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## Canadian Jews and Multiculturalism: Myths and Realities\*

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*Since the British conquest in 1759, Canada has experienced multiculturalism in three phases: (1) a period of multiculturalism manqué from 1759 to 1971; (2) a period of official multiculturalism that began in 1971 and is still running its course; and (3) the beginning of an open society paying only mild lip service to multiculturalism that has been emerging since the late 1990s. Each period has had advantages and disadvantages for the Jewish collective and for individual Jews. Often the interests of the collective were not identical with those of individuals.*

De jure, Canada has been a multicultural country since October 1971, when the government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau delivered its "Announcement of the Implementation of a Policy of Multiculturalism within the Bilingual Framework." De facto, Canada has been multicultural since the late nineteenth century, when Jews in Montreal and Toronto became numerous enough to organize their own communal life in independence of the French Canadian and Anglo-Canadian communities of those cities.[1]

Essentially, however, and constitutionally from 1867, Canada was bi-national, bicultural, bireligious, and bilingual from the British conquest in 1759 until the 1960s. It was a country of French Canadians, who were French by origin, culture, and language and Roman Catholic by religion, and Anglo-Canadians, who were of British Isles origin and culture, Protestant by religion (except for Irish Catholics), and English speaking. For the tiny Jewish community (only some sixteen thousand in 1900), which was for the most part rejected by French Canadians and not readily accepted by Anglo-Canadians, this was a time of largely autonomous life on the margins and in-between the cracks.

### **The Era of Multiculturalism Manqué**

English Canada was more diverse than French Canada in these years, but it was at the same time a rather demanding melting pot. People who came from places other than the British Isles were expected to become British by culture, temperament, and language. Outsiders—those who came from the European continent and even Jews from Britain—felt considerable pressure to assimilate

and to conform. In general, French Canada was intolerant of outsiders and unwelcoming to them, even those who came from Francophone Europe.

Clarence De Sola provides an instructive example of the Anglo-Canadian melting pot in operation and of this early stage of Canadian multiculturalism. His family had deep roots in Britain. His father, Abraham De Sola, was Canada's first ordained Jewish minister; he was also a McGill professor and the first Jew in the British Empire to be awarded an honorary doctorate. Clarence himself had made and inherited enough money to take his place among the plutocrats of Anglo-Montreal. But religious prejudice, assimilationist pressure, and his own insecurities kept him aware of his incomplete Anglo identity. To fix the flaw, he invented for himself and the other Jews of Canada an inflated and largely false British Sephardi heritage like that of his father-but not his mother and not even Canada's founding Jewish family, the Harts.[2]

De Sola also became a staunch Zionist. He was the first president of the Federated Zionist Societies of Canada, and his close associates in the organization included "the most active and most respected section of [Canadian] Jewry," as Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow noted.[3] Such an involvement was almost unthinkable in most other countries, especially in the United States, for a man of De Sola's wealth and position. With its sights fixed on the Land of Israel, Zionism was almost always the doctrine of admitted outsiders. (Aaron Aharonson, the Zionist pioneer, agronomist, and organizer of the Nili spy ring that aided the British during World War I, recognized the *poseur* in De Sola. In his diary, Aharonson described the Canadian Zionist as "a charlatan and an egotist, in the full sense of the word, a liar.")[4]

The Jews' position in the Canadian educational system in the binational years also demonstrates their outsidership and the country's discriminatory multiculturalism. Before World War I and beyond, Canadian schools were either Protestant or Catholic (in Quebec, French Catholic). For a time at the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews in Quebec were legally deemed Protestants for school purposes. Otherwise they would have had no right to public schooling at all. In that province, Jews could not vote in school-board elections until well after World War II, much less stand for office.[5]

In Ontario, the Protestant schools became "public" after World War I; the publicly funded Catholic schools have remained separate, but tax-supported, to the present day. In Toronto neighborhoods with a Jewish majority, Jews could and did stand for public school director in the early decades of the twentieth century. Ida Siegel was one who did so successfully. But very few Jews were hired as teachers in Toronto or elsewhere until decades later, and the Protestant tone of the educational system obtained for many decades.[6]

#### *The Zionist Connection*

After the turn of the twentieth century when their numbers in Canada were increasing, Jews were acknowledging in many ways their outsider status in the country and their ethnic or national independence, their existence as a third solitude, as Hugh MacLennan might have had it.[7] Perhaps the chief way of doing this was turning to Zionism, like Clarence De Sola. In the pre-World War I years, Canada was one of three countries in the world with the highest per capita membership in the Zionist movement, the other two being Belgium and South Africa. All were binational states where, during the frequent periods of strife between the two official nationalities when each group revved up the nationalist engines, Jews got squeezed. They were neither French nor English in Canada, neither French nor Flemish in Belgium, neither Afrikaners nor English in South Africa.[8]

Still in 1884, Yosef Eliayahu Bernstein, an erstwhile correspondent for the East European, Hebrew-

language newspaper *Hamelitz*, reported from Montreal that the city was divided into parties: French, English, Scottish, Irish, Protestants, and Catholics. The only thing they agreed on, according to Bernstein, was hatred of the Jews.[9] In 1910, when tensions between French and English Canadians were again heating up over a number of issues and both national groups were flexing their nationalist muscles, Montreal's Yiddish newspaper, the *Keneder Odler*, commented that, "A lot of people think that in Montreal there will be a war between the Protestants and the Catholics. If there is," the paper predicted, "we Jews will be the first to suffer, from both sides . . . ."[10]

That the Federation of Zionist Societies and its successor, the Zionist Organization of Canada, served as the representative organizations of Canadian Jewry until the 1930s is further demonstration of Canada's early multiculturalism. In the words of Henry Srebrnik, Canada was a place where "ethnicity [was] legitimated as the primary basis for political interaction." [11] And so, like French and Anglo-Canadians, Jews in Canada organized themselves as an ethnic group, a nationality, unlike American Jews, who organized as a religious group. In 1919, Lyon Cohen, the first president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, told Congress delegates that they "ought to be prepared to make any sacrifice" to ensure that "the Charter of the new World Federation," that is, the nascent League of Nations, would incorporate "as the basis of its very existence, religious, political, and civil equality for all peoples, and for Jews equal rights with other nationalities." [12]

The upside of outsidersness was that Jews turned inward and developed a vibrant communal life of their own. The intermarriage rate was for a long time infinitesimal, and the *aliyah* (emigration to Israel) rate to this day has generally been double that of the United States.[13] Traditional Judaism held on rather better in Canada than in most places, certainly than in the United States, where an Americanized, less separatist Judaism emerged, a faith more in line with American Jews' ability to join the American mainstream. Until the mid-1950s, there were only three Reform synagogues in all of Canada.

The community has been well organized, with the Zionist Organization and then the Canadian Jewish Congress uniting its constituents and representing it publicly and politically. And Zionism, as noted, has been hugely popular. In fact, unlike the United States and Europe, there has been almost no anti-Zionism in Canada, except among some Jews on the communist fringe in the 1930s and the Hasidic fringe today.

Among mainstream Jews, Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath of Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto spoke out forcefully against the concept of Jewish statehood in the 1930s and early 1940s. But Eisendrath was an American; eventually, he returned there and was replaced at Holy Blossom by a staunch Zionist, also of American origin. To balance Eisendrath, there was Montreal's long-time Reform rabbi, Harry J. Stern,[14] who was at the other end of the Zionist spectrum, a fan of Jabotinsky with decidedly Revisionist leanings.[15] In the terms of Daniel Elazar and Stuart Cohen, it could be said that Canadian Jewry from the turn of the twentieth century through World War II, behaved as largely segregated Jewish communities had behaved for centuries; in many ways, it was an exemplary multicultural community in a country that was imperfectly multicultural.[16]

If, then, Jews were neither British nor French and neither Protestant nor Catholic in binational, bicultural Canada, they were intensely Jewish. If one is a proponent of Jewish communal life and/or a Jewish survivalist, this was not a bad quid pro quo. In the interwar years, Zionist emissaries and fundraisers from the Land of Israel were very enthusiastic about visiting Canada. They could not collect a lot of money, because Canadian Jews were still mostly struggling immigrants, but they appreciated the warm reception in a community that understood why the Zionist enterprise was essential for the Jewish people. Almost all of the emissaries, from Berl Katzenelson and Yosef

Baratz of the Labor movement to Arthur Ruppin and Menahe Ussishkin of the Zionist bureaucracy (although not Jabotinsky), saw great differences between American and Canadian Jews. In their reports home, they contrasted the "Jewish Jews" of Canada and the assimilating Jews of the United States.[17]

One ought not to overstate the outsider status of Canadian Jews. In western Canada, where their numbers were quite modest, Jews tended to be rather well integrated into the communities in which they lived, Winnipeg being something of an exception. Before 1900 in Montreal and Quebec City and, to a lesser degree, Toronto, members of the Jewish elite succeeded in joining the clubs of the WASP elite, and successful Jewish professionals and businessmen were accepted by their peers. In the mid-nineteenth century, Abraham De Sola taught both Jewish studies and Spanish at McGill University, and Jews gained full civic and political equality in Canada two decades before they did so in the mother country.

As noted, after 1900 and reaching a high point during the Holocaust years, the outsidership of Jews became much more pronounced. In those years, if one was a Jew who wanted to be a teacher or studying medicine and in need of a hospital in which to intern, the benefits to the Jewish group of Canadian "multiculturalism" might have seemed inadequate compensation for stifled personal dreams. And if one was a child who got harassed and possibly thrashed by Gentile ruffians on the way to and from school, the strength of the Zionist Organization of Canada was not likely to assuage the hurt or heal the wounds.

In a memoir of his father, the ardent Zionist and Montreal poet Irving Layton, Max Layton tells of the day he was playing with a group of boys and discussing family origins. After a while, the puzzled child ran upstairs. One of the boys was French, he told his father; the others were of different backgrounds, and all were proud of their families. "Daddy, what am I?" the young boy asked. "You," the father said, "are a Jew," the scion of rabbis, scholars, and ancient warriors, a people with a long and lustrous heritage. The child ran downstairs to share his family's history with his friends. On hearing the "good news," the boys all pounced on the young Jew and beat him up.[18]

And if one was a refugee from Nazi Europe hoping to save one's family by emigrating to Canada, the country did not look good at all. Canada took in fewer Jews per capita during the Nazi era than any other country in the Western world.[19] For the individual Jew, then, increasingly, opportunity was often limited in Canada, while prejudice sometimes appeared unlimited. That seemed to be the price for community vitality, for the early version of Canadian multiculturalism.

## The Era of Official Multiculturalism

By the 1960s, the winds of change were blowing in Canada, although some light breezes had wafted across the country earlier. In 1938, for example, John Murray Gibbon published a book about the peoples of Canada, which he called *The Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation*. Murray's claim was that Canada was not a melting pot like the United States nor even a tight duality of peoples, but rather a social mosaic that nurtured the diversity of its peoples, the uniqueness of each ethnic tile. Gibbon's depiction of Canada, however, was more wishful thinking than reality literature at that point in time. It should be seen in part, at least, as a book of its day, namely the run-up to World War II, when unity-or at least lip service to unity-was increasingly important.

By the 1960s, however, the notion of a different kind of multiculturalism in Canada, one that viewed multiculturalism less as a descriptive term than as a social ideal to be furthered by government

support, was taking hold.[20] In the immediate postwar years, it had been easier for a Ukrainian veteran of the Waffen SS to immigrate to Canada than it was for a Jewish veteran of the death camps.[21] But soon immigration policy began to shift becoming less and less restrictive (by the 1980s, visible minorities constituted some 70 percent of immigrants to Canada),[22] and newcomers were far less pressured than earlier to conform to Canadian norms.

One of the reasons, as Lorraine Weinrib and others have argued, was that Canadians were increasingly ashamed of their behavior toward Jews during the Nazi years.[23] The extent of the reexamination of Canada's past was demonstrated by the popularity of *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, a scholarly account of Canada's refusal to admit Jewish refugees even after the war. When the book came out in 1982, the authors and publisher were amazed that it became a bestseller, something almost unprecedented for an academic history book.[24]

There were other influences for change as well. The American Black Power movement raised the flag of ethnic solidarity and separateness in the great melting pot to the south. French Canadian nationalists like Pierre Vallières came to view their situation in Canada as analogous to that of American blacks and drew strength from their example.[25] Sentiment grew in Quebec for separation, that is, the independence of the province from Canada. As enthusiasm for separatism gathered strength, and as more and more immigrants of non-British, non-French origin came to Canada, politicians and political scientists sought alternatives to the old binational conception of the Canadian polity. A royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism was formed to study the issue and to suggest a new policy.[26]

One of the eventual results of the revisioning of Canada was the country's first constitution adopted in 1982. The first section of that constitution, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, provides in Section 27 that the charter "should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." The provision is vague and has not had much impact; it does not describe "a right [but only] an instrument of interpretation." [27]

More significantly, the charter contains another provision (Section 33), one unique to Canadian constitutional law, known as the "Notwithstanding Clause." The clause allows a province to override legislation or court rulings in order to protect the collective rights of its residents. It may do so even at the expense of fundamental individual rights such as the right to life, liberty, security of person, and equality, the right to freedom of expression, conscience, association, and assembly, and the right to freedom from unreasonable search and seizure and from arbitrary arrest and detention. Some rights may not be overridden: democratic, mobility, language, minority language education, gender equality, and multicultural heritage rights, as well as the right to denominational (i.e., Catholic and Protestant) schooling.

From the start, the Notwithstanding Clause has been controversial because of its permission for the sweeping abrogation of individual rights in order to protect group rights. It has been used very sparingly, most notably by the province of Quebec to protect French-language use and education. Although it has been useful to Quebec in maintaining cultural distinctiveness within the Canadian confederation, it has little potential for the smaller ethnic groups. Sections 16-21 of the constitution enshrine French and English as the official languages of the country, and the only group rights with meaningful constitutional protection other than those of French and English Canadians are those of the aboriginal peoples.[28]

More significant results of the constitutional deliberations for groups other than the French and the English were the government's 1971 multicultural "Announcement" mentioned at the outset and the

enactment of the federal Multiculturalism Act in 1985. These steps legitimized the preservation of languages (though not their public use) and cultures other than those of Britain and France and of religions other than Protestantism and Catholicism. Not incidentally, it was hoped that multiculturalism would provide a means for satisfying French Canadian aspirations without separation.

A junior ministry, the Department of Canadian Heritage, was established in Ottawa to promote the new approach. (The first two ministers were Quebec Jews, Gerry Wiener and Sheila Finestone.) Funds were appropriated for the teaching in after-school programs or sometimes as part of the regular curriculum of so-called "heritage languages," that is, the languages of immigrants' "old countries." Money was now also made available for cultural programming, such as folk dancing and cultural festivals, in the ethnic communities, and for some thirty university chairs of ethnic studies that were established across the country. Each of these, including a Canadian Jewish studies chair split between York and Concordia universities, specializes in a different one of the country's ethnic groups.

### *Good for the Jews?*

For Jews, multiculturalism has meant, in addition to the university chair, heritage programs in Yiddish and Hebrew paid for by public funds; events such as the annual Jewish book fairs and film festivals held in a number of cities, and Toronto's Ashkenaz, a biannual celebration of East European Jewish culture, the largest and most successful of its kind in North America; (provincial) public funds for day schools in every province where there are day schools except Ontario; a proliferation of Jewish-studies programs in Canadian universities all of them public institutions; and other opportunities. Perhaps the most significant tangible result of the new approach is that today well more than half of all Jewish children receiving a Jewish education in Canada go to day schools, a percentage many times greater than that in the United States.[29]

In less concrete terms, multiculturalism has meant increased self-confidence and willingness to speak out on issues of particular concern to the Jewish community. As Henry Srebnik and others have pointed out, today's

"assertive" and determined community has no hesitation in publicly and overtly bringing to bear the full power . . . of the community within the larger political arena. Issues of concern include domestic anti-semitism and the activities of racist groups, prosecution of Nazi war criminals, the security of Israel, and the fate of endangered Jewish communities [around the world], as well as areas not of purely Jewish concern, such as education, immigration policy, minority rights, and civil liberties.[30]

Multiculturalism in Canada has meant, then, that Jews no longer fell into a constitutional lacuna. Instead, they were full-fledged members of the Canadian polity.[31] In strengthening their own institutions and their own culture, Jews were no longer acting as outsiders but, rather, as model Canadians. To be a good Jew was now to be a better Canadian.

Yet, ironically, ethnic legitimacy served to pull down many of the barriers that had previously kept Jews and other outsiders partially ghettoized, removed, to a degree, from the mainstream of Canadian life. In 1969, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed the first Jew ever to the federal cabinet. A Jew had first been named to the U.S. cabinet in 1905 and to the British cabinet in 1909; Trudeau, although his government initiated official multiculturalism, had evolved from a stereotypical French Canadian nationalist to a firm believer in meritocracy.[32]

Since then, other Jews have served in the federal cabinet-most recently Irwin Cotler, a human rights activist who had played a major public role in the freeing of Natan Sharansky from his Soviet prison, and a staunch Zionist with intimate connections to Israel. Jews have also served as provincial premiers; Supreme Court justices, including Rosalie Abella, an incumbent on the court born to Holocaust survivors in a displaced persons camp; governor of the Bank of Canada; university presidents; ambassador to the United Nations; provincial lieutenant governor; and much else. In other words, the multicultural society has led directly to the open society in which every individual is free to participate as he or she wishes or can, a society very much like that of the United States.

A constitutional reflection of the transition can be found in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As noted, the charter largely focuses on the individual thereby vitiating the assumptions and practices of earlier eras that protected group rights. The 1985 Multiculturalism Act goes further, deriving group rights (other than those of French and English Canadians) specifically from the charter's guarantee of the equality of individuals. And, in general, the Supreme Court has accepted the notion that the charter was intended mainly to protect the individual and not the group.[33]

### **The Future: A Multicultural or an Open Society?**

Over time, two contradictory trends with regard to multiculturalism have emerged in Canadian society. On the one hand, as University of Toronto professor Janice Stein has put it, "multiculturalism has become part of the sticky stuff of Canadian identity." [34] Eddie Goldenberg, the longtime chief of staff of former prime minister Jean Chrétien, proclaimed that: "We are now a progressive, tolerant, multicultural and multi-ethnic society." [35] Irving Abella, a prominent York University historian and former president of both the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Canadian Historical Association, has said that: "Multiculturalism is innovative; it has enhanced our self-image; it has proven a life-saver to many communities; it has created pride where there was once only contempt; it has given Canadians a sense of uniqueness." [36]

On the other hand, the critics of multiculturalism seem to be gaining strength. Canadian governments have backed away from it in different ways. A glance at the website [37] of the Department of Canadian Heritage in mid-2006 is instructive. Multiculturalism has been downgraded to just one of the department's branches and is now combined with Human Rights. Other (more important?) branches have been established to promote antiracism and women's rights, among other activities. "Ethnic group" programming is advertised for only two groups: blacks and Asians. Budget constraints are undoubtedly part of the picture.

In September 2005, the Ontario provincial government rejected a recommendation by former attorney general Marion Boyd that the right to arbitration outside of courts be extended to Muslims, who could have elected sharia courts to mediate their disputes. And in order to appear evenhanded, the province rescinded the longstanding right of Jews and Christians to elect to have disputes arbitrated by their own religious leaders. In 2006, former Quebec provincial premier Bernard Landry described multiculturalism as an "error" and declared that Quebec was "multi-ethnic but not multicultural." [38]

Governments are, of course, responding to the perceived will of the electorate. Some examples of events in late 2006 and early 2007 are instructive. In January 2007, the town council of Hérouxville, a small community in central Quebec where only one immigrant family was living at the time, adopted guidelines for new immigrants to Canada who were considering settling in Hérouxville. Among other things, the five-page document, which had no legal standing, informed potential

newcomers that in the town "it was forbidden to stone women or burn them with acid" or to circumcise them. Some days later, the council removed the most offensive "guidelines," but most remained in place.[39]

The next month a hockey referee in Quebec refused to allow a girl wearing a hijab to participate in a game, and his decision was backed by Quebec premier John Charest.[40] In Montreal in the same period, a longtime employee of the Jewish General Hospital demanded the "right" to eat nonkosher food in the hospital's kosher cafeteria, even though there was a lunchroom where anyone could eat without restriction. The claim was upheld by the Quebec Human Rights Commission, which recommended compensation of \$10,000, and supported by the leader of the provincial opposition party, the separatist Parti Québécois.[41] Also in Montreal, some patrons of a YMCA health club protested the frosting of gym windows done to avoid offending the pupils of an adjacent Hasidic girls' school, even though the school had borne the cost of the frosting.[42]

These are but a few of the growing number of manifestations of sentiment against what Quebeckers call "reasonable accommodation," the spirit of compromise that has enabled multiculturalism to work in Canada.

### *Critical Voices*

Like government policy, the popular press reflects the public mood. The columns of Margaret Wenté in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* are illustrative. Wenté is invariably sensible and humane, more commonsensical than conservative, and without the disregard for the disadvantaged often exhibited by neoconservatives. The paper's orientation is Center-Right, and it is considered Canada's foremost daily.

In a column that appeared in spring 2006 pointedly titled "End of the Multicultural Myth," Wenté describes an encounter at an airport with a father and two children "dressed in western clothes" and a mother "shrouded all in black from head to foot, with a narrow slit for her eyes . . . even her hands . . . covered with black gloves." Wenté goes on to express her readiness to live with difference, with, as she puts it, "multiculturalism-up to a point," but she also asserts her unwillingness to accept immigrants to the West who reject Western values, including the equality of women.

The column speaks favorably of recent efforts in the Netherlands to teach immigrants to be tolerant toward Dutch mores, not only regarding women's rights but regarding more contentious issues as well such as gay marriage. Wenté also praises a Rotterdam bylaw designed to discourage speaking languages other than Dutch in public, a bylaw potentially more draconian than Quebec's Bill 101.[43] Wenté's is, of course, a selective renunciation of diversity. Gay marriage is acceptable, but the burka is not. But she is a selective and thoughtful conservative with her own values. More recent columns have pursued similar themes.[44]

Wenté's discontents are just one, rather mild indication of the growing public reaction against multiculturalism in many countries including Israel and Canada. What lies behind the outcry is, to a certain extent, the politically very incorrect fear of the other, especially Islam, but not only. Islam is a relatively unknown quantity in Europe and America. In general, moreover, people who walk about hiding their faces, whether in burkas or balaclavas, arouse unease. Unease has turned to fear and hostility with the incidents of recent years: the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh and politician Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands; the riots in Paris and other French cities in autumn 2005; the underground bombings in London and the train bombings in Madrid; to say nothing of 9/11 and the capers of Osama bin Laden. And there is a "demographic threat" in Europe as well as in Israel.



Concerns among Jews about multiculturalism mirror those of others but are heightened by the Arab-Israeli conflict, a very hot-button issue in the staunchly Zionist Canadian Jewish community. It should be noted, however, that some Jews, at least, were hesitant from the start to jump on the multiculturalism bandwagon. During the early-1980s constitutional debates in Canada, the Canadian Jewish Congress leadership focused almost exclusively on civil rights issues and said almost nothing about the multicultural heritage of Canadians or about religious freedom-including issues that concerned Jews, such as Sunday blue laws and prayer in the public schools.[45]

A recent article by Janice Stein returns to the human rights issues that have traditionally exercised many Jews and especially the conflict between human rights and multicultural rights. Her piece is both personal and general. It explores, perhaps more sharply, some of the issues that Wente highlights, but also the particular clash of values in the Jewish community. The article illustrates why Jews, even the multiculturalism skeptics among them, might wish to pause before rejecting the multicultural ethos altogether.

Stein offers a paean to Canada's unique urban, cultural diversity, which she finds "generally respect[ful of] difference" and lacking the "fiercely assertive nationalism" of the neighboring United States.[46] She likes the porous borders of ethnicity in Canada, citing not intermarriage, the obvious example but an explosive issue in the Jewish community, but rather the anodyne issue of shifting loyalties in World Cup football. Her concerns about the Canadian brand of multiculturalism include the constraint of free speech in a polite society respectful of others; the sanctioning of discrimination, particularly against women out of respect for cultural difference; incitement to hatred and violence through subtle stereotyping; and the "secularization of public space." [47]

For her, these issues come together in the treatment of women where she sees a clash between human rights and traditional, ethnic values. Stein talks extensively about her own synagogue and her impatience with its refusal to grant women full equality in the prayer service. In calling for "deep" rather than "shallow" multiculturalism, Stein suggests that religious institutions that contravene human rights (especially, but not only, with regard to women) ought not to enjoy the tax relief accorded to religious, educational, and welfare institutions in Canada. She also laments multicultural education in which "children . . . go only to their community schools until they are ready for post-secondary education, worship at community institutions, go to community summer camps, play soccer or hockey within their own communities, and make friendships only with the kids who have similar cultural connections." [48] The praise for multiculturalism notwithstanding, Stein's essay sounds very much like a call for the melting pot, the open society that she dismisses in her opening paragraphs.

And this is precisely what is happening as individual Jews, no longer outsiders, move into the Canadian mainstream. In general, their Jewish activities diminish, and the group is weakened.[49] It is not that anyone feels obliged to be less actively Jewish; it is more a shift of priorities and the reality of limited time, energy, and money.

#### *Multiculturalism and Jewish Women*

Canadian Jewish women offer an excellent example of what the shift from the multicultural to the open society means. Jewish women in Canada in earlier periods lived in a double ghetto: a gender one and an ethnic one. Presumably they always had the same talents and energy they have today, but there were fewer outlets for them, fewer means of self-expression. So the talents and energy were put to work in the service of the Jewish community and in those activities of the community deemed appropriate for women: chiefly charitable work, education, and social work.

Today, however, women enter the workforce almost on an equal basis with men, and impediments

to involvement in general or Gentile organizations have fallen away—a good example is Judy Rebick who headed the National Organization for Women. As a result, talents and energy once devoted to synagogue sisterhoods, women's Zionist organizations, Jewish charitable or educational endeavors, or Israel, are no longer available to the Jewish community.

The career of Sylva Malka Gelber illustrates the process. Gelber came from a wealthy Toronto Jewish family that was at once acculturated and very active in Zionist affairs and the Jewish community. When she applied to Barnard College in the early 1930s, she was refused entry because "the Jewish quota [for that year] was already filled." For a time she worked as a journalist for a Toronto Zionist newspaper, and she also dabbled in theater. Unfulfilled, she left Canada for Palestine in 1932.

There she enrolled in the new Va'ad Le'umi School of Social Work (now the Paul Baerwald Faculty of Social Work at the Hebrew University). She was its first graduate and became a close colleague of Henrietta Szold. Later she worked in the social services of the Mandatory government. In 1948, she left Palestine for personal and political reasons and returned to Canada, a country with more and increasing opportunities for women and for Jews than the one she had left sixteen years earlier.

She never again had much to do with the Jewish community. Among other civil service positions, she was the first head of the Women's Bureau of the Canada Department of Labour. From 1970 to 1974, she represented Canada on the UN Commission for the Status of Women. She was a member of the "Group of 78," an advisory group of prominent Canadians concerned with foreign policy, and one of the few Jews to sign the group's "Statement on Canadian Foreign Policy in the 1980s. Before her death in 2003, Gelber endowed the Sylva Gelber Award in Music.[50]

The same process can be seen in the area of philanthropy, and events in Toronto are illustrative. In recent years several very wealthy Canadian Jews have given large sums of money to the business schools at York University and the University of Toronto. The new opera house in Toronto and a performing arts center there have also been the beneficiaries of very large gifts from Jewish donors. One donor gave the Art Gallery of Ontario a sculpture worth \$50 million—ironically, a crucifix. Some of these donors also give generously to Jewish and Israeli institutions, and some do not. In an earlier era, however, most of these funds probably would have gone to Jewish causes.

Yet another indicator of decreasing involvement in Jewish affairs in the open society is the intermarriage rate. Traditionally the rate of intermarriage in Canada has been considerably lower than in the United States. One source reports a rate of 7 percent in 1961 and 25 percent in 1984,[51] a radical, but not surprising, jump, as the Canadian Jewish community became more rooted in Canada than earlier, and as the restrictions of the binational period eased in the era of multiculturalism.

Indications are, however, that more recently the rate has begun to approach that of the United States and perhaps to exceed it in some localities. A questionable source reports that in Ottawa in 2005, 48.3 percent of "couple households" with at least one Jewish member are intermarried couples, while 82.1 percent of such households under the age of thirty are intermarried.[52] A more reliable source based on the 2001 Canada Census reports that in Winnipeg 62.5 percent of couples under age thirty with at least one Jewish member are intermarried, 39 percent of couples aged thirty to thirty-nine, and 20 percent of couples forty and over.[53]

#### *The Need for a Balanced Assessment*

It would seem, then, that the era of multiculturalism characterized by the devotion of Canadians to

their ethnic group of origin is drawing to a close. Perhaps it would have died a natural death, because in legitimizing ethnic difference, multiculturalism reduced prejudice and ended outsidership, paving the way toward the open society. Perhaps it should be said, as well, that mindless devotion to diversity and an apparent hesitation to ensure even minimal adherence to Western cultural norms and values on the part of immigrants have not been helpful to the cause of multiculturalism. On the other hand, the often thoughtless and overgeneralized criticism of diversity and multiculturalism voiced by many conservatives today, is hastening its demise, perhaps unwisely.

To be sure, segregation-and that was what it was-had its drawbacks. Prejudice and the stifling of dreams and talent were two of them. But multiculturalism did serve to reinforce Jewish communal life, making available to the community such people as the uncrowned monarchs of Jewish Canada in the interwar period, Archie and Lillian Freiman. The Freimans were very wealthy and acculturated; they were on personal terms with Prime Minister Mackenzie King, although it is now known that he did not like them much or any other Jews for that matter. Archie headed the Canadian Zionist Organization for more than two decades, and Lillian presided over Hadassah/WIZO during the same period. They were an extraordinary duo who might well have spent their money and energy on the general society if it had been more open and accommodating.

The open society on the American model discourages loyalty to subgroups and, although it is often less open than it claims to be, holds out a standing invitation to all citizens to participate equally.[54] In an open society, Theodor Herzl might have been Ted Koppel, Tzipi Livni might have been Madeleine Albright, and Irwin Cotler might have been Henry Kissinger.

Perhaps before celebrating the demise of multiculturalism or assisting in its suicide, it is worth recalling its historical precedents. Monoculturalism has often not been good for the Jews. In the democratic melting pot, it can lead to assimilation; in a totalitarian society like communist Russia, to the suppression of minorities and especially Jews; in ethnically or religiously homogeneous societies, like contemporary [Saudi Arabia](#) or post-1492 Spain, to the exclusion of Jews; and even in Israeli Jewish society, to repression and forced conformity, with long-term negative consequences as in the case of Yemenite immigrants, Moroccans, and others.

In Canada and elsewhere, multiculturalism, despite its contemporary excesses, and even its predecessor, binationalism, with all its negative features as far as individual Jews and the Jewish group were concerned, often served the Jewish community and many Jewish individuals (and other communities and individuals) well. Both frameworks served to reinforce group loyalty and to provide an outlet for the energies of talented Jews to the benefit of those individuals, of the Jewish community, and of the Canadian people at large.

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## Notes

\* A somewhat different version of this article was presented at the conference on "Jews in a Multicultural World: Myths and Realities," in honor of Prof. Gideon Shimoni at the Hebrew University of [Jerusalem](#), January 2007.

[1]. As Harold Troper and Morton Weinfeld have noted, in Canada, multiculturalism has several

meanings. These include "the demographic reality of a Canadian population made up of people and groups from diverse ethnic and social origins"; "a social ideal or value that accepts cultural pluralism as a positive feature of Canadian society;" and "government policy initiatives designated to recognize, support, and . . . manage cultural and social pluralism at federal, provincial, and municipal levels" ("Canadian Jews and Canadian Multiculturalism," in Howard Adelman and John H. Simpson, eds., *Multiculturalism, Jews, and Identities in Canada* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996], 11). In the present article the term multiculturalism, when used without definition or qualifiers, normally refers to the first of those meanings.

[2]. On De Sola's historical revisionism, see Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif? Jews, Anglo-Canadians, and French Canadians, 1759-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 64-65.

Additional information on De Sola can be found in Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 40-60.

[3]. Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans Green, 1919), 355.

[4]. Aharon Aharonson, *Yoman*, ed. Yoram Efrati (Tel Aviv: Karni, 1970), diary entry for 2 December 1917, 362. [Hebrew]

[5]. See Brown, *Jew or Juif?* 239-43, 257-58, 318-19, 321-22, and the sources cited there.

[6]. See Michael Brown, "From Gender Bender to Lieutenant Governor: Jewish Women in Canada, 1738-2005," *A Maturing Community: Jewish Women and Seniors* (Toronto: York University Centre for Jewish Studies, 2005), 6.

[7]. MacLennan's book, *Two Solitudes* (Montreal: Collins, 1945) describes the separate worlds of Montreal's French and Anglo populations.

[8]. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Random House, 1976), 162.

[9]. Yosef Eliyahu Bernstein, "The Jews in Canada (North America)," *Hamelitz*, 11 Iyyar 1884. [Hebrew]

[10]. "The Strong Word," *Keneder Odler*, 23 October 1910. [Yiddish]

[11]. Henry Srebnik, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Ethnicity: Jews and the Charlottetown Accord," in Adelman and Simpson, *Multiculturalism*, 101.

[12]. Quoted in Bruce P. Elman, "The Constitutionalization of Multiculturalism in Canada: The Jewish Legal Role," in Adelman and Simpson, *Multiculturalism*, 69-70.

[13]. On the other hand, that Canada is, in large measure, part of "America" is clear from the fact that Canadian per capita *aliyah* figures are much lower than those of any country except the United States. Cf. Michael Brown, "The Push and Pull Factors of Aliyah and the Anomalous Case of Canada: 1967-1982," *Jewish Social Studies*, 48 (Spring 1986): passim.

[14]. The J was said to be for Jesus, reflecting the rabbi's charismatic preaching and his interfaith work.

[15]. On Eisendrath in Toronto, see Meyer W. Weisgal, *So Far, An Autobiography* (London and Jerusalem: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 92; Stephen Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), 241-42. Although there are numerous press clippings of the time relating to Stern's career as well as his own publications, he awaits his biographer.

[16]. Daniel J. Elazar and Stuart A. Cohen, *The Jewish Polity: Jewish Political Organizations from Biblical Times to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 1-41, as cited in Srebnik, "Multiculturalism," 101.

[17]. See, e.g., Yitzchak Eleazari-Volcani [A. Zioni], "From Traveling Abroad," *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*, 8 October 1920 [Hebrew]; Shmaryahu Levin, New York, letter to Menahem Ussishkin, Meech Lake, Canada, 19 July 1927, in *Iggrot Shmaryahu Levin: Mivhar* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1966), 421-22 [Hebrew]; Arthur Ruppin, *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, trans. Karen Gershon (London and Jerusalem: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), diary entry, Chicago, 31 December 1922, 202-09; Yosef Baratz, "MiCanada," *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*, 1 May 1931 [Hebrew]. On Jabotinsky, see Michael Brown, "A Case of Limited Vision: Vladimir Jabotinsky on Canada and the United States," *Canadian Jewish Studies*, 1 (1993): 1-26. On Katznelson, see idem, *The Israeli-American Connection: Its Roots in the Yishuv, 1914-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), passim.

[18]. *Globe and Mail*, 7 January 2006. For examples of Layton's ardent commitments and strident expression, see his *For My Brother Jesus* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), *The Covenant* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), and other works.

[19]. See Irving M. Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Denys, 1991), passim. On anti-Semitism in English Canada in the 1930s, see Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975); on anti-Semitism in French Canada during the same years, see Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and the Delirium of Extremist Right-Wing Nationalism in Quebec from 1929 to 1939* (Montreal: Robert Davies, 1993).

[20]. See note 1.

[21]. See, e.g., Harold Troper and Morton Weinfeld, *Old Wounds: Jews, Ukrainians, and the Hunt for Nazi War Criminals in Canada* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press., 1988), passim.

[22]. Srebnik, "Multiculturalism."

[23]. Lorraine Eisenstat Weinrib, "'Do Justice Unto Us!' Jews and the Constitution of Canada," in Daniel Elazar, Michael Brown, and Ira Robinson, eds., *Not Written in Stone: Jews, Constitutions, and Constitutionalism in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2003), 33-70.

[24]. Lecture by Harold Troper, one of the book's authors, Toronto, November 2005.

[25]. See Pierre Vallières, *White Niggers of America* (Montreal: Oxford, 1968).

[26]. See the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1969).

[27]. Elman, "Constitutionalization," 78.

[28]. See esp. Peter Johansen and Philip Rosen, "The Notwithstanding Clause of the Charter," Parliamentary Information and Research Service, February 1989 (revised September 1997).

[29]. According to Ira Robinson ("Canadian Jewry Today: Portrait of a Community in the Process of Change," *Changing Jewish Communities*, 12, 15 September 2006), 34.8 percent of Jewish school-age children in Montreal are enrolled in day schools and 25.2 percent of Toronto Jewish school-age children.

[30]. Srebnik, "Multiculturalism." In a private conversation with the author, Prof. Harold Troper argued that the shift from quiet intercession to public assertiveness reflects the shift in power in the Jewish community from the older, more assimilated leaders to a younger, more brash group, most of whom were second-generation East Europeans or Holocaust survivors. In *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), Franklin Bialystok makes a similar, though not identical, argument.

[31]. Among the many works on multiculturalism and the Jews of Canada are: Adelman and Simpson, *Multiculturalism*; Bernardo Berdichewsky, *Cultural Pluralism in Canada: What It Means to the Jewish Community* (Vancouver: Institute on Governance, 1996); Nora Gold, "Voices from the Field: Multiculturalism as Experienced in Jewish Social Service Agencies," in Marla Brettschneider, ed., *The Narrow Bridge: Jewish Views on Multiculturalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 236-46; Saul Hayes, "Multiculturalism as a State Policy," in Chaim Spilberg and Yaacov Zipper, eds., *Canadian Jewish Anthology* (Montreal: National Committee on Yiddish, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1982), 48-58; Stuart Schoenfeld, "Canadian Jewry in a Multicultural Canada: Assimilation, Inter-marriage and Jewish Identity," in Edmund Y. Lipsitz, ed., *Canadian Jewry Today: Who's Who in Canadian Jewry* (Downsview, Ont: J.E.S.L. Publications, 1989), 92-98; Morton Weinfeld, "Canadian Cultural Pluralism and Its Implications for the Jewish Community," *Shofar*, 5 (1987): 1-7; idem, "Canadian Jews and Canadian Pluralism," in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *American Pluralism and the Jewish Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1990), 87-106.

[32]. Troper and Weinfeld, "Canadian Jews," 25. Cf. also John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, Vol. 1, 1919-1968 (Toronto: Random House, 2006).

[33]. See, e.g., Lorraine Weinrib, "Canada's Charter Rights Protection in the Cultural Mosaic," *Cardozo Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 4 (1996): 395-422.

[34]. Janice Gross Stein, "Living Better Multiculturally," *Literary Review of Canada*, 14 (September 2006): 3.

[35]. Quoted in Sheldon Kirshner, "Chrétien's 'Shadow' Reflects on Long Career in Government," *Canadian Jewish News*, 2 November 2006. See also Goldenberg's memoir of his political life, *The Way It Works: Inside Ottawa* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006).

[36]. Irving Abella, "Foreword," in Adelman and Simpson, *Multiculturalism*, viii.

[37]. <http://www.pch.gc.ca/>.

[38]. Landry is quoted in "Landry Weighs In on Sovereignty and Multiculturalism," *Canadian Jewish News*, 29 June 2006, 18.

[39]. Dene Moore, "Herouxville Wants Immigrants That Fit In with Its Citizens," *National Post*, 1 January 2007, 1; [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca), 13 February 2007, and many other sources.

[40]. [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca), 27 February 2007.

[41]. "Editorial-More Intolerance," *The Suburban.com*, 8 March 2007; Janice Arnold, "Jews Watching Outcome of Tight Quebec Race," *Canadian Jewish News* (Internet edition), 8 March 2007; and other sources.

[42]. [www.ctv.ca](http://www.ctv.ca), 11 November 2006, and other sources.

[43]. Bill 101, *Charte de la langue française*, enacted in 1977 by the separatist Quebec provincial

government, established French as the sole official language of the province for almost all facets of public life. Adjustments to the bill have been made from time to time, most significantly in the area of education.

[44]. Margaret Wente, "End of the Multicultural Myth," *Globe and Mail*, 18 March 2006. See also idem, "Wired for Submission," *Globe and Mail*, 4 November 2006, and "Runaway Turkish Bride," *Globe and Mail*, 9 December 2006

[45]. Elman, "Constitutionalization," 74.

[46]. Stein, "Living Better," 3.

[47]. Ibid., 3-4.

[48]. Ibid., 5.

[49]. Cotler is an exception in this respect, as is Myra Freeman, the immediate past lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia, who made the kitchen of Government House kosher when she took office.

[50]. See Sylva Gelber, *No Balm in Gilead: A Personal Retrospective of Mandate Days in Palestine* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), and other sources.

[51]. The source is the rather reliable website, Multicultural Canada, [www.multiculturalcanada.ca/ecp/content/jews.html](http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/ecp/content/jews.html).

[52]. Jewish Outreach Institute website, <http://joi.org/blog/index.php?p=121>.

[53]. Myron Love, "Rabbi Urges Fight against High Inter-marriage Rates," *Canadian Jewish News*, 25 May 2006. The report is based on the work of Montreal demographer Charles Shahar.

[54]. On the effect of inherited wealth and status in Canada's "open" society, see John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

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