being "as Israeli as any branded survivor of Dachau."157 Writing of an archaeological dig on the site of an Indigenous village near Pickering, Ontario, the Vochenblatt interjected: "what a difference between this and the digging of holes and filling them up again that the Nazis used to force their victims to do. There is purpose in the Museum dig."158 The Holocaust came to mind even when the discussion was about other matters entirely.

Pressure to keep silent about German war crimes in order to protect the Cold War rapprochement with West Germany was real.¹⁵⁹ In Toronto for example, when a film club originally affiliated with the UJPO called the Realist Film Society showed *The Last Stop*, a Polish film about the Holocaust, the screening was interrupted by the RCMP and the film reel seized. A club officer was told by one of the RCMP agents that the film was "... no longer in the public interest. It's the Cold War."¹⁶⁰ Yet despite such diplomatic realignments no switch could turn off people's memories and beliefs. As a law professor acknowledged in 1951 when arguing Canada should accept more ethnic German immigrants, "there are still enough who, despite all the

spotlight concentrated on Soviet Russia and communism, have not forgotten the barbarous atrocities committed by the Nazi regime, and, at least passively, tolerated by many Germans." The *Star* showed no hesitation in including on its editorial page a discussion of an investigation by the World Jewish Congress showing that West Germany's foreign office was being "run by notorious ex-Nazis," including those who had been "closely and directly connected with persecution and extermination of Jews in Europe..." ¹¹⁶²

Rather than being suppressed, the memory of Hitler was invoked on all sides of the political spectrum as a moral yardstick by which opponents could be judged. For Cold Warriors, this sometimes meant saying Soviet premier Joseph Stalin was worse than Hitler. A front-page 1953 article in the *Star* advised its readers not only that "oppression of Jews in Hungary is worse than the Nazi time," but that the oppression was conducted by former Nazis, now faithful communists.¹⁶³ A *Globe* editorial, from the beginning of the decade, had expressed surprise that Jews in Toronto could vote for communist parliamentary candidates such as the UJPO's J. B. Salsberg, chiding that "Communist nations [...] did not make the slightest protests over the monstrous pogroms of the Jews of Germany and Eastern Europe [...]."

Left wing voices similarly invoked the spectre of the *Führer* to discredit ideological opponents. When the American State Department purged dissenting books from government-operated libraries, the *Vochenblatt* called them out for "aping the Hitlerite storm troopers,...doing everything they can to be worthy of the 'great traditions' of their Nazi predecessors." A cartoon, reproduced from the *Toronto Telegram*, showed Hitler looking on approvingly as Senator Joe McCarthy pushed a bewildered and reluctant Uncle Sam into throwing books on a fire. 1666

The red-baiting populist senator was repeatedly compared to Hitler.¹⁶⁷ His tactics were described with the labels of the Nazi era: a *Vochenblatt* article talked of his strategy of "seeking out 'co-operative' Jews as a front for his proto-fascist drive" and was headlined "McCarthy Enlists a 'Judenrat'. **Ochenblatt writer Sam Lipshitz called two of McCarthy's Jewish associates "the U.S. edition of Kapos and Judenrattler—the worst kind of scum, that grew up amongst the Jewish people under conditions of Hitlerite occupation." Lipshitz described American legislation outlawing the Communist Party as being "of more far-reaching totalitarian character than was ever passed by Hitler in his first years of power.**Inches journalists took for granted that, a decade after the war in Europe ended, readers would have enough familiarity with the details of the Holocaust to understand references to *kapos*, *Judenrat* and *Judenrattler*.

Comparisons of McCarthy to the Führer were not limited to the left. In 1954, a Republican senator from Vermont also compared him to Hitler, adding that McCarthy had incited "foreboding in four fellow citizens of Jewish blood and faith." ¹⁷¹

Advocates and opponents of racial desegregation alike used the Nazi metaphor to condemn the other side. After the governor of Arkansas brought in the National Guard to block the implementation of the Supreme Court's decision to desegregate schools in 1957, Rabbi Feinberg asked "What is anti-Negro segregation if not a sick remnant of Nazi racism?" Dorothy Thompson similarly compared the governor's stand against integration to Hitler and his appeal to racialism, in response to a Southern senator who had described President Eisenhower's use of federal troops to enforce the Supreme Court order as Hitler sending in the Storm Troopers. 173

The concentration camps were used as a paradigmatic example of the dangers of discrimination on the basis of religion, creed or race. The Writing of Doukhobor children in British Columbia, who had been apprehended by the state for up to six years because their parents would not allow them to attend school, the *Star* described public schools as "concentration camps." The *Globe* took the metaphor to greater extremes; an editorial in the paper that was largely critical of Doukhobors nonetheless maintained that "To a freedom-loving Canadian . . . there is something obnoxious in the stories of the B.C. government's forcible removal of Doukhobor children from their parents and their incarceration in schools without communication, as if they were Jews in Hitler's Germany." The

In later decades writers would condemn too-facile analogies to the Holocaust for diminishing or demonstrating a lack of understanding of the horror that the victims endured, but if people were offended by such over-the-top comparisons in the 1950s one would not know it from the newspapers of the day.¹⁷⁷ Rather than any enforced silence about the Holocaust, the subject came up regularly in discussions of seemingly unrelated topics and was used as an ultimate condemnation.

The Shoah: Human or Jewish Tragedy?

Some assert that the Nazi extermination program was generally viewed in the postwar period as a human tragedy rather than a specifically Jewish one, subsumed by the general category of war-time atrocities.¹⁷⁸ This interpretation is not borne out in the Toronto papers. Some articles in the *Star* about the camps do omit mention of the religious or racial identity of the victims, either because of a desire to draw universal lessons or perhaps simply because the reporters never learned the religion of the persons they interviewed or described.¹⁷⁹ Many other articles, however, speak explicitly about Jewish victims and antisemitism, and overall there is no indication that the Jewish character of the Shoah was being minimized. Rather, what is striking is the rarity of references to other victims. There was some acknowledgment that political prisoners and Soviet Prisoners of War had been imprisoned in the camps, and that Canadian soldiers had been killed in them.¹⁸⁰ A *Star* editorial on the coming into force of the United Nations' convention against genocide lists groups of victims:

"particularly Jews, Poles, gipsies [sic] and the like" and mentions that in addition to six million Jews, the victims of genocide under the Nazis included "millions of Poles, Czechs, Slovak, Dutch, Belgian, Russians"; but even here, when the editorial actually comes to describe the horrors of the genocide the examples it gives are atrocities committed against Jews.¹⁸¹

A *Star* photo-essay that focused on Nazism as a rejection of Christianity included a picture of three Germans who spent ten years in concentration camps because they "chose Christianity over Hitlerism"; but it also made clear that "Extermination of Jewish race was part of Hitler plan for world conquest." I have found no mention of the fact that gay men and Jehovah's Witnesses were interned in the camps. More commonly, the newspaper pieces mention only Jewish victims, something that might be seen as confirming a disturbing stereotype of Jews as consummate victims were they not balanced by other stories of rebellion and the post-war successes of Jewish refugees. Overall, the Nazi mass murder program was presented primarily as a Jewish tragedy.

The concentration camps and Hitler's persecution of Jews was a regular topic of discussion in the Toronto newspapers of the 1950s. Indeed, it may have been more written about then than it was during the war period and immediately after. Journalists in the 1950s reported on survivors in Canada, their war-time experiences and their lives as new immigrants; they covered memorial ceremonies and speeches and wrote endless stories about anything and anyone connected with Anne Frank. The aftermath of the war—the trials of war criminals, arguments over West German rearmament, German reparations to Israel and the survivors, the fate of displaced people still waiting to be resettled—was fodder for news reporting, and made its way into the hobby section, the "Women's" section, and announcements of local events. The Holocaust became a source of travel pieces, of meditations on human evil, and of human—interest stories about the people who survived the worst of its atrocities. It was part of the popular imagination.

The factors that some believe led to suppression of memories of the Holocaust shaped the narrative but did not conceal it from public view. Cold War politics led people to use the Holocaust as a metaphor for the evils of Stalinism and McCarthyism. Concern for the appearance of victimhood led people to emphasize incidents of heroism, such as the Warsaw ghetto uprising and other forms of resistance. Jewish assimilation and the growth of a new suburban lifestyle led to a greater focus in the popular press on those who made successes of themselves in their new country, overlooking those who did not. In the dailies, friction between refugees and Canadian-born Jews was not discussed and their integration into Canadian society was viewed with optimism, whereas the socialist Jewish press offered glimpses of the harsher side of immigrant life.

The Jewish left consistently and publicly memorialized the Holocaust; a vocal Jewish sub-community, they were loud in their denunciation of Nazi war crimes. Although the Communist Party's position on Israel divided it from many potential Jewish supporters, the Holocaust served as a point of overlap between Soviet policy and Jewish memory; the Party was opposed to the rearmament of West Germany and on the alert for any signs of resurgence of Nazism there.¹⁸⁴ Excluding Jewish progressive groups from the analysis, as did Novick, creates a distortion in the picture of how the Jewish communities of North America responded to the war-time tragedy.

The newspaper articles of the past are one piece of evidence to suggest that scholars who have concentrated on the activities of Jewish communal leadership rather than on popular culture and grassroots activities seriously underestimated the extent to which the Holocaust was a subject of popular concern in the post-war period.

However, the argument for a conspiracy of silence did not originate with historians. The claims that the memory of German atrocities was being set aside over Cold War politics and that Jewish elites were keeping silent about them in order to fit in with the political agenda were already being made by left-wing activists in the 1950s. In this, those who argue that the 1950s was a period of silence about the Holocaust are not providing a balanced assessment of the era. Instead, they are articulating only one side of a loud debate that was already well under way as the Cold War began to gel.

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2Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1999), pp. 103-04

3"Who could forget Dachau?": Gabrielle Roy, *Alexandre Chenevert* (Montreal: Librairie
Beauchemin Ltée, 1954) p. 19

4 Novick, *ibid*

Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry* (Verso Books, 2000)

6On the historiography of the "conspiracy of silence", see Hasia Diner, *We Remember*

With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962 (New York UP, 2009), pp. 1-17, 365-390; and Antoine Burgard, "L'historien face à l'événement et sa mémoire: Peter Novick et la place de la Shoah aux États-Unis", Bulletin d'histoire politique, 24 no. 3 (2016), pp. 177-201, https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/bhp/2016-v24-n3-bhp02546/1036739ar/

7 Novick, *ibid*, pp. 96-98

See e.g., Gennady Estraikh, "Professing Leninist Yiddishkayt: The Decline of American Yiddish Communism", *American Jewish History (The Soviet Issue*), 96 no. 1 (March 2010), pp. 33-60

Novick's failure to properly consider the views of socialists and the US Communist Party is criticized in Nancy Russell, "An Assessment of Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life*", World Socialist Web Site, (June 29 2000), https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2000/06/

nov-j29.html; and see also Diner, above, pp. 290-93.

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Diner, above; and David Cesarani and Eric Sundquist, eds, *After the Holocaust:* Challenging the Myth of Silence (Routledge, 2012)

11

E.g., Arlene Stein, Reluctant Witnesses: Survivors, Their Children, and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness (Oxford UP, 2014). Deborah Lipstadt strikes a kind of middle ground, acknowledging the memorial culture of the 1950s while discussing how communication between survivor and American-born changed beginning with the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann: Deborah Lipstadt, The Eichmann Trial (Schocken Books, 2011), pp. 290-309

12

E.g., Neal Adams, Rafael Medoff and Craig Yoe, eds, We Spoke Out: Comic Books and the Holocaust (IDW Publishing, 2018); and Art Spiegelman, "Ballbuster: Bernard Krigstein's life between the panels", The New Yorker, July 22, 2002, www.newyorker.com/ magazine/2002/07/22/ballbuster

13

Novick, *ibid*, 306 note 1; and John Hersey, *The Wall* (Knopf, 1950). On how 1950s readers did respond to Hersey's novel and the themes expressed in it, see Nancy Sinkoff, "Fiction's Archive: Authenticity, Ethnography and Philosemitism in John Hersey's *The Wall"*, *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society*, 17 no. 2 (Winter 2011), pp. 48-79

14

Novick, ibid, pp. 117-20

15

E.g., Edith Stein, canonized as Saint Teresia Benedicta: Walter Herbstrith, Edith Stein: A Biography (Harper & Row, 1985) and Paul Hamans, Edith Stein and Companions on the Way to Auschwitz (Ignatius Press, 2010)

16

E.g., Ka-tzetznik 135633, House of Dolls (Simon and Schuster, 1955), translated by Moshe M Kohn, first published in Hebrew 1953. The book 'was a wild success and translated into a dozen languages': David Mikics, 'Holocaust Pulp Fiction', Tablet, April

9 2012, www.tabletmag.com/sections/ arts-letters/articles/ka-tzetnik. On images and stories about Hitler and Nazis in popular culture since the War, see Gavriel D Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made* (Cambridge U P, 2005). The book only skims the surface, as Rosenfeld recognizes: p. 404, note 52.

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Community (McGill-Queen's U P, 2000); Max
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As an exception, James Carroll, quantifies references in newspaper indexes but does not look at the articles themselves: James Carroll, "Shoah In The News: Patterns and Meanings of News Coverage of the Holocaust," Discussion Paper D-27 September 1997, The Joan Shorenstein Center, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/d27_carroll.pdf. Diner, above, provides extensive discussion of coverage in Jewish community newspapers

and periodicals but mentions the mainstream dailies only incidentally, as at pp. 196-97, where she discusses how Milwaukee Jewish organizations publicized their work to the mainstream press. Peter Schrag, *The World of Aufbau: Hitler's refugees in America* (U of Wisconsin Press, 2019) discusses coverage of the topic in a German-language American newspaper aimed at a Jewish audience.

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Particularly noteworthy is Novick's dismissal at pp. 140-41 of a single *Life* magazine article on the Krieger v Mittelman trial as the "only exception known to me" in which issues of Jewish collaboration were discussed in the mainstream press. In fact, the case was reported on extensively in America and the articles syndicated internationally: see e.g. "A Man With A Narrow Face", Time Magazine, July 3 1950, p. 13, "Refugee in Brooklyn Assaults a Passer-by as Murderer in Concentration Camp in '45", New York Times (hereinafter 'NYT') June 21 1950, p. 19; "3-Man Board Sits in 'Murder Trial': Ancient Jewish Custom in Hearing of Man Accused of Killing in DP Camp", NYT, Oct 11 1950, p. 21: "Council Clears Jew on Charge Of Killing Nazi Camp Comrade" (NYTS), Globe and Mail, Dec 1, 1950, p. 10; "Vengeance", Sunday Mail (Brisbane, Qld) July 9 1950, p. 14; and "Had He Found His Brother's Killer?", The Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW), July 9 1950, p. 41. On the trial, see Joel Silverman, "Krieger v Mittelman and Jewish Perceptions of the Refugee in the Early Cold War", Judaism 55 (2006) 40

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Louis Rosenberg, *Population Characteristics* of the Jewish Community of Toronto (Canadian Jewish Congress, 1955), https://www.bjpa.org/search-results/publication/18151, pp. 1-8, 40-42

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See the *Vochenblatt*'s apology for giving their readers "a distorted picture of Soviet reality" with respect to executed Yiddish writers, "On Jewish Culture in the Soviet Union", *Vochenblatt*, June 14 1956, p. 4: J Gershman, "We Can't Agree with You, Madam Furtseva!", *ibid*, June 28 1956, p. 3; and "The Editor's Comments", *ibid*, July 5 1956, p. 2. Cf. Joseph Berger, "Jewish Currents Magazine and a Longtime Adversary Decide to Merge", *NYT*, April 13 2006, section B, p. 3; and Estraikh, above

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When asked whether the paper devoted space to the Holocaust and refugees, Sam Lipshitz replied "not overwhelmingly." Bialystock, *Delayed Impact...*, above, p. 93. Cf. articles by Lipshitz below.

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Diner, above, 365-390; and Hasia Diner, "Origins and Meanings of the Myth of Silence", in Cesarani and Sundquist, above, p. 192

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on the Vochenblatt's editor, "Portrait Of A Jewish Professional Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman", edited, and with an introduction, by Irving Abella, (1977) 2 Labour/Le Travail 185; on the Party and Zionism, Peter Brod "Soviet-Israeli Relations 1948-56: from Courtship to Crisis" in Wistrich, Robert S. ed., The Left Against Zion: Communism, Israel and the Middle East (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1979) pp. 50-70

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for an example of the intellectual contortions required by this balancing act, see e.g.
Joseph Gershman, "Arab-Israel Peace Can Be Achieved!", Vochenblatt, October 21 1954, p. 2

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B Silbert, "Conventions are A Wonderful Thing", *Vochenblatt*, March 18 1954, p. 3

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"Labor-Progressive Party Issues Statement on J. B. Salsberg", *Vochenblatt*, July 26 1956, p. 3

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On the background, history and political affiliations of the UJPO and the Vochenblatt. see Ester Reiter, A future without hate or need: the promise of the Jewish left in Canada (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2016): Ester Reiter. "Secular Yiddishkait: Left Politics. Culture and Community", 49 Labour/Le Travail 121 (2002); Faith Jones, "Between Suspicion and Censure: Attitudes Towards the Jewish Left in Postwar Vancouver", 6 Canadian Jewish Studies 1(1998): Henry Srebrnik, "Chasing An Illusion: The Canadian Jewish Communist Movement", in Matthew B. Hoffman, Henry F. Srebrnik, eds, A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century (SUNY Press. 2016): Morris Biderman. A Life on the Jewish Left: An Immigrant's Experience (Toronto: Onward Publishing, 2000); Gerald Tulchinsky, Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment (U of T Press, 2013) chapter 5, pp. 94-119. For relevant contemporary reporting, see "Goodbye to Communism: Boy Undercover Agent Poison to Montreal Reds", GM, Dec 7 1951, p. 15; "Split in Toronto Of Jewish Group Is Blow to Reds", GM, Feb 24 1960, p. 5; I Fine and S Lapedes, "Defending the UJPO" (Letter to the Editor), GM, Mar 16 1960, p. 6; and David Lewis Stein, "The Slow Comeback of Canada's Communists", McLean's, July 29 1961, p. 7

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Edward Crankshaw, "The Frightful Memory of Bialystock Revolt", *GM*, Ag 26 1958, p. 7

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