Review of the Year

OTHER COUNTRIES
National Affairs

Despite the warning bells sounded by the stock-market crash in October 1987, Canada enjoyed a prosperous 1988: it saw its dollar appreciate from about 77 to about 83 U.S. cents, unemployment decline, and economic growth remain on a steady if unspectacular path. Most political attention focused on the November 21 general election, in which the Progressive Conservative party (PC) of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney sought a second mandate. Canadian Jews faced the election with some special concerns in addition to those shared with their fellow Canadians. Among these, fear that the Canadian position on the Middle East might deteriorate was foremost. In addition, many Jews held serious doubts about the wisdom of the Meech Lake agreement for constitutional change, which was signed in 1987 but still lacked the approval of two provinces.

The major issue in the federal election was free trade with the United States, which was the centerpiece of the PC program but was opposed by the Liberals and New Democrats (NDP). The strategy of stressing the trade issue, which evoked a strong emotional reaction in a country that at least in part defined itself in comparison with its large neighbor and strove to avoid domination by the U.S., was a risky one for Mulroney. Ultimately he swept to another strong victory and majority government, aided in part by the poor campaign conducted by the Liberals, traditionally the main alternative to the PCs.

Of the 1,577 candidates for the House of Commons, 15 were Jewish. There were Jewish candidates in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia, including candidates for each of the three major parties. Of the 15, 6 were elected. Gerry Weiner, the first Jewish cabinet minister in a PC government, was handily reelected in his suburban Montreal district. Similarly, Liberal Sheila Finestone won a strong victory for a second term in Montreal’s Mount Royal district. Liberal David Berger moved into a new constituency in Montreal because of redistricting and was returned to the House. In Ontario, two Liberal incumbents won easily, Herb Gray in Windsor and Robert Kaplan in Toronto. Dave Barrett, the former NDP premier of British Columbia, won a seat on his first attempt in federal politics. One incumbent Jewish MP who lost was David Orlikow, who held
a Winnipeg seat for the NDP for 26 years. Among non-Jewish candidates, a significant loss from the Jewish perspective was Rev. Roland de Corneille, an MP from Toronto, who had failed in his bid for renomination as a Liberal in the spring. De Corneille had been outspoken on innumerable Jewish issues and was viewed by many Jews as one of the most valuable MPs. On the other hand, Bill Attewell, a PC and chairman of the Parliamentary Group for Soviet Jewry, was reelected, as was cabinet minister Barbara McDougall, also very popular with Jewish voters. Both held seats in the Toronto area. In a footnote to the campaign, Douglas Christie, an attorney who had represented anti-Semites James Keegstra and Ernst Zundel, garnered only 171 votes running as an independent in British Columbia.

Earlier in the year, Gerry Weiner, who had been minister of state for immigration in the federal cabinet, was appointed minister of state for multiculturalism. Subsequently, the post was upgraded by the creation of a Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship headed by Weiner as a full minister.

In the Manitoba provincial election, held in April, Jim Carr, a Liberal, won a seat for the first time. Carr defeated NDP cabinet minister Roland Penner, also a Jew. Other Jews who lost their seats in Manitoba were Marty Dolin of the NDP and Abe Kovnats of the PCs.

Ontario held municipal elections just before the federal election. Mel Lastman, longtime mayor of North York, was reelected, as was City of York councillor Ben Nobleman. Howard Levine won a seat on the Toronto City Council.

**MEECH LAKE**

Aside from the election itself, a key political issue of concern to Canada's Jews was the Meech Lake accord, a constitutional amendment package that was criticized by many because it would enhance the power of the provincial governments at the expense of the federal government. Although it was quickly approved by the federal Parliament and eight of the ten provincial legislatures soon after the agreement was reached in 1987, New Brunswick and Manitoba were still withholding approval. Unless all the provinces approved by the middle of 1990, the agreement would lapse. Since the accord defined Quebec as a "distinct society," explicitly recognizing that province's right to cultural and linguistic particularism, advocates argued that if it was not put into effect, Quebec might eventually secede. Opponents, such as the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), Ontario Region, contended that Meech Lake was too high a price to pay to bring Quebec into the Constitution. They claimed that the accord weakened individual and minority rights and specifically threatened Quebec anglophones. Fears were expressed that the Jewish community of Quebec (about one-third of the Canadian total) might see its overall position weakened and its language rights further eroded.
Relations with Israel

Canadian supporters of Israel had reason to be concerned this year. The warning signals included indications of a possible policy shift by the government, adverse reactions to Israel's handling of the uprising of the Palestinian Arabs, troubling media coverage of Israel, divisions within the Jewish community regarding Israel's policies, and public criticism of Israel.

From the beginning of the uprising there were signs of division within the government as to how Canada should respond. Prime Minister Mulroney was perceived as less willing to criticize Israel than was his Department of External Affairs and its minister, Joe Clark. Mulroney's recognition of Israel's difficult situation and his praise of the country for showing restraint were applauded by the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) and its constituent organizations. In contrast, External Affairs people reportedly complained to the Israeli ambassador about "Israel's excessive use of force against the Palestinians." Clark himself called in the Israeli ambassador during January to criticize various aspects of Israeli policy regarding the uprising. Later, in response to a reporter's question, Clark replied, "Certainly, human rights are being abused." In addition, both Clark and Mulroney endorsed the idea of an international peace conference, which was opposed by the Israeli government.

At the annual CIC Parliamentary Dinner in March, an occasion that was supposed to have been a celebration of 40 years of Israeli independence, Clark startled the assembled community representatives with a hard-hitting speech in which he used terms such as "unacceptable human rights violations," "illegal under international law," and "shocking" to characterize Israel's handling of the uprising. Clark was also rather blunt in assessing the occupation itself. He stated that "a policy of indefinite control over the land without an acknowledgement of the rights of its inhabitants has been proven a failure," calling upon Israel to withdraw if the Palestinian leadership recognized Israel's territorial integrity. In recapitulating the principles of Canadian foreign policy in the region, Clark emphasized the notion of mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians and a homeland for the latter, stopping just short of an overt call for a Palestinian state.

Jewish reaction to the Clark speech was generally quite antagonistic. His delivery was punctuated with boos, jeers, and catcalls. Some members of the audience even walked out on the minister. Immediately after the speech, CIC chairman Sidney Spivak publicly informed Clark that "we fundamentally disagree with your analysis and prescription." Later, the CIC executive, representing the organized Jewish community, stated that it was "appalled at the unbalanced and ill-informed statement." It accused Clark of suffering from a fundamental misunderstanding of the situation between the Arabs and Israel, of misrepresenting facts, and of reacting intemperately. CJC president Dorothy Reitman found it "grotesque that Mr. Clark should intimate that Israel is responsible for the ongoing conflict...." Ralph Snow, president of B'nai Brith Canada, denounced Clark's approach as "ill-informed and unacceptable."
The leaders of the two opposition parties also spoke at the CIC dinner, although their remarks were overshadowed by the consternation caused by Clark's address. NDP leader Ed Broadbent reiterated his party's criticism of the "totally unwarranted" and sometimes "brutal" actions employed by Israel to deal with the intifada. John Turner, the Liberal party head, suggested that the occupied territories be placed under a new administration pending the convening of an international peace conference. Turner also restated his own and his party's commitment to Israel, receiving a standing ovation as he concluded.

Considerable community pressure was mounted in response to Clark's speech, with the CIC requesting a meeting with the minister in order to clarify the situation. The meeting between Clark and the executive was held about two weeks later, a day after the prime minister sent a reassuring letter to the CIC ("Israel is our friend"). However, despite the conciliatory comments that followed the meeting, a belief lingered among the CIC people that Clark may have been preparing the ground for a major shift in foreign policy.

Clark was able to mend some fences in an April speech to the Jewish community of Edmonton, a speech that differed markedly in both tone and content from his Ottawa speech. CIC chairman Spivak was pleased with the speech and noted the "constructive, balanced approach" taken by the minister, who stressed Canada's support for Israel's independence and integrity.

**Criticism of Israel**

Events in Israel had repercussions beyond government policymakers, in particular in the media. The *Toronto Star*, the country's largest circulation newspaper, carried an editorial in March praising Clark's speech to the CIC as "a necessary reminder to members of the Jewish community in Canada that they are citizens of Canada, not Israel." The raising of the dual-loyalty canard brought down an avalanche of criticism on the paper and a demand for an apology by the major national Jewish organizations. The *Star* held fast. Subsequently, after a concerned citizen in London, Ontario filed a formal complaint with the Ontario Press Council, the council found for the complainant, contending that the *Star* should have made clear that it was not referring to all Canadian Jews, only those who had walked out on Clark. The paper was obligated to publish the adjudication decision.

A systematic analysis of Toronto newspaper coverage of Israel and the Middle East was carried out by a media monitoring committee headed by York University professor Sally Zerker. By comparing headlines in the *Star* and the *Globe and Mail* with those in the *New York Times*, Zerker found that the Toronto papers conveyed a more hostile image of Israel than did the *Times*, generally covering only one side of a story. Zerker also observed that "the press is unreasonably persistent in its coverage of Israel," to the point of being obsessive.

In response to criticism of the media, Howard Bernstein, a CBC producer, remarked at a community forum that the Jews were unfairly blaming the messenger.
However, there was no denying that the news had an effect. A definite softening of the strong Canadian public support for Israel was reported by pollster Martin Goldfarb earlier in the year.

This could be seen as well in widening support for the Palestinian cause and increased public criticism of Israel and its policies. In April Shirley Carr, president of the Canadian Labor Congress, criticized violence by both the Israeli government and Palestinian terrorists, but also asserted that the PLO had the right to attend any peace conference on the future of the territories, a new position for her organization. In May the Canadian Council of Churches circulated a draft statement that asked its members to be aware of “the urgency and justice of the Palestinian cause, with consideration for the peace and security of Israel.” It added that “the vicious circle of the victims becoming the oppressors must be broken once and for all . . .” and that Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem is a violation of international law and “as such is null and void.” The council charged that its freedom of contact with Christians was limited by Israeli authorities, called for withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories, and supported the creation of a Palestinian state. CJC prepared an elaborate critique of the statement in response.

Other Middle East-Related Issues

Throughout the year, the government pursued the case of Mahmoud Mohammad, a former Palestinian terrorist who immigrated to Canada in 1987 without disclosing his conviction in Greece in 1970 for a 1968 attack on an El Al airplane there that resulted in one death. When the government became aware of his past—including membership in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—it moved to deport him. After months of protracted hearings, the immigration department adjudicator ruled that Mohammad had lied about his past when he applied for immigrant status. However, he also ruled that Mohammad could not be deported because he had already applied for refugee status in Canada. It was unlikely that a deportation could be carried out until appeals of the immigration hearing and the full process of the refugee application were completed, which could take up to eight years.

Another national issue with a Middle East dimension involved the government’s decision to acquiesce to a request excluding certain classes of people, namely Jews, women, and people of Arab extraction, from participation in the Canadian force of some 500 sent to monitor the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq with peacekeepers from 19 other countries. Following CJC charges that the policy was discriminatory, Defense Minister Perrin Beatty announced a review of the decision. He stated, however, that the policy reflected the UN practice of respecting the traditions, customs, religious practices, and beliefs of the host countries. The League for Human Rights of B’nai Brith Canada announced its intention to launch a lawsuit over the issue.
Anti-Semitism

The indefatigable Ernst Zundel spent several months in court again on the retrial of charges that he violated the criminal code by spreading false news, specifically by promoting Holocaust denial. (See "Canada" article, AJYB, annually, going back to 1983.) The prosecution had to prove that he knowingly published false information about the Holocaust that was likely to cause injury to the public interest. Zundel had been convicted on these charges in 1985, but the Ontario Court of Appeal vacated the conviction on technical grounds and ordered a new trial.

In a decision that significantly changed the legal framework from that of the original trial, the judge agreed to a Crown motion to take judicial notice of the Holocaust as an historical fact. This eliminated the necessity of rebutting defense testimony that the Holocaust had not occurred. Much of the trial focused on Zundel's pamphlet—*Did Six Million Really Die?*—the publication of which was the basis for the charge against him. Despite the judge's ruling, the defense concentrated on witnesses who questioned the veracity of accepted historical accounts of the Holocaust, or concurred in some of the defendant's negative views about Jews. One defense witness, Prof. Robert Faurisson, repeated his earlier assertions that no Jews were gassed at Birkenau. Another defense witness, historian David Irving, testified that perhaps as few as 100,000 Jews had been killed by the Nazis.

After some 15 weeks of testimony, the jury finally delivered a guilty verdict. They had heard the Crown prosecutor assert that Zundel published his pamphlet in order to get public attention and that he had anti-Semitic motives. The defense had argued that the pamphlet merely contained opinions, which were constitutionally protected. Zundel was sentenced to nine months in jail, but promised to appeal.

The other major national case involving anti-Semitism, that of former high-school social-studies teacher James Keegstra, continued to work its way through the courts. (See "Canada" article, AJYB 1989, 1988, 1987, 1986.) Keegstra's crime had been to teach his classes that Jews fomented revolution and wars, were evil, and had lied about the Holocaust. In a surprise decision, the Alberta Court of Appeal struck down the antihate law under which Keegstra was convicted and declared it unconstitutional. The fact that the law itself was invalidated was a source of distress to the Jewish community, especially the Jews of Alberta. The necessity for Supreme Court adjudication of the issue became clear when the Ontario Court of Appeal upheld the same law in a case involving the promotion of hatred against nonwhites. In fact, the Alberta attorney general decided to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, insuring that eventually the inconsistency between the positions of the Ontario and Alberta courts would be resolved.

Another teacher with allegedly anti-Semitic views was the subject of ongoing controversy in the eastern part of the country. Malcolm Ross of New Brunswick had been the target of accusations for years, for engaging in public anti-Semitic activities, including the publication of a book, *The Spectre of Power*, alleging a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. Although the provincial government had declined to
prosecute, for various reasons, the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, decided to investigate. When the commission was stymied in its investigation by the refusal of the New Brunswick school board to cooperate, a commission of inquiry was established by the government. At that point Ross retained B.C. lawyer Douglas Christie to represent him, adding himself to Christie's existing list of clients that included Zundel, Keegstra, and alleged war-crimes perpetrator Imre Finta. Subsequently, a court took jurisdiction of the case; however, when questions were raised about the commission of inquiry's jurisdiction, this delayed consideration of the substance of the case yet again.

In its report for 1986, B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights documented some 55 anti-Semitic incidents, a decline for the third consecutive year. However, preliminary figures for early 1988 showed an increase from previous years.

In Calgary, police arrested two supporters of the Ku Klux Klan in connection with a plot to murder a prominent Jewish businessman and blow up the Jewish Community Center. In Toronto, the Hillel House at the University of Toronto was vandalized; windows were broken and signs defaced twice within two weeks. Also in Toronto, in a downtown area with many Jewish businesses, a large sign appeared, displayed prominently: "Jews out of Gaza, out of Canada."

A Saint John, N.B., radio station was fined $5,000 for allowing anti-Jewish and antiblack comments on the air by a leader of the racist Aryan Nations group. After the Canadian Radio and Television Commission filed charges in court, the station pleaded guilty. Several Montreal synagogues suffered vandalism during the year. One synagogue, in an area where few Jews resided any longer, was heavily damaged in a fire that was most likely caused by arson. The synagogue had suffered other forms of vandalism in the past. In November there was a rash of anti-Semitic graffiti in the predominantly Jewish suburb of Cote St. Luc, at Jewish institutions and in public places.

**Nazi War Criminals**

In the aftermath of the Deschenes Report on Nazi war criminals living in Canada, bilateral agreements were concluded between Canada and such countries as Israel, the Netherlands, and the Soviet Union to facilitate cooperation on prosecutions. (See AJYB 1989, pp. 259-60.) Under the agreements, Canadian investigators could gather evidence in the other countries that would be admissible in Canadian courts, under Canadian rules of evidence.

Despite the signing of the agreements, the government was accused of dragging its feet in the pursuit of specific war criminals by David Matas, a lawyer acting on behalf of B'nai Brith Canada. Describing the government as "overcautious," he accused it of "not proceeding with a sense of urgency, enthusiasm, or commitment." Matas urged the government to spend less time negotiating evidentiary agreements and more time in actual prosecutorial activities. He pointed out that Justice Jules Deschenes had identified 20 individuals who merited prompt action, but by mid-
1988, only two cases were under way. Government spokesmen responded that, in light of their concern to bring only strong cases before the courts, they were making good progress.

The only case actually before the courts was that of Imre Finta, who was charged with forcible confinement, kidnapping, and manslaughter in connection with the deportation of over 8,000 Jews from his native Hungary in 1944. Due to delays in gathering evidence, the trial did not begin during the year, but prosecution and defense attorneys traveled to Hungary and Israel to interview witnesses.

In a noncriminal case, the government began proceedings to strip Jacob Luitjens of his citizenship on the grounds that he concealed his Nazi past when he immigrated from Paraguay (where he had taken refuge after the war) in 1961. Luitjens, convicted in absentia by Holland for his wartime collaboration activities, was a retired University of British Columbia botany professor. If the government succeeded in removing his citizenship, he would probably be deported to the Netherlands, which had requested his extradition in 1981. The citizenship hearing began in September, in Vancouver, where several witnesses appeared. Further testimony was expected to be heard in Holland.

Holocaust-Related Activity

The Toronto Jewish Congress cosponsored a conference for educators from across the country at the University of Toronto, in August, on "Teaching the Holocaust in the Canadian Context." Several Canadian scholars attended a major conference in Britain on "Remembering the Future: The Impact of the Holocaust and Genocide on Jews and Christians." Among those who presented papers were Profs. William Seidelman, John Conway, Alan Davies, Marilyn Nefsky, and Michael Marrus. Other educational programs included an educators' tour to the death camps and to meet survivors in Israel; the development of a new unit on Kristallnacht for Montreal Protestant high-school students; an in-service program on the Holocaust for New Brunswick high-school history teachers; and a lecture and film series, "Resistance, Rescue, and Moral Responsibility," held in Montreal.

The province of Manitoba decided to erect a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust on the grounds of the Legislature in Winnipeg. In the city of North York in the Toronto area, a Holocaust memorial was planned for a city park. It would consist of a 36-foot-high obelisk created by sculptor Ernest Raab.

Two films dealing with Holocaust themes were shown during the year. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) produced a television drama by Anna Sandor, Two Men, concerning a survivor who confronts one of his persecutors. The Canadian Jewish Congress released a documentary film, Voices of Survival, featuring interviews with Canadian survivors. It was shown on national television.
Demography

Although Canada conducted a mid-decade census in 1986, the data on Jews may have raised more questions than they answered. Unlike the 1981 census, which included questions on both religion and ethnicity, the 1986 census had only a question on ethnic origin, allowing the individual to give multiple responses. The result was that 245,855 people listed only a Jewish ethnic origin, while an additional 97,655 people listed Jewish as one of two or more ethnic origins. These data yield a total of 343,510 people who might in some way be considered Jewish, though it is difficult to ascertain just how Jewish people with multiple ethnic origins might be. The confusion that results from the inconsistency in measurement of Jewish identity between the two censuses makes any comparisons difficult and perhaps not meaningful. What is known is that the number of Jews is somewhere between 245,000 and 343,000, but it is difficult to say just where. If one errs on the side of inclusion, it would be reasonable to estimate the number of Jews who identify as such to be between 315,000 and 330,000.

In the absence of any better figures, the populations of the three largest Jewish communities, using the total of single and multiple Jewish ethnic identifiers, were: Toronto—142,095; Montreal—96,475; and Vancouver—18,925. It should be noted that a more restrictive measure of the Montreal Jewish population during the early 1970s indicated about 115,000 people, suggesting a population loss since the advent of the Parti Québécois in 1976 of about 20,000 people or more.

Using the same criteria, the Jewish population by province was as follows: Newfoundland—540; Prince Edward Island—160; Nova Scotia—4,405; New Brunswick—1,515; Quebec—98,225; Ontario—176,535; Manitoba—18,270; Saskatchewan—2,610; Alberta—15,105; British Columbia—25,870; and Yukon and Northwest Territories—270. The major growth occurred in Ontario, particularly Metro Toronto, with additional growth in Alberta and British Columbia.

Winnipeg’s community had been worried about population decline for some time. Because of losses to Ontario and other locales where economic opportunities were perceived to be better, a high proportion, about 27 percent, of Winnipeg’s Jewish population was over age 65 (compared to about 20 percent in Montreal and less than 15 percent for Canadian Jewry as a whole). Also in Winnipeg, the abandonment by the younger part of the community of the traditional North End neighborhood, and its move to the South End, had implications for Jewish community institutions.

The census confirmed the long-term trend away from a Yiddish-speaking community. In 1986 there were only 22,700 Jews who listed Yiddish as their mother tongue, a decline from 32,800 in 1981. About two-thirds of those listing Yiddish as their mother tongue were over 60 years old.

The census also showed a higher socioeconomic status for Jews than the Canadian average, with higher incomes, more education, and higher-status jobs in general.
Communal Affairs

Events in Israel were the chief focus of community attention and concern during the year. At the request of Charles Bronfman, a highly influential behind-the-scenes community leader, virtually every national Jewish organization was represented at a September meeting in Toronto, to discuss the community’s Israel-related issues, especially the uprising in the administered territories. At this and subsequent meetings, the role of each organization was examined in order to assign responsibilities more effectively and to try to develop a unified strategy. The convening of the meetings reflected a conviction that the community was not making the most of its resources, which in part was an organizational problem.

Criticism of Israel’s policies in the territories was by no means limited to non-Jews. An organization called Jews for a Just Peace demonstrated in front of the Israeli consulate in Toronto in April. Its president, Yossi Schwartz, said that the government of Israel under Yitzhak Shamir “has a fascist vision which is leading the country into a Third Reich” and called for an end to the occupation. On a more moderate note, the Board of Trustees of Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple urged the Israeli government to exercise greater restraint, supported negotiations, and endorsed the idea of an international peace conference.

The question of Jews criticizing Israel publicly was the topic at a session of a CJC, Quebec Region, conference in November. Prof. Frederick Krantz argued vigorously about the need for Jews to close ranks publicly in time of crisis, while Prof. Blema Steinberg and writer Leon Wieseltier defended the integrity of those who did not agree with current Israeli policy while reaffirming strong commitments to Israel.

In November the Canadian Zionist Federation held a seminar in Montreal for community leadership. Participants discussed Middle East issues and methods of putting Israel’s case to the Canadian public and to the rank and file of the Jewish community more effectively.

THE MONTEBELLO ISSUE

Significant community discord surfaced in connection with what came to be known as the Montebello issue. In April the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, a government-sponsored think tank, convened a two-day private seminar on issues relating to peace in the Middle East at Chateau Montebello, a resort near Ottawa. The impetus for the seminar came from Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark, following up on a suggestion contained in the 1980 Stanfield Report. Its stated purpose was to stimulate dialogue and improve communication between Jews and Arabs. The Canadian participants—15 Jews and 15 Arabs—were reportedly asked to keep their identities secret, and the sessions were closed to the media. According to an institute spokesperson, they came as individuals rather than as representatives of organizations.

When details of the seminar eventually leaked out, the seminar itself and espe-
cially its Jewish participants—many of them prominent community leaders—came under attack. Critics contended that the participants were possibly being used by Clark, that the 15 Jews would be perceived as representatives of the Jewish community even though they claimed not to be, that the Jewish participants were selected in a manner that produced greater support for the idea of a Palestinian state than existed in the community, that the organized community was left out despite the participation of some of its leaders in personal capacities, and that secrecy was contrary to the community's interests. Supporters, including many of the participants, responded that the seminar was no more than what was officially claimed, that they attended on their own and represented no one, that the discussions were useful, and that media presence would have inhibited frank discussion.

Originally there were plans to hold a second seminar at the end of the summer. Ultimately, the sponsoring institute decided to postpone the second dialogue, which was never held. The residue within the Jewish community was that one segment, generally centrist to right politically, was satisfied that it had thwarted the continuation of what it considered to be a misguided effort. Another segment, generally leftist, though not exclusively so, was frustrated because an opportunity for productive Arab-Jewish dialogue had been torpedoed. This division reflected differences of opinion within the community regarding the appropriate path to the achievement of Arab-Israeli peace.

RELIGIOUS AND FUND-RAISING ISSUES

After the Israeli election on November 1, the Jewish community turned its attention to the negotiations over forming a new governing coalition. The main concern of most Canadian Jewish organizations was the proposed amendment by the Orthodox parties of the definition of Jewishness in the Law of Return in such a way as to offend non-Orthodox Diaspora Jewry. Representatives of the Toronto and Montreal federations joined their counterparts from five U.S. cities in meeting with key Israeli party leaders and other politicians to communicate their apprehension over the divisiveness that the proposed amendment would cause. The United Israel Appeal (UIA), Montreal Allied Jewish Community Services (AJCS), and Toronto Jewish Congress (TJC) also expressed opposition to the amendment.

A group of Orthodox rabbis and one lay leader, from Montreal and Ottawa, who backed the amendment to the law, denounced the federations for their stance and flew to Israel to express their views to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. They carried with them a message of support from Chief Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung of Montreal. However, their action was opposed by many of their colleagues, among them the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of Canada, Quebec Region, which, while adhering to the principle that conversions should follow Jewish religious law, did not agree that the public law of Israel was the proper vehicle to achieve that goal. The council advocated noninterference by Diaspora Jews in internal Israeli affairs.
Meanwhile, a delegation of 40 Reform Jewish leaders from across the country and a delegation representing major Canadian Jewish federations and national organizations met with the Israeli ambassador to voice their opposition to changes in the law and to ask that the issue be removed from the political agenda. The decision in Israel to forge a new national unity government, which effectively removed the "Who is a Jew?" issue from the agenda, obviated the need for further action.

The issue of how to allocate funds raised in local communities was a concern of the United Israel Appeal, which channeled money from annual drives to projects in Israel. Although there had been a gain in funds collected in the two major cities, Montreal and Toronto, it had been offset in recent years by declines in smaller communities. UIA president Martin Levine noted that in some cities as much as 93 percent of the campaign proceeds was retained for local needs, compared to the norm of about 50 percent, the balance going to Israel through the UIA.

**Community Relations**

The question of Sunday shopping continued to occupy a prominent position on the community's agenda with the government, especially in Ontario. A Toronto supermarket that catered to a Jewish clientele, Sunnybrook Foods, was found guilty of violating the Retail Business Holidays Act by being open on Sunday. A defense claim that the law was unconstitutional was rejected in provincial court. The store lost its first appeal but planned to appeal further.

In a major new development, the Ontario government introduced a bill in April that would exempt any Sabbath-observing store from the Sunday-closing rule if all stores owned by the company were closed on the same day. This was a big improvement over the previous law, which sharply limited the exemption. Furthermore, municipal or regional governments would be empowered to set their own rules. The move was welcomed by the Canadian Jewish Congress with one reservation, namely, that chains wanting certain stores closed on Sundays and others closed on Saturday would not be allowed to do so.

In Quebec, the Canadian Institute on Minority Rights urged the provincial government to stop enforcing Sunday-closing laws. The present law exempted only stores with fewer than four employees that had an affidavit from the CJC attesting to the religious commitment of the proprietor. The congress, which was not happy with its role, asked the government to be relieved of it. CJC's preference was that any retailer who closed on Saturday for religious reasons be permitted to open on Sunday.

**SCHOOLS**

Ontario's Jewish community continued its struggle to obtain government funding of its day schools. Organizations continued to lobby for funds, with CJC's Ontario
Region describing the issue as a matter of equity. Several of Montreal's Jewish day schools faced problems as a result of nonrenewal of leases or exorbitant rental increases during the next few years. The most pressing situation involved the end of the lease of the United Talmud Torahs (UTT) for the Merton School, owned by the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM), which considered using the building for an alternative school. After a rancorous public campaign, the board was persuaded to extend the lease through the summer of 1990.

Despite pressure from the organized Jewish community, the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM) opened an “alternative school” that offered some Hebrew instruction as an option, in addition to enriched programs in several academic subjects. Many people involved in Jewish education feared that the school, which charged a nominal fee for the optional studies, would siphon off students from Jewish day schools. The school opened with about 175 students, perhaps 150 of them Jewish, and most of the Jewish students did in fact transfer from Jewish day schools.

In a major decision, the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down a provincial regulation that required the daily recitation of a prayer—typically the Lord’s Prayer—and reading from the Christian Bible in schools. Four of the five justices ruled that the regulation violated the religious freedom of non-Christians and atheists, despite a provision for opting out of the religious exercises. The case arose in Sudbury, where one of the three parental plaintiffs was Jewish. After deciding not to appeal the case to the Supreme Court, the Ontario government issued new guidelines which, rather than eliminating prayer in the classroom—as the Jewish organizations had urged—allowed a variety of prayers from many religious traditions. In another case, the Supreme Court of Ontario upheld religious instruction in the public schools, noting that children who objected could be exempted from such instruction.

THE OUTREMONT AFFAIR

The Vishnitzer Hassidim of the Montreal suburb of Outremont had an unpleasant encounter with their municipal government that mushroomed into a nasty episode of anti-Semitism. The city council twice rejected their petition to rezone an empty lot to allow the construction of a synagogue. Opposition to the Vishnitzers was spearheaded by Gerard Pelletier, head of the Parti du Renouveau Outremont and a member of the council. Expressing concern about how numerous the Hassidim might become, he spoke of the “fear” and “conflict” that can be created as a minority grows in a community.

The Outremont affair escalated significantly in September when one of Montreal's major daily newspapers, La Presse, ran a front-page story about the suburb's “Jewish problem.” The story cited complaints from residents, published in a local Outremont paper, that the Hassidim were unfriendly, that they ignored parking
regulations, and that they were buying up houses. Pelletier was also reported to have expressed fears that the Hassidim would soon outnumber the French Canadians in the town. (Currently the Hassidim constituted about 11 percent of the Outremont population.)

After Jewish community relations organizations denounced the article, La Presse apologized for using the term “Jewish problem” but stuck to the content of its story, the intercommunity tensions. Chief editorial writer Alain Dubuc wrote that the zoning issue masked a malaise that had to be reported and claimed that phrases that had offended Jewish sensitivities were really no more than another manifestation of “tensions between the francophone majority and groups that have chosen English as their language of usage.” The CJC responded that Dubuc failed to deal with the religious prejudice of the original article and instead tried to turn it into a linguistic issue. In a companion piece to Dubuc’s editorial, columnist Gerald LeBlanc blamed the Jews for the problem because they failed to integrate into the French milieu. He also castigated Jewish anglophones for allegedly opposing the survival and protection of the French society.

Quebec’s immigration minister, Louise Robic, defended the Hassidim, praising them as hardworking, law-abiding citizens. Education Minister Claude Ryan also described them as exemplary citizens. Meanwhile several attempts at dialogue were under way in Outremont in an effort to defuse the situation.

**Education**

Data on Toronto’s Jewish schools showed 14,750 enrolled in all types of schools in 1987–88. Of these, 8,600 were in day schools (7,539 in 12 elementary schools and 1,061 in 7 high schools). There were 35 supplementary schools with 6,427 students. The Associated Hebrew Schools was the largest day school on the continent, with about 3,000 students at the elementary level.

Some of the problems of the Montreal day schools were addressed in a study carried out for the Association of Jewish Day Schools. Approximately 60 percent of Jewish children attended at the elementary level, while about 40 percent went to Jewish high schools. Many of the schools had been losing students in recent years, mainly to the public schools. The ultra-Orthodox and francophone schools were gaining, while the mainstream anglophone day schools were losing students. The schools also faced dissatisfaction with rapidly rising fees, lack of facilities, and failure to keep up with the latest trends, according to Monette Malewski, director-general of AJDS.

One of the big success stories to come out of the Montreal day schools was the innovative Tal Sela Hebrew-language program, directed by Tova Shimon. It had been adopted by 140 schools across the continent, encompassing more than 12,000 students between grades 2 and 6, as well as by schools in Switzerland and South Africa.
Soviet Jewry

Canadian Jews continued to publicize the situation of Soviet Jews as part of the pressure campaign to enable as many as possible to emigrate. The policy question concerning the destination of the emigrants was discussed, but did not emerge as a significant community issue during the year. However, it was understood by community leadership that if the flow of emigrants were to increase substantially, this question would become more pressing.

The emotional highlight of the year was the visit of Yosef Begun, the former refusenik now residing in Israel. Begun's cross-country tour was a focal point in the effort to maintain the enthusiasm and commitment that had characterized the Soviet Jewry movement in the past. In his public remarks, Begun stressed the importance of Diaspora protests in obtaining both the release of Soviet Jews and greater cultural and religious rights for those remaining in the Soviet Union. He argued that glasnost had not yet brought about the fundamental change in the situation of Soviet Jews that so many had hoped for from it.

McGill University professor and human-rights activist Irwin Cotler established a Soviet branch of InterAmicus, the human-rights organization. The main functions of the Moscow office would be to advise and inform Soviet citizens on legal developments and the exercise of various human rights. Cotler argued in statements upon his return from a June visit to the Soviet Union that a legal revolution was taking place and that Soviet citizens could look forward to greater legal protection against government actions.

The theme of change within the Soviet system was also stressed by World Jewish Congress president Edgar Bronfman in a Toronto speech in December. In response to the improvements in Soviet life, he urged activists to be less confrontational in dealing with the Soviet Union. He also emphasized the need to achieve cultural and religious freedom for Jews who remained in the Soviet Union. As he put it, “Let my people be Jews” should be the movement's slogan.

Yakov Rabkin, a Université de Montréal professor who was born in the Soviet Union, was one of the signatories of an historic agreement to establish a Jewish studies program at the USSR’s new Academy of World Civilizations. Along with Israeli rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, Rabkin’s efforts were aimed at training a new generation of scholars to revive the once outstanding tradition of rabbinic scholarship. The program would be the first of its kind since the Russian Revolution.

Religion

There were signs in 1988 that the hostility characterizing relations between the Jewish religious movements in the United States was finding expression in Canada as well. An example of this was an initiative, in September, by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (a right-wing group) to “alert the public to the dangers of Reform and Conservatism,” ostensibly to combat
intermarriage. The union’s stand was attacked by Rabbi Dow Marmur of Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple (Reform), who questioned the integrity and honesty of the Israeli rabbis who stimulated the original stance. Marmur called on Orthodox rabbis and lay leaders to take a stand in favor of Jewish unity and to reject actions by some Orthodox leaders to deny the legitimacy of the other movements.

Questions about Orthodoxy in Israel were also raised by Chancellor Ismar Schorsch of the Jewish Theological Seminary in an address to the Canadian Council for Conservative Judaism in Toronto, in November. He criticized in particular the use of governmental power on behalf of ultra-Orthodox causes in Israel. Council delegates strenuously objected to Israeli proposals to amend the Law of Return in a manner “that would appear to deny the legitimacy of non-Orthodox forms of Judaism.” They also heard a report on a survey of Canadian Conservative synagogues showing that most of those responding did not count women in a minyan or offer aliyyot to women. Earlier in the year, the Conservative movement had opened its first permanent office in Canada, the Jewish Theological Society of Canada, located in Toronto.

A major point of contention between Orthodox and non-Orthodox in Toronto was access to a mikveh (ritual bath). Both Conservative and Reform leaders protested a decision to limit the use of the Koschitzky mikveh to women engaging in the monthly ritual bath and to bar its use for conversions. This was seen by the Conservative and Reform rabbinates as an attack on them, because Orthodox rabbis had access to other facilities for conversion purposes. As a result, some rabbis had to take converts out of town for the required immersion. Rabbi Lawrence Troster (Conservative) lamented the situation, claiming that it “reflects a polarization of the community.” Similarly, in Winnipeg, the Lubavitch-owned mikveh was no longer available to non-Orthodox rabbis for conversions. The Canadian Council of Liberal Congregations (Reform), meeting in London, Ontario, in November, opposed amendments to the Law of Return and deplored the mikveh controversy in Toronto.

The role of women in Jewish religious life continued to be an important issue. Within Orthodoxy, Rabbi Moshe Stern of Toronto criticized his colleagues for not encouraging women to pursue the avenues of religious expression that were already permissible within Jewish law. Recognizing the effect of feminism even in Orthodox circles, Rabbi Stern argued that Orthodoxy need not be perceived as antifeminist and urged rabbis to take a more positive attitude toward women’s religious needs. In Hamilton, Temple Anshe Shalom (Reform) engaged the city’s first female cantor, Ruth Slater. She formerly held similar positions in two other Ontario cities.

On another issue involving women, a coalition pursuing civil remedies for women whose husbands refused to grant a religious divorce urged that Parliament amend the Divorce Act to prohibit the granting of civil divorce if a religious divorce had not been obtained. In the meantime, the practice of requiring a prenuptial agreement to grant a get (religious divorce) in case of civil divorce was gaining acceptance among Orthodox rabbis in Montreal.

For the first time in its history, the International Council of Christians and Jews
held its international colloquium in Canada. The Montreal meeting, in August, dealt with interfaith dialogue throughout the world. The Jewish keynote speaker, Rabbi Howard Joseph of Montreal, called for "theological humility" on the part of all religions. ICCJ president Victor Goldbloom of Montreal urged participants to extend involvement in interfaith dialogue to a wider range of people rather than just specialists.

Culture

The Toronto Jewish Cultural Council, an arm of the Toronto Jewish Congress, established a competition to encourage the writing of plays with Jewish themes. An annual award was contemplated.

Basya Hunter's play *Johannes Reuchlin and the Talmud* opened in Toronto in March. In Montreal, a children's play about a Canadian girl who moves to Israel, *Aviva's Piano*, by Miriam Chaiken, was produced at the Saidye Bronfman Center. Children from day schools appeared in the play before audiences of their classmates. The new Winnipeg Jewish Theater presented its first play, *Hannah Senesh*, by David Schecter.

Toronto Jewish music audiences had an opportunity to attend "The Jewish Composer in Canada," a concert of instrumental, choral, and vocal works by several prominent Canadian Jewish composers, held in Toronto in January. The same month, *Shabbat Shirah* was the occasion for the premieres of new compositions of Jewish music by Gordon Kushner and Cantor Paul Kowarsky at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto. Srul Irving Glick had two new works performed during the year. The Toronto Jewish Folk Choir presented "Four Yiddish Songs for Mixed Choir, Viola, and Piano" at a concert at the University of Toronto in May. In August Glick's "Visions Through Darkness: An Oratorio of Our Time" had its premiere. Winnipeg's *klezmer* group, Finjan, released its first record album, *From Ship to Shore*.

Two major exhibitions of Jewish interest appeared at leading Canadian museums during the year. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts presented the largest exhibition of the works of Marc Chagall ever shown in Canada. The collection, brought over from Paris, included nearly 50 paintings and over 100 drawings, many on Jewish or biblical themes. In Toronto, the Royal Ontario Museum exhibited "Treasures of the Holy Land: Ancient Art from the Israel Museum."

Several films released during the year had a Canadian Jewish dimension. Actor Saul Rubinek made *So Many Miracles*, an account of his family's history, especially in Europe during the Holocaust. Another Holocaust film, *Dark Lullabies*, was produced by Irene Angelico and Abbey Neikik, with financial support from the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Montreal. The film, which deals with the impact of the Holocaust on the postwar generation of Germans and Jews, won several international awards. *The Outside Chance of Maximilian Glick*, directed by Allan Goldstein, is based on a story by Toronto attorney and writer Morley Torgov.
The film is an account of a Jewish boy growing up in a small Canadian town, a theme with parallels in Torgov's own life.

Two radio and television productions are worth noting. The French CBC radio network presented a 13-part series on Israel in the spring, to commemorate Israel's 40th anniversary. CBC television carried a documentary in the fall entitled "Promises to Keep: The Canadians in Palestine," about foreign volunteers who fought for Israel in the War of Independence, among them several non-Jews.

Architect Moshe Safdie added to his internationally prominent reputation with two major new projects, the National Gallery in Ottawa and the Musée de la Civilisation in Quebec City, both of which opened this year.

A major symposium on Yiddish Montreal was held in March, with nearly 20 scholars participating. The major address was by Prof. David Roskies, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, a former Montrealer. The other participants included Zachary Baker, David Rome, Leo Davids, Eugene Orenstein, Pierre Anctil, and Marie Poirier. The themes covered ranged over language, literature, newspapers, demography, and education.

A new Hebrew-language newspaper, with sections in English and French, Mabat, made its appearance in Montreal and was distributed in other major cities as well.

Publications

Two new books by established Canadian Jewish authors were published this year. Ruth Wisse's A Little Love in Big Manhattan: Two Yiddish Poets is about Mani Leib and Moishe Leib Halpern and the interaction of their work with the environment in which they lived. Morton Weinfeld and Harold Troper deal with a topical issue in Old Wounds: Jews, Ukrainians and the Hunt for Nazi War Criminals in Canada.

The subject of Moroccan Jews and their adaptation to Canadian life is explored in Sephardim d'hier et de demain ("Sephardim of Yesterday and Tomorrow") by André Elbaz and Juifs marocains à Montréal: Témoignages d'une immigration moderne ("Moroccan Jews in Montreal: Recollections of Modern Immigration") by Marie Berdugo Cohen, Yolande Cohen, and Joseph Levy. The experience of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants to Montreal is investigated in detail by the non-Jewish historian Pierre Anctil in two books, Le Devoir, les Juifs et l'immigration: De Bourassa a Laurendeau ("Le Devoir, Jews, and Immigration: From Bourassa to Laurendeau") and Le Rendez-Vous Manqué: Les Juifs de Montréal face au Québec de l'entre-deux-guerres ("The Missed Encounter: The Jews of Montreal and Quebec Between the Two Wars"). Anctil shows that Jewish immigration made French Quebecers question their identity and the limits of their ability to tolerate those who are different.

Two books that probe the diversity of Jewish life are Voices of Canadian Jews by Rachel Alkallay and Bryan Knight and Les Juifs Progressistes au Québec by Allan Gottheil. The former involves extensive interviews with a cross-section of the community. The latter contains portraits of ten Quebec Jews who have challenged the established order in one way or another.
Other new books of note on Jewish subjects included: *Development of Jewish Law: Concepts and History of Rabbinic Jurisprudence from Its Inception to Modern Times* by Rabbi Mendell Lewittes; *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* by Rabbi Ernest Klein (posthumously); *Just a Simple Pharmacist: The Story of Murray Koffler, Builder of the Shoppers Drug Mart Empire* by Frank Rasky; *When Paupers Dance* by Szloma Renglich; *A Soviet Odyssey* by Suzanne Rosenberg; *A Man of Little Faith* by Rick Salutin; *The Tree of Life* by Fredelle Bruser Maynard; and *Life Is a Dance—You Should Only Know the Steps*, translated by Katie Brown. Three important new works on general subjects by Jewish authors were *Sometimes a Great Nation: Will Canada Belong to the 21st Century?* by Peter C. Newman; *The Collins Dictionary of Canadian History* by J.L. Granatstein and David Bercuson; and *The Manipulators: Inside the Soviet Media* by Ilya Gerol and Geoffrey Molyneaux (not Jewish).

**Personalia**

The Order of Canada was conferred on Irving Guttman, a pioneering opera director in Western Canada. Stanley Hartt became chief of staff to the prime minister. Allan Gotlieb retired as ambassador to the United States and was appointed chairman of the Canada Council. Nancy Gay-Rotstein was appointed a member of the council. Nathan Nemetz retired as chief justice of British Columbia. Irwin Lampert was appointed judge in the New Brunswick provincial court. Joseph Blumer was named assistant deputy chairman of the immigration appeal division of the Immigration and Refugee Board. Alan Shefman became a member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Leo Yaffe won the Seaborg Medal of the American Nuclear Society. Chaim Niznik won the John Polanyi Prize in medicine and physiology. Michael Marrus won the Canadian Historical Association Ferguson Prize for *The Holocaust in History*. Phyllis Lambert was awarded three international medals for her achievements in architecture. Morris Perlis became the president of American Express Canada. Larry Grossman was appointed president of Counsel Financial Corporation. Brian Segal left the presidency of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute to become president of the University of Guelph, while Arnold Naimark, president of the University of Manitoba, was named chair of the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Two Canadians, Peretz Miransky and Ruth Wisse, were awarded the Itzik Manger Prize, the most prestigious award in the field of Yiddish literature. Justice Irving Halperin was awarded the Samuel Bronfman Medal for Jewish Communal Service. Edward Bronfman received the Human Relations Award of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, and Marnie Paikin became president of the organization.

Within the Jewish community, Brian Feldman was elected president of B’nai Brith Canada, Neri Bloomfield became president of the Jewish National Fund, Sol Lederman became president of the United Israel Appeal of Canada, Baila Aspler was elected president of Emunah Women of Canada, and Edward Winant was elected president of Canadian Friends of Hebrew University. Bob Willmot was
named national executive director of the Canada-Israel Committee, Gerry Koffman was appointed director of the Ottawa Jewish Community Center, Pearl Gladman became associate national director and Yechiel Glustein Quebec regional director of B’nai Brith, and Michael Crelinsten was appointed executive director of the Quebec Region of Canadian Jewish Congress. Internationally, Phil Granovsky was elected chairman and Jack Rose vice-chairman of the board of trustees of Keren Hayesod.

Among leading Jews who died in 1988 were the following: Joseph Gallay, former editor of the Yiddish newspaper *Kanader Adler*, in January, aged 82; urban planner Hans Blumenfeld, in February, aged 96; Kingston community leader Harry Abramsky, in February, aged 90; film producer Felix Lazarus, in March, aged 76; Rebbetzin Elsie Frank, in March, aged 81; public-relations man George Cohen, in March, aged 72; Dr. Arthur Vineberg, noted surgeon, in March, aged 84; real-estate broker Percy Caplan, in March, aged 80; congregational rabbi Haim Kemelman, in April, aged 62; political activist Joshua Gershman, in May, aged 84; physicist Lionel Goldfarb, in May, aged 61; Dr. Louis Harnick, radiologist, in May, aged 68; Toronto Symphony violinist Isadore Dubinsky, in June, aged 85; veterans organization leader Albert Caplan, in June, aged 67; Jewish community professional Harry Berger, in June, aged 78; criminologist Barbara Maslowsky, in June, aged 39; Dr. David Eisen, radiologist and Holy Blossom Temple archivist, in June, aged 87; Prof. Frank Talmage, Bible scholar and historian, in July, aged 50; Cantor Moses Oziel, in August, aged 74; Jonathan Roskies, community activist, in September, aged 32; Israel Bonds leader Chaim Lewin, in October, aged 78; Prof. Bernie Vigod, historian and community leader, in October, aged 42; educator Ruth Ashkenazy, in October, aged 52; summer-camp founder Chaim Pripstein, in November, aged 89; Joseph Joffre, the oldest Jew in Canada, in November, aged 113; pioneer social worker Ethel Shane Vineberg, in November, aged 86; Israel Nitikman, former Manitoba judge, in December, aged 83; Harry Binder, community worker and former Communist party activist, in December, aged 75; and Edward Barkoff, community leader, in December, aged 88.

HAROLD M. WALLER