Review of the Year

OTHER COUNTRIES
Once again, in late 1995, Canada faced the threat of the secession of its second most populous province, predominantly French-speaking Quebec. On October 30, in a surprising outcome, the referendum on independence called by Quebec's Parti Québécois (PQ) government was defeated narrowly, with about 50.6 percent of the voters in the No camp. What had appeared beforehand to be a sizable No vote was converted into a cliff-hanger campaign when Premier Jacques Parizeau, a few weeks before the vote, turned over the campaign to Bloc Québécois (BQ) leader Lucien Bouchard, head of the separatist forces in the federal House of Commons in Ottawa. Far more charismatic and dynamic than Parizeau, Bouchard was able to energize the Francophone voters and nearly win the campaign.

Canadian prime minister Jean Chrétien received a great deal of criticism for playing down the threat of a Yes victory during the campaign. The closeness of the outcome appeared to unnerve him and many federalists across the country, leading to calls for a leadership review. However, Chrétien vowed to continue to fight vigorously to keep the country together. Bouchard, who became Quebec's premier in January 1996, promised to focus on the economy for a while, but also promised another referendum at some point in the not too distant future.

As in the past, the vast majority of Jews in Quebec and throughout the country strongly supported national unity and opposed the PQ's push for independence. The Jewish community in Montreal voted staunchly federalist and provided considerable human and material support for the federalist cause. But the closeness of the vote, coupled with intemperate outbursts by secessionist leaders, again led many Montreal Jews, as well as other federalists, to examine their future prospects in Quebec. Community leaders feared another exodus of primarily young people, perhaps as large as that of the 1976–85 period.

On referendum night, after the votes were counted, Parizeau made a bitter and angry speech in which he blamed the defeat on "money and the ethnic vote," terminology that was particularly upsetting to Jews, who had been in the forefront, along with Greeks and Italians, of the ethnic effort to defeat the PQ's proposition. He repeatedly stressed how 60 percent of "us" had voted Yes. Canadian Jew-
ish Congress president Goldie Hershon denounced his words as “reprehensible,” while B’nai Brith Canada leaders found the remarks to be “racist” and “scary.” The ensuing furor led to a quick announcement by Parizeau that he was retiring from politics, following which his party turned to Bouchard to lead the province. Shortly afterward, prominent separatist Pierre Bourgault denounced the overwhelming No vote among minority groups as a “straight racist” vote, particularly identifying Jews, Greeks, and Italians as racist. Canadian Jewish News columnist Sheldon Kirshner, reflecting on the history of Quebec nationalism, claimed that “their movement contains no shortage of narrow and vindictive voices. . . . No wonder minorities in Quebec feel vulnerable, if not threatened.”

In the months following the vote, the PQ attempted to mend fences with minority groups. In February 1996, Serge Menard, the minister responsible for Montreal affairs, addressed an audience of young Jewish adults, urging them to remain in Quebec and claiming that his movement did not want separation from Canada, but rather “sovereignty and partnership.” But he offered no concessions on the restrictive language laws and the state of political uncertainty, conditions which many in the audience blamed for the parlous state of Montreal’s economy.

Premier Bouchard himself attempted to reassure non-Francophones about their place in Quebec. However, when he addressed an audience of invited Anglophone leaders in March, distancing himself from Parizeau’s anti-ethnic remarks but reaffirming his commitment to hold another referendum, he provided little comfort. He pursued much the same line in May, when he invited a group of Jewish community leaders to meet with him in Quebec City. There he reaffirmed a commitment to democracy and equality but also to independence—leaving the Jews rather discouraged and pessimistic.

At the federal level, matters of refugee policy were of particular interest to the Jewish community. In August 1995 the Federal Court of Canada upheld an immigration panel’s denial of asylum to Russian émigrés who had left Israel, where they had become citizens, claiming harassment and persecution. Israel was troubled that Canadian authorities had even considered such a claim concerning the nature of Israeli society. In another case with a different twist, the court ruled in November that the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) was correct in deciding that an Azerbaijani Jewish woman could not claim asylum in Canada because she had the option of going to Israel. The potential impact of this ruling would be to bar any Jewish refugees from coming to Canada. Despite many protests from refugee organizations and Jewish groups, the situation had not been clarified by mid-1996. It was apparent, however, that panels of the IRB were applying the law inconsistently in different parts of the country, granting asylum to some Jewish claimants but rejecting others on the basis of the precedent.

In statistical terms, Canada granted fewer claims of asylum to people from Israel than in any year since 1992. The 1995 total was 121, though 1,745 cases were still pending at the end of 1995. In 1994, 380 refugees from Israel had been accepted. Eli Yerushalmi, Israel’s acting ambassador, was happy to see the decline.
but was not "pleased that there's even one case from Israel." Canada's willingness to consider claimants from Israel thus remained a sore point in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

In a federal cabinet shuffle in January, Sheila Finestone lost her ministerial position. Armand Elbaz, a vice-president of the Communauté Sépharade du Québec (CSQ), ran as the PQ candidate in a June provincial by-election and lost in the heavily federalist Outremont riding.

Israel and the Middle East

Canada strongly supported the peace process and welcomed the signing of Oslo II in September 1995, as did most Jewish community organizations. But Ottawa's support for the Israeli government's approach was not absolute. For example, Canada was not represented at the gala opening of the Jerusalem 3000 festivities in September, having decided not even to send lower-level diplomats, as some other countries did, because of its ambivalence about the status of Jerusalem.

In a major address in May 1995, Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy had depicted Canada as having a great deal to contribute to the success of the peace process. For example, Canada was working quietly on a number of multilateral policy issues and on fostering cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. Speaking to an audience of Arabs and Jews at Montreal's Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, Axworthy called upon the "Canadian Arab and Jewish communities to find ways of working together or trilaterally with the government" to help build a peaceful Middle East. A concrete example of the changing environment was the reopening of the PLO's Ottawa office in August, following a two-year closure.

The November 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was strongly condemned by government officials and members of the Jewish community. Prime Minister Chrétien lamented that "the world has lost one of its great leaders" and urged that the struggle for peace continue. He described the 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles at the White House as "one of the great moments of history." Chrétien, accompanied by several top community leaders, attended the funeral. Memorial services were held throughout the country.

After 14 months of negotiation, Canada and Israel signed a free-trade agreement in January 1996 that was expected to triple bilateral trade from its 1995 level of $330 million. The pact was scheduled to go into force on July 1, 1996, but problems in ratification delayed the effective date to 1997. All tariffs on industrial products would be removed immediately, but those on certain agricultural and fish products would remain. Canada, which had originally been reluctant to negotiate such a deal, found that the incentives were greater once Israel had such deals with the United States and the European Union. In addition, the pact gives free-trade access to territories under control of the Palestinian Authority through the customs union between the PA and Israel. One voice of caution regarding the deal was that of Dan Propper, president of the Manufacturers Association of Is-
rael, who worried that a change in the customs classification system that Canada wanted "could result in profound damage to certain Israeli industries that export to the United States."

Wahid Baroud, a former member of the PLO's Force 17, was deported to Sudan in January because of his terrorist record. Two cabinet ministers certified that he was a security threat. He had entered Canada with his family in 1991, but his terrorist past was uncovered only three years later.

Israel appointed two new consuls-general: Jehudi Kinar in Toronto and Daniel Gal in Montreal.

**Anti-Semitism and Racism**

B'nai Brith Canada's Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents for 1995 reported 331 events—80 incidents of vandalism and 251 of harassment (including anti-Semitic hate propaganda and mail, verbal slurs, death threats, physical assault). This was the highest total in the 14 years of the audit. There was a marked rise in harassment incidents, especially in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, but part of the increase could be ascribed to improved reporting techniques. Nearly half (159) the total incidents occurred in Ontario, while Quebec, with a somewhat smaller population, had only 53. It should be noted that nationally the number of reports of vandalism declined from 105 in 1993 to 92 in 1994 and 80 in 1995, while harassment incidents increased from 151 to 198 to 251 during the same period.

In August 1995 vandals defaced the site of a proposed new synagogue building in North Vancouver by painting "Juden Raus" and a huge swastika on board fencing surrounding the construction site. During the previous month, two swastikas were spray-painted on the door of a Toronto synagogue.

In December a Hamilton newspaper reported the existence of a network of Iron Guardists among Romanian immigrants in the Hamilton area. Sol Littman, Canadian representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, was investigating Canadian links to the notorious Romanian fascist organization and provided the information to *The Spectator*. The Romanian Cultural Association's private campground in Flamborough, Ontario, was being used for training purposes, and at least 24 people linked to the camp were identified by the Wiesenthal Center as connected to the Iron Guard. Hamilton is one of the three most active centers of Iron Guard activity in the world.

James Keegstra's ten-year entanglement in the legal system was finally brought to an end by the definitive resolution of his case. Keegstra was convicted in 1992, in his second Alberta trial, on hate charges stemming from his teaching of anti-Semitism in the classroom. That conviction was overturned on appeal in Alberta, but that decision was in turn reversed unanimously by the Supreme Court of Canada in February 1996. The importance of the case was its upholding of the antihate law against claims that it interfered with the free expression of ideas.
The charges against Ernst Zundel, the anti-Semitic publisher and Holocaust denier in Toronto, were dropped by Ontario Attorney-General Charles Harnick in March 1996. The charges of conspiracy to promote hatred and defamatory libel against Jews were based on a complaint by Holocaust survivor Sabina Citron, who subsequently launched a libel action against Zundel based on articles that appeared on his Internet Zundelsite. Jewish organizations were critical of Harnick for deciding that there was insufficient evidence to proceed. Karen Mock of B’nai Brith League for Human Rights stated: "[T]hat [Zundel] continues to disseminate his hateful messages worldwide is a national disgrace." Meanwhile, Oliver Bode, a friend of Zundel, was returned to Germany in March after being stopped at the border as he tried to enter Canada. Immigration officials were aware of his 12 convictions for hate crimes in Germany.

The Supreme Court of Canada again made a decision that was welcomed by Jews when it ruled unanimously in April that Malcolm Ross, the anti-Semitic New Brunswick teacher, could be banned from the classroom by his school board. In his opinion, Justice Gerard La Forest wrote that limiting Ross’s free-expression rights was justified because of his potential influence on impressionable children.

The most disturbing anti-Semitic incident of the year was the explosion of the detonating device of a letter bomb in April at the office of the Jewish National Fund, located in the Calgary Jewish Center. The secretary who opened the package was not hurt because the bomb itself had not exploded, but as a result, security was tightened at Jewish organizations across the country.

**Nazi War Criminals**

Several deportation proceedings were under way during the year. Josef Nemcsila, accused of being a Hlinka guard in Slovakia during the war, was allowed to remain in Canada. In July 1995 immigration adjudicator Ed McNamara dismissed the deportation proceedings on the grounds that a landed immigrant who has acquired Canadian domicile is protected from deportation. The decision was roundly criticized by Jewish community spokespersons. The Justice Department announced plans to appeal the decision to the Federal Court.

Konrad Kalejs, originally from Latvia, who allegedly belonged to the notorious Arajs Kommando at the time that it participated in the murders of tens of thousands of Latvian Jews, became the focus of a deportation hearing in this period. Kalejs was deported from the United States, where he had lived since 1959, in 1994, going first to Australia and then to Canada in early 1995, without being legally admitted. Apprehended in June and facing a deportation hearing, he traveled to Australia. Returning to Canada in September 1995, he was detained by immigration officials at the Toronto airport and held for possible deportation; however, he was released on his own recognizance after a preliminary hearing at which government counsel was inadequately prepared, a development that outraged Jewish organizations. Former Canadian Jewish Congress president Irving
Abella asserted that "this was total incompetence on the part of the government, a disgraceful performance." At the deportation hearing, which began in May 1996, documentary evidence of Kalejs's membership in the Kommando, as well as oral testimony, was presented to the immigration adjudicator. The government contended also that he was not a legitimate visitor to Canada. The hearing was still under way at the end of June 1996.

The denaturalization and deportation proceedings against Helmut Oberlander, Erichs Tobiass, and Johann Dueck were embroiled in controversy because of allegations that Associate Chief Justice James Jerome of the Federal Court was "unable or unwilling" to move the hearings forward at an acceptable pace. After Dueck's lawyer requested a stay of the proceedings, Jerome withdrew from the case in May and was replaced by Justice Bud Cullen. The three defendants also claimed that the trial was an abuse of process on the grounds that they should be tried as war criminals rather than being deported. Given the government's trial record to date, deportation was a far more likely outcome than criminal conviction.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

The number of Jews in Canada, based on the 1991 census, was 356,315.¹

A study of Vancouver-area Jews, based on the 1991 census and commissioned by the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, found substantial numbers of ethnic Jews who were not practicing their religion. According to the study's authors—Jim Torczyner, Shari Brotman, and Jean Gerber—of the 19,375 Jews in the area (estimated to have grown to 21,270 by 1994), 26 percent professed no religion, and 18 percent adhered to a religion other than Judaism. Furthermore, some 45 percent of Jewish children were in intermarried families. The data also show an overall intermarriage rate of 26 percent, but a 45-percent rate for Jews between the ages of 25 and 39.

In Montreal, where the burning demographic issue was the high proportion of aged in the community, a Federation CJA study issued in July 1995 predicted that the number of Jews 65 and over would actually decline until 2001 but begin to increase after that. The study did anticipate "demographic stresses" for years to come. "There will undoubtedly be fewer contributors to support community services, and a smaller pool from which our community leadership will be drawn."

The report also dealt with the problem of poverty among the elderly.

Another Federation CJA study, issued in September 1995, "La Communauté

Sépharade," found that in 1991 there were 21,049 Sephardic Jews in Montreal, about 21 percent of the Jewish population. The median age among Sephardim was about seven years younger than for the Ashkenazim. About 37 percent were born in Morocco, about 33 percent in Quebec, and 30 percent elsewhere (mainly Israel or Arab countries). Some 70 percent listed French as their mother tongue.

Communal Affairs

In the wake of the hotly contested election for the presidency of the Canadian Jewish Congress in May 1995, Justice Herbert Marx of Quebec Superior Court was asked to head a committee to investigate the election procedures and recommend improvements that might prevent a recurrence of the bitter dispute. This centered on the contention by some plenary officials that supporters of Thomas Hecht, the defeated candidate, had bent or broken the rules of the plenary in order to help his cause. Hecht's defenders argued that the staff and CJC insiders were so supportive of Goldie Hershon, the winner, that he had to use all legal means available to rectify the imbalance. In fact, the implication of impropriety on either side was substantial.

The Marx committee report, issued in April 1996, avoided apportioning blame to either Hershon or Hecht supporters for the 1995 fiasco and instead criticized "the absence of sufficiently comprehensive electoral rules and regulations." It recommended that at future plenaries, delegates be accredited and registered well in advance of the actual meeting. Neither candidate was completely satisfied with the outcome, though Hecht declared himself "vindicated."

Most Jewish community organizations faced serious budgetary problems during the year, and agencies that depend on government appropriations were affected by the trend toward less government spending. In Toronto, a cut in provincial government program spending hurt institutions such as Baycrest Hospital, Jewish Family and Child Service, the Bernard Betel Center for senior citizens, the day-care program at the Bathurst Jewish Center, and the Jewish Vocational Service. In addition, a nonprofit housing project for the frail elderly was canceled. Balancing this, 11 Jewish agencies received about $3 million from the United Way, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto provided $370,000 to agencies to compensate for cuts.

In Montreal, Federation CJA found itself with $1.4 million less to allocate to programs than in the previous year. Faced with several pressing needs, appropriations to most agencies went down, though programs for the very needy were increased. The allocation for the United Israel Appeal declined by over 12 percent, while that for national institutions dropped by over 6 percent.

In Toronto, the United Jewish Appeal initiated its Vision Campaign, the centerpiece of which was an effort to induce contributors to make three-year commitments. About 40 percent complied.

One of the national agencies hurt badly by the cuts was CJC, which suffered a
5-percent cut for 1995–96 and expected a larger one, perhaps as much as 10 per-
cent, for 1996–97. The cuts hit both national and regional operations.

In Montreal, brothers Mark and Ouri Groysberg, both former Soviet journal-
ists, launched a monthly Russian-language newspaper for immigrants. The Voice
of the Community covers events and cultural developments in Canada, Israel, and
the former Soviet Union.

The purpose of the new Centre international de recherche sur les Juifs du
Maroc, with offices in Rabat, Paris, Jerusalem, and Montreal, is to rehabilitate
and promote the historical-cultural patrimony of Moroccan Jews. The center,
which opened in October 1995, planned to develop educational programs, sup-
port academic research, and hold scholarly conferences. The head of the North
American section is Michael Elbaz, an anthropology professor at Université
Laval in Quebec City.

Israel-Related Matters

In the weeks following the murder of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, sev-
eral strong Canadian advocates of Rabin’s policies were sharply critical of right-
ists within the Canadian Jewish community. Irving Abella, Canadian Jewish Con-
gress past president, asserted that Rabin and his policies had been under attack
for several months and that meetings of community organizations that supported
the peace process had been disrupted by opponents. A co-president of Canadian
Friends of Peace Now made a similar complaint. David Satok, a former CJC of-
ficer, claimed that “our leadership has not taken a very deep look inward to see
how they were partially responsible; [nor did they] delegitimize those who called
Rabin and Peres traitors and murderers. The climate of verbal violence and vio-
 lent language leads to violent acts, as we have witnessed.” In December the na-
tional executive of the CJC called for restraint in the peace process debate.

Within the Jewish community there was considerable debate over the Israeli
government’s peace policies. At a memorial service in August for victims of ter-
rorism, held under Orthodox auspices at Toronto’s Congregation Shaarei
Shomayim, Rabbi Moshe Stern, president of the Vaad Harabonim of Toronto,
argued that Halakhah requires that Jews retain control over the Land of Israel.
Citing Maimonides, he averred that “the Torah message is that Eretz Yisrael was
meant to be forever in the hands of the Jewish people. It was never meant for oth-
ers.” In response, Rabbi Mark Dratch cited a number of rabbis who maintain that
land can be exchanged for peace.

In February 1996 some 1,100 Jews constituted the largest mission ever to go
to Israel from Canada. Most had never been to Israel or had not visited in over
20 years. The trip, organized by the federations and the United Israel Appeal,
commemorated Jerusalem’s 3000th birthday. The group was in Jerusalem at the
time of one of the major terrorist bus bombings, giving the participants a first-
hand experience of the impact of terror on the daily lives of Israelis. Rallies to
protest the terrorist attacks were held in Toronto and Montreal. At Toronto's Shaarei Shomayim synagogue, Rabbi Mark Dratch and Consul-General Jehudi Kinar called on Yasir Arafat to bring the terrorists under control.

During the April fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, a Katyusha rocket hit the Canada Centre in Metullah, causing about $1 million of damage. The recreation facility was built with aid from Canada's United Israel Appeal.

One of those elected to the new Knesset was Prof. Henry (Tzvi) Weinberg, who taught French literature at the University of Toronto for many years before immigrating to Israel in 1992 and assuming a position at Bar-Ilan University. His long involvement with the Soviet Jewry movement and close ties with many of its principals led to his winning a place on Natan Sharansky's list, Yisrael B'Aliyah.

Laidlaw, Inc., established an endowed chair in Canadian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in honor of its president and CEO, James R. Bullock.

Religion

Efforts to increase pressure on recalcitrant husbands who refuse to give their wives a religious divorce (get) were enhanced in June 1995 when the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto adopted a by-law change barring elective federation office to persons denying a get to a former spouse.

Two Montreal synagogues, Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Tifereth Israel and Shomrim Laboker, merged on the latter's premises in August 1995. Rabbis Yonah Rosner and Martin Penn were serving as co-rabbis. The move was necessitated by declining memberships, especially in the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol. The two congregations were only a few blocks apart.

The Reform community in Toronto opened a new ritual bath (mikveh) during the summer of 1995, located at the Canadian Center for Reform Judaism in suburban Thornhill. It would be used mainly for conversions. The need for it reflected the growing inability of Reform rabbis to gain access to mikvehs operating under Orthodox auspices.

Toronto inaugurated a new and extensive eruv (a demarcated area within which Orthodox Jews may carry objects or wheel baby carriages on the Sabbath) late in 1995, one which covered an estimated 90 percent of the Jewish population of the metropolitan area. The project, designed to satisfy the most stringent level of observance, took five years to complete. It was constructed under the auspices of the Vaad Harabonim.

The Sephardic Rabbinate of Ontario was organized late in 1995 in order to unite the province's Sephardic Jews and provide them with rabbinic services, spiritual counseling, and religious education. Dayan Haham Amram Assayag was appointed chief rabbi. Thirteen synagogues and other institutions are included in the new organization.
In an opinion piece in the *Canadian Jewish News* in January 1996, Prof. Martin Lockshin of York University's Center for Jewish Studies called upon Orthodoxy to curb extremist views in the wake of the Rabin assassination. In analyzing the Orthodox reaction to the murder, Lockshin found that the mood of introspection changed to that of victimization in response to harsh criticism of Orthodox Jews. He questioned a willingness in some Orthodox circles to be too indulgent of the expression of extreme right-wing views while being intolerant of any deviation to the left. He concluded with a call for Orthodoxy to dissociate itself from those who encourage vigilantism "before Orthodoxy loses whatever respect it still commands among its adherents and among other Jews."

Congregation Shaar Hashomayim, the first Ashkenazic synagogue in North America and Montreal's largest, celebrated its 150th anniversary during 1995 and 1996 with a series of festive events, including the dedication of 14 tapestry Torah covers, the presentation of the synagogue's own coat of arms, issued by the Governor-General's office, a major concert, a special service, and a dinner dance.

Canadian Reform rabbis distanced themselves somewhat from their American counterparts by affirming in April 1996 that they would not perform same-sex marriages. The Central Conference of American Rabbis backed same-sex marriages under civil law while reserving a decision on whether to give religious sanction to such unions.

Rabbi Barbara Borts became Montreal's first female rabbi when she assumed the post of associate rabbi at the Reform Temple Emanu-El Beth Sholom in August 1995. Ordained in England, she indicated a desire to develop "gender-sensitive" liturgy at her new synagogue.

**Education**

Ontario's Jews maintained their pressure on the provincial government to try to obtain equitable funding for the Jewish day schools. In the most recent case, which began in 1991, a group of parents sued the Ontario government for relief. The case was heard by the Supreme Court of Canada in January 1996, but a decision had not been rendered. The plaintiffs' arguments were based on the concepts of equality and religious freedom, calling it unjust that Roman Catholic schools are funded while those of other religions are not. In previous cases, courts rejected this argument on the grounds that the terms of confederation in 1867 made a special exception for the Catholic schools. At the trial and in the court of appeal, the Jewish parents lost, leaving the Supreme Court as their last hope.

Arieh Waldman, a day-school parent in Toronto, decided not to wait for a court decision and took the matter to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva in February. He contended that the denial of funding to Jewish schools violated international law by discriminating on the basis of religion. He noted that Ontario was the only province to fund some religious schools but not others. No decision had been reached by mid-1996.
Montreal's Jewish day schools, which already enjoyed government financial support, found that support shrinking and looked for ways to improve their financial position. The main proposal being explored in 1995 was to seek associate status with the Montreal Catholic School Commission, but that did not appear to be bearing fruit. Quebec’s Liberal government, which was defeated in 1994, had suggested that if associate status could be arranged, funding at 100 percent for the general studies curriculum might be obtained within three years. At present the schools receive only 50 percent of the cost of general studies and nothing for the Judaic curriculum. With the return of the PQ to power in 1994 and a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Catholic board, it was unlikely that what had been seen as a promising initiative would succeed.

The Association of Jewish Day Schools (AJDS) reiterated its demand for full funding in a brief filed with the Quebec body studying educational reform in August. In both Montreal and Toronto, about 40 percent of day-school students received tuition assistance from the respective Jewish federations. In Winnipeg, for 1995-96, the Jewish day schools received an 11-percent increase in their government funding after a two-year freeze. The new grant was about two-thirds of what the public schools received.

**Community and Intergroup Relations**

Several ethnic groups cooperated to issue a joint statement, a “Call to Conscience,” regarding Canadian immigration policy, in June 1995. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Hindus affirmed that “we believe that it is now our moral duty to speak about the reality of Canada’s treatment of refugees.” Prof. Irving Abella called for Canada “to return to its humanitarian ideal” in the treatment of refugees. The Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, the League of Human Rights, and several rabbis demanded a more compassionate stand on refugees at the meeting, which was held in Toronto’s Church of the Holy Trinity.

In Winnipeg, a three-day conference was held in September 1995 to build bridges between Jews, Mennonites, and Ukrainians. A similar conference, “Relations Between Blacks and Jews: Learning from the Past to Build a Better Future,” was held in Montreal in March 1996. Dan Phillip, president of the Black Coalition of Quebec, told the audience that “we have a great coalition, but we have to build on it.” Speakers compared black-Jewish relations in Canada favorably to those in the United States, but Prof. Mort Weinfeld urged vigilance by the two communities. “Our common enemies would delight in seeing us fracture,” he said. A black Jew, vice-president of his Hamilton synagogue, attacked representatives of the Nation of Islam who ascribe a prominent role in the slave trade to Jews. Speaking to a Toronto audience in April, Dr. Anthony MacFarlane presented evidence to demonstrate that Jews had a minor presence in the slave trade.

The relationship between Islam and terrorism was a major focus of a conference held in September 1995 at Montreal’s McGill University. The symposium
was entitled “Religious Extremism, Peace and Human Rights” and involved scholars from Canada, Israel, and the United States. The keynote address by Prof. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im of Emory University stressed Islam’s message of peace. He called on fellow Muslims to dispense with the notion that Jews are their “eternal enemies.” He also expressed regret that peacemaking between Israelis and Arabs appeared to be the province of secular people.

Montreal’s Jewish community, already reeling from the referendum result, encountered additional tension just before Passover 1996. Several supermarkets, under pressure from the provincial Office de la langue française (OLF), pulled “kosher for Passover” foods off their shelves after being warned that they were violating the language law by selling products that did not have French labeling. Both the store managers and the OLF were sharply criticized by Jewish organizations, not only for the action itself but because it came so close to the holiday as to interfere with individuals’ ability to obtain Passover food.

Canadian Jewish communities have long imported substantial quantities of kosher for Passover food, primarily from the United States, because Canadian producers are simply unable to meet the demand. However, the size of the market is so small that it pays neither the manufacturer nor the importer to affix the legally required French labels. This had never been an issue because an exemption for special circumstances that is already in the statute could be interpreted leniently with regard to the Passover food, if the OLF were so inclined, and in any event, agreements were reached years ago to exempt Passover food. Thus, the action of the Quebec authorities in 1996 was totally unanticipated and inexplicable. Efforts by community relations professionals to determine whether the cause was bureaucratic confusion or a deliberate attempt to impose hardships on Jews were fruitless.

After the end of Passover, the Canadian Jewish Congress initiated talks with the OLF to conclude a written agreement that would permit food products without French labeling in future years. OLF head Nicole René refused to apologize—despite extensive public criticism and international publicity for what was dubbed “Matzahgate”—but did concede that “in hindsight it’s obvious that the Jewish community felt it was being targeted. . . .” But Reisa Teitelbaum, CJC’s Quebec chairwoman, noted that “the angst is already there and this is just something else to add to it.” Meanwhile B’nai Brith’s League for Human Rights initiated a court case to compel the OLF to grant an exemption under existing provisions of the law. B’nai Brith condemned the OLF action as “a heavy-handed and insensitive tactic calculated to provoke and intimidate our community.” A joint task force of the CJC and OLF was expected to produce a written agreement for an annual exemption from the French labeling requirement, for a 68-day period beginning 40 days before the start of Passover.

In May the United Church of Canada’s British Columbia conference called upon its members to encourage “firm and positive attitudes” toward Jews. In a unanimous resolution, the participants acknowledged the historical role of anti-Semitism in Christianity as well as the possibility of current such manifestations
within the United Church. The resolution made a number of positive suggestions regarding ways to improve Christian-Jewish relations.

**Culture**

Marianne Ackerman's new play, *Celeste*, opened at Montreal’s Theatre 1774 in November 1995. One of the leading characters is a Jewish psychiatrist, played by Shimon Aviel, whose views on Judaism are an important dimension of the production.

Bryna Wasserman succeeded her ailing mother, Dora Wasserman, as artistic director of Montreal’s Yiddish Theater. Her first production, *Double Identity*, a Sholem Aleichem play, was performed during May and June 1996. For four years prior to her return to Montreal, the younger Wasserman directed at New York’s Folksbiene Playhouse.

David Gow’s new play, *The Friedman Family Fortune*, opened at Montreal’s Centaur Theater in May. Starring Maurice Podbrey, the play focuses on the life of a Montreal grocery magnate and his family.

In July 1995 Toronto’s Harbourfront was the site of “Ashkenaz,” a celebration of Eastern European Jewish culture. The program included klezmer bands, singers, and drama groups. The 13th annual Festival Sépharade de Montréal in June 1996 featured an art exhibition on the theme of Jerusalem 3000 as well as numerous theatrical and musical events over a two-week period.

Cantor David Bagley of Montreal produced a new album, his 20th, called *Harninu Goyim Amo* (Sing Ye Nations About His People), dedicated to the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The recording includes pieces from the religious liturgy, Yiddish songs, and three original works by Bagley.

The Montreal World Film Festival, held in August and September 1995, included a record 13 films from Israel. Most of them were featured in a special section of the program dedicated to the filmmaking of a particular country—Israeli Cinema of Today. The Toronto International Film Festival, held in September, also included a number of films of Jewish interest, particularly Israel’s *Under the Domim Tree*, directed by Eli Cohen. Jon Blair’s documentary *Anne Frank Remembered*, and Michael Verhoeven’s Holocaust film *My Mother’s Courage*, which deals with the deportation of Budapest’s Jews in 1944. Toronto's fourth annual Jewish Film Festival was held at the Bloor Cinema in May 1996 and featured two Israeli films set in the period of the Gulf War. Twenty-nine other films were screened, dating from 1918 to 1995. Montreal’s Jewish Film Festival, also held in May, included 14 films that were screened at the National Film Board Cinema. The films were in English, French, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Spanish.

Stephen Low’s new film, *Across the Sea of Time*, was shown in English and French at the Imax Theater at Montreal’s Old Port during the summer of 1996. It tells the story of a Russian-Jewish boy searching for his relatives in America. Toronto filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici and co-producer Elliott Halpern made
a documentary, *Expulsion and Memory*, about the descendants of the Conversos in New Mexico and elsewhere who retain elements of their Jewish heritage. (Conversos were 15th-century Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity under duress.) “How could it be,” Jacobovici asked, “500 years after the conversions, that some of their [descendants] were walking around feeling Jewish? What Jewish customs and folklore had survived?” The film was shown on TVOntario in April 1996.

In January 1996 Société Radio-Canada, the French-language service of the CBC, showed a mini-series, *Steinberg*, based on the life of successful Jewish businessman Sam Steinberg, who developed his mother’s grocery into Quebec’s leading supermarket chain. Relationships between French Quebecers and Jews are a major focus of the film. Writer and director Mark Blandford said about Steinberg, “He was a mensch, an astonishing visionary, an entrepreneurial genius, an extraordinary person.”

A documentary on the late Samuel Bronfman, made for CBC television by David Paperny of Vancouver, traces the liquor magnate’s life from Odessa to Saskatchewan to Montreal. Included is material on the controversial Prohibition years, Bronfman’s key role in obtaining Canadian arms for Israel in 1951, and interviews with Bronfman’s sons, Charles and Edgar. *Whisky Man: Inside the Dynasty of Samuel Bronfman* was shown in March 1996.

“Building Bridges,” a touring exhibition of the work of six Israeli and six Palestinian artists, was shown at the North York Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery in Toronto in October and November 1995.

**Publications**

One of the first social-scientific surveys of the Jews of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus is reported in *The Jews of Moscow, Kiev and Minsk: Identity, Anti-Semitism, Emigration* by Canadian sociologist Robert Brym and Russian researcher Rozalina Ryzkina. The stark reality of trying to build Jewish life among people with few Jewish ties and little substantive background is highlighted in this study.

Henry Srebrnik’s *London Jews and British Communism 1935–1945* is a useful investigation of radicalism among Jewish immigrants.

Abraham J. Arnold undertakes a challenging task in *Judaism: Myth, Legend, History and Custom from the Religious to the Secular*, an attempt to explain and justify a secular humanist approach to being Jewish and to demonstrate ways in which this can be transmitted.

The 500th anniversary of the expulsion of Jews from Spain fostered renewed interest in that period. In *The End of Days: A Story of Tolerance, Tyranny and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, Erna Paris describes Spanish society under the Inquisition and explores the combination of factors that transformed one of the high points of Jewish history into one of its lowest.
Jean-Marc Larrue’s *Yiddish Theatre in Montreal* traces its development from its roots in Eastern Europe down to the present-day productions of Dora Waterman, who contributed a foreword and postscript. Larrue claims that “Montreal is perhaps the only city that can claim to have sustained Yiddish stage productions without interruption for the past 100 years.” Other nonfiction books with a Canadian focus include Wendy Eisen’s *Count Us In, The Struggle to Free Soviet Jews: A Canadian Perspective*, a thorough recounting of the cause that mobilized a substantial cross-section of Canadian Jewry; *A.M. Klein: The Story of a Poet*, by Zailig Pollack, which emphasizes Klein’s changing relationship with the Jewish community and its influence on his work; and *Beyond Imagination: Canadians Write About the Holocaust*, edited by Jerry Grafstein.

Other noteworthy works of nonfiction are *Hilmar and Odette* by Eric Koch; *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe’s Ghosts After Communism*, by Tina Rosenberg; *Journey to Oblivion: The End of the East European Yiddish and German Worlds in the Mirror of Literature* by Peter Stenberg; *Jewish Presences in English Literature*, edited by Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller; *The Stigma of Names: Anti-Semitism in German Daily Life* by Dietz Bering; *Search Out the Land: The Jews and the Growth of Equality in British Colonial America, 1740–1867* by Sheldon J. Godfrey and Judith C. Godfrey; *Letter from Vienna* by Claudia Cornwall; *Secrets of the Jews* by Stuart Rosenberg; and *Nuremberg Forty Years Later: The Struggle Against Injustice in Our Time*, edited by Irwin Cotler.

New fictional works include an account of child abuse by Carol Matas, *The Primrose Path*; Patricia Starr’s roman à clef, *Deadly Justice; Getting Away with Murder* by Howard Engel; and a children’s book by Mordecai Richler, *Jacob Two-Two’s First Spy Case*. Among new books of poetry are *Blind Messiah* by Shel Krakofsky; *Altar of the Seasons* by Judah Denburg; *The Song of Moses and Other Poems* by Seymour Mayne; *A Scroll of Remembrance* and *Older and in Love* by Donia Blumenfeld Celenman; and *Jerusalem: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Poetry*, edited by Seymour Mayne and Glen Rotchin.


**Personalia**

Several members of the Jewish community were named to the Order of Canada: Louis Applebaum, Harvey Barkun, Sidney Buckwold, Abel J. Diamond, Carl Goresky, Jack Bell, Frances Belzberg, Gordon Brown, Yhetta Miriam Gold, Carl Gollieb, Sen. Jack Marshall, David Smith, and Joseph M. Tanenbaum. Newly ap-
pointed judges included Freda Steel to the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, Risa Levine as the first Jewish woman on the British Columbia Supreme Court, Michael Moldever and Marc Rosenberg to the Ontario Court of Appeal, Joan Lax to the Ontario Court of Justice, and Lison Asseraf to the Montreal Municipal Court.

A number of people assumed new community positions: Sandra Brown as president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto, Yoine Goldstein as president of Montreal's Federation CJA, Mitzi Dickstein as president of B'nai Brith Women of Canada, Richard Vineberg as president of CJF Canada, Morty Yalovsky as president of Montreal's Jewish Education Council, Donald Davis as president of the Association of Jewish Day Schools in Montreal, and Maryse Ohayon as president of the Communauté Sépharade du Québec.

Dr. May Cohen of McMaster University won the Governor-General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case for her work for the advancement of women. Josh Freed won the Leacock Humor Medal.

MP Sheila Finestone was the winner of the Samuel Bronfman Medal of the CJC for distinguished service to the community.

Among leading members of the community who died in the second half of 1995 were Eugene Winter, community activist, in June, aged 85; artist and philanthropist Judith Dan, in July, aged 61; Joachim Schoenfeld, author of Holocaust memoirs, in August, aged 100; Cecil Vineberg, leading accountant and community leader, in August, aged 77; day-school leader Ben Block, in September, aged 80; Rabbi Avraham Yaacov Glucowsky, yeshivah teacher and Chabad activist, in October, aged 66; labor leader Al Hershkowitz, in November, aged 82; Judge Philip Givens, former MP and mayor of Toronto, in November, aged 73; internationally acclaimed sculptor Kosso Eloul, in November, aged 75; businessman and community leader Phil Granovsky, in December, aged 74; and Jack Cummings, real estate magnate, philanthropist, and community leader, in December, aged 73.

In the first half of 1996: David Rome, historian, CJC archivist, and facilitator of Jewish-Québécois dialogue, in January, aged 85; community activist and Yiddishist Jacob Egit, in January, aged 85; David Kofsky, Labor Zionist leader, in January, aged 81; bookseller William Wolfe, in January, aged 86; longtime CJC leader and community activist David Satok, in January, aged 64; poet Ken Hertz, in February, aged 50; Mizrahi leader Max Zeifman, in February, aged 85; Zionist activist Jack Rosen, in February, aged 86; Leona Finkler, fund-raiser and Bar-Ilan University supporter, in February, aged 77; pioneering newspaperman and journalism professor Murray Goldblatt, in March, aged 73; Jean Sable, communal leader and philanthropist, in March, aged 84; Labor Zionist leader Jack Light, in April; and lay education leader Issie Engel, in May, aged 68.

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