



## **Changing Jewish Communities**

[Visit our new website: Institute for Global Jewish Affairs](#)

*No 10, 16 July 2006, 20 Tammuz 5766*

### **From Binationalism to Multiculturalism to the Open Society: The Impact on Canadian Jews**

***Michael Brown***

- *The experience of Canadian Jews has been shaped to a large degree by the country's binationalism (English-French) and multiculturalism and increasingly by the open society.*
- *Under binationalism, Canadian Jews suffered from prejudice and exclusion, but the situation fostered group cohesion. Under multiculturalism, ethnicity was recognized and many of the barriers that had earlier kept Canada's Jews partially ghettoized came down. The legitimation of group identity, however, in some ways encouraged Jewish affiliation and activism.*

- *With multiculturalism falling out of favor, many in Canada and elsewhere now laud the individualism of the "open society." Declining communal participation and rising intermarriage rates among Canadian Jews, however, indicate that both multiculturalism and even binationalism were more conducive to Jewish group survival.*

It might well be argued that a multicultural society provides the ideal setting for Jewish life in the Diaspora. And yet, in Jewish and non-Jewish circles, especially among conservatives, multiculturalism and diversity are now in disfavor. A recent column in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* by Margaret Wente, a columnist who is invariably sensible and humane, moderately conservative but without the disregard for the disadvantaged exhibited by many conservatives, is illustrative.<sup>1</sup>

Titled "End of the Multicultural Myth," the column opens with a description of a family Wente happened upon at an airport: 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." Wente goes on to assert her readiness to live with difference, with, as she puts it, "multiculturalism - up to a point," but she also expresses 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 more contentious issues as well, such as gay marriage. Wente also praises a Rotterdam bylaw designed to discourage speaking languages other than Dutch in public, a regulation potentially much more draconian than Quebec's Bill 101.<sup>2</sup>

Wente's is, of course, a selective renunciation of diversity. Gay marriage is acceptable, but the burka is not. But, as noted, she is a selective and thoughtful conservative with her own values. And her discontents are just one, rather mild indication of the growing

6/10/2009

From Binationalism to Multicultural...

public reaction against multiculturalism in many countries including Israel and Canada. The discovery in Canada of a huge cache of weapons and explosive materials and the subsequent arrest of seventeen suspected terrorists in early June 2006 excited a far stronger reaction against multiculturalism in the rightwing *National Post*, published in Toronto. "Did we really think," columnist Lorne Gunter asked rhetorically, that "the world's jihadis would fall for our multicultural bump?"<sup>3</sup>

What lies behind the outcry is, to a certain extent, the politically very incorrect fear of the other, especially Islam, but not only that. Islam is a relatively unknown quantity in Europe and North 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 riots in Paris and other French cities in fall 2005; the underground bombings in July 2005 in London; the murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004 in Amsterdam and the train bombings of March 2004 in Madrid; to say nothing of 9/11 and the exploits of Osama bin Laden. And there is a "demographic threat" in Europe as well as in Israel.

The foregoing issues are not the focus here. Rather, they are part of the background for discussing a perceived political and social shift in Canada away from multiculturalism, and the probable impact of that shift on Jews and the Jewish community there. To analyze that phenomenon, it is necessary to review some of Canada's social and constitutional history relating to Jews, a history that may be divided into three periods, the last of which is (or possibly is not) in its beginning stages.

The first was the binational period, which stretched essentially from the British conquest to the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> For the Jewish community this was a time of life on the margins and in between the cracks. Then came the much shorter multicultural period of almost full belonging for the Jewish and other ethnic groups. It began in the 1960s and is still extant, although showing signs of petering out. Finally, there is the dawning era of the open society a mono- or bicultural, monolingual society in which groups count for little, in which status and wealth can (ostensibly) be achieved by all, and may the best person win.

## The Binational Era

From the British conquest in the mid-eighteenth century until well after World War II, Canada was a binational, bireligious, bicultural, bilingual country. Anglo-Canadians originated in the British Isles and were English-speaking, tied culturally and politically to England, and Protestant by religion except for Irish Catholics. French Canadians were culturally French and Francophone, had family roots in France, and were universally Roman Catholic.

Those unfortunate enough not to come from either Britain or France were, in the parlance of twentieth-century Canadian immigration guidelines, "nonpreferred." People of color, southern and eastern Europeans, and Jews were more nonpreferred than others. The dual nature of the country was enshrined in the quasi-constitution, the British North America Act of 1867. To a considerable extent, both of the official nationalities sought to preserve in their New World setting the traditions of the Old World. The mindset in binational Canada, unlike that in the more freewheeling United States, was conservative and traditional.

English Canada was more diverse than French Canada in these years, but it was at the same time a rather unforgiving melting pot. The spirit of the period, in the colonies as well as the mother country, was captured by W. S. Gilbert: "It was greatly to [their] credit" that Anglo-Canadians were almost all of UK origin.<sup>5</sup> People who came from places other than the British Isles were accepted on condition that they become British by culture, allegiance, temperament, and language. Often tolerance did not extend even to French Canadians. In 1890, the nationalist and imperialist spokesman of English Canada, D'Alton McCarthy, pronounced Canada "a British country." The "sooner we take up our French Canadians and make them British," he declared, "the less trouble will we leave for posterity."<sup>6</sup>

In the melting pot<sup>7</sup> of the United States, immigrants from everywhere adopted as their putative ancestors the Pilgrim Fathers. In English Canada, the unifying figure was the living British monarch. In French Canada, it was the actual ancestors of the population, hence the very high value placed there on "racial"

purity - being *pure laine* - and the near impossibility of acculturation. In English Canada, outsiders - those who came from the European continent and even Jews from Britain - understood the terms of accommodation. On the occasion of the visit to Canada in 1901 of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (the future King George V and his wife), the *Canadian Jewish Times* proudly proclaimed that "our loyalty is...British not Jewish."<sup>8</sup>

### ***Assimilationist Pressure on Jews***

Clarence DeSola (1858-1920) provides an instructive example of a Jew responding to the assimilationist pressure of English Canada. His family had deep roots in Britain. His father, Abraham DeSola, was Canada's first ordained "rabbi";<sup>9</sup> he was also a McGill professor and the first Jew in the 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, the pressure to conform, and his own insecurities left 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 background like that of his father - but not his mother and not even Canada's founding Jewish family, the Harts.<sup>10</sup> DeSola 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.<sup>11</sup>

Such an involvement was almost unthinkable in most other countries, especially the United States, for a man of DeSola's wealth and position. With its sights fixed on the Land of Israel, Zionism was almost always the doctrine of admitted outsiders. Indeed, Aaron Aaronson, the Zionist pioneer, agronomist, and organizer of the Nili spy ring that aided the British during the Palestine Campaign of World War I, recognized the poseur in DeSola. In his diary, Aaronson described the Canadian Zionist as "a charlatan and an egotist, in the full sense of the word, a liar."<sup>12</sup>

## ***Outsider Status***

In fact, in binational Canada, Jews did not really fit in. Until well after the turn of the twentieth century, they were merely a very small and relatively inconspicuous appendage of Anglo-Canada. As late as 1901, there were just over sixteen thousand Jews in all of Canada.

Jews' position in the educational system is indicative: Canadian schools before World War I and beyond were either Protestant or Catholic. For a time at the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews in Quebec were actually deemed legally Protestant for school purposes. Otherwise they would have had no right to public schooling at all. Jews in Quebec could not vote in school board elections until well after World War II, much less stand for office.<sup>13</sup>

In Ontario, the Protestant schools became "public" after World War I; the publicly funded Catholic schools have remained separate to the present day. In Toronto neighborhoods with a strong Jewish presence, 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 in most places, even the more open western provinces, the Protestant tone of the educational system prevailed for many decades.<sup>14</sup>

After the turn of the twentieth century when their numbers in Canada were increasing, Jews acknowledged in many ways their outsider status in the country, their existence as a third solitude, as Montreal novelist Hugh MacLennan might have put it.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

In 1910, tensions between French and English Canadians were again heating up over a number of issues, and both 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..."<sup>17</sup>

The most common way for Canadian Jews to acknowledge their outsider status over the years was by affiliating with Zionism, like Clarence DeSola. 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 were Belgium and (white) 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 were squeezed between both. They were neither French nor English in Canada, neither French nor Flemish in Belgium, neither Afrikaner nor English in South Africa.<sup>18</sup> As a result, they turned to Jewish nationalism. As late as 1956, the American sociologist David Riesman noted that wealthier Toronto Jews were largely "other directed," their sights set "towards London, towards Hollywood-New York, and towards Tel Aviv."<sup>19</sup>

### ***Jewish Communal Life under Binationalism***

The upside of outsidership coupled with Canada's conservative Zeitgeist 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.<sup>20</sup> Traditional Judaism sustained itself 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, while Zionism, as noted, has been hugely popular.

In fact, unlike the United States and Europe, there has been little 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, and he was eventually sent back where he came from. To balance him, there was Montreal's longtime Reform rabbi, Harry J. Stern. Stern was also an American, and he devoted much of his career in Montreal to interfaith work. (His middle initial was said to stand for Jesus, both because of his involvement with Christians and because of his charismatic preaching.) At the other end of the Zionism spectrum from Eisendrath, Stern was an admirer of Jabotinsky and of Revisionist Zionism.<sup>21</sup>

So, if Jews were neither British nor French and neither Protestant nor Catholic in binational, bireligious Canada, as the country was de facto from 1759 and de jure from 1867, they were intensely Jewish. If one is a proponent of Jewish communal life or a Jewish survivalist, this was not a bad tradeoff. In the interwar years, Zionist emissaries and fundraisers from the Land of Israel were enthusiastic about visiting Canada. They could not collect a lot of money because Canadian Jews were still mostly not-well-off 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 them, from Berl Katzenelson and Yosef Baratz of the Labor Movement to Arthur Ruppin and Menachem Ussishkin of the Zionist bureaucracy (although not Jabotinsky), saw great differences between American and Canadian Jews. They reported home positively about the Jewish community in Canada and negatively about the one in the United States in words that might have sounded harsh to American Jewish ears.<sup>22</sup>

Although Jabotinsky was unenthusiastic about Canadian Jews, he believed that the country's political system might be a model for Palestine. In a Montreal speech during a fundraising tour for his New Zionist Organization, he suggested that Palestine might eventually achieve Dominion status within the British Empire with rights for Jews and Arabs similar to those of French and English Canadians in Canada.<sup>23</sup>

## ***The Perils of Prejudice***

On the other hand, if one were a Jew who wanted to be a teacher, or studying medicine and in need of a hospital in which to intern, life in Canada could be stifling. And if one were a child who was harassed and possibly beaten by gentile children on the way to and from school, it also did not seem appealing.

(In a memoir of his late father, the poet Irving Layton, Max Layton tells of a day he was playing with a group of boys and discussing family origins. After a while, he ran upstairs and told his father that one of the boys was French and the others were of different backgrounds, and all were proud of their families. "Daddy, what am I?" Max asked. "You," the father said, "are Jewish," the scion of rabbis, scholars, and even warriors, a people with a long and distinguished history. Max ran downstairs to deliver the good news of his exalted heritage. On hearing it, his "friends" joined together in beating him up.)<sup>24</sup>

And if one were a refugee from Nazi Europe hoping to save his 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.<sup>25</sup> For the individual Jew, opportunity was often limited in Canada and prejudice sometimes seemed unlimited. But that was the price to be paid for extraordinary communal vitality.

## **The Era of Multiculturalism**

By the 1960s, the winds of change were blowing in Canada. Light breezes had been felt before. In 1938, John Murray Gibbon published a book called *The Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation*.<sup>26</sup> Gibbon'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 a sociological portrait or a description of political reality at that stage. It should be seen in part, at least, as a book of its time, namely, the runup to World War II, when unity - or at least lip service to unity - was increasingly desirable.

By the 1960s, however, the mosaic notion of Canadian society really was taking hold. In the immediate postwar years, it was easier for a Ukrainian veteran of the Waffen SS to immigrate to Canada than for a "non-preferred" Jewish veteran of the death camps.<sup>27</sup> But soon immigration policy became less and less restrictive, and immigrants 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.<sup>28</sup> The extent of Canadians' discomfort with their past was demonstrated by the popularity of *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*,<sup>29</sup> a scholarly account by Profs. Irving Abella and Harold Troper of Canada's refusal to admit Jewish refugees even after the war. When the book came out in 1982, the authors and publisher were very surprised that it became a bestseller, something almost unprecedented for an academic volume. Indeed, the work had been rejected by other publishers as "un-Canadian" and unlikely even to recoup publication costs.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> Sentiment grew in Quebec for separation, that is, the province's independence from Canada.

## ***Seeking a New Paradigm***

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 binational conception of the Canadian polity. A royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism was established to study the issue and to suggest a new policy.<sup>32</sup> One of the eventual results of the revisioning of Canada was the country's first constitution adopted in 1982.

The first part of that document, 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 statement is vague, and it has had limited impact. More significantly, the Charter contains a provision (Section 33) 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 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 (English in Quebec and French elsewhere), 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 the provision for sweeping abrogation of individual rights in order to protect group rights. It has been used sparingly, mostly by the province of Quebec to protect French-language use and education.

Although the Notwithstanding Clause has been useful to Quebec in maintaining cultural distinctiveness within the Canadian confederation, it seems to offer little to the smaller ethnic groups. Sections 16-21 of the constitution enshrine French and English as the country's official languages. The only group rights with meaningful, specific constitutional protection other than those of French and English Canadians are those of the aboriginal peoples.<sup>33</sup>

A more significant result of the constitutional deliberations for groups other than the French and the English was the government's "Announcement of the Implementation of a Policy of Multiculturalism within the Bilingual Framework" in October 1971 and the enactment of the federal Multiculturalism Act in 1985. These steps legitimized the preservation of languages 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 the breakup of the country.

A junior ministry, the Department of Canadian Heritage, was established in Ottawa to promote the new approach. 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, 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 University in Toronto and Concordia University in Montreal, specializes in a different one of the country's ethnic groups.

### ***The Impact on Jews***

For Jews, multiculturalism has meant, in addition to the university chair, heritage programs in Yiddish and Hebrew paid for by public funds, (provincial) public funds for day schools in every province where there were day schools except Ontario,<sup>34</sup> a proliferation of Jewish Studies programs in Canadian universities, and other opportunities. Perhaps the most significant tangible result of the new approach has been manifested in the field of education. Today well more than half of all Jewish children receiving a Jewish education in Canada go to day schools, a proportion many times greater than in the United States.

In less concrete terms, multiculturalism has meant that in strengthening their own institutions and culture, Jews were no longer acting as outsiders but rather as exemplary Canadians. The shift from binationalism to 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.<sup>35</sup> To be an involved Jew - or an involved Italian, or Chinese - was now to be a better Canadian.

But "there's the rub!" Ethnic legitimacy eliminated many of the barriers that had previously kept Jews and other outsiders partially

ghettoized, somewhat removed from the mainstream of Canadian life. In 1969, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau appointed the first Jew ever to the federal cabinet - a development that had occurred in the United States in 1905 and in Britain in 1909.

Since then, other Jews have served in the federal cabinet. The most recent was Irwin Cotler, a human rights activist who played a major public role in freeing Natan Sharansky from his Russian prison, and a staunch Zionist with intimate connections to Israel. Jews have also served as provincial premiers; Supreme Court judges, including Rosalie Abella, an incumbent on the Court who is the daughter of Holocaust survivors; university presidents; ambassador to the UN; provincial lieutenant governor; and virtually everything else.

In Quebec, a large influx of Francophone Jews from North Africa since the 1960s has for the first time accorded a measure of legitimacy to Jews in French Canada as well. A sign of their acceptance - and of their rejection by the primarily Ashkenazi established community - was the high intermarriage rate between North African Jews and French Canadians beginning in the 1960s.<sup>36</sup> 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 potentially 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 previously, 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.<sup>37</sup>

## **The Open Society on the Horizon**

In recent years, there seems to be a growing sense in Canada and elsewhere that the only really democratic society is the open

society in which individual rights and freedoms are paramount. Many observers point to a creeping Americanization of Canadian society that would further undermine the commitment to meaningful multiculturalism.<sup>38</sup> Over time, Canadian governments, perhaps accepting the logic of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and presumably reflecting the perceived will of the electorate, have lost much of their enthusiasm for multiculturalism.

The Department of Canadian Heritage was never more than a junior ministry. A glance at its website<sup>39</sup> in mid-2006 indicates that the mission of promoting the activities of Canada's multicultural communities is no longer primary. Multiculturalism has been downgraded to just another 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. More likely, however, support has declined because multiculturalism is no longer seen as a way to defuse Separatist sentiment among French Canadians, and also because of the growing reservations about multiculturalism mentioned here at the outset. Although some Jews, especially the conservatives among them, applaud the shift, there are good reasons for the Jewish community to be anxious about it.

### ***Good for the Jews?***

As individual Jews, no longer outsiders, move into the Canadian mainstream, their Jewish activities generally diminish. (Cotler is an exception in this respect, as is Myra Freeman, the immediate past lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia.) It is not that anyone feels obliged or pressured to be less actively Jewish. But priorities shift and time, energy, and money are limited.

Canadian Jewish women offer an excellent example of what the shift from the multicultural to the open society means. In earlier periods, Jewish women in Canada lived in a double ghetto, a

6/10/2009

From Binationalism to Multicultural...

gender one and an ethnic one. Presumably they always had the talents and energy they demonstrate today, but there were fewer outlets for them, fewer means of self-expression. So they went to work for the Jewish community in those domains deemed appropriate for women, chiefly charitable work and social work. Today, however, as women enter the workforce almost on an equal basis with men, as impediments to involvement in general or gentile or formerly all-male organizations fall away,<sup>40</sup> talents and energy once devoted to synagogue sisterhoods, women's Zionist organizations, and Jewish charitable or educational endeavors are no longer available to the Jewish community.

The career of Sylva Malka Gelber illustrates the process. She came from a wealthy Toronto Jewish family that was at once acculturated and highly 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, Gelber 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.<sup>41</sup> Gelber 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 before.

Gelber 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 its "Statement on Canadian Foreign Policy in the 1980s." Before her death in 2003, she endowed the Sylva Gelber Award in Music.<sup>42</sup>

The same process can be seen in the area of philanthropy, and recent developments in Toronto are illustrative. In the last few years, several wealthy Toronto 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, a performing arts center there, and the Art Gallery of Ontario have also received large grants from Jewish donors, some of whom also give generously to Jewish and Israeli institutions, and some of whom do not. In an earlier era, 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,<sup>43</sup> a radical, but not surprising, jump, as the Canadian Jewish community became more rooted in Canada than earlier, and as the restrictiveness of the binational period eased in the era of multiculturalism. Indications are, however, that more recently the rate has begun to approach that in 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 were intermarried couples, and 82.1 percent of such households under the age of thirty were intermarried.<sup>44</sup> 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 were intermarried, 39 percent of couples aged thirty to thirty-nine, and 20 percent of couples forty and over.<sup>45</sup>

It seems, then, that the era of multiculturalism characterized by Canadians' devotion 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 outsidersness, paving the way toward the open society. Perhaps the example of nearby America is irresistible. And 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 drawbacks. Prejudice and the stifling of dreams and talent were two of them. But multiculturalism and binationalism 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 wealthy and acculturated; they were on personal terms with Prime Minister Mackenzie King, though it is now known that he did not care for them much or any other Jews for that matter.

Archie Freiman headed the Canadian Zionist Organization for more than two decades, and Lillian presided over Hadassah/WIZO during the same years. 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, though it is often less open than it claims to be, extends a standing invitation to all citizens to participate equally.<sup>46</sup> 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.

## ***A Loss of Cohesion***

Perhaps before celebrating the demise of multiculturalism or assisting in its suicide, it would be worth recalling 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 and Moroccan immigrants and other groups.

On the other hand, multiculturalism has shown some potential in the places where it has been tried. In interwar Poland, the constitution guaranteed Jews and other minorities national rights

6/10/2009

From Binationalism to Multicultural...

regarding language, cultural institutions, and schools. The era began in a promising way, although Poles' nervousness over their tenuous hold on the country and their traditional prejudices torpedoed the hopes and expectations.

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, multiculturalism worked well, although the Empire collapsed partly because its nationalities insisted on political independence as well as cultural autonomy. In Canada, multiculturalism, despite its contemporary excesses, and even its predecessor binationalism, with all of 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.

\* \* \*

## Notes

1. Margaret Wente, "End of the Multicultural Myth," *Globe and Mail*, 18 March 2006.
2. Bill 101, *Charte de la langue française*, passed in 1977 by the Separatist government of the province of Quebec, 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. On the Rotterdam bylaw, see "The Dutch News in January 2006," Expatica website, [www.expatica.com](http://www.expatica.com).
3. Lorne Gunter, "It Was Only a Matter of Time," *National Post*, 5 June 2006. See also Christie Blatchford, "Ignoring the Biggest Elephant in the Room," *Globe and Mail*, 5 June 2006.
4. Under the French colonial regime, Jews and other non-Catholics were officially barred from settling in Canada.
5. "For He Is an Englishman," in *HMS Pinafore*.
6. Quoted in Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1965), 128.
7. In his play *The Melting Pot* (1908), Israel Zangwill employs two metaphors for the United States: the melting pot and the orchestra. The melting pot is a

6/10/2009

From Binationalism to Multicultural...

crucible used in steelmaking. In it, various metals - that is, immigrants from various places - become molten and are blended together to create a new metal that is superior to any of its now indistinguishable components. In the orchestra, each instrument - again, immigrants from various countries - has its own part to play but all play together to create a new composition.

8. 29 March 1901.

9. Although he was known in North America as Rabbi DeSola, as a Sephardi religious leader his title really should have been "Hacham."

10. On DeSola'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 DeSola can be found in Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992), 40-60.

11. Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1919), 355.

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

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

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

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

16. "The Jews in Canada (North America)" *Hamelitz*, 11 Iyyar 1884. [in Hebrew]

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

18. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 162.

19. "Introduction," in John R. Seeley, R. Alexander Sim, and Elizabeth Loosley, *Crestwood Heights: A Study in the Culture of Suburban Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), xi.

20. Cf. Michael Brown, "The Push and Pull Factors of Aliyah and the Anomalous Case of Canada: 1967-1982," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 48 (spring 1986): passim.

21. On Eisendrath in Toronto, see Meyer W. Weisgal, *So Far, an Autobiography* (London and Jerusalem: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 92;

6/10/2009

From Binationalism to Multicultural...

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.

22. See, e.g., Yitzchak Eleazari-Volcani [A. Zioni], "From Traveling Abroad," *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*, 8 October 1920 [in 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 [in Hebrew]; Arthur Ruppin, *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, trans. Karen Gershon (London and Jerusalem: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 202-09, diary entry, Chicago, 31 December 1922; Yosef Baratz, "MiCanada," *HaPo'el HaTza'ir*, 1 May 1931 [in 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.

23. See Brown, "Limited Vision."

24. *Globe and Mail*, 7 January 2006.

25. See Irving M. Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1991), passim.

26. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1938.

27. See 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 and Markham, Ont.: Viking Press, 1988), passim, and other sources.

28. 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.

29. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982.

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

31. See Pierre Vallières, *White Niggers of America* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968).

32. See the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1969).

33. See esp. Peter Johansen and Philip Rosen, "The Notwithstanding Clause

6/10/2009

From Binationalism to Multicultural...

of the Charter," *Parliamentary Information and Research Service*, February 1989 (rev. September 1997).

34. Ontario has been condemned by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for funding Catholic schools but not those of other faiths. The province has ignored the rulings.

35. Among the many works on multiculturalism and the Jews of Canada are: Howard Adelman and John H. Simpson, eds., *Multiculturalism, Jews and Identities in Canada* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996); Bernardo Berdichewsky, *Cultural Pluralism in Canada: What It Means to the Jewish Community* (Vancouver: Canadian Jewish Congress, Pacific Region, 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: Transaction Press, 1995), 236-46; Saul Hayes, "Multiculturalism as a State Policy," in Chaim Spilberg and Yaacov Zipper, eds., *Canadian Jewish Anthology* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, National Committee on Yiddish, 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*, Vol. 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 Press, 1990), 87-106.

36. See, among other sources, Evelyn Bloomfield-Schachter and Jean-Claude Lasry, "Jewish Inter-marriage in Montreal, 1962- 1972," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 37 (1975): 267-78; Ronald D. Lambert and James E. Curtis, "Québécois and English Canadian Opposition to Racial and Religious Inter-marriage, 1968-1983," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 16 (1984): 30-46; Morton Weinfeld, "Inter-marriage: Agony and Adaptation," in M[orton] Weinfeld, I[rwin] Cotler, and W[illiam] Shaffir, eds., *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), 365-82.

37. See, among other sources, Lorraine Weinrib, "Canada's Charter Rights Protection in the Cultural Mosaic," *Cardozo Journal of International and Comparative Law*, Vol. 4 (1996): 395-422.

38. See, e.g., Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice* (Toronto: Penguin, 2003), a polemic against Americanization and for the uniqueness of Canada.

39. [www.pch.gc.ca](http://www.pch.gc.ca).

40. A good example is Prof. Judy Rebick, who headed NOW (the National Organization for Women).

41. Now the Paul Baerwald Faculty of Social Work at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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

43. The reliable website Multicultural Canada, [www.multiculturalcanada.ca/ecp/content/jews.html](http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/ecp/content/jews.html).

44. Jewish Outreach Institute website, <http://joi.org/blog/index.php?p=121>. The figures are questionable because they are given no context, such as an overall rate or the percentage of marrieds in the various categories. The Institute, moreover, was created to fight intermarriage and cannot be considered a dispassionate reporter.

45. Myron Love, "Rabbi Urges Fight against High Intermarriage Rates," *Canadian Jewish News*, 25 May 2006. The report is based on the work of Montreal demographer Charles Shahar.

46. 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).

\* \* \*

Michael Brown is professor emeritus at York University in Toronto. In 2006, he was visiting professor at the Halbert Center for Canadian Studies and the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Among his recent works is *Not Written in Stone: Jews, Constitutions, and Constitutionalism in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2003), written and edited with Daniel J. Elazar and Ira Robinson.

---

Manfred Gerstenfeld, Publisher • Chaya Herskovic, Editor • Howard Weisband, Associate Editor • Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (Registered Amuta), 13 Tel-Hai St., Jerusalem 92107, Israel; Tel. 972-2-5619281, Fax. 972-2-5619112, Email: [jcpa@netvision.net.il](mailto:jcpa@netvision.net.il) • In U.S.A.: Center for Jewish Community Studies, 5800 Park Heights Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21215 USA; Tel. (410) 664-5222, Fax. (410) 664-1228 • Website: [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org) • Copyright. ISSN: 0792-7304

---

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Fellows of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

---