

**Diaspora Solidarities:
Refugees, Human Rights, and the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada,
1936-1967**

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ABSTRACT

This transnational history of the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada (JLC) retraces the organisation's narratives, networks, and practices of "diaspora solidarity", from the moment of its establishment and into the post-war period. The JLC's activists refracted their solidarities through the lens of a diasporic Jewish identity. At a time when Canada imposed strong barriers against refugees, the JLC worked to send aid to the anti-fascist resistance in Europe while participating in a series of immigration schemes to bring Jews from displaced persons camps over to Canada. It was in this unique moment that the JLC could also launch pioneering human rights and anti-racism campaigns within the labour movement. Representing one section of the organised Jewish community in Canada, the JLC proved a critical part of the transformation of the country's treatment of refugees and minorities in the following decades.

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Darchei Noam and the Danforth Jewish Circle. Driven by curiosity and a sense of obligation as a stranger to this community, I felt it important to develop some personal connection with a people whose stories I have felt privileged to write. For this, I also owe thanks to two theologians (of all creatures), Marc Ellis and Carolina Dionco, who some years ago introduced me to the Jewish question in Manila. As they predicted, the answers I found have led me home by an unexpected route.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFL – American Federation of Labor

AJC – American Jewish Congress

CCF – Cooperative Commonwealth Federation

CCL – Canadian Congress of Labour

CJC – Canadian Jewish Congress

CLC – Canadian Labour Congress

DPs – Displaced Persons

HIAS - Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

IFLWU – International Fur and Leather Workers Union

ILGWU – International Lady Garment Workers Union

IRO – International Refugee Organization

JDC – American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

JIAS – Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (Canadian)

JLC – Jewish Labour Committee (Canadian)

NDP – New Democratic Party

NY JLC – Jewish Labor Committee of America

TLC – Trades and Labour Congress

UJPO – United Jewish Peoples Order

UNRRA – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

PREFACE

In the following pages, I offer a history of an organisation called the Jewish Labour Committee (JLC) in Canada. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the JLC was best known for its human rights and anti-racism campaigns within the Canadian unions. In this thesis, however, I turn the dial back by a few decades, anchoring my narrative on the solidarities it mobilised on behalf of minorities and refugees in the immediate post-war years.

During the Second World War and in its aftermath, the Canadian JLC located itself within a transnational geography of solidarity that connected it to anti-fascist and socialist movements in Europe as well as remnants of the Jewish left. Some of its members were direct inheritors of older traditions of Yiddish socialism that had thrived among Jewish emigres to North America. As such, the JLC wrestled with debates surrounding the question of Jewish identity in the diaspora – one that only grew in urgency as Jews contemplated the future of their community in the wake of the Holocaust.

Members of the JLC worked to secure relief for their comrades and thousands of displaced persons (DPs) stranded in European refugee camps. They participated in a series of projects to bring DPs over to North America at a time when Canada, like the United States, tightened its borders against war refugees. These efforts were undertaken independently by the JLC and the mainstream Jewish community represented by the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), with the direct support of trade unions in Montreal and Toronto. Anticipating contemporary refugee sponsorship and resettlement schemes, the DP projects worked around immigration restrictions and were launched in a pivotal moment in the evolution of Canada's immigration system, with which supporters of the projects sometimes worked at cross-purposes. They operated in an especially difficult context as Jewish DPs found themselves caught up in the crosshairs of Cold War realpolitik: Western countries which at best proved lukewarm in their hospitality, the repatriation policies of the Communist bloc, and Zionist initiatives to resettle Jews in Israel before and after its founding in 1948.

Over time, the liberalisation of Canada's immigration system coincided with the development of international discourses around human rights, especially the rights of immigrants and minorities as such. The networks that the JLC established and maintained in the early stages of its career paved the way for subsequent political

campaigns around the legislation and implementation of human rights laws and anti-discrimination policies across the country. As representatives of an oppressed minority, JLC campaigners mobilised a unique narrative about the Jewish experience in the struggle against racism within and beyond the Canadian labour movement.

Despite its pioneering efforts, the organisation preferred to keep a low profile. By the time the JLC could march more confidently onto the public stage in the 1970s, much of its work had come to be absorbed and institutionalised by the Canadian unions and the state bureaucracy. Yet throughout its career, the JLC had acted as a critical nexus for a kind of subaltern internationalism which worked to overcome divisions within the Jewish community and the labour movement alike. In certain critical moments, this internationalism brought together Jewish bosses and workers, government administrators and humanitarian workers, Canadian social democrats and Communists, immigration officials, trade unionists, and political movements across the Atlantic.

Even as it worked to secure relief for Jewish refugees, the JLC concerned itself with the rights of other minorities in Canada and did so increasingly from mid-century onward. I argue that the JLC is an important case study of one section of an organised minority in Canada which sought to bring the particularities of the Jewish experience to bear on an emancipatory and universalistic politics. This is, I believe, a novel approach to the JLC's organisational history which by no means is intended to be definitive or all-encompassing. I aim, in part, to inspire a wider set of questions concerning Jewish identity as a historical phenomenon, re-articulated in a Canada that was itself still figuring out its place in the world in the post-war period.

Before I continue, however, some explanation is required for how I came to this subject. As a freelance writer and non-profit worker, my professional work to date has focused on the Philippines, where I have dealt with issues concerning post-colonial democracy, civil society, human rights, and armed conflict. In both scholarly outlets and the popular press, I have also written about the history of ethno-nationalist and Communist insurgencies affecting the rights of minorities in the south of the country. Political developments back home continue to concern me deeply.

It is no surprise, then, that I have been asked many times what got me interested in the Jews. Hopefully this satisfies the curious. My move to Canada met with a period of wanting to make a break with the past. It began with a pact (long since broken) with my supervisor, whose expertise is on the Philippines, that I was to have nothing to do with

the Philippines. Instead, I would be looking at Canadian history, around themes with which I was somewhat familiar: organised labour, immigration, or civil society. In attempting to make a home in this country while writing my proposal, I reached out to immigrant rights activists and trade unionists in Toronto and Montreal. A string of coincidences and encounters with the Jewish community, including many individuals in the same leftish political circles, finally pulled me toward writing a history of the JLC.

I admit that pride also played a role in this equation. I did not wish to be pigeon-holed as the third-world student expected to do work only on his own country. Indeed, by running away, I ran into a people with places of origin, transplanted histories, and conflicted identities so different from mine, and yet so akin. Having said that, I found myself returning time and again to my origins. I accept now that it is only through the prism of my own personal trajectory, while preserving a critical measure of neutral distance and independence, that I have come to address the questions at hand in a more enriching way. First, as a Filipino: a post-colonial subject and a member of a diaspora much less ancient or distinguished than the Jewish, but one with its own history of exclusion, tragedy and, as a friend once put it, hopes of redemption “infinitely deferred.” Secondly, as a potential immigrant, in a world only too familiar in its hostility to the stranger, who is still coming to terms with this limbo that is shared by many. Finally, as a deracinated writer with a complicated relationship -- marked by both enduring sympathy and deep disappointment -- with the organised left, in addition to my own people and ‘homeland’.

If these dimensions of my personal experience have coloured or biased my scholarship, it was not my intention from the outset. My goal was, and remains, to write history in the present; that is, to let it speak to current questions, without allowing the pressures of the present determine my approach to the past.

CHAPTER 1

Here and There:

Yiddish socialism in the Diaspora

“The Jews have had no greater champion than the socialists,” remarked Michael Rubinstein, Chairman of the Jewish Labour Committee in Canada (JLC).¹ It was a Fall day in 1943, at the height of the War when news from Europe was far from reassuring. In Canada, meanwhile, the MacKenzie King government was tightening immigration restrictions. By and large, the response to thousands of Jews who sought refuge in North America was still “none is too many.”²

At few other times was a lecture on the “Jewish problem” more prescient. It was one of the many Rubinstein had given to his colleagues at the JLC’s Montreal headquarters shared with the *Arbeter Ring*, an association of veteran Jewish socialists and members of Quebec and Ontario’s trade unions.³ His talk was wide-ranging, touching on the ill winds buffeting Jews from all sides: from the capitulation of Vichy France before the spread of “Hitlerism” to the positions of Soviet Russia. With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact still fresh in the minds of many who had seen Russia as a haven for their people, Rubinstein continued, “the more Stalin is unmoored from Socialist principles the more we should fear the fate of the Jews in Russia.”⁴ Within Jewish circles where these geopolitical developments had personal implications, a sense of abandonment prevailed, and some had turned to Zionism. But Palestine alone could not be the answer to the

¹ Speech by Michael Rubinstein to JLC members, 1943, Volume 9, File 23, “Michael Rubinstein Lectures, Proposed Solution to Jewish Problem - Socialism, also lecture on B.C. Vladeck,” Jewish Labour Committee of Canada Collection, MG28-V75, Finding Aid No. MSS1291, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada. Subsequently referred to as the JLC Collection.

² Referring to the general thrust of Canadian immigration policy at the time, based on a quote from Canadian government official, Frederick C. Blair, in an acclaimed book of the same name by Irving Abella and Harold Troper, in *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948* (Toronto, ON: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1983).

³ Yiddish for the Workmen’s Circle. The organisation was founded in the early 1900s in New York city, by unionists and socialists in a labour movement that had begun to emerge in the 1880s, populated by a significant proportion of Eastern European Jewish immigrants politicised in the United States. More on the JLC’s particular connection with the Workmen’s Circle in Chapter 3. See also Judah Shapiro, *The Friendly Society: A History of the Workmen’s Circle* (New York, NY: Media Judaica, 1970).

⁴ Rubinstein speech (n. 1). The Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact was signed between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in 1939, named after the foreign officers of the same name.

Jewish question, as revisionist Zionists like Jabotinsky or even a few members of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) kept insisting.⁵ A small strip of desert thousands of miles away could “at most take in a million Jews,” even as millions more -- 20 million, in his estimate -- would be in need of shelter by the time Hitler had done the worst damage.⁶ Moreover, most Jews preferred refuge in North America, and yet the gates were closed. The full scope of what would come to be known, much later, as the Holocaust was not yet apparent.

In the meantime, Rubinstein argued, “nationalist feelings are not enough for nationalism today is the refuge of the greatest; also exploited by the worst elements of society.” Salvation for most Jews could only be found in unity with other members of the working class, of all races and creeds. In this he was simply echoing the writer Waldo Frank who saw Jews as old hands at suffering: “Jewish action must ally itself with the general cause of social justice. The Jew who joins in an impersonal, non-sectarian movement for social justice is the sole true disciple of the Prophets - the sole real Jew”⁷. And that task had clearly fallen on Jewish *socialists* and progressives, he insisted, for the Jewish millionaire, the parvenu of Hannah Arendt’s depiction, was “not particularly interested in Jewish problems, spurning them until he is attacked.”⁸

Rubinstein’s speech was a deeply emotional appeal to solidarity, in the face of a world that had fallen silent in the face of their national tragedy. In what was still a very different Canada, even the appointed leaders of the institutional Jewish community feared rocking the boat too much. To press for stronger action on the part of the Canadian government -- still less for an easing of immigration restrictions -- might result in a public backlash. Even in the war’s aftermath, at least half of all Canadians still held perceptions of Jewish immigrants as “communistic” or unduly interfering in the affairs of government.⁹

⁵ Ze’ev Jabotinsky was a Russian Jew and a leading proponent of Revisionist Zionism, which was to the far right of the Zionist mainstream, forwarding a strong form of anti-communism, Jewish nationalism, and armed self-defence during WWII. But Jabotinsky radicalised much earlier, in the 1920s, at the height of Jewish persecution which reached his hometown of Odessa, compounded by Arab opposition to early Jewish immigration to Palestine.

⁶ Rubinstein speech (n. 1).

⁷ Opinion column clipping, “A Heroic Remedy [by Waldo Frank],” *Der Tog* [The Day], November 1934, Volume 9, File 26, “Notes: Michael Rubinstein, for lectures (also in Yiddish),” JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸ Rubinstein speech (n. 1).

⁹ To be fair, many preferred to have nothing to do with any side in what was seen as a European conflict, seeing Japanese and German emigres, for example, as “fascistic” or “warlike.” See News

By contrast, there was less reluctance to act on the part of the JLC and their allies in the Canadian labour movement and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF).¹⁰ Rubinstein's speech highlighted the urgency of what was to be done here and now for their friends and fellow Jews abroad. Coordinating closely with their *chaverim* in the JLC headquarters in New York, where the organisation was established in 1934, they had already delivered thousands of dollars' worth of clothing, anti-fascist propaganda, and other forms of support to affiliated organisations abroad.¹¹ Through the Garment Workers' scheme, Jewish trade unionists had also worked flat-out with immigration officials and employers to ensure the resettlement of Jewish families, labour organisers, and socialist intellectuals in North America and Scandinavia.¹² In the post-war years the JLC would continue to provide aid to orphans and families from Europe's displaced persons camps, while providing financial support to those who chose to emigrate to Palestine.¹³

While the situation in Europe seemed hopeless, there was still much to inspire. Rubinstein was speaking mere months after the Warsaw uprising in April, when Jewish Bundists, labour Zionists, communists, and members of the Polish resistance joined arms in a final, desperate armed struggle in the "parks and streets of the Ghetto."¹⁴ Such information flowed quickly to the JLC, through its extensive network in the European antifascist resistance. Indeed, members of the North American labour movement were among the first to learn of the full scope of the persecution of the Jews of Europe --

clipping, "Gallup Poll of Canada: Selected Immigrants Favored Public Opposed to Japanese," *The Montreal Daily Star*, data from the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, 30 October 1946, MG28-V75, Finding Aid No. MSS1291, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁰ The CCF was formed in Saskatchewan with the Regina Declaration, establishing a tradition of democratic socialism in Canada that was the precursor to today's New Democratic Party (NDP). Michael Rubinstein and Maishe Lewis, among other members of the JLC, were long time organisers for the CCF and later took leading positions in the NDP. See also James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working-Class Future* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

¹¹ "Friends," or more precisely "Comrades," in Yiddish. Correspondences between members of the JLC and other members of the Jewish left typically began with this honorific when addressing each other. Unless otherwise indicated, I use "Canadian JLC" or simply "JLC" to refer to the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada, distinguishing the latter from its New York Branch, referred to as the American Jewish Labor Committee, the "American JLC," or the "NY JLC."

¹² More on this in Chapters 4 and 5. See also Volume 16, File 10, "Canadian Garment Workers' Scheme. Correspondence & lists," JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³ Volume 16, File 13, "D.P. Immigration to Canada. Correspondence. Part 1," 1951, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁴ Rubinstein speech (n. 1). See also Alain Brossat and Sylvia Klingberg, English trans. by David Fernbach, *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish Radicalism* (London: Verso, 2016), esp. pp. 29-54.

alongside other ethnic minorities, trade unionists, socialists, and democrats -- with the rise of the Axis powers.

The JLC's efforts would have been impossible without these long-established transnational networks of solidarity. As early as the mid-1930s, they had begun pioneering work in the fight against racism within the unions and wider Canadian society. As both Jews and socialists, JLC members perceived even more acutely the roots of fascism, which had so afflicted their people, in racism and ultra-nationalism of all stripes. With socialism's "struggle for human equality," Rubinstein stressed, "have come all that goes with it. The struggle for social and economic equality, the right to political equality and the equality of all races and creeds."¹⁵

This moment captures, in microcosm, the JLC's guiding philosophy. Setting aside the historical facts surrounding its articulation, it was a partisan speech with an explicitly political objective. Responding to the circumstances within which their people were presently caught up, it mobilised a narrative of age-old historical oppression in the service of an internationalist, and utopian, commitment to humanity that was at the moment passing through a rather dark phase. In this tension between the particular and the universal lay a uniquely Jewish or Yiddish socialist¹⁶ tradition which seems, in retrospect, to have been but a brief interlude -- a flame slowly extinguished in the wake of the Holocaust. Caught between the various revolutions and great power conflicts of the 20th century, many of the JLC's founding members had their roots in the General Jewish Labour Bund. In Rubinstein's audience were Bundists like Moishe Lewis, who had emigrated to Canada in the 1920s from a *shtetl* in Svisloch, Ignacy Falk and Kalmen Kaplansky from Poland -- or what remained of it, caught between the Soviet army and fascist Germany.¹⁷ Still others, like the JLC's Harry Simon, were members of the labour Zionist organisation, *Poale Zion*. Both had their origins at the turn of the century in the

¹⁵ Rubinstein speech (n. 1).

¹⁶ As the vernacular of early generations of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, the Yiddish language would only gradually become an identity marker for a distinct variant of "Yiddish socialism." See also Gennady Estraiikh and Mikhail Krutikov, eds., *Yiddish and the Left: Papers of the Third Mendel Friedman International Conference on Yiddish* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2001), Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), and Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (NY: New York University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ See Cameron Smith, *Unfinished Journey: The Lewis Family* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1989). A *shtetl*, or *shtetlekh* (pl.) were what Jews called small towns, where they lived alongside other ethnic groups, mainly in Eastern Europe and the Russian border regions.

fractious politics of what can be broadly defined as the Jewish left¹⁸. The pre-war period saw decades of cross-fertilisation between left intellectuals and political organisers, mostly in Eastern Europe, and their North American counterparts in the urban centres of New York and Montreal. They had responded to the needs of the mainstream of the Jewish community when it was, by and large, urbane, Yiddish-speaking, and part of an industrial working class concentrated in the garment industry.

For the Bund and for many who would carry its legacy long past its prime in interwar Poland, Jewish politics in the diaspora entailed a certain responsibility toward both members of their own community and beyond it. The Yiddish word, *Doykeit*, literally “here-ness,” was one articulation of the Bundist ethos. ‘Here’ (*do*) referred to the de-territorialised condition of the Diaspora, shaped by the Jewish encounter with the societies where they found themselves living.¹⁹ Even as these Yiddish socialists grappled with the literal loss of the world that had given birth to their movements, far from dying out, many expanded their scope of moral concern toward other ethnic minorities.

It was an ideological commitment as much as it was a pragmatic one. So strongly represented were Jews in unions like the International Lady Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) that they were often regarded, mistakenly, as “Jewish unions”²⁰. In practice Jews often worked and organised alongside first or second-generation immigrants like themselves, including Ukrainians, Italians, Finns, and Greeks, in addition to Quebec’s Francophone working class and Black Canadians in the Maritimes. By the same token, meaningful political gains could only be made by building alliances with the ‘general’ --

¹⁸ This thesis follows the organisational and ideological distinctions between sections of the international Jewish left as discussed in Ezra Mendelsohn’s edited collection, *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (NY: New York University Press, 1997) and Enzo Traverso’s *The Marxists and the Jewish Question: the History of a debate 1843-1943* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1994). For North America, Irving Howe’s classic text *World of Our Fathers* (NY: Galahad Books, 1976), Matthew Hoffman and Henry Srebrnik’s *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century* (NY: SUNY Press, 2016); and Tony Michels’ *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) offer good guides.

¹⁹ David Slucki discusses the concept in his international post-war history of the Bund in *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945: Toward a Global History* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012)

²⁰ Eli Lederhendler paints a nuanced portrait of the emergence of the “Jewish” labour movement in *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism, 1880-1920: From Caste to Class* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Shifting loyalties of class and ethnic identity were the norm as early Jewish immigrants encountered other ethnic groups within the general American labour movement.

that is, multi-ethnic -- labour movement of Canada's immigrant society.²¹ Those involved in the JLC considered themselves part of a politically self-conscious minority, among other minorities who were aware of their precarious status in their adoptive homelands. Indeed, the JLC was the first to reconcile the two fractious union federations represented by the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) and the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), forging a broad consensus around the need to fight racial discrimination within the labour movement.²² They had also worked together to lobby the Canadian government to adopt a more liberal immigration policy at a time when US unions favoured a generally restrictionist one.²³

After the war and well into the late 1960s, the JLC's enduring connections with the unions, other organised minorities, and the CCF/NDP would enable it to forge multi-ethnic coalitions for human rights and civil rights.

The JLC's diaspora solidarities

My master's thesis tracks the JLC's organisational trajectory, from its establishment in Canada to its later years, through the framework of what I call its "diaspora solidarities." It is not a straightforward historical account, but rather selects key moments and campaigns that offer a useful perspective into the organisation's political narratives, practices, and transnational networks of solidarity. It addresses the following questions:

- **What were the practices and networks of solidarity mobilised by the Jewish Labour Committee (JLC) in Canada?**²⁴
 - Which local and international issues most concerned the JLC, and how did the organisation address them?
 - How did the JLC relate to the institutional Jewish community, other political organisations, and the general labour movement, in Canada and abroad?
- **Were, and if so how, were these 'diaspora' solidarities mediated through the JLC's narratives concerning Jewish identity and history?**

²¹ The same was certainly true in the United States. See Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

²² More on the relationship between the JLC and the major union federations in Chapters 3 and 4.

²³ Lederhendler, *American Jewry*, 108.

²⁴ Distinctions between narrative and practices of solidarity, and how they were identified in the archives, are discussed in the *Methods* section in this same Chapter.

- What was the nature of these solidarities (i.e. oriented around ethnic identity, class identity, Cold War considerations, or humanitarianism and human rights)?
- **What were the major shifts in the articulation of these solidarities?**
 - If they did change, how were the JLC's narratives and practices of solidarity (i.e. concerning human rights or refugees) re-articulated over the course of its political engagements in Canada and abroad?

Among the major arguments of this thesis is that diaspora solidarities (1) intersect with, and are worked through, relationships with the peoples, places, and movements which Jews, like other immigrant minorities, encounter; (2) that they are transformed over the course of that encounter, transforming in turn their sense of place, nation, and homeland; and (3) that these diaspora solidarities are, almost by definition, never confined within territorial borders, but rather are tied to distant places and world events.

In this thesis, I am especially interested in the way that the JLC worked through the labour movement, taking upon itself the rights of other racialised minorities, immigrants, and refugees in Canada in such a way that they were refracted through specifically Jewish concerns. What was unique to the JLC's approach to these problems? How did the organisation address or frame them for its networks within the labour movement in a language of solidarity that best resonated with rank-and-file unionists? Far from seeing them as mutually exclusive, I argue that the JLC successfully wedded universalistic concerns with Jewish particularity through an anti-fascist, later a human rights-based, narrative which directly addressed questions of immigration and racism. By working through the unions, it would eventually have a concrete impact on general Canadian society and the government's immigration policies.

Secondly, through the lens of the experiences of the JLC and the causes it espoused, this study hopes to clarify continuities or differences between the pre- and post-war Jewish left in Canada. It recounts how these solidarities were shaped by their approach to Jewish identity, as members of a diaspora fully conscious of their kinship with other marginalised minorities. The multi-faceted, contingent, and spatial nature of diaspora solidarity and Jewish identity is evident in the JLC's responses to the minority question across different scales and beyond Canada's borders.

Finally, a historical analysis of the JLC's diaspora solidarities opens up a wider set of questions around the various ways in which the organisation impacted, and was impacted in turn, by changes in Canadian society and the post-war international order.

Structure of the thesis

This section finishes with a discussion of approaches taken to the extensive, and still largely untapped, archival sources available on the Canadian JLC. The **second chapter** elaborates on some of the theoretical inspirations for this thesis as well as this study's contributions to existing literature on the JLC and, by extension, the Jewish left in Canada. As applied to the case of the JLC, I draw upon and merge conceptual themes from selected literature in the fields of human geography and diaspora studies; in particular the ideas of political geographer David Featherstone. The next chapter also situates the JLC within a transnational historiography that takes into consideration existing literature in Jewish studies and Canadian labour history, in addition to more recent scholarship on the international history of human rights and immigration.

Chapters 3-6 cover the bulk of the material gathered from the archives. In **Chapter 3**, I go into a discussion of the JLC's pre-war origins and early years, after its founding in the mid-1930s. I focus on the transnational networks, narratives, and practices of solidarity mobilised by some of its key members in response to the war in Europe. Working closely with the JLC in New York, the urgent needs of Jewish refugees would activate their existing ties with democratic labour, socialist, and anti-fascist movements across the Atlantic.²⁵

Chapter 4 moves to the immediate post-war period, amid debates concerning Canada's international role and Canadian society's contradictory responses to the DP crisis. This chapter looks into the JLC's efforts to work around, and reform, Canada's racialised immigration policies on behalf of Jewish and other immigrants, while building its fight against racism at home through the labour movement.

The fifth chapter describes the special immigration schemes developed by the JLC, working alongside its affiliated garment unions and the institutional Jewish community, to bring DPs over to Canada. The networks of solidarity that members of the JLC

²⁵ It is important to note that the term "refugee" did not come into general use by either the JLC or government circles until the 1950s, before which "displaced persons" (DP) was preferred. In this thesis, I use both terms interchangeably, but use "refugees" specifically in relation to Jewish DPs.

developed while carrying out these projects were ones they retained throughout their careers in the decades that followed.

Chapter 6 begins with efforts to resettle the DPs in Canada, which coincided with a moment when Canadian society was coming toward a stronger recognition of the rights of refugees, immigrants, and ethnic minorities. Human rights and anti-racism consequently became central themes in the JLC's political agenda, transitioning from the narratives of its early years, which were more explicitly rooted in the politics of anti-fascism and socialist internationalism. The chapter briefly discusses the JLC's campaigns within the Canadian labour movement, at their height in the mid-1950s and 60s. The JLC's encounters with Quebec nationalism are also discussed, especially its support for the linguistic and cultural rights of Canada's Francophone minority.

The **concluding chapter** offers a summary and some thoughts on how this study of the JLC's diaspora solidarities might contribute to different approaches to minority politics and their contributions to their adoptive homelands, as well as to transnational histories of social movements. Throughout its organisational career, the JLC negotiated a tight balancing act between concerns specific to the Jewish community, the realities of Cold War geopolitics, and its commitments to communities beyond its own. The JLC's solidarities were uniquely informed by the organisation's ideological origins and its relationship to Canadian social democracy, in addition to its participation in wider debates over Canada's place in the world -- and the Jewish community's place within Canada.

Methods

Much of the material in the chapters that follow is based on original archival research which I conducted between November 2016 and July 2017. During the thesis proposal writing stage, I did preliminary archival research at the **Ontario Jewish Archives (OJA)** between November 2016 and February 2017. The OJA hosts digital copies of oral histories from leading figures of the Canadian Jewish left across the spectrum, in addition to copies of left publications like NFJA's *Fraternally Yours*, *Outlook*, the *Vochenblatt*, and *Der Veg* (The Way). While the OJA's specific collections on the JLC are limited, it does hold material from organisations like the *Arbeter Ring* (Workmen's Circle) and *Poale Zion*, with which the JLC worked closely, shared campaigns, and exchanged correspondence.

Informal interviews with members of the Canadian Jewish community and the labour movement were also useful in guiding the direction of my initial research questions and assumptions. As mentioned in the preface, I reached out to Canadian unions and groups like the United Jewish Peoples Order (UJPO) prior to deciding on doing a history of the Canadian JLC. In my explorations, I was surprised to find quite a few people who identified as Jewish – in addition to other immigrant workers and ethnic minorities – simultaneously active in labour, refugee rights, and peace activism oriented around the Israel-Palestine conflict. Notably, many younger activists drew upon the history of the Jewish left, especially the Bund, as an inspiration for their efforts. Few, however, were directly familiar with the work of the JLC, and even those representatives of an older generation who were, like Alan Borovoy, passed away a few years ago. As such, I have not included the people I have met as sources, even as they offered me with a living thread connecting past and present iterations of Jewish labour activism.

The bulk of my archival work was done between May-July 2017, at the **Library and Archives Canada** in Ottawa, which stores comprehensive collections from the JLC, the CLC, and the JLC's Kalmen Kaplansky. In late June 2017, I also briefly consulted additional material on the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) at the **Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives (Montreal)** and the **Jewish Public Library of Montreal**.

A subsequent content analysis of relevant material allowed me to identify key themes pertinent to the JLC's approach to Jewish identity and the solidarities they expressed throughout the post-war period. For the most part, I consulted correspondence, press releases, committee reports, newspaper clippings, opinion pieces, photographs, among other assorted material. Much of this material was produced, received, or collected by the JLC from the 1940s up to the early 1990s. As I worked through these documents, I decided to focus on the immediate post-war years up to the 1960s.

Consistent with the research questions outlined in this chapter, they were approached with a view toward identifying:

- a) key political campaigns by the JLC
 - i. *Primary sources*: internal reports, meeting minutes, letters between JLC members, government agencies and other organisations
- b) narratives of solidarity anchored on narratives around Jewish identity and history

- i. *Primary sources*: solidarity banquet speeches, newsletters and press releases of the JLC, opinion pieces in mainstream or Jewish newspapers (e.g. *Keneder Adler*)
- c) organisations with which the JLC interacted
 - i. *Primary sources*: letters, internal reports, requests for funding (especially from unions and the CJC), correspondence with government agencies

Working through the archival material required devoting particular attention to: (1) the transnational dimensions of the solidarities that the JLC expressed; (2) the way that both its domestic and international campaigns were couched through its specific approach to Jewish history and identity; and (3) its responses to the concerns of the Jewish community.

My analysis partly follows Pierce, et al.'s suggestion to identify key actors and institutions embedded within an organisation's networked and relational politics of place.²⁶ For example, it was worth unpicking the way JLC organisers framed their positions, as they put pressure on immigration officials and the institutional Jewish community to accept more refugees from Europe, or when they lobbied provincial governments to implement anti-discrimination legislation in Halifax, Ontario, and Quebec. In that regard, I found personal correspondence and letters to be especially useful in offering a richer, more nuanced portrait of the JLC's activities than official reports, speeches, and press releases tended to reveal. I have attempted to balance my approach to the letters with the latter, in addition to later oral interviews with JLC members. Throughout my thesis, specific historical documents or volumes are referenced in footnotes, while a list of archival collections consulted follows the Bibliography.

For reasons of time and finances, my research was limited to archival collections available in Canada. While this has been more than enough to work on given the focus of my thesis, there is likely to be more material available on the JLC in New York and France, which would further corroborate the conclusions made here and give a more expanded portrait of the organisation's activities in Europe and the United States.

A note on language

²⁶ Joseph Pierce, Deborah Martin, and James Murphy, 'Relational place-making: the networked politics of place', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36, no. 1 (2011): 54-70.

A significant proportion of the archives pertaining to the Jewish left in North America is in Yiddish; others are in Hebrew and French. Early correspondence between the New York and Montreal branches of the JLC, for example, was largely in Yiddish, while some of the JLC's communications with organisations in Israel were in both Yiddish and Hebrew.

While I have invested in learning Yiddish through a summer programme at the University of Ottawa²⁷, and have some reading ability in the language, I have decided not to rely too much on Yiddish material that could not be interpreted with full confidence through related English language documents. I approached French language material in the same manner. Given the limits of time, and in the absence of a French or Yiddish translator, there is enough English-language material from the post-war period sufficient for a fair analysis of the themes relevant to the study.

²⁷ Yiddish Summer Institute 2017, University of Ottawa (May-June 2017)

CHAPTER 2

Diaspora solidarities and the Jewish Labour Committee

This chapter draws on a selection of literature from the fields of political and historical geography that have been useful in dissecting the JLC's narratives, networks, and practices of solidarity. It touches on how these solidarities were mediated through the JLC's approach to diaspora identity, tied to the politics of Jewish modernity, within which there was a wide spectrum that included various forms of nationalism, liberalism, and socialism.¹

First, it is necessary to define what is meant by *solidarity* and *diaspora*, as they are used here, before attempting to bring these two concepts together. Solidarity, for human geographer Doreen Massey, is negotiated in and through relationships of difference, requiring the coming together of actors in space.² It is a process, in other words, of diverse groups of people arriving at an awareness of their shared agency and power to transform their conditions of life. In arguing for a politics of transnational solidarity, Massey is referring more precisely to the emergence of 21st century social movements enabled by the growth of cities and the communication of actors across vast spatial distances.³ Yet, her work might also speak to various historical episodes of political internationalism. Indeed, much of her earlier writings dwell on labour movements in the factory districts of Manchester that are not easily understood in isolation or confined within the borders of England⁴. As workers and labour organisers moved between communities, between city and country, they developed a fluid sense of political identity

¹ "Jewish modernity" or the Jewish Enlightenment is a period usually located between the 1850s up to the Second World War. It is a term used to describe the "belated" secularisation and politicisation of Jews, at a time when other European were responding to the ruptures of economic and political modernisation by rallying to their own nationalist or socialist movements. Lederhendler's much earlier work, *Jewish Responses to Modernity: New Voices in America and Eastern Europe* (NY: New York University Press, 1991), discusses the encounter of Eastern European Jewish immigrants with modernity in the United States, while Enzo Traverso's *The end of jewish modernity* (London: Pluto Press, 2016) is an intellectual history of Jewish modernity as such, surveying the height of Jewish contributions to the cultural, literary, and scientific scenes in Europe and North America.

² In *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), human geographer Doreen Massey dissects the relationship between the construction of identities, transborder solidarities, and representations of space in the history of modernity, see esp. pp. 62-72.

³ See also Massey as referred to in Paul Routledge and Andrew Cumbers, *Global Justice Networks: Geographies of Transnational Solidarity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

⁴ Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995)

that was also tied by an umbilical cord to events elsewhere in the British Empire. The militant solidarities and ‘working class’ identities forged in the localities of Manchester garment factories were many-layered and inter-scalar. While mediated primarily through everyday relations at the ‘local’ or urban scale, these were refracted through regional, national, even trans-imperial identities.

Similarly, Deborah Martin argues that all mass social movements require the construction of a common identity; one that is never static, but rather processual, contested, made and remade, in the process of people, often from diverse backgrounds, acting in concert and moving across space.⁵ Political identities require the assemblage, or bundling together, of common symbolic repertoires -- spatial imaginaries or “place frames” -- harnessed toward shared goals.⁶ For Featherstone, too, solidarity is not a sensibility that develops automatically among individuals with similar views, even similar interests or class positions: that is, a relationship between like with like. Nor is it a mere discourse wielded by social movements for political effect. Solidarity is instead a more fluid and dynamic process of constructing relationships among different, at times antagonistic, subjects. Through solidarity, divergent political positions and identities are transformed or re-articulated in the process of encountering diverse others through collective action. Practices of solidarity that emerge from these relationships, from street protests and published statements to the development of long-term campaigns and institutions of civil society, are situated within, and respond to, specific places and events.⁷ Moving between bodies and across borders, solidarities are mobile. They are highly contingent, evolving in response to different circumstances, sensitive to key moments of crisis and rupture.

Solidarity is also a process of meaning-making. This is especially the case with social movements oriented around a collective identity such as a nation or religion. The reason for this is immediately clear: something like a narrative glue is needed to hold people together. The social theorist Stuart Hall emphasized the socially constructed nature of

⁵ Deborah Martin, ‘Place Frames: Analysing Practice and Production of Place in Contentious Politics’, Chapter 4 in Walter Nicholls, Justin Beaumont, and Byron Miller, eds., *Spaces of Contention: Spatialities and Social Movements* (London: Ashgate, 2013)

⁶ Joseph Pierce, Deborah Martin, and James Murphy, ‘Relational place-making: the networked politics of place’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36, no. 1 (2011): 54-70.

⁷ David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012)

identity in a postmodern society.⁸ But clearly identity is not infinitely malleable, nor at any point in human history have national or ethnic identities ever been fixed or stable. Hall's take must be nuanced with reference to the concrete historical experiences of groups of people who, as in the Jewish case, have a unique repertoire of symbols and stories collected from their encounters with others across various places. Strongly oriented to history in this way, these encounters have had a long-lasting impact on their sense of collective identity.

In other words, ethnic identities are embedded in history even as they are constantly re-invented, often through stories that evoke a common past as well as the construction of distinct others against which to define themselves. This can result in communal solidarities that are exclusionary and inward-looking. On the other hand, hegemonic versions of that history are open to contestation, and narratives of solidarity can take on more universal registers.⁹ In Featherstone's conception of "subaltern nationalism," diverse historical experiences of oppression can conjoin and mobilise different national communities toward shared goals. Among the examples he sites were the interethnic solidarities and networks forged between white Irish nationalists and Black abolitionists resisting the trans-Atlantic slave trade.¹⁰ Dislocated from their respective homelands (Africa and Ireland), the very mobility of these dissident immigrants, and their encounter with one another, allowed for a political consciousness that was truly trans-national in scope, in a way that transcended both ethnic and geographic boundaries.

Crucially, for Featherstone as for Massey, acknowledging the presence of difference, even relations of antagonism, within and across political movements and ethnic communities is as important as identifying factors that unite them in understanding the nature of solidarity in different contexts.

In writing this history of the JLC, I have selectively applied these various conceptual frameworks from the political geography literature. While they were useful in my

⁸ Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities: Old and New Ethnicities', Chapter 2 in Anthony King, ed. *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991)

⁹ The field of cultural geography has much to add to how constructions of history, language, and ethnic identity play out in space. See e.g. Thomas Sullivan, 'I want to be all I can Irish': the role of performance and performativity in the construction of ethnicity', *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 13 (5): 429-443, 2012.

¹⁰ See Chapter 5, 'Counter-Global Networks and the Making of Subaltern Nationalisms', in David Featherstone, *Resistance, Space, and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008)

approach to the archival material, I recognise the limits of the tendency among scholars in this field to synthesise many different historical periods and diasporic experiences under an overarching theoretical framework. Featherstone's insights would indeed benefit from a more empirically-grounded approach to solidarity – a concept which is itself in need of further unpacking. "Solidarity", after all, can be applied to various spheres: to narratives expressed by social movements across the political spectrum, to relations between different ethnic communities, or to various practices that reinforce ties between members of the same community, especially one geographically dispersed.

This study contributes to this on-going conversation through a *diasporic* approach to the solidarities expressed by the Jewish community as both a "minority" and a diaspora within Canada. Its main contribution is to provide an empirical foundation for a conceptualisation of "diaspora solidarity" through an organisational history of the JLC. It aims to shed light on the JLC's solidarities in the post-war and early Cold War periods. Set against the divisive geopolitical atmosphere of the time, ideological, ethnic, even class-based differences were re-negotiated, even transcended.

Finally, analyzing the transnational dimensions of the JLC's diaspora solidarities allows for a reconsideration of Canadian history from a global perspective. The JLC moved within a fluid historical moment in which the country was forced to rapidly reimagine its role in the post-war order, reform its immigration system, and reconfigure its institutions in response to emerging international norms around refugees and human rights.

The next two sections further examine the importance of a critical engagement with the history of the JLC and Jewish diasporic politics in Canada.

A politicized diaspora

The Jewish diaspora, and the Jewish left as a political formation within that community, is an important case study as it cuts across these interpretations of solidarity. For Jews, a national identity, and its political expressions, were linked to the *diaspora* condition, both as a real lived experience and an imagined community.¹¹ Often taken as the archetypal example of a diaspora people, the collective self-image of a transnational community has played a unique historical role among Jews. Over centuries, stories of dispersal and displacement were institutionalised in religious ceremonies, educational curricula,

¹¹ In Benedict Anderson's sense of collective national identity, see also *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]).

journalism, literature and the arts. Such narratives provided a common reference point for a people navigating their place within host societies either indifferent or actively hostile to their presence.

While diaspora can refer to any ethnic group dispersed across space or between states, as it is used among Jews it also often evokes the more ancient, and theological, notion of *galut*, or dispersal from a homeland (Israel/Palestine). For this reason, Jon Stratton notes that it is important to distinguish between two uses of the concept when applied to the Jewish case.¹² For many centuries, the main stage for this drama played out in Europe, where Jews were treated first as a religious, and then as an ethnic, or national, minority. “Diaspora” would come to acquire distinctly modern resonances, made possible only with the consolidation of the nation-state system, and its tendency toward homogenising ethnic groups or nations within spatially bounded territories. Enzo Traverso and Eli Lederhendler situate the Jewish entry into modernity somewhere between the 18th and 19th centuries.¹³ In the political arena, this would come to be expressed in Jewish participation in, and the formation of their own, nationally-oriented political movements and parties. Owing to the contingencies of history, and since at least the time of the French Revolution, secular Jews gravitated toward those of a generally left-wing or liberal bent, as these tended to be the strongest champions of their rights as individuals and a collective minority in Christian-majority Europe. By contrast, exclusionary nationalist movements and far-right pogroms, especially in the more backward regions of Russia and Eastern Europe, regularly scapegoated Jews in addition to other religious and ethnic minorities.¹⁴ While modernity brought limited political emancipation for these groups in certain countries where democratic reforms were put in place, they also carried in their wake severe social disruptions that resulted in a backlash from traditionalist elements. By the 20th century, these social transformations reached their limits, when a combination of

¹² Jon Stratton, *Coming Out Jewish* (London: Routledge, 2000), see pp. 1-31.

¹³ Enzo Traverso situates the evolution of modern Jewish politics within the rise of European nationalist and socialist movements, and their various responses to Jews as a minority in Europe. See *The Marxists and the Jewish Question: the History of a debate 1843-1943* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1994)). Traverso’s earlier work is followed up in his recent book, *The End of Jewish Modernity*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Pluto Press, 2016). Eli Lederhendler follows a similar periodisation for modern Jewish political movements in North America and Eastern Europe in *Jewish Responses to Modernity* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Much of this earlier history is covered in Jonathan Frankel’s book, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

competing territorial nationalisms, extreme ideological movements, economic crises, and the collapse of multi-national empires fed, at least in part, into two world wars.¹⁵

It was within these ruptures that the Jewish Question was again posed, following live debates since the 1880s. Various voices offered different, at times conflicting, approaches to a diaspora which now straddled both sides of the Atlantic. Zionism, which like other national movements of the time took expression in arguments for Jewish self-determination, posed the need for immigration to a territorial entity, where the establishment of a state would promote the “ingathering of the exiles” and the negation of the Diaspora still concentrated, and increasingly repressed, in Central and Eastern Europe. Different strands of political Zionism existed, with Socialist Zionism featuring an interesting tension between a nationalist orientation and a Marxist-inflected proletarian internationalism which Zionists attempted to put into practice in the Yishuv, a growing community of European Jewish immigrants in British Mandate Palestine. By contrast, non-Zionist movements for Jewish nationalism within the diaspora, like the Bund, rejected efforts to defer ‘salvation’ for their people in the foundation of a Jewish state that seemed, for many years until 1948, an unrealisable utopia.¹⁶ Instead they focussed attention on the more immediate needs of the diaspora in their host countries. Both movements gained adherents among Jews who immigrated to North America for reasons of direct political persecution, economic opportunity, or both.

The JLC’s connection to the political traditions of Bundism and labour Zionism is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Identifiable within the JLC are two generations of activists, including some who had arrived in the 1930s, joining a much earlier set of socialists and labour organisers who had established themselves within the general Canadian labour movement in the pre-war years. It is clear that this background would continue to inform the politics of leading figures within the JLC.

Having said all this, the historian of modern Jewish history, Tony Michels, goes against an earlier paradigm that saw Yiddish socialism transplanted, fully formed as it were, from

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt proposes that the Jewish refugee crisis had its origins in the crises of the modern nation-state. In *Origins*, she notes that there was an incentive on the part of Nazi Germany to maintain the ‘dispersal’ of the Jews, creating a refugee crisis that provoked an anti-immigrant reaction in Western countries, including Canada and the United States, which would otherwise not have been as receptive to anti-Semitic politics. See especially Part 2 on Imperialism in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951), 267-302.

¹⁶ See Zvi Gitelman’s *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2011)

the old country.¹⁷ He situates their emergence instead in the fruitful exchange between dissident intellectuals and activists in Eastern Europe and North America. At the turn of the century, they were fostered by encounters between Yiddish-speaking immigrants and other ethnic communities, in particular New York's German socialists, with which they shared some linguistic affinity. Similarly, Lederhendler warns against overstressing the impact of Eastern European Jewish socialism on the mainstream of the Jewish community.¹⁸ By and large that generation of Jews who came over in the early 20th century did not necessarily carry political affiliations from the old country with them. Upon arrival, many in fact were not, or did not consider themselves part of, an industrial working class in the strict sense. The great fluidity of class positions between Jewish employers and workers in North America's garment trades is proof enough of this. For Michels and Lederhendler alike, many of the trade unions and socialist organisations that Jewish immigrants encountered were part of movements that were organic to North America. In light of the difficulties posed by the immigration process to the lives of early Jewish immigrants, these organisations provided crucial material, emotional, and cultural support. In this sense, they were similar to various philanthropic institutions of the organised community, which helped facilitate their integration into the relatively more open societies of North America.

Nevertheless, the ideologues and organisers attached to groups like the JLC were indeed a politically dedicated minority within a people who held fast to a notion of their being part of a diaspora. They carried a deeper sense of collective history than most other immigrant communities, which they retained in a manner that set them apart from the North American left in general. It was this self-narrative of the community in which they were rooted that the Canadian JLC would mobilise to great effect, in solidarity with other minorities beyond their own. Furthermore, their organisational ties connected them across continents, on a scale unusual to most immigrant groups and distinct from the Canadian Jewish community at large. These networks stretched across North America and beyond: from the United States to France, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia.

In Canada, the JLC existed alongside changing approaches to minorities and immigrants by the state, spanning roughly a period from the late 1930s to the 1970s. As historians

¹⁷ Tony Michels, *A Fire in their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005)

¹⁸ Lederhendler, *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism*, 69-84.

David Meren, Francine McKenzie, and Laura Madokoro contend, the study of immigration in this period, including the various histories of immigrants politicised by their experiences in Canada, presents an opportunity for internationalising the country's history.¹⁹ Drawing on the political theorist Hannah Arendt, Madokoro argues that Canada's nature as both an extension of the British Empire and a settler nation-state informed its approach to refugees -- the stateless, and therefore "rightless" -- who were framed in racialised terms.²⁰ Remarking on the specific context of Asian and Afro-Caribbean migrant diasporas in Quebec, Meren notes that "those who found themselves on the margins of, or excluded from, the Canadian project of rule availed themselves of transnational networks, multilateral organizations, and international activism to challenge the racial structures of power within Canada's borders and beyond."²¹

This project of rule was hardly monolithic, and even in the 1940s the Canadian state proved far more malleable to organised political efforts by minorities than might first appear. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, we will see how the JLC likewise intervened, with some success, in the affairs of government through its work with the unions and the organised Jewish community. The next few sections consider two bodies of literature, Jewish studies and Canadian history, with which this thesis is in conversation. Within both, an organisational history of the JLC offers a unique lens with which to think through wider thematic concerns to do with human rights, immigration, and organised labour in the post-war period.

The Left in Jewish historiography

First, this study seeks to fill gaps in Canadian Jewish history. It treats the JLC as part of what can be broadly defined as the "Jewish left." Gerald Tulchinsky, among others, have written comprehensive historical accounts of Jews in Canada.²² In these general histories, however, the left is treated in terms of a subculture within the Jewish community

¹⁹ Laura Madokoro and Francine McKenzie, "Introduction: Writing Race into Canada's International History," in *Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History*, eds. Laura Madokoro, Francine McKenzie, and David Meren (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017), 3-24.

²⁰ Laura Madokoro, "Belated Signing: Race-Thinking and Canada's Approach to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," in *ibid*, 161-182.

²¹ David Meren, "Conclusion: Race and the Future of Canadian International History," in *ibid*, 295.

²² Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008)

oriented around Yiddish culture or *Yiddishkeit*.²³ Other authors approach the subject through individual autobiographies or biographies, including Tulchinsky's own more recent account of the communist, Joseph Salsberg and Cameron Smith's biography of the Lewis dynasty, covering their roots in Bundist and social democratic politics in Canada.²⁴ Meanwhile, full organisational histories tend to focus on "Jewish communism," such as it existed in Canada.²⁵ This faction of the left included some, but by no means all, within the orbit of the United Jewish Peoples' Order (UJPO), whose post-war activities rarely intersected with the JLC's.²⁶

To the extent that the Canadian Jewish left or labour movement is approached as a topic in itself, scholars typically focus on the pre-war or inter-war periods, looking mainly at Jewish participation in the labour movement in case studies like the garment industry of Toronto and Montreal.²⁷ This has left little room for the history of an organisation that did most of its work in the post-war years, after having been founded in the context of the refugee crisis of the 1930s and 40s. In Irving Abella and Harold Troper's key work on the subject, the JLC is mentioned only tangentially in a book which emphasizes the role of mainstream communal institutions like the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC).²⁸

Part of the reason for this discrepancy is that, in most cases, Jewish participation in left politics is treated as a minor current; a passing phase within the general trajectory of the rest of the Jewish community. The phenomenon is located within a step-wise process

²³ See, e.g., Ester Reiter, 'Secular *Yiddishkeit*: Left Politics, Culture, and Community', *Labour/Le Travail* Vol 49, 2002; and Rebecca Margolis, *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture in Montreal, 1905-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011)

²⁴ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Cameron Smith, *Unfinished Journey: The Lewis Family* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1989).

²⁵ See Matthew Hoffman and Henry Srebrnik, *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century* (NY: State University of New York, 2016). Gennady Estraiikh gives an account of Joseph Salsberg's split with Jewish Canadian communists following a visit to the Soviet Union, in 'Metamorphoses of *Morgn-frayhayt*', Chapter 7 in Estraiikh, G. and Mikhail Krutikov, eds., *Yiddish and the Left: Papers of the Third Mendel Friedman International Conference on Yiddish* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2001). Morris Biderman also wrote of his experiences in the Communist Party of Canada and UJPO, and his subsequent departure in *A Life on the Jewish Left: An Immigrant's Experience* (Toronto: Onward Publishing, 2000).

²⁶ Like the Canadian union federations and the JLC, UJPO had its own US-based counterpart, the International Workers Order (IWO). Ester Reiter has written a history of UJPO in *A Future Without Hate or Need: The Promise of the Jewish Left in Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016). See also Henry Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur: Birobidzhan and the Canadian Jewish Communist Movement, 1924-1951* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008)

²⁷ See e.g. Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992)

²⁸ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, in *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948* (Toronto, ON: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1983). More on this in Chapter 4, in this work.

that saw their transformation from a struggling group of impoverished immigrants, radicalised by their experience of poverty, into an increasingly self-confident and prosperous ethnic group. As they became one among many such identity groupings in a Canadian “multicultural” space, leftist commitments would gradually fall away.²⁹ Spatially this is represented in the migration of the majority of second and third generation Jews from working class districts like the Ward in Toronto or Montreal’s St. Laurent Boulevard to expansive suburbs.³⁰ Temporally, the post-war period, and especially the 1960s, is seen as a major turning point in the elevation of Jewish status into middle class respectability, and for some a more conservative political orientation. While some view this as an ethnic success story, others look with some nostalgia at a radical tradition that is no more.³¹ Both paradigms hold a very particular understanding of left politics as increasingly divorced from the mainstream of the Canadian Jewish diaspora taken as a *whole*.

As David Koffman notes, the field of Canadian Jewish history is ripe for a re-evaluation, especially in terms of the need for more critical histories of community institutions across the spectrum.³² He adds that the field would also benefit from new comparisons with American Jewry. Similarly, Michels warns against the tendency by Jewish ethnic historians to approach North American Jewry through a unidirectional, even Whiggish lens.³³ Overly celebratory accounts of their upward mobility or successful assimilation into “majority” society -- and more negatively, of their “whitening” or embourgeoisement -- tend to reinforce assumptions as to the singularity of a community that was never monolithic nor separable from the general history of North American society. Such exceptionalist accounts betray a much more complex human reality of internal ideological frictions, class divisions, as well as vastly different perceptions and

²⁹ Howard Adelman and John Simpson, *Multiculturalism, Jews, and Identities in Canada* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1996)

³⁰ The Ward is what is today’s Spadina area in Toronto. In Montreal, working class Jews clustered mainly around the Saint Laurent Boulevard and Saint Urbain Street in the old Jewish quarter, often living alongside Francophones. Wealthier Jews lived to the West of Mount Royal in Westmount in Cote des Neiges – the latter is today predominantly occupied by Afro-Caribbean, South Asian, and Filipino immigrants.

³¹ For the former approach, see Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). For the latter, Reiter, *A Future Without Hate or Need*.

³² David Koffman, ‘Canadian Jewish Studies since 1999: The State of the Field’, Chapter 2 in Ira Robinson, ed. *Canada’s Jews in Time, Space and Spirit* (Academic Studies Press, 2013), pp. 451-467.

³³ Tony Michels, ‘Communist History and Beyond: What is the Potential of American Jewish History?’, *American Jewish History*, Vol 95 (1): 61-71.

emotions among Jews themselves of their place in the various countries where they found themselves living.

Furthermore, there is much we can do with a 'geographic' lens applied to Jewish history and thought. The subject offers a rich trove of what are the essentially spatial concepts of exile and displacement, diaspora and homeland, migration and territoriality. But while Israeli geographers have done considerable research around the geographies of religion, Zionism, and national identity within Israel, it seems that there has been less work done on the Jewish *diaspora*, as situated explicitly within geographic approaches to transnationalism, national identities, and nation-states.³⁴

In his latest book, Lederhendler offers a new research agenda for North American Jewish historiography that foregrounds this spatial dimension.³⁵ Key issues that concerned, and continue to concern, a great number of Jews in the western world are overseas, in "countries other than their particular countries of origin."³⁶ These "worldwide connections" surpass the usual networks, including direct family ties or bonds of national citizenship, common to other ethnic diasporas or immigrant communities. In this, Lederhendler echoes an old truism among political geographers of avoiding the "territorial trap" -- that is, studying any phenomenon within the artificially constructed borders of nation-states in isolation from its extraterritorial preconditions.³⁷ The Jewish diaspora offers a unique case in point. For example, approaching modern Jewish history often requires scholars to have some working knowledge of European, North American, and even Middle Eastern history as the necessary backdrop to their research. Among other factors, this is due to the fact that the North American Jewish population are descendants of immigrants from multiple geographies, linguistic backgrounds, and even religious traditions within Judaism. Jews as a people are not easy to locate within any single ethnic or territorial framework.

As such, he urges a move beyond a binary, minority-majority paradigm; that is, the study of Jews as a separate "minority" within North American "majority" society. For centuries,

³⁴ See, e.g., works by Haim Yacobi and Oren Yiftachel

³⁵ Eli Lederhendler, *American Jewry: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

³⁶ p. xix, *ibid.*

³⁷ Agnew has long challenged international relations theorists in particular for neglecting the historicity of territorial nation-states, which have fostered analyses that view states as static, bounded 'containers of society'; see John Agnew, "The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory", *Review of International Political Economy* 1(1): 53-80, 1994.

Jews have nearly always held an in-between status in countries where the boundaries between minority and majority, citizen and foreigner, have been fluid.³⁸ Still, given the conceptual ease of the word “minority,” it is difficult to approach the issue in any other way.³⁹

Importantly, with few other ethnic glues to hold them together apart from religious affiliation, socialist politics or Israel have in certain moments become anchors for group solidarity -- each in turn, and in distinct ways, acting to expand their scope of moral concern to events beyond North America. David Sidorsky complements this insight by suggesting that a great number of Jews adopted socialist or left-leaning politics in large measure because they had to: “in modern Jewish history... there has been a high degree of convergence between movements that supported the civil rights of all minority groups and movements that supported Jewish emancipation.”⁴⁰

Crucial new insights may therefore be gleaned by looking into the conditions that shaped the various priorities of the Jewish left in the post-war period, and its relationship with the wider community. It seems that there was a shift, evident in the trajectories of activists within the JLC, away from the politics of the union shop, addressing basic economic needs specific to the Jewish immigrant community. As the latter found itself in a relatively more secure position in post-war Canadian society, many Jewish activists would come to adopt a more liberal politics that foregrounded civil liberties, anti-racism, and human rights in a manner that was impossible in the old country or in inter-war Canada: precisely the time and place when the Jewish left is often portrayed as having enjoyed the peak of its influence. On the other hand, it can even be argued that the later human rights concerns of the JLC, while less radical, was in some ways more consistent with the Bundist ideal of securing the rights of all minorities within a nation of equals. As James Loeffler notes, this was a broader trend among Jewish organisations and

³⁸ See Simon Bronner, ed., *Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations* (Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014); and Sander Gilman and Milton Shain, eds., *Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

³⁹ Despite Lederhendler’s warning, this study still tends to use the term “minority” as a general reference to ethnic groups in Canada, following its use by the CLC and other organisations, and “diaspora” when referring to the Jewish case as articulated by the JLC. While the JLC used both terms in their public statements, use varied depending on whether they were speaking to a Jewish or non-Jewish audience.

⁴⁰ p. xxxi, ‘Introduction’, in David Sidorsky, ed. *Essays on Human Rights: Contemporary Issues and Jewish Perspectives* (NY: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979)

individuals who participated in civil rights activism, in lobbying for human rights legislation in North America, and in early support for the United Nations.⁴¹

The JLC, Canadian labour, and human rights

Given the organisation's prominence within the labour movement, it is striking that there is, as yet, no thoroughgoing historical account of the Canadian JLC. The few authors who do mention the organisation generally treat it as one among many other groups in civil society coalitions lobbying for human rights legislation in Canada. Critical research along these lines has been done by Carmela Patrias, Ruth Frager, Ross Lambertson, and James Walker.⁴² In these cases, however, the JLC's distinctive ideological and political history tends to be sublimated into the general history of organisations like the CJC, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) or the social democratic CCF/NDP.

French historian Catherine Collomp is perhaps the only author who has embarked on a full organisational history of the JLC. Her recent book complements her two earlier articles on the JLC's efforts around the European refugee crisis.⁴³ In all three, she focusses primarily on the New York branch of the JLC (NY JLC) and on the immediate post-war period. While they shared similar ideological backgrounds and campaigns, the NY JLC and its Canadian counterpart operated in distinct environments with separate histories. There are significant differences between the American and Canadian operations of the JLC. The NY JLC, for one, had to steer through a bigger pool of American unions and other Yiddish socialist organisations. In some ways this limited its influence, while the Canadian JLC could concentrate its efforts within a much smaller labour movement in terms of membership and organisational diversity. Despite this,

⁴¹ James Loeffler, 'The Particularist Pursuit of American Universalism: The American Jewish Committee's 1944 'Declaration on Human Rights'', *Journal of Contemporary History* (50)2:274-295, 2014. See also Chapter 1 in David Sidorsky, ed. *Essays on Human Rights: Contemporary Issues and Jewish Perspectives* (NY: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979) and Michael Galchinsky, *Jews and Human Rights: Dancing at Three Weddings* (NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008).

⁴² See Carmela Patrias and Ruth Frager, 'This is our country, these are our rights': Minorities and the origins of Ontario human rights campaigns', *The Canadian Historical Review* (1):1-35, 2001; Ross Lambertson, 'The Dresden Story': Racism, Human Rights, and the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada, *Labour/Le Travail* 47:43-82, 2001; and James Walker, 'The "Jewish Phase" in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada', *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études ethniques au Canada*, 34(1): 1-29, 2002.

⁴³ Catherine Collomp, *Résister au nazisme: Le Jewish Labor Committee, New York, 1934-1945* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2016). The French language edition of Collomp's book has yet to be translated into English. See also articles by the same author, 'The Jewish Labor Committee, American Labor, and the Rescue of European Socialists, 1934-1941', *International Labor and Working-Class History: Labor in Post-war Central and Eastern Europe*, No. 68: 112-133, 2005; and "Relief is a political gesture:" The Jewish Labor Committee's interventions in war-torn Poland, 1939-1945', *Transatlantica* [Online] 1, last accessed 25 April 2018, URL: <http://transatlantica.revues.org/6942>

there was a fruitful exchange of ideas, political tactics, and finances between both branches.⁴⁴ The NY JLC also drew some inspiration from the latter's human rights work which, by some measures, was much more extensive.

Some of these gaps in the Canadian JLC's historiography may have to do with the fact that the organisation, especially in its early years, tended to operate under the radar, even as they were behind most of the human rights and anti-racism committees in the major unions.⁴⁵ Moreover, a sizeable collection of archival documentation from the Canadian JLC was only completed and made available to the public in the early 2000s.⁴⁶ In addition, Lambertson notes that there is limited reference within Canadian labour historiography to the role played by Jews in particular and minorities in general to the labour movement of the post-war period.⁴⁷ While labour historian Gregory Kealey has stressed the importance of studying diverse working class immigrant cultures for understanding the specificities of Canadian labour, research on the trajectory of Canadian unionism in this period still tends to look back to pre-war influences, notably the French and English, or is otherwise dominated by comparisons with the United States.⁴⁸ This is important to note given that the dynamics of minority integration into, and influence upon, Canadian unions cannot fit neatly into a British or US model.⁴⁹

The contributions of the labour movement to the consolidation of Canada's human rights and immigration policies have also been somewhat neglected, until very recently. Among authors who deal directly with the intersections between human rights and the labour movement, important work has been done by Dominique Clément, Stephen Heathorn, and David Goutor. In his brief history of human rights in Canada, Clément highlights the JLC's special role in the early phases of human rights and anti-racism

⁴⁴ Chapters 3 and 4, in this work.

⁴⁵ Walker, "Jewish Phase" in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada,' 7-9. Explained also in Chapter 4, in this work.

⁴⁶ Jewish Labour Committee of Canada Collection, MG28-V75, Finding Aid No. MSS1291. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada. In subsequent footnotes this will be referred to as the JLC Collection.

⁴⁷ Lambertson, 'The Dresden Story'

⁴⁸ Gregory Kealey in Chapter 4, 'Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980s', *Workers and Canadian History*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), see esp. pp. 112-126.

⁴⁹ Given the limits of space, I deal mostly with the JLC and its campaigns which foregrounded issues of race and immigration in the labour movement. The wider historical context of the Canadian left and the unions, and the solidarities they expressed, are an important, if implicit, backdrop to this recounting of the JLC's history.

legislation in Canada.⁵⁰ In their introduction to an edited volume on a similar theme, Goutor and Heathorn further unpack the concept of “human rights.” They highlight recent efforts to revisit its development into a persistent national myth, as it evolved in response to domestic and international factors and became a major cause taken up by various political actors.⁵¹

Frager and Patrias, in their chapter in the same volume, remark on the historical salience of Jewish Canadians who were for a time at the forefront of human rights activism in the country. The Jewish diaspora in Canada had a well-developed institutional infrastructure supported, in the post-war years, by a growing middle-class of educated professionals who enjoyed some influence on public opinion through the press, existing government connections, and the academe. The community’s transnational ties with the United States also improved their ability to draw lessons from organisations which were doing similar work abroad, while adopting them to the Canadian context.⁵²

The Canadian JLC’s diaspora solidarities coincided with a unique convergence of domestic and international factors. In the two decades after the war, Canada faced enormous pressure to embark on a coherent project of nation-building, as it reconfigured its role in the international arena in its transition from full Commonwealth status. Such a role depended in part upon the country’s willingness and capacity to absorb thousands of those displaced by WWII, thereby contributing to European reconstruction. Post-war economic changes also demanded more labour, including foreign labour, and the building of a domestic welfare apparatus. All of these changes coincided with the need for the Canadian government to manage the growing expectations of, and tensions within, an increasingly diverse population. Meanwhile, the emergence of new international norms of human rights directly challenged racism and departed from limited notions of individual rights under British law.

Complementing Madokoro’s insights cited earlier in this chapter, Walker notes that Canadian elites (representing, it must be said, a broad cross-section of the voting population) were well behind such discussions in international fora and appeared

⁵⁰ Dominique Clément discusses the role of the JLC in connecting human rights with the labour movement in Canada in *Human Rights in Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016).

⁵¹ David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn, “Introduction,” in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, eds. David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 2013).

⁵² Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, “Transnational Links and Citizens’ Rights: Canadian Jewish Human Rights Activists and Their American Allies in the 1940s and 1950s,” in *ibid*, 139-165.

ill-equipped to deal with these changes at home.⁵³ Through laws, the press, and its immigration system, Canada continued to treat both foreigners and minorities within its borders along racialised lines. Because Jews for many years had faced domestic anti-Semitism, while bearing the brunt of anti-immigrant hostility, Jewish activists on the left and the mainstream institutional community shared a common concern for reforming the country's treatment of minorities and immigrants in general. Yet for organisations like the JLC which sought to transform Canadian society in a lasting manner, mass activism was "not simply a matter of re-arranging public policy but of re-orienting the public mind."⁵⁴

Geopolitics and Jewish internationalism

Throughout its work, the JLC became an important nexus between North American unions, political movements in Europe, and the institutional Jewish community. The networks that the JLC tapped in its efforts to bring Jewish DPs over to Canada in turn proved critical to the success of their later campaigns for improvements in the country's human rights and immigration policies. In this way, the JLC's diaspora solidarities represented a distinct tradition of "Jewish internationalism," one that lived through a period often perceived as the golden age of human rights in the aftermath of the Holocaust, where Jews have figured as the archetypal victims of mass genocide.⁵⁵ It therefore makes intuitive sense to argue that their status as a symbolic marker for mass atrocity -- and the consequent need for human rights -- was acquired in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Jewish American historian Samuel Moyn, on the other hand, argues that the experience of the Holocaust did not play so strong a role, as typically assumed, in the consolidation of the global human rights system, or even of contemporary norms against genocide.⁵⁶ While Jewish figures were vocal in their support for international human rights norms and mechanisms, most Western governments and political elites had by and large avoided a narrative that portrayed Jews

⁵³ James Walker, "Decoding the Rights Revolution: Lessons from the Canadian Experience," in *ibid*, 29-58.

⁵⁴ Walker, *ibid*, 40.

⁵⁵ In a couple of works, Samuel Moyn focuses on the relationship between universalism in Jewish ethics, human rights, and international politics. He takes French Jew René Cassin as an example of Jewish internationalism expressed through advocacy on human rights. See, e.g. Moyn, 'René Cassin (1887-1976): Human Rights and Jewish Internationalism', pp. 278-291, in *Makers of Jewish Modernity*, edited by Jacques Picard, et al. (Princeton University Press 2016); and Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics*, especially pp. 208-214 (Cornell University Press 2005).

⁵⁶ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2012)

as the chief victims of WWII.⁵⁷ Realpolitik was the overriding concern of the immediate post-war period, with reconstruction and reparations negotiated between states mattering more than the individual or collective human victims of the fascist powers. In addition, even for many within the North American Jewish diaspora, active identification with the Holocaust as a central tenet of their collective identity -- often described as “Holocaust consciousness” -- would only catch up in the mid-1960s.⁵⁸

Moyn concludes that the focus of human rights history must be relocated from the immediate post-war period to the 1970s, which is when human rights, as such, would truly enter the public domain, becoming a coherent cause around which a global mass civil society, even some world leaders, would come to rally.⁵⁹ The emergence of human rights as a transnational movement would only become a “last utopia,” in his phrase, on the successive ruins of Soviet Communism, disillusionment at post-colonial governments, and the weakening of the Western welfare state. In other words, the three-decade time lag between WWII and this particular moment resists attempts to locate their emergence in the immediacy of the Holocaust. Instead, Holocaust memory would itself be mobilised as a usable past by human rights movements committed to preventing international atrocities, often in non-Western spaces.

This study of the JLC takes up Moyn’s challenge in part. His work is prescient in many respects, particularly in its sensitivity to the role of Cold War geopolitics in shaping the historical trajectory of human rights. Indeed, the JLC stood on one side of the Cold War divide, as an organisation committed to a broadly democratic and non-Communist politics with a more complicated relationship with Zionism than other Jewish organisations. Still, extreme political developments called for moments of unity with various sections of the organised left and the institutional Jewish community, allowing the JLC to work across geopolitical and ideological divisions. It was in this context that human rights as such, and the defence of basic liberties in the post-war international

⁵⁷ For example, Polish Jew Raphael Lemkin was pivotal in the drafting of the international Genocide Convention. Hersch Lauterpacht, Moses Moskowitz, and Rene Cassin, among other Jews and international lawyers were deeply involved in the United Nations and similar circles. In addition to the Canadian John Humphrey, the American Jewish Congress and other leading figures assisted, commented on, or were directly part of the drafting of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the public debates that followed. The JLC was itself involved with UN-related activities in Canada (see Chapter 4). See also Samuel Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History* (London: Verso, 2014), esp. pp. 69-86.

⁵⁸ Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 87-97.

⁵⁹ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*

order, would increasingly become central to the JLC's political programme, complementing the efforts of the general Canadian labour movement.

However, Moyn appears limited to historical developments unique to the United States, even as the American example ultimately became a dominant influence on global human rights movements. In Canada, by contrast, civil rights and human rights movements coincided directly with the growth of the post-war welfare state, which later responded to these movements by institutionalising their demands into domestic laws and foreign policy. As we will see in the later chapters, this very fact made the Canadian JLC, in contrast to the NY JLC which still exists, something of a victim of its own success, with much of its work having been assimilated into the Canadian unions or taken up by the state. Until well into the 1970s, however, concerns for human rights were mostly the purview of civil society and were a core part of the Canadian JLC's campaigns in the very early stages of its political career.

Furthermore, the JLC, and the Jewish left by extension, offers something of an exception to Moyn's thesis of the "belated relations of human rights and Holocaust memory."⁶⁰ It is argued here that for those remnants of Yiddish socialism that did survive the Second World War, the importance of a politics of human rights was doubtless confirmed by their recent history, and the longer history of anti-Jewish persecution.⁶¹ Complicating this was Canada's initially ambivalent reception to the Holocaust, which meant that its linking with human rights could not be mainstreamed until much later. Goutor, whose earlier scholarship coincidentally touches on Holocaust memory in Canadian society, likewise argues that most Canadians had a remarkably limited understanding of the war in Europe as it progressed, at least as revealed in the press.⁶² Public ignorance about its aftereffects for European Jews, in particular, was reflected in the general lack of sympathy for the entry of refugees into Canada.

Nevertheless, the JLC found itself in an ideal position as an organisation founded in a critical moment in the lead up to the war, while being established explicitly on humanitarian grounds. If not hinting at the Holocaust directly, the JLC did mobilise a

⁶⁰ Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 96.

⁶¹ This is corroborated by Hasia Diner in her book, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), where she contests a common assumption that the Jewish community fell silent in the two decades after the war. Indeed, there was strong continuity in efforts to commemorate the Holocaust, especially among Jews who were politically active in the United States.

⁶² David Goutor, "The Canadian Media and the 'Discovery' of the Holocaust, 1944-1945," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 4, no. 5 (1996-1997): 88-119.

narrative of solidarity that capitalised on the Jewish experience. It took up the cause of universal human rights in the specific sense of fighting racism, rooted in turn in an older anti-fascist politics that explicitly recognised the plight of the Jews and other racialised minorities as key targets of Western anti-Semitism. It spread this sensibility among its contacts in the labour movement, simultaneously on behalf of Jewish DPs and for the rights of other minorities in Canada. In the JLC's Jewish activists, in turn, labour leaders found long-time allies who had facilitated their connection with movements abroad, and with whom they had worked directly on behalf of war refugees amid joint efforts to integrate them into Canadian society. The next two chapters return to this earlier period in the organisation's history.

CHAPTER 3

Transnational solidarities and the crisis of European Jewry

The JLC positioned itself as a representative of “Jewish labour”; an heir to a tradition that pre-dated its establishment in the inter-war period. At the time, Jewish immigrants were still strongly represented in the garment industry in cities like Montreal, Winnipeg, Toronto, and New York. Since the turn of the century, these cities were sites of union militancy centred around immigrant labour. Alongside Italians, Ukrainians, and other Eastern European first and second-generation immigrants, Jews were members of the most active unions of the period, including the International Lady Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA).¹

Cross-border exchanges between unions and other organisations in Canada and the United States fostered the growth of what was really a multi-ethnic labour movement, with overlapping political concerns and campaigns. For many years the ILGWU and ACWA, as well as the major union federations, the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) and the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), were tied with their US affiliates.² The JLC was likewise established first in New York in February 1934, before expanding into Montreal and Toronto in 1936.³ In addition to the ILGWU and ACWA, the JLC’s main allies from the beginning included the Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers Union as well as branches of the Arbeter Ring and other Jewish socialist organisations. While the garment unions were its principal financial sponsors, the Canadian JLC also had supporters within

¹ Eli Lederhendler argues that the unions were critical to the integration of Jewish immigrants into North American society. See especially Lederhendler’s “Becoming an (ethnic) American: From Class to Ideology,” Chapter 3 in *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism, 1880-1920: From Caste to Class* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 85-119. See also Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

² Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History* (Toronto: James Lormier, 1996).

³ The first two years involved establishing initial connections in Canada, with the JLC operating very much as an extension of the American branch. It was not until 1938 that the Canadian JLC began conducting its affairs as an independent organisation, holding its 10th Anniversary Convention ten years later in 1948. See, i.e., 10th Anniversary National Convention of the Jewish Labor Committee of Canada Report, 1-3 November 1948, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. Eventually, however, the official date of its establishment was moved back to 1936, as noted by Carmela Patrias and Ruth Frager, “This is our country, these are our rights’: Minorities and the origins of Ontario human rights campaigns’, *The Canadian Historical Review* (1):1-35, 2001.

the mainstream of the Jewish community represented by the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC).

At its founding, the JLC's purpose was both humanitarian and political. Responding to the persecution of Jews in inter-war Europe required urgent attention to the needs of refugees, while addressing the deeper political roots of European fascism:

Dedicated to the struggle against all forms of dictatorship and oppression, guided by the progressive traditions of Jewish and North American Labour and trade union movements, it developed from its very inception an effective operational program in the field of protecting human lives and basic human values.⁴

The JLC's interventions during the Jewish refugee crisis would have been impossible without the networks of solidarity it established in the US and Canada. JLC members built up these networks over the course of many years working in the North American unions. Even so, the JLC made a conscious distinction between Jewish labour and the labour movement more generally, approaching the latter as a representative of an ethnic minority, with its own particular political lineage and set of problems. It projected itself "as the spokesman for Jewish members of trade unions, social and community organizations, and democratic labour-political groups."⁵

In later speeches, the JLC would recall the moment of its establishment as a period of "fear and deep despair," out of which a small group of like-minded labour leaders, democrats, and socialists emerged whose working political philosophy linked solidarity with the Jewish cause with a call for universal human solidarity. For them, "the survival of Jewry was inseparably linked with the survival of the best in civilization and human progress."⁶

The JLC was, according to one resolution, a product of "a mass movement stemming from the very core of the Jewish people."⁷ This mass movement carried over into the

⁴ Speech entitled "Thirty Years' History of JLC" delivered at the Jubilee Banquet in honour of Michael Rubinstein, 29 January 1966, Volume 3, File 17, 'Clippings, Speeches -- Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree - 29 Jan 1966', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Speech by Michael Rubinstein delivered at a Human Rights Award Banquet, 2 February 1963, Volume 3, File 12, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree, 2 Feb. 1963-- Rubinstein speech', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁷ Michael Rubinstein speech, "Ten Years of Strife, Rescue and Aid...", republished article in Reports of the 10th Anniversary National Convention of the Jewish Labor Committee of Canada,

JLC's networks of solidarity which, temporally and spatially, extended far beyond WWII North America. In her account of the American JLC, Collomp retraces the organisation's roots in a generation of emigre socialists who arrived in New York between the 1920s and 1930s, joining up with an existing Jewish labour movement that had struck roots in the 1870s.⁸ For Michels, decades of cross-fertilisation between Europe and the US fed into a distinct Yiddish-American socialism enriched by encounters between radicalising immigrants from various parts of Europe.⁹

Their Canadian counterparts were similarly immersed in an immigrant culture, both Jewish and working class, that encompassed schools, mutual aid societies, religious shules, and the *landsmanschaften*, which linked Jews from common towns of origin in the Pale of Settlement.¹⁰ Providing extensive welfare and moral support for immigrants, they functioned in part to facilitate their social integration, in the absence of extensive institutions committed to the purpose on the part of the Canadian state. Together, these institutions formed the fabric of a Yiddish socialist milieu whose particular vibrancy stemmed from the world of Eastern European Jewry and their encounter with the new world. The prominent degree of overlap between Jews and the left for much of the early to mid-20th century was a product of the conditions in which their politics evolved, as well as to new circumstances in their adoptive homelands. A number of Jewish socialists occupied leading positions in unions, and were networked, through shared membership and joint campaigns, with like-minded comrades in the Jewish Socialist Farband and the Arbeter Ring. A vocal minority brought with them the fractious politics of the old country. Far from isolated radicals, they were deeply rooted in the life worlds of their fellow immigrants. They were held together by the Yiddish-language press which mirrored the concerns of their predominantly working-class readership, including in their pages everything from general labour strikes and socialist literature to coverage of events of specific concern to the Jewish community. Up to the late 1930s, the Jewish Daily

1-3 November 1948, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸ Collomp, *Résister au nazisme*

⁹ Tony Michels' *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Ashkenazi Jews in the early 20th century typically lived in towns straddling the border regions of what are now Russia, Poland, and other Eastern European states.

Forward (*Forverts*), and in Canada, Montreal's *Keneder Adler* (Canadian Eagle), enjoyed mass circulation and cross-border readership of at least half a million.¹¹

The JLC's Bundist roots

Before returning to our period of focus, it is important to revisit the ideological undercurrents that shaped the JLC's decision-making and the solidarities it expressed in the decades that followed. The Canadian JLC's roots lay in this fusion between the North American and Eastern European expressions of Yiddish socialism. Ideological debates therefore loomed large in the historical imaginaries of organisers within the JLC and chsimilar organisations. Of these, Bundism, and to a lesser extent labour Zionism, had a sizeable impact on the political formation of the JLC's founders. Both ideologies came out of the maelstrom of European nationalist and populist movements in the 19th century. Tied to their popular base, their political positions and articulations of solidarity responded to the conditions that Jews faced in the Pale. But it was in Poland and parts of Russia in particular, where Jews had suffered the worst of the pogroms and Czarist repression, that these movements took on their most radical expressions.¹²

The Bund was both a mass political party and a trade union representing Jewish workers within larger social movements that incorporated various linguistic and ethnic groups across Russia and Eastern Europe. Its diasporic politics put it in bitter contest with the labour Zionist movement, with which it competed for membership and the sympathy of the Jewish community. The Yiddish word *doynkeit* was one articulation of a diaspora identity elaborated best by the Bund, and the organisations that would carry some of its spirit to North America. A celebration of the diaspora condition, it emphasized solidarity in the spaces and societies in which Jews found themselves living. For a while embodying the Bund's fierce opposition to territorial Zionism, it was a broadly humanist, universalist approach to diaspora identity. It was inspired by a socialist internationalism that also posited national cultural autonomy as a response to the Jewish question. This involved, at least in part, a linguistic centring of Yiddish, as a language rivalling Hebrew, in the context of the latter's association with a Zionism that saw Yiddish as a symbol of poverty and the backward *shtetl* -- as something, in other words, to be forgotten and left behind.¹³

¹¹ Rebecca Margolis, *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture in Montreal, 1905-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

¹² Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹³ David Slucki, *The International Labour Bund after 1945* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

Bundist thinkers disrupted assumptions of a singular Jewish identity or fixed national culture, given the sheer diversity – geographic, cultural, and linguistic – of experiences central to the diaspora condition. They challenged ideas that the diaspora(s) required a territorial centre or homeland on which to anchor national identity. Instead, Jews were a “world people.”¹⁴ For Bundists, the transmission and reproduction of modern Jewish culture was possible “here,” in Europe, as opposed to “there,” where it would have to be artificially implanted, like a fish out of water, in Palestine or any other territory outside of Europe. Alongside other diaspora nationalists, adherents of *doykeit* strode a middle path that equally resisted assumptions that the national or ethnic solidarities that Jews had for each other would ever completely disappear, as through a teleological process of assimilation into their host societies. The struggle for political recognition in the latter was of course central to this endeavour, and the Bund joined movements alongside other national minorities who sought wider autonomy for themselves in multi-ethnic polities.

Despite their major differences, Socialist Zionism and Bundism were two movements that can be situated within the wider canvass of a diasporic Jewish left.¹⁵ What united them were, in broad brushstrokes, the need to act in solidarity with Jews everywhere and the working class in particular, the rejection of religious conservatism, the pursuit of an egalitarian society, and a commitment to language, whether Yiddish or Hebrew, as a way of maintaining Jewish cultural continuity.

Featherstone’s notion of subaltern nationalism, discussed in the preceding chapter, is a useful one in accounting for Bundist, and Jewish socialism more broadly, which re-articulated the messianic tradition within Judaism in their politics in a more secular guise. For Bundist intellectuals at least, if not necessarily for their mass base, the pursuit of liberation as a key theme in Jewish history was held in common with other oppressed national communities. For many Jews, including the Bund in its early years, socialist revolution, and later its utopian expression in the Soviet Union, would put an end to

¹⁴ A phrase used with increasing frequency in Bundist publications even in the years leading up to the Second World War, and the struggle with labour Zionists over Jewish immigration to Palestine. This drew on the thoughts of one of the Bund’s leading theorists, Vladimir Medem. See also Vladimir Medem, *Vladimir Medem: The Life and Soul of a Legendary Jewish Socialist* (NY: Ktav Pub. House, 1979).

¹⁵ In *Converging Alternatives: The Bund and the Zionist Labor Movement, 1897-1985* (NY: State University of New York, 2006), Yosef Gorny argues for a ‘dialectical’ approach to the history of Bundism and Socialist or Labour Zionism which points to their common desire to respond to the conditions Jews faced in Europe. In the post-war years, their diverging trajectories would be affected by the establishment of the State of Israel, as a rupture affecting all aspects of the relationship between the Yishuv and the Diaspora

racism and the oppression of minorities. In other words, the politics of the Jewish left was embedded within a diasporic imaginary that was in many ways unique to its adherents. Bundist ideas, however, were never expounded into a coherent philosophical framework policed by its adherents. Translated literally, the Bund meant “Union”. What in fact enabled its popular appeal in the Pale was the party’s ideological flexibility and its pragmatic emphasis on *praktika*, addressing everyday economic campaigns and needs of the masses, as opposed to *teoretiki*.¹⁶ While this enabled it to work effectively with other political parties, it did leave Bundists open to criticisms of ideological ambiguity from those who competed with it for members.

Founded in Lithuania a few years before the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, the Bund took part in the movements leading up to the 1917 Russian Revolution. It later insisted on the right to represent all Jewish workers in the Pale, putting it at odds with Lenin and the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks opposed both Bundists and Zionists – with some tentative gestures of sympathy toward left Poale Zion in their early years – on the grounds that a genuinely “internationalist” politics was incompatible with these expressions of Jewish nationalism. In any case, the Jewish nation was simply too spread out across Europe that it would be better for it to disappear, like other ethnic minorities, into the ether as an inevitable result of the unfolding of capitalism, with all remnants of ethnic attachment transcended by the commitment to a cosmopolitan global proletariat. Bundists, as Plekhanov famously put it, “were Zionists with sea-sickness.”¹⁷

Even as there were moments of unity between the Bund and left Poale Zion, the divide between Bolsheviks and their opponents would prove more lasting, expressed in organisational wrangling between Communists and social democrats internationally.¹⁸ In North America, neither Bundists nor labour Zionists would ever reach the status of mass parties as they did in the Pale. First, the conditions that Jewish immigrants faced in the United States or Canada, while mostly bad, were not so extreme, tempering any radical impulses that they might have expressed in Czarist Russia. The Jewish Question was re-articulated by Jewish socialists in politics that were comparatively more open, and to which many had fled precisely to escape the worst depredations of European society. In addition, those attempting to directly import Bundism struggled to compete with an

¹⁶ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 233-235.

¹⁷ Frankel devotes an entire chapter to the history of the Bund, including its complicated relationship with Bolshevism and later Soviet Communism in *ibid*, 171-257.

¹⁸ Gorny, *Converging Alternatives*

already well-established Jewish labour movement organic to North America, where the Bund's particular brand of politics could not fully resonate. The Bund attempted to restore something of its former glory within existing Jewish labour movements in cities like New York, Montreal -- even Melbourne, Tel Aviv, and Buenos Aires. But beyond the boundaries of inter-war Poland, Bundists would occupy only minority positions within larger political formations.¹⁹

Still, it lived on among individual activists and organisations which carried something of its spirit into North America. Indeed, the Bundist approach to organising Jewish workers as a collective minority within the general labour movement in the Pale was mirrored in relations between the Jewish left and organised labour in the US and Canada. Carrying faint echoes of the Bund's own approach to organising, the JLC positioned itself as a non-sectarian organisation, "in the everyday party sense", by which it meant that it embraced "all the various democratic and labour trends in the Jewish labour movement".²⁰

Finally, some of the NY JLC's leading figures were Bundists, or of Bundist heritage, with extensive ties to mainstream Jewish communal organisations, the Yiddish press, and the North American unions.²¹ Baruch Charney Vladeck was general manager of the *Forverts*, before becoming one of the founders of the JLC in New York.²² Nathan Chanin, Bundist editor of the same paper and general secretary of the Arbeter Ring, was a long-time confidant of the NY JLC. Adolph Held, president of the JLC by the mid-1940s, was previously European director of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS).²³ Sidney Hillman and David Dubinsky, stalwarts of the garment unions ACWA and ILGWU, had Bundist sympathies, along with dozens of Yiddish journalists and

¹⁹ Slucki, *The International Labour Bund after 1945*.

²⁰ Michael Rubinstein speech, Volume 3, File 12, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree Feb 2 1963', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²¹ Gail Malmgreen, "Jewish Labor Committee," in *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History*, eds. Stephen Norwood and Eunice Pollack (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008), 251-255.

²² Tony Michels, "The Early Yiddish Press in the United States," in *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History*, eds. Stephen Norwood and Eunice Pollack (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008), 261-267.

²³ Owing to his experiences in both HIAS and the JLC, Held would later serve in the post-war claims commission for Holocaust survivors in liaison with the German and Austrian governments. See Malmgreen, "Jewish Labor Committee," 255.

rank-and-file unionists.²⁴ Many were born in countries like Lithuania, Poland, or Belarus, raised in the tradition of Yiddish socialism and reared in the oppositional politics of the Pale. Rebecca Kobrin goes even further in retracing the lineage of Jewish socialist leaders in New York to specific *shtetls* and cities like Bialystok, in northeastern Poland. This “Bialystoker diaspora” established various communal institutions, small socialist parties, and schools that never quite lost their orientation to the old country, even as they remade themselves on new soil.²⁵

A socialist diaspora in Canada

Similarly, a number of the Canadian JLC’s founders, including Kalmen Kaplansky, Michael Rubinstein, and Moishe Lewis, had immersed themselves in these two worlds --the North American labour movement and the Yiddish left -- well before establishing their branch in Canada. Fluid ties of individual affiliation between local Jewish organisations and unions, combined with their shared Eastern European background, facilitated the creation of networks of solidarity across various scales after they migrated to North America.²⁶

Kaplansky was himself from Bialystok, arriving in Montreal via New York in 1929. Transitioning from Polish and Yiddish to English and French was one of many steep learning curves that immigrants like Kaplansky faced.²⁷ Rejected by McGill University on account of his linguistic difficulties and Jewish background, he would work for many years as a typesetter, later becoming an organiser for a branch of the International

²⁴ Gerald Sorin, “American Jews in the Socialist and Communist Movements,” in *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History*, eds. Stephen Norwood and Eunice Pollack (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008), 283-289.

²⁵ Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

²⁶ As a sample of these connections, the Canadian JLC’s core staff in 1940 included members of the International Lady Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) [B. Shane, S. Kraisman, J. Berman], Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) [F. Lerman, Phil Wasserman, J. Shuster], the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union (UHCMWIU) [M. Silcoff and S. Sugar], the Bakers Union [A. Shkolnick], the Workmen’s Circle [Maishe Lewis, H. Carin, M. Winikoff, R. Belitsky, A. Kligman, N. Mergler, L. Papernick], Lubliner Verband [M. Gartenberg], the CCF-Jewish Section [N. Wevrick], and Left Poale Zion [A. Katz, S. Allen, M. Bernstein, C.S. Aronoff], the Jewish Socialist Farband, and the Pocket Bookmakers’ Union. See letters and fund-raising appeals in Volume 7, Files 8-10, ‘Correspondence: JLC and the War Effort 1939-1940, - 1941, - 1942’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷ Biographical information on Kaplansky’s early years is available in his personal papers. See Kalmen Kaplansky fonds, MG30-A53, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa ON Canada, especially Volume 1, File 1, ‘Kaplansky, J. Biographical Material’, 1978, n.d. Much of this material is in Yiddish and Polish.

Typographical Union in Montreal.²⁸ Kaplansky's training in the Canadian labour movement would serve him well as director of the JLC after 1946. In his early years, he was mainly preoccupied with everyday union politics and the Arbeter Ring, which elected him chairman of their branch in Montreal, where he served between 1940-43.²⁹

It was certainly a turbulent time to have one foot in the union movement and another in the Jewish community. The Great Depression led to rising labour unrest, growing fears of communism, and the threat of war in Europe. In his history of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), Naylor describes a Canada in its radical '30s, where movements grew in parallel with those shaping the New Deal era in the United States. In the Prairie provinces, new parties like the CCF were forming to address the frustrations of those worst hit by the Depression. In Saskatchewan, farmers organisations, labour activists, and agricultural cooperatives joined in the signing of the Regina Declaration, heralding a prairie socialism that envisioned an alternative to both Communism and the duopoly of Canada's traditional parties.³⁰

Identifying with the CCF's political vision, Michael Rubinstein had joined the party after its founding in 1932. Based in Quebec, but with extensive ties to Jewish leftists in Toronto, Winnipeg, and Regina as a member of the Jewish Socialist Farband, Rubinstein had also been in contact with the CJC in early campaigns against domestic anti-Semitism and fascism.³¹ As a lawyer, Rubinstein was part of unsuccessful efforts to establish a Labour Party of Canada, also known as the Canadian Labour Party (CLP), at the federal level. While the CLP remained a dispersed organisation, loosely stringing together union locals and independent trade unions in various Canadian cities, its labour activists would serve as an important base for the CCF. Rubinstein's work for both the CLP and the CCF preceded his becoming the first chairman of the Canadian JLC.³² His participation

²⁸ Local 176 of the International Typographical Union.

²⁹ "Kalmen Kaplansky," Bibliographies, Canada's Human Rights History, accessed 15 April 2018, <https://historyofrights.ca/encyclopaedia/biographies/kalmen-kaplansky/>.

³⁰ James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working-Class Future* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

³¹ Correspondence from H.M. Caiserman (General Secretary of the CJC) to Michael Rubinstein on the formation of an anti-Nazi Consumer League, 24 October 1935, Volume 7, File 7, 'Correspondence: re Jewish Labour organisation which predated the establishment of the JLC 1931, 1933, 1955', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

³² Assorted documents, from the early 1930s to mid-1940s, concerning Rubinstein's involvement in the CLP, and later the CCF in Quebec, are in Volume 10, File 1, 'Michael Rubinstein: Notes for lectures, CCF pamphlets 1944', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. These include

continued after the CCF's formal transition into the *Parti social démocratique du Québec* in 1939.

Another Bundist and JLC member involved in the circles of the CCF and JLC was Moishe Lewis. Hounded by both the Bolsheviks and far right pogroms in his home town of Svisloch where he was Chairman of the Bund, Moishe fled to Canada, arriving with his family in Quebec City in August 1921.³³ Moving to Montreal, he would become general secretary of the JLC in the 1940s and literal forefather of one of Canada's prominent political families, associated with the CCF and its rebranding in the New Democratic Party (NDP). Moishe's son, David Lewis, ran unsuccessfully as a CCF candidate for the St. Louis riding in Montreal for the 1943 Quebec provincial election. Kaplansky, who took on the bulk of the JLC's work in the immediate post-war period, also conducted a failed bid for the same position a year later. Owing to the high concentration of Jews in the area, the St. Louis riding was known as the "Jewish seat," hotly contested by social democrats and Communists in the Labor-Progressive Party, which called for a united front against far-right candidates with anti-Semitic and fascist sympathies.³⁴

The participation of Jewish activists in the CCF in Quebec is significant given the close relations that would later develop between the JLC and Francophone unionists.³⁵ At this time, however, there was still limited cross-over between Francophone labour and the

speeches and notes on campaigns for basic labour legislation in the province, as well as union representation in a nascent federal public housing commission. Also worth mentioning is a 1931 letter highlighting Rubinstein and the CCF's J.S. Woodsworth's participation in debates over whether the Canadian labour federations should secede from their counterparts in the United States. See Correspondence from H. Abramovitch to Michael Rubinstein, 13 October 1931, Volume 7, File 7, 'Correspondence: re Jewish Labour organisation which predated the establishment of the JLC 1931, 1933, 1955', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

³³ Svisloch is in contemporary Belarus. See Cameron Smith, *Unfinished Journey: The Lewis Family* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1989), 113-130.

³⁴ The 1944 Quebec election is instructive in outlining tensions within the Jewish left at this time. While the CCF put forward Lewis and Kaplansky, candidates from the Labor-Progressive Party, a Communist front, included Michael Buhay and Fred Rose, both Jews. Rose would be the only communist to become a member of Parliament in this period and to have been successfully elected in any Canadian election. For the St. Louis riding, however, there were fears that having both parties field candidates would split the vote, resulting in the victory of Paul Masse of the right-wing Bloc Populaire who had run on an anti-war, and actively anti-Semitic, platform. See appeal to the CCF from the Michael Buhay Election Committee entitled 'An Appeal to reason to those who Endanger the Jewish Seat of St. Louis', 1944, Volume 10, File 10, 'Correspondence: David Lewis and CCF material 1944-64', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁵ Rubinstein recounted these experiences in a speech entitled 'THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN MONTREAL', 1944, Volume 10, File 1, 'Michael Rubinstein, Notes for Lectures and CCF pamphlets, 1944', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

CCF, which remained a marginal local club in the electoral arena, even as it had strong ties among Anglophone and Jewish unionists in Montreal.³⁶ In addition to the city's large and long-standing Jewish community, the organisation's development within this dynamic political scene is another important factor to consider its special ties with the Canadian unions. As an epicentre for Yiddish socialism, Montreal was Canada's New York, with Winnipeg a close second, and Toronto's Ward district a distant third.³⁷ All three cities were centres for labour radicalism, but it was in Montreal's garment industry where the Jewish labour movement, enriched by the city's ties to New York, found its organisational locus in the JLC. The JLC shared office space with the Arbeter Ring in Montreal, where it held most of its meetings alongside labour leaders across Ontario and Quebec.³⁸ It also enjoyed strong ties with members of the garment and printers' unions of the city-wide Montreal Labour Council.

Moishe, Rubinstein, and Kaplansky carried their pre-existing ties with the Canadian unions, the Jewish community, and the CCF into their work for the JLC. Through their colleagues in New York, furthermore, their networks of solidarity extended overseas. Collomp argues that the organisational and biographical ties of early JLC leaders to European socialism put them well to the left of their North American counterparts, even as their political formation lent a distinct flavour to their anti-Communism.³⁹ Splits within the Jewish left in Canada, fragmented along varying positions on the Soviet Union, mirrored divisions within the general Canadian left and major unions.⁴⁰ But if their direct encounter with Bolshevism made their opposition to Communism more visceral, events affecting their kin in Europe made their political convictions no less urgent.

³⁶ Naylor, *Fate of Labour Socialism*, 94-97.

³⁷ For a history of the Jewish labour movement in Winnipeg, see Daniel Stone, ed. 'Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg, 1905-1960', *Jewish Life and Times*, Vol 8 (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2001).

³⁸ Its original office was at 4848 St Lawrence Boulevard; before moving to their current address in 5165 Isabella, which remains the address of the Workmen's Circle and the Abraham Reisen Educational Institute.

³⁹ Catherine Collomp, 'The Jewish Labor Committee, American Labor, and the Rescue of European Socialists, 1934-1941', *International Labor and Working Class History* No. 68 (Fall 2005): 112-133.

⁴⁰ These divisions meant that there was limited overlap between the JLC and organisations like the United Jewish Peoples Order (UJPO) whose counterpart in the United States included the Jewish section of the International Workers Order (IWO), in turn affiliated with the Communist Party. For more on Canadian Jewish communism, see Ester Reiter, *A Future Without Hate or Need: The Promise of the Jewish Left in Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016); Henry Srebrnik, *Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Soviet Birobidzhan Project, 1924-1951* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), and Gerald Tulchinsky's *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

Trans-Atlantic solidarities

As the war in Europe gathered pace, the JLC became a barometer of events abroad. Founded in New York in the mid-1930s at a pivotal moment of crisis for European Jewry, the JLC committed itself to both humanitarian work overseas and anti-racism work at home.⁴¹ At its founding Convention in 1934, the most pressing item on the JLC's agenda was to provide aid to Jewish and non-Jewish labour organisations in Europe. Anxious not to duplicate the work of other Jewish organisations, like the much larger American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) or the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the JLC saw its main strength in the trade unions.⁴² Having enjoyed long careers in the North American labour movement, its members were already well placed to activate their existing networks on behalf of their people and comrades in Europe. Major Jewish organisations and unions under both the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) responded to the JLC's appeals by donating up to USD 150,000 to its relief fund. This allowed it to channel direct support to the European underground resistance, through its network among members of the "democratic labour movement" -- a reference to non-Communist allies and socialist parties based largely in Scandinavia, France, and Poland.⁴³

In 1938, the JLC sent USD 75,000 to various organisations in Poland, including the Central Committee for Jewish Unions and the *Medem Sanitorium*, a school and orphanage run by the Bund and the Central Yiddish School Organization.⁴⁴ In the inter-war years, the Bund became the largest mass Jewish party in Poland. It was here that political tensions reached a boiling point, erupting in open street battles in Warsaw and other cities that pitted fascists against the tenuous alliance between Bundists, local Communists, and labour Zionists.⁴⁵ But by September 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany had

⁴¹ Catherine Collomp, "Relief is a political gesture:" The Jewish Labor Committee's interventions in war-torn Poland, 1939-1945', *Transatlantica* [Online] 1, last accessed 25 April 2018, URL: <http://transatlantica.revues.org/6942>

⁴² The JLC's humanitarian work for Jewish DPs intersected with HIAS and AJJDC. More on this in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴³ Collomp, 'The Jewish Labor Committee', 117.

⁴⁴ Di Tsentrale Yidishe Shul-Organizatsye (TSYSHO). See "TSYSHO," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, accessed 20 April 2018, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Tsysho>.

⁴⁵ Alain Brossat and Sylvia Klingberg, English trans. by David Fernbach, *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish Radicalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 29-54.

occupied Poland, dividing the country between themselves. Bundist leaders Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter were captured by the Soviets, and many others sought refuge in neighbouring Lithuania. The JLC also maintained close contact with the Bundist representatives of the Polish government-in-exile in London, like Szmuel Arthur Zygielbaum. Zygielbaum's suicide in May 1943 carried an explicit message for both the Axis powers and the Allies who bore responsibility for the massacre of European Jewry.⁴⁶ The apparent reluctance of the great powers to intercede on their behalf meant that the onus fell on ordinary people caught between the cross-hairs of realpolitik.

Rejected by fascist Europe, betrayed by the Soviet Union, and denied refuge by many Allied nations, Jews were in a unique position to call for an anti-fascist internationalism that was committed to democracy and solidarity among victims of racism on both sides of the Atlantic. Beyond facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and relief, the JLC's unique circuits of solidarity were a bridge connecting a more insular North American labour movement with their counterparts in Europe. Polish Bundist exiles in the NY JLC maintained regular correspondence with comrades in Poland, which kept them abreast of developments in the country and elsewhere.⁴⁷

In Canada, JLC affiliates maximised their own networks in the Jewish community and colleagues in the garment unions. They made an urgent appeal for funding, reaching out Jewish households and trade unionists across major Canadian cities, with cheques made payable to their office in Montreal. A typical fund-raising appeal in 1943 adopts Biblical overtones:

Will you deny them the means of deliverance... to continue their heroic fight against Hitler? Will the sacrifices of the Revolt in Warsaw Ghetto last Spring be in vain? Hitler and his hordes may vent their bitterness, born of defeat, on the last remaining Jews. We must save them first. The victory of the world must not be an empty one for our people.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Collomp, *Résister au nazisme*. 212-216.

⁴⁷ Among the American JLC's founders were Jacob Pat, Emanuel Nowogrodski, and Benjamin Tabachinsky, who arrived in New York between the years 1937 to 1939. See Collomp, *Résister au nazisme*, 95.

⁴⁸ Fund-raising appeal entitled "Emergency Appeal For...[followed by a run-down of donations and political activity]," undated, Volume 15, File 21, 'Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

It is important to note that the JLC's relief efforts preceded an international humanitarian system that was still coming into formation. It was not until the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in November 1943 that there was anything like an international body that could take official responsibility for displaced persons (DPs) in Europe. Torn between the various interests of the leading Allied powers, however, UNRRA's mandate was defined as much by ambiguity as by a forward-looking vision of the reconstruction of European society. On top of competition between Western countries over leadership of the organisation, the reluctance of the Soviets to support UNRRA shaped the latter's capacity to manage DP camps adequately, given its association with the US government which would become its largest country donor, followed by Britain and Canada.⁴⁹

In this unpredictable geopolitical atmosphere, the JLC exploited a moment of unity between the Soviets and the Allied powers just shortly after the collapse of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1941.⁵⁰ Despite old animosities held by Jewish social democrats toward the Bolsheviks, the situation called for the renewal of popular front tactics with the USSR. Between 1942 and 1946, the Canadian JLC worked with the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa and the Polish Embassy in Russia, transmitting donations of clothing, food, and medical equipment through their offices.⁵¹ After the liberation of several European cities by the Soviets, growing numbers of refugees, many of Polish Jewish origin, were in need of aid in DP camps located in Russia. The "Aid to Soviet Russia" campaign represented a massive humanitarian effort on the part of rank-and-file unionists and members of the Canadian Jewish diaspora. The ACWA and the ILGWU, among other garment unions and union locals in Toronto and Montreal, were at the forefront of the Canadian campaign. The Women's divisions in these unions contributed the most in soliciting financial donations from their colleagues and neighbours, as well as surplus clothing from stores and factory warehouses.⁵² General operational costs -- shipping,

⁴⁹ Charles Wesley Sharpe, "The Origins of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 1939-1943" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2012).

⁵⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 102-107.

⁵¹ See Canadian JLC's correspondences with aid workers as well as contacts in the Polish government-in-exile and the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in Volume 7, File 11, 'Aid to Russia Relief 1942' and Volume 7, File 12, 'JLC Aid to Russia War Relief', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵² Rubinstein's recollections in a speech for the 30th Anniversary Banquet of the JLC, 29 January 1966, Volume 3, File 17, 'Clippings, speeches - Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award

storage, and staff salaries, among other expenses -- for the JLC's Russian War Relief reached up to CAD 14,300. The garment unions contributed an additional CAD 3300 in direct financial assistance for the Russian campaign.⁵³

Volunteers piled the rooms of the Workmen's Circle high with heavy coats, vests, blankets, and assorted clothing for men, women, and children. As the JLC's National Secretary at this critical time, Moishe coordinated closely with the Canadian Red Cross and charity organisations like the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire in preparing them for shipment to Russia. The JLC also shipped up to a tonne of clothing per month to the Polish Embassy, which coordinated relief efforts on behalf of those displaced in Eastern Europe.⁵⁴ In 1943 alone, the Montreal branch of the JLC coordinated the shipment of at least 85 crates of clothing (valued at CAD 14,157). At a time of great austerity, workers contributed up to a day's wages in response to such appeals. Through the JLC, their donations reached European resistance movements and organisations providing aid to growing numbers of DPs.⁵⁵

Sensing that the war was reaching its climax, JLC canvassers redoubled their efforts a year later, urging people to donate twice or thrice what they contributed in 1943. Their fund-raising appeals emphasized the success of the European resistance in saving "tens of thousands of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto alone, who are now in hiding, aided by the non-Jewish population."⁵⁶ In 1944, the Canadian JLC would spearhead one of the earliest commemorations of what would only much later be known as the Holocaust. Moving beyond a narrative of Jews as victims, they stressed moments of solidarity between Jews and non-Jews and their joint resistance to the Nazis. The Warsaw Ghetto

Honouree - 29 Jan 1966', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. See also Moishe Lewis' correspondences with the Women's Division of the ILGWU and the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire in Volume 7, File 11, 'Aid to Russia Relief 1942', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵³ Fund-raising appeal entitled "Emergency Appeal For...[followed by a run-down of donations and political activity]," (n. 48)

⁵⁴ Correspondence between the JLC's Moishe Lewis and Margaret Meyer, War Service Convenor, Municipal Chapter of Montreal of the Imperial Order Daughters of Canada, 1 October 1942, Volume 7, File 10, 'Correspondence: JLC and the War Effort 1942', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁵ Fund-raising appeal entitled "Emergency Appeal For...[followed by a run-down of donations and political activity]," (n. 48)

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

uprising was an important theme for these commemorations which doubled as fund-raising events.⁵⁷

Quite apart from the work of the American JLC, the collective contributions of the Canadian unions and Jewish organisations, working through the Montreal JLC, reached into the hundreds of thousands of dollars throughout the war. Increasingly, these donations would be channelled through UNRRA. Possibly an exaggeration, but perhaps informed by the urgent need to raise funds, the JLC was proud to note by early 1944 that they had donated 7.5 tonnes of clothing in a single year, “the largest amount contributed by any organization either Jewish or non-Jewish,” to UNRRA.⁵⁸ Yet for all governments involved in the agency, humanitarian considerations were bound up with international geopolitics and domestic economic interests, as channelling aid to Europe offered a ready market for their goods. While short-lived and underfunded, the UN agency supplied critical aid to those displaced in Europe for the remainder of the war. Canada’s contribution to UNRRA extended beyond financial support, as hundreds of Canadians occupied critical positions within the Agency.⁵⁹

Refugee lists

In the face of the challenges posed by great power rivalries, the JLC attempted to intervene directly in Europe on its own terms. While the organisation continued to channel aid across the Atlantic, JLC members hoped to bring some of their comrades over to North America. In 1939, the NY JLC started drafting a list of socialist intellectuals and labour organisers that would come to be known as “The AFL list” by US immigration officials.⁶⁰ Anticipating the Nazi occupation of France about a year later,

⁵⁷ The Warsaw Ghetto uprising would become the subject of a yearly event hosted by the JLC until the 1970s. See e.g. Volume 25, File 7, ‘Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration 1965’ and Volume 25, File 17, ‘Research Materials: The Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, n.d., 1951, 1953, 1963, 167-1968’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁸ Undated appeal, possibly 1943, likely addressed to Jewish Canadian community and union movement, Volume 15, File 21, ‘Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁹ Susan Armstrong-Reid, *Armies of Peace: Canada and the UNRRA Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 162-184.

⁶⁰ Collomp, *Résister au nazisme* 99-120.

AFL leader William Green prevailed upon President Roosevelt to bring around 1,200 of these individuals into the US.⁶¹

In Canada, their colleagues kept track of the same inventory of names, which went through several incarnations as the war progressed. With the assistance of the AFL and the International Red Cross, the NY and Montreal branches of the JLC jointly suggested individuals to include in the list. In its final version, over half of the names were of French, Polish, and Italian socialists, liberals, scientists, writers, journalists, trade unionists and their families. Many had been captured by the collaborationist Vichy government of France, but some had escaped into DP camps later managed by UNRRA.

The JLC appealed to the humanitarian sympathies of the Canadian government and ordinary Canadians, vouching for the people on their list on the basis of shared values. They emphasized their long history of fighting for democracy and freedom in the “Middle European” countries, a translation of the Yiddish-German term *Mittleuropa*, in reference to Eastern Europe. In the midst of an apparently hopeless situation, the JLC took the long-view, presenting a narrative of solidarity with those who would rebuild Western democracy on the ruins of the Third Reich:

It is in the democratic elements of Europe that lies the great hope for the resurrection of a European democracy after the defeat of Hitlerism. If brought to freedom and safety from extermination, the gifts of intellect, courage and experience of these people will be once more at the service of democracy both here and after the war in their own Countries. Saving them will frustrate Hitler's plan to decapitate Europe by exterminating all his intellectual opponents. Many of them would moreover be very useful, as their training and occupation show, in our War Effort.⁶²

It may be reading too much into such appeals to suggest that there is something necessarily *Jewish* in the way the JLC framed them. Still, the JLC's narratives of solidarity in this period betray a strange sort of optimism, a stubborn hope, even a hint of the messianic, if one can call it that, in the darkest of times. The efforts of the organisation at

⁶¹ Collomp, ‘The Jewish Labor Committee’, 118. See also Michael Rubinstein’s speech for the JLC’s 1963 Banquet which mentions the 1,200 figure on p. 5, Volume 3, File 12, ‘Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree, 2 Feb 1963,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶² Correspondence from JLC Executive to Thomas Crerar, Minister of Mines & Resources, 6 November 1942, Volume 15, File 21, ‘Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

this critical moment, against the backdrop of their people's collective tragedy, would become a key theme mobilised by the JLC in its campaigns in Canada long after the war. But there were also more pragmatic reasons to frame these appeals as they did. Writing in 1942 to Thomas Crerar, Canada's Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, the Department tasked with processing immigration claims, the JLC nevertheless felt compelled to stress that the "most rigorous scrutiny of the record of these men and women proves them to be unquestionable opponents of any kind of totalitarian philosophy."⁶³ If members of the JLC took great pains to emphasize that none of them were communists, they also had to reassure authorities that they were not prioritising their own kin, at a time of tight immigration restrictions against Jews in much of the Western world.

The fact that they succeeded at all in guaranteeing safe passage into North America for many, if not most, of them is remarkable.⁶⁴ Looking back at this moment, it would be another point of pride for Rubinstein that the "majority of those rescued were not Jews. We did not ask them their nationality or ethnic origin -- their passport was their love of freedom and proven service to humanity."⁶⁵ Needless to say, it might have been harder to convince the authorities of the merits of those on the JLC/AFL list had most of them been Jews or had less political prominence in the European Resistance.

Profiles on that list, convey, even in their brevity, a sense of urgency on behalf of comrades stranded in France. Among the Polish Jews was Wulf Weviorka, "noted journalist; former editor of the *Haynt* ("Today"); a Jewish anti-Fascist paper in Paris; in great danger in southern France."⁶⁶ Among the Italian socialist leaders was Pietro Nenni whose life was likewise "constantly in danger; Mussolini's personal revenge may force the Vichy government to deport Nenni into the hands of Italian Fascists at any moment."⁶⁷ Another interesting profile is that of Rafael Ryba, a Polish Jewish knitting teacher and editor of the trade union journal *Facionaire*, hunted by the Gestapo for organising among

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Collomp, *Résister au nazisme*, 99-120.

⁶⁵ Speech delivered by Michael Rubinstein at the 30th Anniversary Banquet of the JLC, 29 January 1966, Volume 3, File 17, 'Clippings, speeches - Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree - 29 Jan 1966', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶⁶ Refugee Lists, undated, Volume 15, File 21, 'Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

workers in the Paris-based Underground.⁶⁸ Moving between New York and Canada between the late 1930s and early 1940s, Ryba would go on to become the Montreal JLC's secretary.⁶⁹

The refugees had shared similar trajectories of exile. Those not captured by Vichy officials or the Gestapo sought refuge in the unoccupied south of France. From there, a few managed to travel to Spain before reaching the main port of exit in Lisbon, Portugal, where an NY JLC representative was stationed. The JLC promised to support the refugees financially upon their arrival in either Montreal or New York.⁷⁰

Dutifully keeping track of the names on the JLC/AFL list, the Canadian JLC was eager to exploit the small window of opportunity that opened right before the full outbreak of hostilities. As the US at this time proved more amenable to immigration of any sort than did Canada, many of them chose to come to New York, before both countries sealed off their borders entirely in 1941.⁷¹ However, it is clear that at least a handful of the refugees like Ryba did reach Canada in the nick of time. Working closely with the CJC which provided financial assistance to what it classified as the "Labour Committee cases," the JLC helped match them with jobs and housing, tapping their networks within local Jewish communities in various Canadian cities – a hospitality later extended to post-war DPs.⁷²

After 1945, the JLC's most important work still lay ahead. As predicted, many who were brought over to North America, especially Italian and French socialists in New York, would move back to Europe, some returning to political life and participating in reconstruction efforts in their respective countries.⁷³ With few exceptions, their Jewish

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ See correspondences in Volume 7, File 23, 'Correspondence JLC 1947', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁷⁰ Correspondence from Michael Rubinstein to Thomas Crerar, Minister of Mines & Resources, 6 November 1942, Volume 15, File 21, 'Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁷¹ A point underscored by Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada. See also David Wyman, *The Abandonment Of The Jews: America and the Holocaust* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

⁷² Correspondence between Saul Hayes, CJC National Executive Director, and Moishe Lewis [cc'd. Rubenstein, Bronfman, and Solkin], 6 May 1942, Volume 7, File 10, 'Correspondence: JLC and the War Effort 1942', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the CJC and JLC's efforts on behalf of Jewish DPs in more detail.

⁷³ Collomp, 'The Jewish Labor Committee'. In their later recollections, Michael Rubinstein and the CLC's Claude Jodoin mention two notable individuals that the JLC had helped bring to America but who had returned to their home countries after the war: Erich Ollenhauer, leader of

counterparts did not fare as well. With the decimation of Europe's Jewish population came the dispersal of an entire political culture. The Polish Bund would not survive the war intact, though its spirit lived on among a few remnants in the diaspora. Shaped by their distinctive ties to Yiddish socialism, those who joined the JLC enriched its organisational life, but there was still the problem of those they had left behind. In the immediate post-war period, tens of thousands of those displaced by the war, an overwhelming number of them Jewish, sought refuge in North America.

The refugee crisis would become even more dire as the popular front, which had allowed for a brief period of international cooperation between social democrats, liberals and Communist parties, collapsed after 1948 with the hardening of Soviet foreign policy.⁷⁴ Jewish organisations like the JLC navigated an even more complex political terrain as relations between the Communist left and the mainstream of the North American Jewish community, further deteriorated in the lead up to Israel's establishment.⁷⁵ The pressures of international geopolitics, compounded by Canada's initial reluctance to take in refugees, did not leave much room for optimism for Jews stranded in DP camps across post-war Europe. Still, members of the JLC, working alongside other organisations, pursued their humanitarian and refugee work well into the 1950s. The next chapters describe these efforts in more detail.

War-torn solidarities

The JLC's history cannot be understood apart from the political formation of its principal organisers in the Jewish left. In this chapter, we turned to the early 20th century, where parties like the Bund in the Pale of Settlement emerged in parallel with an immigrant labour movement among Jews and Eastern Europeans in North America. As a Jewish organisation oriented toward the labour movement, the JLC's diaspora solidarities grew from its roots among Jewish émigrés, whose experiences in Europe

Germany's Social Democratic Party, and Halvard Lange who would become Norway's Minister of Foreign affairs in the 1960s. See Volume 3, File 12, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree, 2 Feb 1963', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁷⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, 6-7; 215-220. See also William Stone, "Communists and Popular Fronts." In *Editorial Research Reports* 1956, vol. I, (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1956), accessed 23 April 2018, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre1956041100>.

⁷⁵ The Soviet Union was contradictory in its support for Zionism in the lead up to the establishment of Israel in 1948 and after. See Avi Shlaim, 'Israel between East and West, 1948-1956', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 4 (November 2004): 657-673.

would inform the solidarities they would later express in Canada. It was therefore something of an organisational hybrid of a trans-Atlantic Yiddish socialism, fostered through the movement of individuals and ideas across continents. The JLC's humanitarian response to the Jewish refugee crisis was, moreover, made possible by its founders' affinity with a socialist tradition whose circuits of solidarity encompassed trade unions in Toronto, Montreal, and New York, as well as political circles in Paris, London, Stockholm, and Warsaw. A more detailed accounting of the JLC's international work and its ties to the European Underground resistance is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.⁷⁶

If the JLC's solidarities were uniquely transnational, the *realpolitik* of the years leading up to, and shortly after, the Second World War nevertheless informed the nature of their humanitarian and political work. Shortly after its founding, the JLC's members were pressured to respond to the demands of war. Their support for refugees and the European Resistance underscores the fractious geopolitical atmosphere within which they expressed their solidarities. For one, popular front tactics with the Communists did not extend to the JLC's decisions over who to bring over to North America. The deliberate framing of the people on their refugee lists as non-communist, mostly non-Jewish, members of the European left was characteristic of the organisation's pragmatism: if only to facilitate the success of their approach to immigration officials who were hardly sympathetic to Jewish appeals. At the same time, the mass campaign to ship aid to the Soviet Union proves that ideological differences were not so rigid as to prevent solidarity across the divide in the urgency of the moment.

This chapter highlighted the JLC's ideological foundations and the complex circumstances that its founders laboured under, early in the organisation's career. The tight balancing act required to respond to the war in Europe foreshadows the nature of its transnational networks, narratives, and practices of solidarity in the years that followed.

⁷⁶ More on this in Collomp's two articles cited in this chapter. Collomp also expounds on the JLC's work with the Resistance in France and Poland in *Résister au nazisme*, 143-237.

CHAPTER 4

The JLC, labour humanitarianism, and the immigration debates in Post-war Canada

In August 1946, Kaplansky was sent to the JLC's general assembly in New York, where colleagues were wrestling with what to do in the war's aftermath.¹ In these early days, the full extent of the Holocaust and the ensuing refugee crisis was far from clear, but the JLC's extensive network in the European left afforded it unique insight into the situation abroad. A Bundist delegation from Poland had also recently visited the NY JLC, bearing news concerning the immediate aftermath of the war in Europe.² In total 20 million people had been displaced, with between 100,000-200,000 Jews stranded in DP camps across the continent.³ They were joined by refugees of all nationalities – close to a million people -- who could not be repatriated to territories later annexed by the Soviets, including Eastern Poland.⁴

From his American colleagues Kaplansky learned that in the previous month, a Pogrom had targeted Jewish survivors in the Polish Ghetto of Kielce.⁵ Over two dozen Jews were killed and many more injured. The Kielce pogrom provoked no meaningful response from the Polish authorities, with the Catholic church blaming Jewish communists for their persecution. Ironically, by the time the Communist Party took over Poland it too began to clamp down on Jewish institutions. Many had entertained hopes of rebuilding Jewish life in Poland, beginning with efforts to find homes for those in DP camps and to retrieve orphans in hiding among Christian families. Instead between

¹ Kaplansky had just been appointed Executive Secretary of the JLC's Public Relations Committee in the previous month. See Letter from Moishe Lewis, JLC Secretary to Kalmen Kaplansky, 15 July 1946, Volume 7, File 22, 'Correspondence: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

² Letter from D. Neiman, NY JLC, to Moishe Lewis concerning March 1946 Bundist delegation to New York, 21 March 1946, Volume 7, File 22, 'Correspondence: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. [Letter translated from Yiddish by Moishe Volf-Dolman].

³ David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews, 1933-1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 776-791.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ "REPORT BY K. KAPLANSKY ON TRIP TO NEW YORK AUG. 6-16, 1946", Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

1945-1946, hundreds of Jews were killed by Poles who feared losing the privileges and property they had taken from them during the Nazi Occupation.⁶

The fact that all this happened less than a year after the end of the war was, for the JLC, only another example of entrenched racism against Jews in Eastern European societies that did not end with the defeat of the Nazis. After the Kielce pogrom, the JLC would be flooded by appeals for assistance to help them immigrate to Canada, as those who “originally intended to remain [in Poland] decided to leave”.⁷

By this time, hundreds of thousands of people had streamed into UNRRA-managed DP camps in Italy, France, Austria and Germany. The latter was divided into four zones, each respectively under the military administration of the Allied victors: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union. Still in a state of shock and limbo, Jews tended to gravitate toward the British and US Zones and did so increasingly after signs of persistent instability in Poland. Conditions in the DP camps were notoriously poor. Underfunded and understaffed, a black market soon emerged, leading to competition and tensions within the camps between Jews and non-Jews, as well as between German Jews and their Eastern European counterparts. With the important exception of UNRRA, the international infrastructure for providing relief and resettlement for stateless refugees was in its infancy.⁸

Initially UNRRA, at the bidding of the military authorities and the Americans in particular, refused to classify Jews under a separate category of DPs, as making ‘racial’ distinctions of this sort reminded them too closely of Nazi ideology. While this was perhaps a well-meaning move, this meant that camp authorities could not distinguish between their special needs and those of other displaced groups, who were classified by country of origin. In practice, lumping everyone together meant those most in need of aid fell into the cracks, and Jews, at any rate, still stood out from other DPs. This was the case not least because for most Polish Jews, paperwork supplied by the Polish government after the war made special note of their religious background, though many tried to hide the fact. For these reasons, Jews relied strongly on humanitarian support

⁶ Cesarani, *Final Solution*, 773-775. See also Judt, *Postwar*, 43.

⁷ Report by Kaplansky from New York (n. 5).

⁸ Susan Armstrong-Reid and David Murray have written a history of Canada’s special role in UNRRA in *Armies of Peace: Canada and the UNRRA Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008).

from local communal and diaspora organisations, including the US-based Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).⁹ But organised Jewish relief efforts were hampered by Allied military authorities, especially those in the British Zone, who associated them with Zionist efforts to promote immigration to Palestine.¹⁰ The Labour government that took power after the war was firm on the policy set out in the 1939 White Paper which discouraged Jews from settling in Palestine, yet at the same time Canada and the United States continued to impose severe restrictions against Jewish immigration to their shores.¹¹

The JLC launched its own post-war humanitarian and immigration campaigns in this difficult context. Working jointly with the NY JLC, the Canadian JLC assisted with the processing of over a thousand visas for Polish Jews seeking asylum in Scandinavia and North America between the years 1945 and 1947.¹² It had forwarded an additional CAD 250,000 to organisations in Poland, in addition to continuing their clothing campaign. As it did during the war, it also sent CAD 13,000 in support of organised self-defence for Jewish activists in the ghettos.¹³

While such efforts were smaller in scale in comparison to those of the JDC, HIAS, or UNRRA, the JLC's networks were unique to the organisation and its members. Their diaspora solidarities in the post-war period are best viewed through their encounters with the North American unions, the Jewish-Canadian community, and the Canadian state.

Union racism and anti-immigrant sentiments

⁹ Yehuda Bauer describes the state of demoralisation among Jewish DPs and the efforts of North American Jewish organisations to ferry relief to Europe's DP camps, while providing other forms of political and emotional support, in *Out of the Ashes: The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Susan Armstrong-Reid and David Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 161-195.

¹¹ The unique challenges faced by Jewish DPs who had nowhere to go were at the forefront of debates internal to the JLC in its early years, which were published to reach the Canadian Jewish community at large. See resolutions on the DP problem published in the JLC's "Report of our Tenth Anniversary Convention -- Nov. 1-3, 1946", article reprinted in the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, 15 November 1946, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹² The JLC arranged for the settlement and housing of several hundred people in Norway, Sweden, France, and Belgium after having obtained 1,500 visas for mostly Polish Jewish refugees, who also sought asylum in the United States, Canada, or Palestine. In "Report of our Tenth Anniversary Convention -- Nov. 1-3, 1946", article reprinted in the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, 15 November 1946, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³ *ibid.*

By 1932, Canadian immigration policy was characterised by a racial schema which essentially barred all migrants with few exceptions. At the top of the hierarchy of ideal immigrants were British and American citizens, as well as white European farmers, lumber-jacks, and miners demanded by Canada's resource-based economy and the efficient settlement of the prairies. As urban-dwellers, by and large, European Jews rarely fit such criteria.¹⁴ While there was some easing of these restrictions in the post-war years, the dominant thrust of government policy, consistent with public opinion, was still toward a racially selective immigration process. By 1947, little had changed, with Canada prioritising farm labourers and agriculturalists under provisions which excluded "immigrants of any Asiatic race".¹⁵

Abella and Troper's critically acclaimed *None Is Too Many* describes the implications of Canada's racialised immigration system for the government's conflicted response to those displaced by the Second World War.¹⁶ The title is a reference to the treatment of Jewish refugees throughout the war. Proving far less open than its southern neighbour, the MacKenzie King government's racialized immigration quotas would earn Canada an unseemly reputation for having the worst record for accepting refugees in the western world. However, apart from a brief note on the JLC, the authors focus mainly on one section of the Jewish Canadian institutional community, centred around the CJC and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), and their relationship with organisations like the National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution (CNCR).¹⁷

While the CJC took the lead in high-level negotiations with Canadian immigration officials, the JLC invested its efforts in the labour movement where it could function

¹⁴ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 198-199.

¹⁵ See especially Provisions 4.a, 4.c, 4.d, and postscript on Asian immigrants in the JLC's copy of Canadian immigration law P.C. 695, which underwent several subsequent revisions until P.C. 1734, dated 1 May 1947, in Volume 15, File 21, 'Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. There would not be significant changes in Canada's immigration policies until after the UN Refugee Convention of 1951. Even then, the Canadian government would only respond meaningfully to new international norms around immigrants and refugees by 1967. See Chapter 6, in this work. See also Marlene Epp who describes critical changes in Canadian post-war humanitarianism in *Refugees in Canada: A Brief History*, Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada Series, No. 35 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2017).

¹⁶ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, see esp. 101-147.

¹⁷ JIAS is the Canadian counterpart of the US-based Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). For the CJC and JIAS' relations with CNCR see *ibid*, 45-51.

most effectively. Its work in this arena was critical as sections of organised labour had traditionally been at the forefront of opposition to foreign immigration. Goutor notes that Canada's exclusionary immigration policy attracted strange bedfellows: bringing together conservative elites and the craft unions, especially those under the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), which was affiliated with the AFL.¹⁸

It is important to situate the TLC's positions on immigration in the context of its time. On the part of organised labour, anti-immigrant sentiments developed within an atmosphere of fear against foreign others who might lower wages and working conditions, outcompete locals for jobs, or be too timid to organise. More importantly, only foreigners of a certain type were deemed incompatible with the Canadian nation-building project which did have need for a growing population -- if only those of properly British, Western or Northern European stock. Nationalist in orientation, unions evoked the exclusionary solidarity of a white working class against "Asiatic," especially Chinese, immigrants since at least the late 19th century. While opposition to Eastern Europeans, including Jews, was less blatant, regional prejudices were quite pronounced. In Montreal, TLC-affiliated union locals signed public appeals against Jewish immigration in the 1890s.¹⁹ Tensions did arise between the union rank-and-file and their leadership who sometimes took a more positive approach to the immigration question. This was, however, always a minority position, even as organised labour tended to target for criticism immigration officials and business interests in need of cheap foreign labour, as opposed to the immigrants themselves. By the 1930s, nativist sentiments reached their height. Submitting to the pressures of the Great Depression, Canada's de facto closed border policy attracted much broader public support.²⁰ During the Second World War, Canada preferred to keep its hands clean, as far as "enemy aliens" associated with either side of the war were concerned. Citizens of Japanese and German descent were targeted for internment on Canadian soil, while the country closed its doors, by and large, to Europe's Jews.²¹

¹⁸ David Goutor, *Guarding the Gates: the Canadian labour movement and immigration, 1872-1934* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 11-35.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 87-115.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 61.

²¹ Patricia Roy, "Internment," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 27 August 2013, last revised 4 March 2015 by Dominique Millette, <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/internment/>>.

At the same time, rapid economic transformations fostered in the context of the war effort enabled the growth of industrial unionism. Like the JLC, some of Canada's major union federations were tied to their American counterparts. Within the TLC, supporters of the American CIO tended to be more politically militant. Internecine strife over which industries to organise, on top of Cold War-inflected purges, led to the expulsion of the latter in 1939 at the behest of the AFL. The changing nature of work demanded new methods for organising workers who felt that they were being deskilled by mass industry. The following year, industrial unions including the United Steelworkers (USW) and the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), would form the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL).²² Founders of the CCL were all members of the social democratic CCF, which supported a more liberal immigration policy -- a political argument much easier to make given the post-war economic requirements of mass industry, especially in the garment sector.²³ This was no coincidence given that the demands, and opportunities, presented by industrial-scale unionism called for unions to organise all workers in the workplace, including immigrants.²⁴

The JLC's early anti-racism campaigns would be among the first attempts to build bridges between unions affiliated with the CCL and TLC. Both federations hosted their national conventions in late September 1946. Eager to get its name across as a key player in the fight against racism within the labour movement, but already burdened with its relief and refugee operations, the JLC was in a manic rush. Kaplansky, by this time the organisation's Executive Secretary, noted that the resolutions that they sought to introduce to the unions had to be "presented on the spot...the display of literature and posters was prepared in a hurry; and the contacts were made in the midst of [sic] busy conventions and will have to be carefully followed up".²⁵ In addition to Kaplansky, the

²² Gregory Healey, *Workers and Canadian History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 345-419. See also Gregory Healey, "Trades and Labor Congress of Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 7 February 2006, last revised 4 March 2015, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/trades-and-labor-congress-of-canada>>

²³ Irving Abella, "Canadian Congress of Labour," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 6 February 2006, last revised 5 February 2014, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-congress-of-labour/>>

²⁴ David Goutor notes that post-war changes in the Canadian economy meant that industrial unions proved far more open to organising immigrant workers in the workplace. See Goutor, *Guarding the Gates*, 212. For further elucidation of the differences between industrial and craft unions, see Craig Heron, "Craft Unionism," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 6 February 2006, last revised 4 June 2014, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/craft-unionism/>>

²⁵ Report by Kalmen Kaplansky, "Report of activities of the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada at the National Conventions of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada held in

JLC delegation to both conventions included the Millinery Union's Maurice Silcoff as well as representatives of the ILGWU from various cities—from Toronto, Abram Kirzner, who was also the JLC's national vice-chairman, Bernard Shane from Montreal, and Samuel Herbst from Winnipeg. But “a large number of non-Jewish delegates gave us their full cooperation,” continued Kaplansky, and marked for special mention TLC President Claude Jodoin, who would later become a long-time supporter of the JLC's human rights campaigns.²⁶ The delegates brought with them French and English-language versions of a special issue of the *Canadian Labour Reports*, a newsletter highlighting progress on racial tolerance within the labour movement, distributed to two thousand trade union officers and the Canadian press. The JLC-affiliated Workers Educational Association also carried copies of a *Tale of Two Cities*, originally published by the American JLC (Fig. 1). The latter emphasized that racism was antithetical to the interests of a united working class while hindering the “development and perfection” of democracy.²⁷



Windsor, September 18-27 and of the Canadian Congress of Labour held in Toronto September 25-28, 1946", Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

Figure 1: Samples of educational material and posters published by the JLC throughout this period, including the back page of *Tale of Two Cities* (left) and a poster printed in New York and distributed by the Toronto JLC through its union contacts in the city (right). Source: Dominique Clément, *Canada's Human Rights History* <<https://historyofrights.ca/archives/jewish-labour-committee/>>

At the TLC Convention in Windsor, the JLC succeeded in drafting a resolution on racial intolerance, which linked European anti-fascism with anti-racism in Canada. After much debate among TLC unionists from across the country, the resolution was passed. In 1944, working closely with JLC members Bernard Shane and Moishe Lewis, the TLC had already established a Standing Committee Against Racial Intolerance. The origins of this committee can be traced back to 1942, when Lewis and the JLC's National Executive had set out to organise, on a broad "non-sectarian" basis, the League for Human Rights to Combat Nazism, Fascism and anti-Semitism. The League had been launched after a tour of both TLC and CCL-affiliated unions in cities across Ontario, Quebec and Western Canada.²⁸ While the TLC was initially hostile toward these Jewish activists, by the end of the war there was a clear shift in sentiment. JLC staff like Shane would be invited into the TLC's Standing Committee when it was chaired by Jodoin.

Being a member, in addition, of the TLC's Committee on Post-war Reconstruction, it would have been easier for Shane to push for another resolution relating to the plight of Jewish refugees. But the existence of opposing resolutions compelled Shane's delegation to water down their language, resulting in a compromise resolution that did not specifically mention the need for Jews, as the group most affected by the war, to enter Canada. Instead, the resolution relied on the generic category of displaced persons and impressed upon the Canadian government "to take humanitarian principles into consideration, when forming its immigration policy".²⁹ It is important to note that it seemed easier to win the sympathy of Canadian unionists for displaced Jews for so long as this did not entail their landing on Canadian shores. At a time when the British government still set the bar high on Jewish immigration and Canada as part of the

²⁸ Correspondence between Moishe Lewis and Maurice Silcoff, Manager of the Millinery Workers' Union, 'Agenda for National Executive meeting of the JLC, 8 May 1942 at the Workmen's Circle, 4848 St Lawrence Blvd', 7 May 1942, Volume 7, File 10, 'Correspondence: JLC and the War Effort 1942', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁹ JLC copy of proposed TLC Resolutions, in Report by Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 25)

Commonwealth still had some say on the matter, the JLC delegation also managed to insert a call for 100,000 Jewish refugees to be allowed into Mandate Palestine – a resolution later approved after being referred to the TLC Executive.³⁰

The JLC succeeded in having all three resolutions passed immediately at a separate CCL Convention hosted around the same time. In a resolution that condemned anti-Semitism and racism, the CCL likewise called upon “the Labour Government of Britain to allow free Jewish immigration into Palestine”.³¹ Complementing a separate resolution supportive of general immigration into Canada, it added an important new amendment to its National Constitution:

The CCL stands unequivocally [sic] for the equality of treatment [sic] regardless of race, creed or colour, and recommends to all affiliated organisations that they oppose discrimination [on] these grounds wherever it may appear.³²

On the “Jewish Question,” framed as such by both union federations, French and English Canadian delegates from the CCL denounced anti-Semitism “in no uncertain terms.” Kaplansky however admitted that it was only with great difficulty that they were able to establish contacts at the Conventions “where the leading people were all busy in group caucuses and party fights.” Still, he noted that their engagement was worth the time and effort, generating publicity for the JLC in the Yiddish and general Canadian press, while “the resolutions adopted and the discussions around them at the Conventions, are of great value to the Jewish Community in Canada.”³³

At its Tenth Anniversary Convention in November of the same year, the JLC invited as speakers both the TLC’s Jodoin and a member of the CCL’s founding executive, Aaron Mosher of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees. Jodoin congratulated the JLC for its patient work with the unions on racism. Mosher, meanwhile, emphasized the nature of Jewish history as one of struggle and solidarity in the face of persecution.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Resolution on Palestine, No. 17 substituting for resolution 251 and 252, adopted by 6th Convention of the CCL, Sept 23-28, 1946, in Report by Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 25)

³² Amendment to CCL Constitution, new Section No. 5, in Report by Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 25). See also Resolution on Immigration, No. 16 substituting for resolutions 245, 246, 247, etc. adopted by 6th Convention of the CCL, Sept 23-28, 1946, in *ibid.*

³³ Report by Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 25).

Quoting liberal Reform Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of Holy Blossom Synagogue who spoke at the CCL Convention, he noted that Jews brought to “the complexity of modern civilisation the prophetic spirit of their predecessors.” For Mosher, this prophetic spirit had been carried into the union movement by Jews who “have developed leaders who have greatly advanced the cause of Labour.”³⁴

Making a clear link between fascism abroad and racism at home, the JLC re-committed itself to the fight against racial discrimination and anti-Semitism in Canada. For ten years since their founding in Canada, the JLC had been thrown immediately into work on behalf of European Jewry. With the end of the war, there would be more time to work on domestic race relations, but the plight of their people abroad remained the most pressing item on their agenda. In the final draft of its 1946 National Resolution copied to Prime Minister MacKenzie King, the JLC reminded the Canadian government of the country’s “moral obligation” to grant those seeking refuge a second chance, “a large number of Jews among them: the most tragic and the first of Hitler’s victims.”³⁵

On the part of the Canadian labour movement, at least, there was greater sense of the gravity of the situation. At the May 1946 Senate Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, months before their national conventions, officers of the TLC and CCL had already called for an easing of immigration restrictions against war refugees of all nationalities and religious persuasions, a point underscored by the JLC in its Resolution:

Along with the stand taken by the officers of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and the Canadian Congress of Labor before the 1946 Senate Immigration Committee, the Jewish Labor Committee of Canada, representing tens of thousands of trade union members in this Dominion... urgently petition the Federal Government to ease the immigration laws of our country. The people seeking admittance into Canada should be offered a chance for a new and freer life,

³⁴ Speech by Aaron Mosher, CCL president, 1 November 1946, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁵ Quoted from a resolution of the National Conference of the JLC in 1946, copied in a letter from Michael Rubenstein to the Prime Minister of Canada on behalf of the JLC, 2 November 1946, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

where their knowledge and productivity will contribute to the growth and prosperity of the country.³⁶

Even so, as evidenced by the intensity of debate over the immigration question within the unions, these initiatives were half-hearted at best. Later projects to reach out to war refugees in the DP camps were driven as much by pure humanitarian concern as by cold-blooded economics. In his later recollections, Kaplansky reflected that they still operated within a social context that was predominantly “white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant... systemic discrimination and endemic prejudice was part of life.”³⁷ The convenience of comparison with their American neighbour south of the border lent itself to a mythology of a raceless society, in stark contradiction to Canada’s preferential treatment for white settlers and the exclusion of Jewish and Asian immigrants.

Uniquely Canadian forms of racism, of course, were evident beyond an exclusionary immigration policy. They also took expression in discrimination against racialised communities in housing, social services, and employment, especially in Montreal and smaller towns in rural Ontario. JLC activists braced themselves to address this reality, believing racism to be antithetical to Canada’s desire to be part of the “community of free nations and peoples”.³⁸ They put forward an alternative vision for post-war Canada as a thriving democracy:

...a country composed of men and women of diverse national origins and religious creeds, many of whom are immigrants from the different countries of the Old World, cannot and will not tolerate any political and economic distinctions based on race, nationality, or religion. We solemnly pledge ourselves to the building of a greater Canada based on the principles of political democracy and economic justice, and part of the community of free nations and peoples.³⁹

Early anti-racism campaigns

³⁶ Resolution of the National Conference of the JLC at its 10th Anniversary Convention, November 1946, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁷ Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2 [time stamp 3:10], Ontario Jewish Archives.

³⁸ Resolution of the National Conference of the JLC at its 10th Anniversary Convention (n. 36).

³⁹ *ibid.*

Between 1945 and 1948, the JLC began patiently working to expand the anti-discrimination campaigns and committees they had introduced to the Canadian unions. Work along these lines began in Toronto and Montreal, later reaching Winnipeg in the Spring of 1946.⁴⁰ The JLC's National Executive prioritised grassroots education on anti-Semitism and racial intolerance, at first with a modest network of local CCF contacts and unionists affiliated with the TLC and CCL. At this time, the leadership of the JLC consisted of Michael Rubinstein as the chairperson, Moishe Lewis as the National Secretary, Bernard Shane as the National Treasurer, J.A. Cherniack and Arbam Kirzner as with Kalmen Kaplansky as the Director. David Orlikow, who would later become the JLC's Director and a federal NDP MP, was appointed field director for Western Canada.⁴¹

By December 1946, the JLC arranged for the first joint conference of union leaders from both federations, in addition to representatives from B'nai Brith and the CJC. Hosted at the Workmen's Circle in Montreal, the conference linked the question of human rights, perhaps among the earliest uses of the phrase, directly with the anti-fascist struggle in Europe and the fight for democracy at home.⁴² No sooner had the dust settled after the war than they realised that the seeds of racial prejudice and authoritarianism could still take root in Canada and its neighbour to the south. Adolph Held, then Chairman of the American JLC, addressed the conference, reiterating the organisation's faith "in the democratic way of life, at a time when totalitarian forces of every shade and description, from the right and the left, are again attempting to undermine the faith of Canadians in political and economic democracy."⁴³

⁴⁰ Joining a thriving Jewish labour movement that had grown in these cities in the years of the Great Depression, the JLC established its headquarters at 4848 St. Lawrence, Montreal, in addition to its offices at 206 Beverley Street in Toronto and 160 Luxton Avenue in Winnipeg, Manitoba. For addresses, see letterheads and correspondences in Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴¹ See correspondences and letter heads, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴² Reports by Kalmen Kaplansky and Moishe Lewis, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴³ Held paraphrased an excerpt from the resolution passed at the JLC's National Conference just the previous month. See Resolution of the National Conference of the JLC at its 10th Anniversary Convention (n. 36).

Held's presence underscores the fact that much like the unions, strong cross-border connections bound the American and Canadian Jewish community through traditional communal institutions as well as individual activists within the Jewish labour movement. Shane himself was sent by the American ILGWU in 1934 to assist with organising local garment unions in Toronto and Montreal, before he joined the JLC.⁴⁴ In their efforts to establish anti-racism committees and curricula for trade union education, the Canadian JLC learned much from their colleagues in America.

Kaplansky took a week-long tour in New York, where he picked up on the American JLC's fund-raising and political methods.⁴⁵ For one, the Canadians adopted something of their American colleagues' covert tactics. To avoid widespread prejudices at the time against campaigns driven largely by a Jewish organisation, the JLC settled for rather innocuous-sounding committees for "human rights" and to "Combat Racial Intolerance," bringing attention to domestic race relations while broadening an earlier, more narrow focus on fascism and anti-Semitism. JLC activists also made the point of foregrounding the role of the trade unions themselves in anti-racism activities – for example, channelling finances that paid for anti-discrimination education through the garment unions and not the JLC headquarters.⁴⁶ In this manner, they adopted what had been best practice for the American institutional Jewish community in doing work behind the scenes to avoid making things appear like an internationalist Jewish conspiracy.⁴⁷

Given their emphasis on union education, they recognised that the first problem was the need to develop educational material specific to Canada. The NY JLC had developed films, radio recordings, reports, and pamphlets which it gladly shared with the Canadian JLC. Yet according to Kaplansky these had "little bearing on the Canadian situation."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 1, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁴⁵ Reports by Kalmen Kaplansky and Moishe Lewis (n. 42).

⁴⁶ Dorothy Dworkin managed some of the JLC's finances for many years. See assorted correspondences on financial transactions between the Canadian JLC, the NY JLC, philanthropists, and the Canadian unions from the years 1945-1960 in Volume 11, Files 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. On the JLC's financial relations with the Canadian unions see also Walker, "Jewish Phase" in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada, 1-29.

⁴⁷ See Frager and Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights", 139-167. The authors underscore the cross-border ties between the JLC, and American and Canadian labour activists.

⁴⁸ Report from New York by Kalmen Kaplansky, 'ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF RACIAL TOLERANCE: Activities in the United States and Recommendations for work in Canada',

In addition, their own material had to be distributed in two languages given “the fact that one-third of Canada's population speak French”.⁴⁹ The bi-lingual *Canadian Labour Reports*, precursor to the CLC's *Labour Gazette*, would become the earliest and main venue for mass dissemination of articles written by the JLC and its labour allies.⁵⁰ The newsletter focussed on race relations and the rights of minorities in a trade union's organisational life. It featured a monthly cartoon called “Labor on Guard,” highlighting the divisive role that racism played in the labour movement.⁵¹ Like many of its publications and internal documents, the JLC commissioned the *Keneder Adler*, whose publishing office shared the same neighbourhood in Montreal, to print the early editions of the Canadian Labour Reports.⁵²

The JLC's persistence saw the CCL officially joining the TLC's existing Standing Committee Against Racial Intolerance in 1948, creating the Joint Labour Committee Against Racial Intolerance. However, neither of the union federations seemed able to offer much in the way of financial support. Shane remarked that the JLC had “always been the first to assume the financial burden for the purpose of combating the evils of racial and religious prejudice in the trade union movement.”⁵³

“The effects of two decades of Nazi hate propaganda are still with us,” he continued, stressing the need for to the JLC to redouble its fund-raising efforts as it struggled to make ends meet while still sending aid to Europe.⁵⁴ Of the Canadian JLC's total income

Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Then-current and former JLC members continued to publish in the Labour Gazette well into the 1970s. See, e.g., “Human Rights – From Concepts to Positive Action: Article by Kaplansky in the Labour Gazette 1972”, Volume 26, File 5, Kaplansky Fonds, MG30-A53, Finding Aid No. MSS 1290, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada. Subsequently referred to as Kaplansky Fonds.

⁵¹ Remarks by Claude Jodoin, TLC Chairman, concerning the launch of the monthly Canadian Labour Reports in ‘*Report of Standing Committee on Racial Discrimination given at the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada Convention at Windsor, Ontario, September 24, 1946*, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵² Correspondences and invoices in Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. See also Volume 11, File 13, ‘Correspondence: Dorothy Dworkin, JLC Toronto 1945-1946’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵³ Speech by Bernard Shane, “The Task Ahead...” republished in “Reports of the 10th Anniversary National Convention of the Jewish Labor Committee of Canada (Montreal, Quebec - November 1-3, 1948)”, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

of CAD 40,000 in 1948 – accumulated through donations from the garment unions, individual donations from members of the Jewish community, and some support from the CJC – 34,000 had been spent on overseas relief operations in the DP camps, channelled partly through the NY JLC. This left only about CAD 4,700 for anti-discrimination work at home and CAD 3,600 to cover administrative requirements and staff salaries.⁵⁵

Despite tight resources and competing priorities, there was some indication that the JLC's efforts had born fruit. Its campaigns pioneered the early fight against racial discrimination within the labour movement. Importantly, they connected Canada's discriminatory immigration system with the issue of racism at home. The organisation's credibility lay in its role as one link in a chain breaking the insularity of Canadian unions and connecting them to events in Europe and elsewhere, and for this the unions were grateful.

As early as 1946, Jean Marie Bedard, the CCL's regional director for Quebec, could remark on the eagerness of their unionists to show "other parts of Canada that French-Canadians are progressive in combatting anti-Semitism and in expressing our desire to help those persecuted because of race or religion."⁵⁶ He stressed that Canada should be obliged to open its gates to refugees out of humanitarian sympathy, and not simply for the sake of the economy or as a quid pro quo for Jewish Canadians who had fought during the war. In this spirit, the CCL leadership in Quebec anticipated well in advance transformations in official discourse on immigration policy among members of the foreign policy establishment.⁵⁷

Yet while they may have won over some of the leading figures of the labour movement, union resolutions and speeches critiquing racism were, for the JLC, not enough. Notably Bedard could not deny the reality of public opposition to non-Christian and non-white

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Untitled News Clipping, from a report on annual Parliamentary debates, 28 September 1946, *The Montreal Gazette*, Volume 7, File 22, 'Correspondence: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁷ Julie Gilmour, "And who is my neighbour?" Refugees, Public Opinion, and Policy in Canada since 1900," in *Canada among Nations 2008: 100 Years of Canadian Foreign Policy*, eds. Robert Bothwell and Jean Daudelin (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009JL), 159-182.

immigration to Quebec, including among Francophone unionists.⁵⁸ Across a wide cross-section of Canadian society beyond Quebec, the war did not bring about a sudden sea-change in racial prejudices, among rank-and-file workers, business owners, and policy makers alike. The JLC was aware that it would take many years of patient work before their efforts could be more firmly established. In the meantime, where it mattered most -- for refugees fleeing for their lives -- Canada still had much to show for.

Labour immigration schemes

In 1948, the Senate continued debating prospects of reforming the country's immigration system. By this time, the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour included individuals who had worked as administrators in the DP camps for UNRRA, and who became vocal advocates for a more liberal immigration policy in the post-war period.⁵⁹ Worth noting are camp directors Jean Henshaw and William Van Ark who stood as witnesses in the Committee on behalf of DPs, especially Jewish refugees, seeking to immigrate to Canada.⁶⁰ Jewish Canadian UNRRAID Ethel Ostry, while not present at the later debates, forged close ties with the CJC and other groups whose work proved essential in pushing for the slow transformation in the government's approach toward immigration.⁶¹

Concerns over DPs and immigration policy intersected with discussions over Canada's international obligations since the end of the war. Federal leader of the CCF and a close ally of the JLC, Major James 'MJ' Coldwell had, as early as 1944, been calling for the country's alignment with UNRRA and international institutions as a safeguard against the reversion to isolationist nationalism that had led to global conflict.⁶² His opinions converged with members of the Department of External Affairs, concerned with Canada's image in the world, and notable military officials like French-Canadian Georges Vanier who had served during the war. Together, these individuals presented a vision for

⁵⁸ A reality which persisted even after Quebec's Quiet Revolution, and well into the 1970s. See David Meren, 'Crisis of the Nation: Race and Culture in the Canada-Quebec-France Triangle of the 1960s', in *Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 228-253.

⁵⁹ Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 323-360.

⁶⁰ Canada, Parliament, Senate, Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour: On the operation and administration of the Immigration Act, etc., *Minutes of Proceedings*, 20th Parl., 29 January 1948 – 11 February 1948, issues no. 1 and 2 (1948).

⁶¹ Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 177-182.

⁶² *ibid*, 31.

Canada as a middle power with an internationalist foreign policy, insisting on stronger engagement with relief and reconstruction efforts in Europe, in line with the country's new commitments under the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which took over from UNRRA in 1947.⁶³

From a less altruistic angle, the post-war economic boom, and rising demand for workers by industry, also presented an opportunity to lower barriers to immigration. The steel, lumber, and paper mill industries were especially willing to tap DPs to address labour shortages. Hugh Keenleyside, who had replaced Crerar as Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, reminded the Committee that last Fall, the Canadian government "had made provision for admission to Canada a total of 20,000 persons from D.P. camps."⁶⁴ In his estimation, the numbers were likely to be much higher than that, accounting for close relatives entitled to immigrate with them. If before and during the war Canada had closed its gates to Europe's displaced when their need for refuge was greatest, now it appeared willing to attract as many of them as possible.

The shift in the state's approach to immigration is understandable both in the context of Canada's post-war economy and its transition away from the British Empire's tight embrace. Canadian officials had received some criticism, especially from their counterparts in Britain, for their reluctance to share some of the burden, alongside other Commonwealth countries in absorbing some of the displaced.⁶⁵ At the time, or so the counter-argument went, the Canadian government had less control over its immigration policy. Now that it could better manage its own affairs, it could embark on a more expansive project of nation-building, which required the growth of its domestic population as well as a more active role in the international community, starting with European reconstruction efforts.⁶⁶

⁶³ "International Refugee Organization," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2 March 2012, last accessed 1 May 2018, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/International-Refugee-Organization-historical-UN-agency>>

⁶⁴ Canada, Parliament, Senate, Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour: On the operation and administration of the Immigration Act, etc., *Minutes of Proceedings*, 20th Parl., 29 January 1948, issue no. 1 (1947): 2-3.

⁶⁵ Britain's critique of Canada's restrictive immigration policies was especially strong after the 1943 Bermuda Conference on Refugees. See Gilmour, 'And who is my neighbour?', 164.

⁶⁶ This was a consistent theme in the 1948 Senate Immigration Debates. See *Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour*, issues 1 and 2 (n. 60).

On the other hand, the prevalence of racial thinking in the Senate debates reflected an immigration system which remained highly selective and tinged with the Anglo prejudices that had been the norm for decades. In a chart presented to the Committee, Keenleyside divided DPs who had arrived in Canada in the previous year by “racial origin.” By late January 1948, in Keenleyside’s estimation, at least 9,000 -- mostly continental Europeans -- had arrived in Canada, and the government expected all 20,000 to arrive in May.⁶⁷

To assuage concerns about the logistics of transporting and resettling DPs, he reassured the Senators that the Department of Mines and Resources, alongside the Department of Labour, had developed a systematic approach to handle the influx of people, through what he called “group labour movements.”⁶⁸ After consultations with unions and employers from the timber and mining industries, immigration officials started testing out the project in 1946. In what was essentially a recruitment drive in the DP camps, several teams representing both labour and management had been sent over to Germany and Austria, seeking prospective workers. Coordinating with Canadian officials based in Heidelberg and London, the IRO facilitated the selection of potential immigrants, who went through a strenuous medical examination process both in the camps and upon arrival in Canada.⁶⁹

In the coming summer, the DPs were to be transported in ships like the *Beaverbrae*, an ex-Nazi vessel recommissioned, and renamed, by Canada as part of post-war reparations to the Allies.⁷⁰ Highlighting the cost-efficient nature of the whole affair, the senators were keen to hear that any surplus immigrants would be avoided by prioritising any relatives of the DPs who were already in the country. “Bulk movement immigrants to industries in Canada,” Keenleyside emphasized, “will be able to get on that ship only if there are not enough relatives of families here available to fill it up.”⁷¹

The geopolitics of humanitarianism

⁶⁷ Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, issue no. 1 (n. 64): 1-4.

⁶⁸ Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, issue no. 1 (n. 64): 7-10.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 238.

⁷¹ Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, issue no. 1 (n. 64): 12. See also Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 247.

It took about two years to select the 20,000 DPs under the Canadian government's early DP immigration schemes. While some senators feared that they were likely to catch radicals with such a broad net, it was taken as given that the selection process had screened out fascists and communists, especially among Italians, Jews, and Eastern Europeans. Interestingly the problem, for some, was not that they would be receiving too many immigrants than the country could practically handle. Rather, it was that the Soviets were getting the lion's share of the best racial type – those of British and German stock. One Conservative Senator urged his colleagues to make peace with West Germany as soon as possible. In the words of Ralph Horner:

If we are going to hold up the peace treaty with Germany and prevent the country from securing any young Germans for this country, Russia is still winning the “cold war” against Canada. I do not think we can get any finer type of immigrant into this country, as they are “displaced persons” in the very true sense of the word. Their country has been given away. The experience we have had with people who employed the German prisoners is that they were a very, very superior type of workman.⁷²

Horner was referring to German-Canadian civilians as well as German prisoners of war (POWs), shipped from Britain and interned by the thousands in Ripples, New Brunswick since 1942.⁷³ Having tested out a labour recruitment scheme on the POWs, a similar formula could now apply to the DPs. Still, it was a matter of some surprise to a few of the senators that Jews now belonged to a category all to themselves.⁷⁴ Given their unique circumstances, by 1948 the IRO had begun classifying Jews by ethnicity in addition to country of origin, unlike most other non-Jewish DPs in the days of UNRRA. For much of the IRO's mandate between 1947 and 1952, there was much ambiguity over defining and distinguishing between displaced persons and refugees. Parliamentary

⁷² Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, issue no. 1 (n. 64): 6.

⁷³ Many German and Austrian prisoners of war (POWs) would be interned in Canada and assigned to fill labour shortages during the First and Second World Wars. See Patricia Roy, “Internment,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 27 August 2013, last revised 4 March 2015 by Dominique Millette, <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/internment/>>. See also David Carter, “Prisoner of War Camps in Canada,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 17 June 2015, last revised 27 July 2015, <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/prisoner-of-war-camps-in-canada/>>.

⁷⁴ Minutes of Proceedings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, issue no. 1 (n. 64): 3-12.

debates over classification raged on in much of the Anglophone world, from Australia to Canada.⁷⁵ Meanwhile it was no secret to the IRO that the Canadian government's immigration schemes tended to exclude Jewish DPs, even as some sympathetic staff at the IRO's Amberg Processing Centre later tried to work around this dilemma.⁷⁶

While no longer so blatant as before the war, Canada's immigration system clearly still ran along racial lines, now reformulated within the parameters of the Cold War. The trouble was that many Polish Jews had been pressed into fighting for the Soviets, and in the ensuing chaos these too were suspected of being communists and consequently rejected by immigration officials.⁷⁷ Those who had escaped to the USSR had an especially difficult time. On the ground, Jewish socialist organisers who fled the Nazis had to grapple, just a few years later, with the Soviet occupation of Poland. Fleeing Poland, in turn, many would find themselves stranded in DP camps, separated from their families, alongside thousands of other refugees, Jewish and non-Jewish.⁷⁸ In the camps, Polish Jews were subject to both racialised treatment as well as the obligation, as Polish nationals, to return to Communist Poland.⁷⁹ While some did so willingly, most preferred to leave for Palestine or North America. For a brief time after the war, Soviet authorities had in fact actively encouraged Jewish immigration to Palestine as part of efforts to compete for influence with the British Mandate. After 1949, however, and amid a wider crackdown on Jewish institutions, it would become much more difficult to secure permits to immigrate out from behind countries now under Soviet rule, especially Poland.⁸⁰ Throughout this time, moreover, Communist Parties in North America had

⁷⁵ Jayne Persian, 'Displaced Persons and the Politics of International Categorisation(s)', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 58, no. 4 (December 2012): 481-496.

⁷⁶ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 252.

⁷⁷ US intelligence reports at the time also suspected that the Soviets had been deploying agents to infiltrate Jewish organisations in efforts to relocate DPs to Palestine and Western countries. The Office of Strategic Services closely monitored the activities of the Jewish Agency (more on the Agency below) and other Jewish organisations seeking to ferry people out of DP camps in Austria and Germany through Project Symphony. See Kevin Ruffner, 'Project SYMPHONY: US Intelligence and the Jewish *Brichah* in Post-war Austria (U)', *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 1 (2007): 33-46. Declassified under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act of 2007.

⁷⁸ Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁷⁹ Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011): 81-119.

⁸⁰ David Engel, "Poland: Poland since 1939," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2011, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Poland/Poland_since_1939>.

taken an anti-DP stance, suggesting that an open border policy by Western powers was a plot to weaken the radicalism of domestic labour movements.⁸¹

It was in the thick of all this that the Canadian JLC, which never stopped keeping track of its European contacts, sought to convince authorities to grant DPs immigration permits to Canada. One list presented in 1949 to Canada's Department of Mines and Resources, partly tasked with processing refugee claims, provides a bit more detail than the lists they organised at the height of the war. Following the convention of its time, the list focuses on adult male figures, mentioning wives and children only in passing. The following profile by one Jakob Laskier is typical of the trajectories of those on the JLC's 1949 list:

... born April 15, 1920, Auto-Mechanic and Driver by Trade, Lodz, Poland; Hanni-Ruzka Laskier, b. December 25, 1925 (wife). He was born in Lodz in 1920; father was a textile-worker. At the age of 6 he entered a Yiddish Kindergarten and afterwards was transferred to a Yiddish Public School. He graduated in 1933 and started working as an apprentice at a Locksmith shop and was taking courses at the Technological Night-School. When the war broke out he fled together with his parents and landed in Krzemieniec [in Western Ukraine]. His father was an adherent of the Jewish anti-Communist Socialist Movement and had difficulties in finding work while Krzemieniec was under Russian control after their invasion.⁸²

The profile notes that when the Germans occupy Krzemieniec, Laskier joins the Partisans or the Underground resistance. Two years later, he joins and fights for the Polish Army until the end of the war. Emphasizing the fact that Jews were again caught in the crosshairs of *realpolitik*, this time among the war's allied victors, Laskier's profile continues:

In 1946 he was released from his Military Service and returned to Lodz. There he was active in the Jewish Anti-Communist Socialist Movement. When the

⁸¹ Frager and Patrias, 'Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights', 160-162.

⁸² JLC Refugee list, Volume 16, File 10, 'Correspondence: Canadian Garment Workers Scheme 1949', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Communists took over control in Poland he was told to liquidate the Socialist Group. He had to leave Poland and escaped to Germany.⁸³

Laskier arrives in 1949 at the DP camp of Feldafing in the American-occupied zone of Germany. By June of the same year, Laskier among others like Ignacy Falk and his family, would be issued immigration permits to Canada.⁸⁴ For many, Montreal and Toronto were only points of transition to New York, though a few went in the opposite direction. Falk would become a JLC secretary in Toronto, an active member of the Arbeter Ring, and a Yiddish writer for the *Keneder Adler*.⁸⁵ The trajectories of these individuals accentuate the real challenges faced by the JLC and the Canadian Jewish community, when they tried to launch their own immigration schemes for Jewish DPs after 1945.

Finding a home for DPs in Canada

In this chapter, we saw how the JLC's diaspora solidarities operated transnationally and worked across multiple scales. Deeply affected by events in Europe, JLC staff reached out to Canadian and American trade unionists, drumming up support for their relief operations across the Atlantic even as they worked to fight racism at home. Exploiting a critical moment after the war when Canada was reconsidering its treatment of immigrants, they made common cause with sympathetic government officials on behalf of Jewish DPs.

At the same time, the JLC had to work to overcome Cold War divides, and an immigration bureaucracy that had little patience for the "rights" of refugees or the

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ As indicated by correspondences during this period between the JLC's William Bambrick and H.U. McCrum of Department of Mines and Resources. See Volume 16, File 10, 'Correspondence: Canadian Garment Workers Scheme 1949', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. It must be stated that portions of the JLC lists are rather scattered between volumes and files in the JLC collection, and it can be a struggle to piece together the names with the JLC's various immigration campaigns, some of them in coordination with the NY branch.

⁸⁵ Letter from W.J. Bambrick, District Superintendent, Department of Mines and Resources to Abram Kirzner, 14 June 1949, Volume 16, File 11, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. It is unclear from the English-language material consulted precisely when Falk arrived in Canada. Several exchanges with Kaplansky clearly hint that he was a Bundist, alongside other JLC staff like Abram Kirzner who came over in the late 1930s. It is more difficult to retrace what became of Laskier. It seems that eventually he moved to Israel after a brief stay in New York. Much of the JLC's correspondences concerning the refugees, especially those between the JLC in New York and Montreal, are in Yiddish.

stateless as such. Indeed, the discourse of the ideal foreign worker, and the cold economic logic that prevailed throughout the Senate debates, make clear that to at least some within the government, Canada's approach to the post-war DPs could not be driven by open-hearted humanitarianism. It is important to stress that such sentiments were never monolithic. Gilmour notes long-running frictions between various branches of the Canadian government, especially those in External Affairs, who carried with them direct experience of the DP camps and preferred a less discriminatory approach, and those tasked with managing immigration and labour relations at home.⁸⁶

Overall, however, domestic considerations prevailed over any inherent rights that the DPs themselves had to leave the camps. There was also a need to manage the domestic response to their arrival, en masse, in Canada. Above all, it was important to ensure that the public, already hostile to most immigrants from Europe at the height of the war, did not perceive them as a threat to local jobs. For so long as unions and employers were on board, and labour unrest could be avoided, then with some discretion, the labour immigration schemes could continue.

⁸⁶ Gilmour, "And who is my neighbour?," 166-169.

CHAPTER 5

“Through the Eye of a Needle”: Jewish DPs and the garment workers’ schemes

Encouraged by the government’s labour immigration schemes, the Canadian Jewish community considered the possibility of developing a similar model for Jewish DPs early on. The problem was that the first teams sent over to the DP camps sought to recruit labour that suited the specific requirements of the mining and timber industries. Those involved in these earlier schemes had excluded Jews almost by default, favouring Eastern Europeans, Germans, and others who had survived the Nazis and had experience as lumberjacks and miners.¹

In Europe’s garment industry by contrast, or so the JLC reasoned, Jews had accounted for a high proportion among workers. DPs who had at least some knowledge of the

¹ Max Enkin, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 24 March 1982, Tape Number AC 132, Ontario Jewish Archives. The preference for finding workers suited to these industries was consistent with the racial biases stated quite explicitly in then-existing immigration law. See JLC responses to P.C. 695, which underwent several subsequent revisions until P.C. 1734, dated 1 May 1947, in Volume 15, File 21, ‘Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

urban trade of tailoring were therefore most likely to be Jews.² Moreover, many of the labour organisers on the JLC/AFL list from the war years had worked in the garment unions.³ The JDC's Paris office had also conducted a survey of DPs which seemed to confirm the JLC's instincts: of the over 200,000 DPs they surveyed, 16% professed some involvement in the "needle trades," leaving a pool of about 38,000 potential candidates for selection.⁴ The fact that Jews were highly represented among garment unionists and industry owners alike in the cities of Toronto, Winnipeg, and Montreal offered an opportunity for their own recruitment scheme. In these exceptional circumstances, ethnic solidarities could prevail over earlier class frictions.⁵

The Tailor's Project

Under the auspices of the CJC, chaired by Saul Hayes, unions associated with the JLC and industry representatives met to organise what they called the Tailor's Project.⁶ For its part, the JLC was again in an ideal position to work around a still hesitant Canadian bureaucracy, having strengthened its networks in both the institutional Jewish community and organised labour over the course of the war. Like the CJC, the JLC had been receiving numerous requests from *landsmanschaften* and other local Jewish organisations to help secure permits for DPs hoping to immigrate to Canada.⁷

To facilitate this process, the JLC proposed a tri-partite arrangement that fielded representatives of unions and business owners. On the management side, among the main characters involved in the planning stage was Max Enkin, a business representative from the Men's Clothing Manufacturers Association of Montreal and a member of the CJC. Enkin worked closely with businesses like the Montreal-based Tip Top Tailors,

² Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2, Ontario Jewish Archives.

³ Refugee Lists, undated, Volume 15, File 21, 'Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 261.

⁵ Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, 'Ethnic, Class, and Gender Dynamics Among Jewish Labour Activists and Jewish Human Rights Activists in Canada', *Canadian Jewish Studies/Etudes juives canadiennes* 21 (2013[2014]): 143-160.

⁶ Max Enkin, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 24 March 1982, Tape Number AC 132, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁷ Assorted correspondence between the CJC, the Canadian Federation for Polish Jews, the Canadian and NY JLC, in Volume 7, File 23, 'Correspondence JLC 1947', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

which agreed to absorb a proportion of whoever would be able to work in their affiliated garment factories and shops. Samuel Posluns, associated with the cloak manufacturers of Toronto, likewise proposed a similar scheme for the city, and offered additional financial support as president of the United Jewish Welfare Fund (UJWF).⁸ Toronto's Jewish industrialists required a bit more finessing, but Posluns managed to overcome their initial hesitations.⁹

The responsibility of ensuring that the garment unions would be on board rested on the JLC's shoulders. It helped, of course, that many of the representatives of ACWA and the ILGWU were Jewish. Yet the concentration of the garment industry in Montreal presented an additional challenge, as it was in Quebec where opposition to war-time immigration had been strongest. The Liberal government under MacKenzie King continued to gauge regional sentiments among French Canadians. The post-war boom in Montreal offered a rare window of opportunity in the administration's later years, though Quebec still preferred Francophone Christian immigrants.¹⁰ The transition to the government of Louis St-Laurent, who sought a more prominent place for Canada in the international arena, raised further hopes on the part of those pushing for a less discriminatory immigration policy.¹¹

The Canadian Jewish community had to pick its way through the new political terrain carefully. In deciding who to bring over to Canada, the JLC recognised that the flow of refugees needed to be checked, as allowing in tens of millions of people all at once could only fan the flames of existing anti-immigrant, and anti-Semitic, public sentiment. Hostility toward foreigners did continue, as solidarity and empathy with "displaced persons" – a concept quite novel for its time – could be felt only by a small circle with

⁸ Documents pertaining to the role of Samuel Posluns and the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, Fonds 31, File 2, 'Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),' Men's Clothing Manufacturers' Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada.

⁹ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 261.

¹⁰ Max Enkin, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 13 April 1986, Tape Number AC 113, Ontario Jewish Archives. See also Meren, 'Crisis of the Nation', 228-253.

¹¹ Louis St-Laurent's experiences in the Department of External Affairs partly explains his commitment to a more internationalist foreign policy as Prime Minister. See Gerald Wright, 'Managers, Innovators and Diplomats: Canada's Foreign Ministers,' *Canada among Nations 2008: 100 Years of Canadian Foreign Policy*, eds. Robert Bothwell and Jean Daudelin (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009): 61-81.

greater knowledge of the situation on the ground in Europe.¹² In Goutor's accounting of the mainstream press, there was still precious little awareness of the true extent of either the refugee crisis or the Holocaust in the immediate aftermath of the war.¹³

Even when devastating images of the DP camps started flowing in, mass sympathy was difficult to maintain. UNRRA's chequered career made things more difficult, coloured as it was by controversies over mismanagement by an overburdened agency, on top of reports of crime and in-fighting among Europe's traumatised DPs.¹⁴ Jews especially were accused of being "infiltrates," competing for aid with DPs of other ethnic backgrounds, as thousands flowed into camps after cases like the Kielce pogrom, with the hope that they would eventually move on to Palestine or North America.¹⁵ Instead by 1947, various governments, especially that of Communist Poland, were intent on repatriating most back to their countries of origin, as part of efforts to repopulate the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. On the part of Western governments that had supplied the most funding for UNRRA, on the other hand, refugees had become a financial burden. The camps had to be dismantled at some point because aid could not be supplied to the DPs indefinitely. At the same time, Jews were not considered a special case requiring a special track for immigration out of Europe, and so most remained at the behest of potential receiving countries like Canada.¹⁶

While the odds seemed stacked against them, the planners of the 'Tailors' Project were convinced that they could appeal to the sympathies of Canadian officials and the general public in a pragmatic fashion, presenting them with a project that could help address any labour shortages in the needle trades. At the same time, they would agree to set limits to the numbers of people Canada could accommodate or absorb. But they would insist on a post-war immigration policy based strictly on domestic economic needs; in other words, one that did not prioritise distinctions between the ethnic or religious backgrounds of the DPs.¹⁷ The message was as simple as it was utilitarian: refugees could become workers in

¹² As noted previously, the term "refugees" did not come into widespread use until after the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. See Madokoro, 'Belated Signing,' 161-182 and Persian, 'Displaced Persons,' 481-496.

¹³ Goutor, 'The Canadian Media,' 88-119.

¹⁴ Cesarani, *Final Solution*, 765-787.

¹⁵ Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 162-185.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada.

the garment industry. If, as they suspected, it turned out that most of them were Jewish, or were the JLC's political kin, then all the better.

The JLC revised the refugee lists they had drafted during the war, with many additions and changes along the way.¹⁸ Jews in the US also quickly received word of the Canadian government's labour immigration schemes. Some of them, frustrated by American deadlock over the DP problem, looked to Canada as an alternative for their friends and relatives still stranded in the camps. The NY JLC office passed enquiries on to their Montreal colleagues. This excerpt from a letter by one Isador Rubin, from Brooklyn, appealing on behalf of relatives soon subject to repatriation to Communist Poland, were of this sort:

Two of my cousins are in a DP Camp in Austria... for 2 years [sic]. Unfortunately they belong to the Polish quota, and though having affidavits from us, they were told that the waiting time still is 2 years and more. The [article from an unspecified Jewish paper referencing the labour immigration schemes] has given us new hope, that we may be able to get them out of the Camp and into Canada.¹⁹

Another letter from Anna Halpern, an ILGWU member in New York, notes that she had "read with great interest the project of bringing displaced persons from Europe to the shores of Canada. I feel lucky to belong to this organization serving always humanitarian aims."²⁰ Halpern also sought to bring her two cousins over from camps in the American Zone in Austria; she was eager to stress that both were "expert man's [sic] tailors." From Toronto as well, the JLC received private requests on behalf of relatives or friends and offers to house Jewish immigrants upon their arrival in the city. Not all were

¹⁸ See, for example, names of individuals in copies of the earlier lists drafted in the 1940s, pencilled out and replaced with new names in Volume 16, File 10, 'Correspondence: Canadian Garment Workers Scheme 1949', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. In the same file, some of these names appear in letters approving their immigration to Canada, exchanged directly between the JLC and Canadian officials in the IRO's Paris office.

¹⁹ Letter from Isador Rubin to Arthur Lerner, Montreal JLC, 22 May 1947, Volume 7, File 23, 'Correspondence: JLC 1947', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁰ Letter from Anna Halpern to Toronto JLC, 11 September 1947, Volume 15, File 22, 'Correspondence: B Shane's Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

in the DP camps, with some hosted by private homes, churches, and charities elsewhere in Germany and Austria.²¹

The JLC and its affiliated unions were receiving such letters from the spring of 1947 up until the winter of 1948. Despite these personal appeals, the JLC could not promise anything, even for those on their own lists. The selection process for tailors in the DP camps allowed for very limited control over who could be considered by potential recruiters assigned to the Tailors' Project delegation. In addition, the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources imposed a "60-40" quota on the tailors' scheme, capping the allocation for Jews at 40% of all potential candidates selected from the camps at the last minute.²² While the figure was later changed to a 50-50 ratio, this posed something of a dilemma.²³ Surely not all of the Jews in the camps had been or could be turned into tailors, even when those most in need of resettlement were Jewish. In practice, these restrictions proved less rigid than they appeared on paper, as the delegation would come to realise when they made their rounds in the camps in the Fall of 1947.

A 'travelling circus' in the DP camps

The JLC's personal ties with government officials facilitated approval for the Tailor's project, officially named the Overseas Garment Workers' Commission. Kaplansky and Lewis maintained close contact with the CCF's MJ Coldwell who, consistent with his support for Canada's active involvement in international humanitarian efforts, lobbied Parliament strongly on behalf of the operation, and organised meetings between the garment unions and immigration officials.²⁴ Samuel Herbst, a Lithuanian Jew who had immigrated from the US and became a labour organiser for the ILGWU in Winnipeg,

²¹ Letter from Jessie Speisman to Toronto JLC, 5 June 1947, Volume 15, File 22, 'DP Camps 1947-48,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²² Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 258-279.

²³ Al Herskovitz, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 19 November 1985, Tape Number AC 111, Ontario Jewish Archives.

²⁴ The CCF and MJ Coldwell's support for the JLC's refugee efforts was evident even during the war. See e.g. Letter from Michael Rubinstein to MJ Coldwell, thanking the latter for facilitating the introduction between a delegation from the JLC and the Minister of Mines and Resources, 10 November 1942, Volume 15, File 21, 'Correspondence: Appeal to TR Crerar Minister of Mines and Resources re Jewish refugees 1942-1943', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. See also Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 31.

established some rapport with fellow Winnipeg local, Arthur McNamara.²⁵ As Deputy Minister of Labour, McNamara oversaw the labour immigration schemes, and approved the delegation – the “travelling circus,” as Kaplansky described their team later – sent to collect DPs in Germany.²⁶

The business representatives Enkin and Posluns left Canada by ship in early August, about a week before the JLC’s Herbst and Shane.²⁷ The delegation’s first stop was Canada House, the office of the Canadian High Commission in London, where they faced significant delays over approval of their clearance for access into the DP camps. It would take at least another week for the labour representatives to be granted temporary military titles and permission to start selecting DPs at last. With time to spare owing to the unexpected wait, Shane paid a visit to another JLC colleague in London – the Bundist and Forverts correspondent Lucjan Blit.²⁸ Blit had been a main point of contact between colleagues working in the DP camps in Germany and those elsewhere in Europe.²⁹ There were others like Bella Meiksin, of the American JLC, who travelled extensively between New York, Montreal, and Paris while coordinating immigration and relief efforts when she was stationed in Munich.³⁰ On top of the Tailor’s Project, the JLC’s international staff continued working to secure visas for thousands seeking resettlement in France and Sweden.³¹

²⁵ The relationship between Arthur McNamara and Samuel Herbst is mentioned in Enkin oral history (n. 6). See also Manitoba Historical Society, ‘Memorable Manitobans: Samuel Herbst (c1892-1960),’ last accessed 4 May 2018, <www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/herbst_s.shtml>

²⁶ Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2, Ontario Jewish Archives.

²⁷ JTA, ‘Delegation leaves for DP Camps to Select 2,500 Clothing Workers As Immigrants,’ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 10 August 1947, Montreal, last accessed 5 May 2018 <<https://www.jta.org/1947/08/10/archive/delegation-leaves-for-dp-camps-to-select-2500-clothing-workers-as-immigrants>>

²⁸ Letter from Bernard Shane to Kalmen Kaplansky, Volume 7, File 23, ‘Correspondence: JLC 1947’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁹ ‘Addresses of our Friends and Co-workers in Europe,’ Volume 15, File 22, ‘Correspondence: B Shane’s Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ In addition to Lucjan Blit and Bella Meiksin, the JLC worked on immigration permits to Scandinavia through its Representative in Sweden. See e.g. correspondence between the NY JLC and Paul Olberg, Jewish Labor Committee of America-Representative in Sweden, 27 May 1947, Volume 7, File 23, ‘Correspondence: JLC 1947’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. For the JLC’s Parisian contacts, see Collomp, *Résister au nazisme*, 99-141.

In London, Shane and Blit “spent some time walking around the streets looking at the destruction the Hitler bombs have created.” The ruins, Shane added in a letter reporting back to Kaplansky, “made a terrible impression upon me.”³² When the team finally arrived in Germany on 22 September, he later drew an interesting parallel with Hanover in the British Zone. The German city was still recovering after intense bombing raids by Allied forces:

I shall only say that after seeing Germany the London bombings were only child’s play. One can walk for miles and not find a house that was not bombed and the sights while walking the streets are frightening. About the German economy also a few words. It is forbidden to deal with the Germans, neither is it permitted to give them money as tips or presents. The best tip a waiter can get is a cigarette.³³

Shane’s observations of Hanover only highlight the general situation at the time even for German citizens outside the DP camps. In these conditions, Jewish DPs in particular had few opportunities for long-term integration. Left to their own devices, many had set up their own political organisations within the camps, while joining in an illicit trade in cigarettes and relief goods. This trade was by no means limited to Jews, although they were characterised unfairly as spearheading the black market that had naturally emerged amid the stagnating conditions of camp life.³⁴ In 1947, the ports allowing for full transport of relief goods into Germany had only recently been opened.³⁵ Military authorities, American diaspora organisations like the JDC, and the IRO wrangled over the management and allocation of aid to the DPs. Shane would not have been unfamiliar with the challenges faced by the IRO during the transition from UNRRA, including budget cuts and an overhaul of its staff. But given that much of the JLC’s aid had been delivered from a distance, it was his first time to witness the plight of the DPs up close. It was clear that without the independent efforts of the JLC and the JDC, which supplemented the rations of Jewish DPs in camps across Hanover and other German cities, the situation would be even worse. Little wonder so many wanted to leave the camps, and Europe altogether, as soon as possible.

³² Letter from Bernard Shane to Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 28).

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 177-181.

³⁵ Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*, 208-209.

Before Shane's Canadian delegation arrived in Hanover, they had spent a couple of days in the city of Frankfurt with the IRO's local staff in the US Zone. They received instructions as to proper procedures for selection while planning for the labour immigration schemes that were still in the pipeline. After negotiating with the IRO staff, the delegation agreed to draw up to 500 DPs from the British Zone, of which 300 could be Jews. From the US Zone, they could recruit 400 potential Jewish tailors and 224 non-Jews. DPs in the Austrian camps were divided along similar lines.³⁶

The more flexible quota reflected the actual proportion of Jews who were in the camps. On the part of the IRO, the incentive was strong to find any means to better manage the problem of Jewish DPs, as staff struggled to solve the influx of Jews and balance the numbers of DPs between camps. It was understood that not all were concentration camp survivors or their relatives, but rather had fled persecution in Poland well *after* the war.³⁷ But by this time, it had become nearly impossible to distinguish between them. For some months Jews had been flowing into Hanover from Bergen-Belsen, a German military base close to the infamous death camp, which had been converted into a DP camp after its liberation by British and Canadian forces.³⁸ The delegation visited Bergen-Belsen, where in Shane's opinion provisions seemed adequate, though they faced a chaotic situation with in-fighting among traumatised DPs. At the time of writing, about 7,000 Jews were still in Bergen-Belsen and were eager, at the very least, to transfer to Hanover after having heard of the delegation's visit.³⁹

It was in Hanover that the real work began of sorting through the DPs for potential tailors. Much of it was a process of random selection, and much was in the hands of the British authorities in charge of the camps who took the DPs out in batches. For the delegation, the selection process presented a moral quandary. "Imagine the situation," Enkin would later recall, "500 people would go to the examination centre... and we were only allowed to select 15-20 people. You found yourself like a god, that you [can tell

³⁶ Letter from Bernard Shane to Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 28).

³⁷ A series of pogroms convinced many to leave as noted by Kaplansky in "REPORT BY K. KAPLANSKY ON TRIP TO NEW YORK AUG. 6-16, 1946", Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. See also Dariusz Stola, 'Jewish emigration from communist Poland: the decline of Polish Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust,' *East European Jewish Affairs* 47, no. 2-3 (2017): 169-188.

³⁸ Mark Celinscak, *Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

³⁹ Letter from Bernard Shane to Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 28).

people] you can go, but you have to stay.”⁴⁰ Although they tried to be as even-handed and objective as possible, Shane, like the others, referred to the lists they had brought with them, hoping largely in vain to find cousins, friends, or comrades. “Few had been left unaffected,” continued Enkin, by a tragedy that affected so many to such a personal degree.⁴¹

Shane and Herbst gave last-minute lessons in tailoring to those who showed the most promise. After a week, the criterion for acceptance was simply to be able to hold a needle in one's hand. In most cases, the delegation picked names as in a lottery. The elderly and infirm had to be turned away, as the medical examination process was out of their hands. So much was left to chance, that for the few who were selected it was like passing “through the eye of a needle.”⁴²

As for the quota on Jewish tailors: while they had accepted it in principle, in practice the realities of the selection process urged members of the delegation to play a little loose with the numbers. Meanwhile in Ottawa, garment industry representatives through the CJC continued to pressure immigration officials about the need for labour, so that they raised the number of total possible recruits under the scheme, of which Jews could now account for up to 60%.⁴³ Ultimately, however, the sheer complexity of the operation, including the difficulty of finding non-Jews willing to enter the garment industry, prevailed upon everyone involved so that Jews accounted for nearly all those they selected in the Tailor's Project, and in later immigration schemes.⁴⁴ In this both the JDC and the IRO staff likely had some hand, as they had been involved in the pre-selection of candidates screened by the delegation.

It was one thing, after all, for the Senators of Ottawa, so distant from the problem at hand, to argue over a labour recruitment scheme for DPs ticked off on an ethnic balance sheet. It was quite another to encounter them first-hand and be held responsible for selecting only a handful among them. The relationships forged between the Jews present in the delegation and the immigration officials tipped the scales in favour of a more

⁴⁰ Max Enkin, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 24 March 1982, Tape Number AC 132, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 2, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada.

⁴³ Enkin oral history, AC 113 (n. 10)

⁴⁴ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 265-269.

lenient approach. Despite some having initially “stuck to the letter of the law,” after a few weeks, many brushed aside their bureaucratic scruples, and there is little indication that the delegation strictly followed the 50-50 quota for the Tailor’s Project.⁴⁵ Reporting from Vienna by the end of October, Enkin confirmed that well over half of those they selected were Jewish. “When the selection team returns to Canada,” noted a CJC update on the delegation’s activities, “it will report to Mr. McNamara [Deputy Minister of Labour] that the percentage ruling will have to be changed”.⁴⁶

This is confirmed by oral accounts by the Jewish representatives involved in the project, recorded well after the events described. In their respective interviews, Kaplansky and the trade unionist Al HersHKovitz note that officials who were directly involved in the selection process became much more flexible after having seen the camps for themselves.⁴⁷

Selections and rejections

By the end of October, the delegation had selected at least 3,000 DPs. They expected DPs associated with the project to start arriving in monthly batches until the next spring, disembarking on the *Beaverbrae* and the *S.S. Sturgis* at the Port of Halifax, and moving thence to Toronto or Montreal.⁴⁸

As the delegation counted only individual female and male adults, the actual figure could have been as many as 6,000, when accounting for partners and children.⁴⁹ The immigration rules allowed for a maximum of up to two children per couple, with the exception of the first batch of DPs expected to set sail in late November. Arguing that there was a shortage in housing to host most of them upon arrival, Canadian officials

⁴⁵ Kaplansky oral history (n. 42).

⁴⁶ Phone interview transcript with Enkin, 28 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁴⁷ See Kaplansky oral history (n. 42) and HersHKovitz oral history (n. 23).

⁴⁸ Private Memo circulated by the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, “RE IMMIGRATION OF TAILORS,” 17 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁴⁹ The actual figures could not be confirmed until the DPs had set sail for Canada. See Memo from W. Friedman and A. Eaton of the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, 21 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives. See also HersHKovitz oral history (n. 23).

restricted slots to single adults and families with pregnant women.⁵⁰ In addition to those screened out “for political reasons,” the team anticipated they would deny a further 900 individual DPs and their families entry into Canada, on account of tuberculosis.⁵¹

Shane and the others expected these rejections and had for this reason listed down about a thousand more individuals than they were technically authorized to select. Their fears proved well-founded. Responding to a unionist in New York who sent a belated appeal for his relatives a few months after their return, Shane confessed that they could not help anyone beyond those they had already selected. He added that even those who were chosen were required to go through the regular screening process in which “hundreds...have been rejected for medical or other reasons and there too we are helpless, since it is not in our power to change the decision of the medical examiner, or even the security officers.”⁵²

The main obstacle, it turned out, lay not with the immigration officials who had gone with the delegation, but among the officers stationed at the IRO’s Amberg Resettlement Centre and their higher-ups in Ottawa who insisted, without stating so explicitly, on the quota. Medical examiners were particularly ruthless in denying visas even to those who had been hand-picked by the delegation and had reached official processing centres in Paris, Rome, and London.

The first batch of DPs supposedly selected by the Tailor’s delegation would not include any Jews at all. A letter from a commissioner associated with the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources attempted to clarify:

We have today received a cable from our Canadian Government Immigration Mission Headquarters at Heidelberg advising that the reason there were no Jewish garment workers on the present sailing of the S.S. “Sturgis” is because 27

⁵⁰ Letter from Jacqueline Feltingoff, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, to Bernard Shane, ILGWU-Montreal, 11 November 1947, Volume 15, File 22, ‘Correspondence: B Shane’s Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵¹ Phone interview transcript with Enkin (n. 46). See also News clipping, ‘Canada to Receive 2,279 DP Workers for Needle Trades’, *Daily News Record*, 6 November 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁵² Letter from Bernard Shane to Louis Hyman, Local # 9 of the Cloak & Suit Tailors Union [affiliated with the ILGWU], 20 February 1948, Volume 15, File 22, ‘Correspondence: B Shane’s Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

of this race from Amberg Camp which were earmarked for this vessel were being held for a recheck of x-ray and blood check which had not been completed prior to the ship's sailing. It was necessary to replace this group by others at short notice whether they were Jewish or otherwise.⁵³

It is likely that Jews were replaced with people selected from the other immigration schemes that sought farmers, lumberjacks, and domestic workers. A Canadian government circular, still making its rounds around the camps at the time, explicitly excluded Jews from recruitment to these sectors. "Both of us know that a lot of headaches are connected with the Canadian affair," wrote the NY JLC's Lazar Epstein to Shane as he urged his colleagues to put more pressure on Ottawa.⁵⁴ "Letters about discrimination are flowing in every day," and for Epstein there was "no doubt that the attitude towards the Jewish tailors is stricter and more rigid than with the non-Jews."⁵⁵

Between Palestine and Canada

For Shane, sorting out rivalries among Jewish organisations presented as thorny a dilemma as the Immigration Branch. On top of the JDC, Orthodox and other religious organisations thrived in the camps alongside Zionist organisations across the spectrum. From the Socialist *Hashomer Hatzair* to the far-right revisionists in *Betar*, Zionist representatives had stepped up their recruitment drive for potential immigrants to Palestine. In the diaspora, Zionists organised themselves under the larger umbrella organisation of the Jewish Agency.⁵⁶

Zionist youth were strongly represented in the camps and had taken up leadership positions in some of the independent groups that had formed after the war. Amid mass demoralisation over an uncertain future, DPs had turned to the kind of self-organisation to which they had grown accustomed as a way of surviving the Nazi period. But the war had marked a shift in Zionism's fortunes. Zionists proved ready to pick up the reins in places where their competitors in the Bund and other diaspora nationalist groups were

⁵³ Letter from C.E.S. Smith, Commissioner, Department of Mines and Resources-Immigration Branch to Norman Genser, Barrister-Montreal, 6 December 1947, Volume 15, File 22, 'Correspondence: B Shane's Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁴ Letter from Lazar Epstein, NY JLC, to Bernard Shane, 7 January 1948, Volume 15, File 22, 'Correspondence: B Shane's Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*, 193-236.

no longer present. They urged communal solidarity on behalf of a Jewish national home. Much like the JLC, Zionist organisations ferried relief to their own members and supporters, but by this time they had significantly more resources and sympathy among the DPs. As a sign of Zionism's entry into the political mainstream within the diaspora, leaders of American Jewry under the JDC, and the CJC's counterparts in the American Jewish Committee (AJC), had at first viewed Palestine as a solution to Europe's Jews with some ambivalence, developed a tight working relationship with the Jewish Agency. Together they set up hospitals and schools in and around the DP camps, while training teachers in both Yiddish and Hebrew.⁵⁷

Meanwhile the *Haganah*, the Zionist paramilitary organisation that had been involved in armed self-defence in the *shtetls*, now managed covert immigration to Mandate Palestine despite the British blockade. Just a couple months before the Tailor's Project delegation left for Germany, an international scandal broke out over the *Exodus*, a ship commissioned by the *Haganah* transporting over 4,000 Jewish DPs bound for Palestine. British authorities used brute force in turning the DPs away as the *Exodus* entered the port of Haifa, transferring them onto three prison ships before disembarking them in Hamburg. As the DPs were herded into temporary transit camps, the IRO and Jewish organisations struggled with the sudden influx of people, even as the British threatened the expulsion of the JDC from the British Zone.⁵⁸ To the Canadian delegation, the incident would have recalled uncomfortable memories of their own government rejecting Jewish asylum-seekers on board the *St Louis* in 1939, over half of whom perished during the war.⁵⁹

Escalating tensions between Palestine's indigenous Arab population and European Jewish immigrants -- on top of terrorist tactics by the *Irgun* which split from the *Haganah* -- only hardened attitudes on all sides.⁶⁰ Former Canadian UNRRAIDs expressed concern at what they saw as a rather dehumanizing attempt to use DPs as a bargaining chip for Zionism's political ends. Elizabeth Brown, who managed UNRRA's Jerusalem

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Cesarani, *Final Solution*, 776. See also Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*, 229.

⁵⁹ Eli Yarhi, "MS St. Louis," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 14 September 2015, last revised 18 April 2017, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ms-st-louis/>>

⁶⁰ Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009): 13-14.

office until 1947, had little sympathy for the Jewish Agency.⁶¹ The Agency had issued thousands of certificates of immigration to Jews who had made their way to Palestine during the war. Many of these overlapped with those granted by British Mandate authorities who belatedly allowed certificates to be issued to 200,000 Jews from countries involved in the war after 1945.⁶² The certificates were non-transferrable, adhering to the requirements of the 1939 White Paper which limited immigration to Palestine. Paradoxically, this also prevented those who wished to do so from returning to their home countries in Europe. Austrian and Greek Jews hosted by UNRRA camps and the Mandate government found themselves again in limbo. The Polish Jews posed a special problem, as they were roughly split between those who would rather return to Poland and those who feared the Polish Soviet government's repatriation scheme -- but preferred to settle in North America.⁶³

Against the backdrop of negotiations by the newly-formed United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), where Canada had a seat, few seemed to have a handle on this political pressure-cooker. Under the auspices of UNSCOP, several British and American commissions of inquiry had surveyed conditions among Jews in DP camps scattered across Europe and the Middle East. It seems, in retrospect, far too easy to assume that a world which sought relief from the refugee crisis would find a ready-made solution in the November 1947 UN General Assembly for the partition of Palestine.⁶⁴ The refugee problem doubtless played a role in the minds of governments like Canada's which voted in favour of partition while never truly lifting its own immigration restrictions against Jews until after the fact.⁶⁵ Even so, it is difficult to deduce the intentions of states from a series of disparate facts. What cannot be denied is that the rapid pace of events took an emotional toll on the DPs and the JLC, as well as other diaspora organisations and humanitarian agencies on the ground who, while trying to steer clear of the tussle over borders and immigration quotas, found themselves caught up in the wheels of global geopolitics.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Brown's private diaries are revealing of such sentiments on the part of Canadian UNRRAIDS. See Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 149-160.

⁶² *ibid*, 150.

⁶³ Stola, 'Jewish emigration from communist Poland,' 169-188. See also Armstrong-Reid and Murray, *Armies of Peace*, 349-350.

⁶⁴ Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel*, 14-17.

⁶⁵ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 275-285.

In all this the JLC tried to find some middle ground. At its 10th Anniversary National Convention, for example, it condemned “brutal acts of terror perpetrated by the terrorist groups [the Irgun]... a tragic misfortune for Jewish people” even as it supported a decision by the Workmen's Circle for the “launching of relief activities on behalf of the survivors of the Hitler regime now in Palestine.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, in this sensitive time hard-line Zionists had support from more right-wing elements within the Canadian Jewish diaspora, who insisted that the garment workers’ project would be a distraction from efforts to help establish a viable population for the new state of Israel. In their view, the Jewish DP problem was an “Israeli problem,” according to Kaplansky, and “treated as if they were synonymous.”⁶⁷ It is instructive to recall that the JLC was itself involved in lobbying the Canadian government to push for the entry of tens of thousands into Palestine – a position that had the support of both major union federations and made logical sense given the reality of public sentiments toward Jewish immigration into Canada.⁶⁸

An October 1946 Gallup poll surveyed whether the country should absorb Jewish refugees who had attempted to enter Palestine under the noses of the British authorities and were now locked up in the Mandate’s internment camps. Across sectors and regions, the survey revealed very little sympathy for their cause on the part of over half (61%) of the Canadian population. Less than a quarter approved of lifting immigration restrictions, while the rest were undecided or qualified their responses with the proviso that Jewish refugees “should be allowed in only if all other possible solutions to the problem had been tried in vain.” Opposition was highest in small rural towns. By province, an overwhelming 76% of Quebecers opposed admission of refugees of any sort, who might have received a slightly more positive reception in British Columbia. The Canadian Institute of Public Opinion commented on the irony of their findings, given that just a year before, “a sizeable majority of those with an opinion on the subject thought they

⁶⁶ “Report of our Tenth Anniversary Convention -- Nov. 1-3, 1946”, article reprinted in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 15 November 1946, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶⁷ Kaplansky oral history (n. 42).

⁶⁸ Chapter 4, in this work.

should be allowed to settle freely in Palestine.”⁶⁹ At best, most Canadians were ambivalent on the matter.

On the part of the DPs themselves, the delegation’s encounters with those in the IRO camps further complicate assumptions that there was any overwhelming consensus on Palestine as Bauer, among other historians of the period, contend. Shane refers to this in his observations of many of the Jewish DPs they met, for whom it made “no difference...where they go, and that is in contradiction to the statements made by the Jewish administration of the camp which is completely in the hands of the Zionists.”⁷⁰

In November, Shane would receive an interesting letter from Jacqueline Feltingoff who was then employed by the JDC to oversee resettlement efforts at Bergen-Belsen. Eager to prove her Bundist credentials and win Shane’s trust, she referred to him as a comrade she had first met in America in relation to the JLC, where she had been a member of the National Executive. Like Lucjan Blit and many of the JLC’s colleagues, Feltingoff shared the usual circles as a long-time member of the Workmen’s Circle and as an associate of the *Forverts*.⁷¹ She had heard about “Shane’s lists” in the JDC’s Paris office and in Bergen-Belsen. The “Bundist Comrades” had approached her on her first day at Belsen, and were sorely disappointed that they, indeed like all the Jews the delegation had selected, had been excluded from the first batch of DPs to set sail for Canada. The official excuse was that some of the Bundists were not tailors, although Canadian officials had clearly included on the first trip people who were neither tailors nor Jews. The interventions of the other JLC associates in Europe, including Bella Meiksin and Nathan Gierovitz, did not move the officials and they trusted Shane to intercede on their behalf:

They think of you as a "Moishiach" [messiah]. These fine, simple Bundists are chafing at the bit, and cannot wait to "escape," complaining of discrimination [Feltingoff had crossed out the word 'persecution'], due to their being such an

⁶⁹ News clipping, “Gallup Poll of Canada: Canadians Oppose Taking Some Interned Palestine Refugees,” *The Montreal Daily Star* [data from the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion], 2 October 1946, Volume 7, File 22, ‘Correspondence: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁷⁰ Letter from Bernard Shane to Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 28).

⁷¹ Letter from Jacqueline Feltingoff, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, to Bernard Shane, ILGWU-Montreal (n. 50).

inconsequential minority in the camp, and one can easily appreciate their feelings in the matter.⁷²

The Bundists planned to leave on the second trip that would depart in December or January. While it is unclear whether they ever managed to do so, the nature of Feltingoff's letter is indicative of the political controversies and emotional struggles of that moment. It is oddly sprinkled, almost coded, with nostalgic Yiddish phrases while at the same time impressing upon Shane to keep her appeal to him discreet: "it's not necessary to ask you not to publicize my own connection with this matter, for reasons which are obvious." Feltingoff's reasons for discretion stemmed from present divisions within the Jewish community. The Bundists in the DP camps constituted "a small, weak group, who, on their own, cannot be very effective."⁷³

Zionism, as did Bundism and other movements in their pre-war heyday, now provided more than anything, some sense of direction and communal solidarity, as Jewish DPs – many of them immediate survivors of the Nazi prison camps -- struggled with high rates of depression and suicide from their traumatic wartime experiences.⁷⁴ The JDC, as did IRO staff, shared the JLC's enthusiasm for the Tailor's Project precisely because it could raise morale among them.⁷⁵ Indeed for the rest of their trip, the JDC and the IRO had wanted the delegation to tour as many camps as possible. It was a Canadian representative of JIAS, Matthew Ram, who shuttled the team across Germany in a rusty Volkswagen.⁷⁶ Ram would later be appointed by the CJC as its chief liaison officer in Europe for succeeding immigration schemes patterned after the Tailor's Project.⁷⁷ On the part of leading figures within the CJC, moreover, there was little opposition to supporting immigration to Canada. The situation in Palestine was still far from stable, making it hardly the most attractive option for Jewish DPs who might otherwise better

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Margarete Myers Feinstein, 'Jewish Women Survivors in the Displaced Persons Camps of Occupied Germany: Transmitters of the Past, Caretakers of the Present, and Builders of the Future,' *Shofar* 24, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 67-89. Feinstein recalls various means taken by DPs, including political organization, to cope with life in the camps.

⁷⁵ Enkin oral history, AC 113 (n. 10).

⁷⁶ Enkin oral history, AC 132 (n. 6).

⁷⁷ See Phone interview transcript with Enkin (n. 46) and Telegraph from Enkin to Genser mentioning Matthew Ram, Fonds 31, File 2, 'Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),' Men's Clothing Manufacturers' Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

adjust to life in Montreal or Toronto with the support of an established institutional community as well as distant friends and relatives.⁷⁸

Bridging divides through the Furriers' Project

The last members of the Tailor's Project delegation left Europe in late November.⁷⁹ By this time the JLC was already involved in planning for their next immigration schemes through which they hoped to include some of those they had left behind. Cooperation between the JLC and its affiliated unions, the CJC, and JIAS extended to these subsequent initiatives that would come to be known internally as the Furriers', Dressmakers', and Millinery Workers' projects.⁸⁰ Officially, they continued to operate under the auspices of the Overseas Garment Workers Commission until well after 1950.⁸¹ Each one adopted the tripartite model which saw industry owners and unions working in tandem with immigration officials.

Of the three immigration schemes launched until the Summer of 1948, the Furriers' initiative provides the best window into the JLC's involvement in building solidarity within the Jewish community and a labour movement fractured by Cold War divides. Planning started soon after the Tailor's delegation returned to Canada, with the Fur Trade Association of Canada taking the reins on the part of industry. To represent organised labour, the JLC put forward Al HersHKovitz of the International Fur and Leatherworkers' Union (IFLWU), or the Furriers' International, and Max Federman of Toronto's AFL-chartered fur workers' union.⁸²

The fact that the two managed to work together is significant given that conflict between both unions ran deep.⁸³ The Furriers' International had for some time been associated with the American Communist Party and was no stranger to anti-Communist purges. In

⁷⁸ Kaplansky oral history (n. 42) and Letter from Bernard Shane to Kalmen Kaplansky (n. 28).

⁷⁹ Correspondence, Fonds 31, File 2, 'Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),' Men's Clothing Manufacturers' Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁸⁰ Kaplansky noted that the Tailor's Project became a model for the later schemes. See Kaplansky oral history (n. 42).

⁸¹ See JLC's correspondence with government officials in Volume 15, File 22, 'Correspondence: B Shane's Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸² HersHKovitz oral history (n. 23).

⁸³ A point raised by HersHKovitz himself in *ibid*.

1938, Federman and several members of the IFLWU's Toronto-based union local separated from the Furriers' International, later affiliating itself with the AFL – the only branch of the IFLWU in a North American city to suffer such a split.⁸⁴ The Furriers' International retained a presence among union locals in Winnipeg, Montreal, and Toronto where HersHKovitz was an organiser. As a long-time member of left Poale Zion, Federman also happened to be among the few labour Zionists in the JLC, which would have pit him ideologically against HersHKovitz who at the time still identified as a Communist. Federman, alongside Harry Simon who was briefly associated with the JLC in its later years, would lead the Ber Borochoy movement in Canada which rallied support for what would become the Histadrut, Israel's national trade union federation.⁸⁵ Zionism and Palestine were major points of contention among Jews involved in the organised left. For it was not until after 1948 that the Soviets and their North American supporters or direct affiliates took a more favourable position toward Israel, before veering again in the opposite direction for the duration of the Cold War.⁸⁶ Another divisive issue was the post-war breakdown of the popular front, with the Communists now condemning liberals and social democrats as “social fascists.”⁸⁷

Despite this, Federman and HersHKovitz shared the trajectory of that earlier generation of Jewish unionists who immigrated directly from Eastern Europe to Canada in the 1920s, later joining the JLC once it had been established. It is interesting to note that for Federman, at least, his Zionist affiliations were not carried over from the old country. His first exposure to union organising was in Germany, where he had worked as a coal miner for a few years after leaving Poland with his father. His political sympathies, however, only developed upon his entry as a young man into an already established Jewish labour movement in Canada. In his later recollections, Federman mentions that the core of Jewish life in these early years was so closely attached to the labour movement that the two were almost indistinguishable. From his point of view, “the

⁸⁴ Joan Sangster, ‘Canada's Cold War in Fur,’ *Left History* (Fall/Winter 2008): 10-36.

⁸⁵ The Ontario Jewish Archives hosts a collection of material from the Poale Zion and the Ber Borochoy movements, and the JLC's intersections with labour Zionism and Joseph Salsberg (after the latter's split from the Communists) between the late 1960s and mid-1970s. See Joseph Baruch Salsberg fonds 92, 2010-4-1, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁸⁶ Shlaim, ‘Israel between East and West, 1948-1956’. For the Canadian context, see also Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur*.

⁸⁷ Max Federman, Oral History Interview with Ben Schneider, 19 March 1976, Tape Number AC 149-AC 150, Ontario Jewish Archives.

whole Jewish community [was] involved in the labour movement – furriers, tailors,” and was concentrated in “Spadina Avenue, where 95% were Jewish in these industries.”⁸⁸

The full accuracy of his perceptions aside, his life-long commitment to the union movement cannot be doubted. During the years of the Great Depression and right before the war, he shared in the struggles of the fur unions which were central in winning such basic reforms as unemployment assistance, a reduced-hour work week, and important labour relations legislation as the Canadian welfare state began to take shape.⁸⁹

By some accounts, Federman enjoyed a less than saintly career later in life, stained by allegations of petty corruption and his participation in the undemocratic, and at times anti-Semitic, atmosphere within which anti-Communist purges of the unions took place.⁹⁰ Internecine strife over such Cold War divides was especially brutal within Toronto’s unions, where it could be difficult to distinguish between actual political struggles and personal rivalries among union leaders. But in accounting for his strident anti-Communism and related support for Zionism, at least, it would be unfair to ignore how Federman took upon himself the problems that Jews felt collectively. Like the other early members of the JLC, he was someone who had lived through the experiences of his people in both old country and new, while personally witnessing the transformation of the Canadian labour movement in the decades after the war. If the burdens of history tended to foster disunity within the Canadian Jewish community and the labour movement alike, various campaigns in solidarity with the DPs shed light on moments where ideological boundaries proved less impermeable. This point is worth stressing in light of Federman’s work for the Furrier’s Project, and his general relationship with HersHKovitz and the JLC.

The initiative unfolded in much the same way as the Tailor’s scheme. The JLC appointed four representatives to tour the camps; specifically, two of each from the IFLWU and AFL furriers’ unions. HersHKovitz was selected to go with Harris Silver representing jointly the IFLWU’s Montreal branch and, as the union’s business manager, the Fur Trade Association. The AFL sent Federman and his colleague Joe Kerbel. As before, the

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Sangster, ‘Canada’s Cold War in Fur.’

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 25-27.

representatives were granted transient military ranks but received their documents in Canada.⁹¹

When the moment arrived to leave for Germany in the Spring of 1948, however, HersHKovitz decided not to go. Having heard from those who had gone before, he believed it would prove too much of a test of his character to be tasked with choosing among the DPs, as a judge decides between life or death. He entrusted the selection of potential furriers for his own union locals in Toronto to Federman. “We were opposed to each other,” HersHKovitz recalled, “but the need was such that one forgot these problems... the domestic issues.”⁹² In the meantime, he would prepare for the arrival of the furriers with JIAS and the CJC in Toronto.

In the camps, the temptation was such that DPs offered bribes of cash and jewellery in the hopes of being selected by members of the selection committee, who attempted to exercise a spirit of fair play, perhaps even to a fault. In HersHKovitz’s opinion, his own colleague Silver, as one of Montreal’s “assimilated Anglophone Jews,” was far too severe in assessing the Yiddish-speaking hopefuls for the skills of a furrier.⁹³ Even so, the Jews overall revealed themselves to be more adept at the trade than the non-Jews – at least from the delegation’s perspective. In any case, skill proved less important than pure chance as a factor in being selected, as had been the case with the Tailor’s project. In contrast to the earlier scheme, Federman and the others were working with a much smaller figure. Immigration officials capped their quota at 500 and so most potential furriers were chosen on “a first come, first served basis.”⁹⁴

The Furrier team’s tour around the DP camps forced the renegotiation of allegiances. As both a labour Zionist himself and a member of the JLC, Federman, as did Shane before him, struggled with Zionist representatives in the camps. The delegation’s visit in 1948 coincided with the enactment of the partition plan for Palestine which made the issue of finding a final home for the Jewish DPs all the more pressing. Yet Federman’s own position was that Jewish DPs should be allowed to go where they wanted to. “The JLC being anti-Zionist at the time, of course, tried to convince the people to come to Canada,”

⁹¹ HersHKovitz oral history (n. 23).

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

noted HersHKovitz. “There were JLC reps in the camps” he added, “but they cooperated to a great degree.”⁹⁵

HersHKovitz would describe it as a singular moment of solidarity within the Canadian Jewish community, if only compelled by an extreme situation that called for compromise and cooperation. Back in Canada, and despite his own union’s political inclinations, HersHKovitz remarked that “we were accepted at the time, we were part of the CJC and we were active in the Jewish community as such.”⁹⁶ Considering both the fractious nature of internal Jewish politics, and the escalating geopolitical tensions that surrounded them, this was itself an achievement. Soon enough, this momentary compromise between individuals and organisations would be eclipsed by the divisions of an earlier time and the demands of a new period. A few years after the furriers’ project, HersHKovitz would break away from the Communist Party and join the AFL union, even becoming Federman’s assistant in 1949.⁹⁷ Like many former Communists, reports of Soviet anti-Semitism tested the loyalties of the few Jews who remained in the movement, while the JLC itself embodied Bundist internationalism’s détente with Jewish nationalism.⁹⁸

A final destination

This chapter highlighted the JLC’s role in the labour immigration schemes which for Enkin constituted “one of the finest annals of humanitarian interest in one’s fellow man.”⁹⁹ In the process, they had to overcome ideological rifts, even long-running class antagonisms, within the Canadian Jewish diaspora in a rare instance of cooperation seldom repeated within the wider labour movement or in other communities as Cold War pressures intensified. The projects likewise affected Canadian politicians, immigration officials, and aid workers immersed in the DP camps, testing their loyalty to the demands of the bureaucracy and awakening latent feelings of sympathy toward the refugees. Their significance lies in the context in which all parties attempted to come to terms with a rather complicated tug-of-war. Jewish DPs were caught in between the Communists who demanded repatriation to rebuild the Soviet bloc, the Zionists who

⁹⁵ HersHKovitz oral history (n. 23). With Bernard Shane not being part of the Furriers’ delegation, HersHKovitz was likely referring to Bella Meiksin and Nathan Gierovitz (see above).

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Sangster, ‘Canada’s Cold War in Fur,’ 16.

⁹⁸ Gorny, *Converging Alternatives*.

⁹⁹ Enkin oral history, AC 132 (n. 6).

needed them for Israel, and a Canada which wanted and needed workers, but preferred white, non-Jewish settlers.

The 'Tailor's and Furriers' projects were not entirely unsuccessful. Through both, some 2,500 DPs, most of them Jews and including the 500 selected by Federman's delegation, managed to move to Canada. DPs from the Tailor's Project started arriving in the Port of Halifax in November 1947 and continued to do so in monthly batches until around March 1948.¹⁰⁰ As the Furriers' delegation only began selecting DPs in the Spring, those taken in by the Furrier's initiative would arrive later that year.¹⁰¹ Including their partners and children, the DPs would, in Enkin and Kaplansky's estimate, easily have reached 6,000 altogether, a significant proportion of the total number of Jews allowed to enter Canada in 1948.¹⁰²

To provide some perspective, only 11,000 Jews would be allowed to resettle in Canada even when immigration restrictions eased somewhat in 1949. Despite Canada's erstwhile anti-immigrant reputation, and the small numbers relative to the pressing needs of Jewish DPs, this made it the third largest receiving country for them after Israel and the United States. The American government would adopt a model akin to Canada's DP recruitment scheme only in 1949, after which it eventually exceeded the numbers of Jews whom Canada allowed in.¹⁰³ A further 160,000 DPs of various ethnic and religious backgrounds – whose status just a decade prior marked them off as “non-preferred” – were allowed to resettle in Canada until the government's special labour immigration schemes ended in 1952.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Memo from W. Friedman and A. Eaton of the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada (n. 49).

¹⁰¹ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 'Canadian Mission Visiting European DP Camps for 500 Fur Workers as Immigrants, *JTA*, 27 June 1948, <<https://www.jta.org/1948/06/27/archive/canadian-mission-visiting-european-dp-camps-for-500-fur-workers-as-immigrants>>.

¹⁰² Enkin oral history, AC 113 (n. 10); Kaplansky oral history (n. 42). In 1948, 8,000 Jews came through other immigration projects, via the CJC and other private initiatives. Jews, however, still constituted a tiny proportion of the total number of DPs of various ethnic backgrounds admitted into Canada per year until 1952. 65,000 DPs were admitted in 1948. See also Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, 279.

¹⁰³ In *Out of the Ashes*, Bauer estimates that around 68,000 Jewish DPs entered the United States between the years 1949 and 1952 (p. 285). While the exact figures remain unclear, a much smaller proportion of Jewish DPs were allowed to enter Canada. See Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 274-279. See also Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁴ Gilmour, “And who is my neighbour?”, 171.

What changed in a few years? If Canada had begun to open its borders, this did not mean a full-hearted embrace of the DPs nor the ascendance of multicultural tolerance to the status of national myth. If government officials had slowly begun changing their tune in response to the refugees, old fears of lost jobs and dangerous foreigners still haunted popular narratives concerning Jews, as well as immigrants and ethnic minorities in general, in the immediate post-war years.

The last chapter describes the JLC's participation in efforts to facilitate the DPs' integration into Canada. Owing to a still evolving refugee system that left them with limited state support, Canadian Jews, working alongside the garment unions, turned again to their own institutions and networks of communal solidarity to find housing and secure jobs for the DPs. Knowing that their own work was still unfinished, the JLC continued to play an active role in the domestic arena, focussing its energies increasingly on anti-discrimination and human rights campaigns in the unions, for which the organisation would come to be known in the decades that followed.

All this was happening amid more subtle transformations in Canadian society, as the post-war welfare state and an international order – one that mobilised discourses of human rights, including rights inherent to refugees, minorities, and immigrants as such -- were coming into formation.

CHAPTER 6

Jewish solidarities and the rights of the stateless

The JLC carried out its work for Jewish DPs in a pivotal moment in the transformation of Canada's institutional infrastructure for processing refugees and immigrants. These domestic changes intersected with the development of international discourses around human rights and humanitarianism, provoked in large measure by the problems faced by European countries emerging out of the Second World War. Between the late 1940s up to the early 1950s, Western countries concerned themselves above all with Europe's displaced.¹⁰⁵ UN debates around this time wrestled with the potential rights of masses of stateless people roaming across the continent in protracted limbo, even when few countries indicated much willingness to take them in. Torn between Europe, North America, and Palestine, Jewish DPs presented an especially thorny dilemma.

¹⁰⁵ In addition to the many challenges presented to UNRRA and the IRO by Jewish DPs as discussed in the previous chapters, Laura Madokoro underscores the fact the Allied powers almost completely overlooked those displaced by WWII outside of Europe in the formulation of the 1951 Refugee Convention. *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 19-33.

For its part, the Canadian state's approach to post-war immigration was contradictory at best. An apparently race-blind process of screening out medical risks or ideological extremists among DPs belied the otherwise racialised nature of Canada's immigration system, which continued to match DPs to domestic economic sectors – based less on individual merit, and more on the specific ethnoreligious groups to which they belonged. To a certain extent Canadian Jews, including the JLC itself, played on these narratives if only so they could launch their own immigration projects whose intentions worked at cross-purposes with the economistic spirit of the government's DP recruitment drive, at least as it was originally conceived.

In the international arena, by contrast, the world appeared to be coming toward a recognition of the rights of the DPs as such, as countries engaged in much wrangling over the UN Convention on Human Rights and the 1951 Resolution on the Status of Refugees.¹⁰⁶ Notably, Canada was not an early proponent of either of these conventions. The official Canadian position resisted creating too expansive a definition for both "rights" and "refugee," knowing that as one of the largest potential receiving countries, by sheer land mass relative to a small population, it would bear the brunt of international responsibility for post-war DPs. Canada delayed ratification for the Refugee Convention until more than a decade later, arguing that the state's federal structure put constraints on its ability to make decisions on these matters against the will of individual provinces.¹⁰⁷ For Madokoro, the reluctance to ratify these conventions had roots in racial, if not necessarily *racist*, thinking entrenched in the state bureaucracy. Granting more leeway to international oversight would mean not only forgoing the government's 'right' to retain a preferentially white and Christian immigration system, but also having to guarantee rights to new waves of refugees who might then become public charges on the post-war welfare state.¹⁰⁸

All this meant that Canadian Jews could rely on limited state support for the resettlement of Jewish DPs. Only an independent, community-led effort could ensure the long-term welfare of the DPs -- stateless refugees par excellence – and their successful integration

¹⁰⁶ Madokoro, "Belated Signing: Race-Thinking and Canada's Approach to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," 161-182.

¹⁰⁷ Gilmour, "And who is my neighbour?", 159-182. See also Frager and Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights", 139-167.

¹⁰⁸ Madokoro, "Belated Signing: Race-Thinking and Canada's Approach to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees"

into Canadian society. As it joined other communal Jewish institutions in that effort, the JLC turned renewed attention to the rights of the “stateless” within Canada’s own borders: racialised minorities facing enduring prejudice and denied the rights otherwise associated with full citizenship.¹⁰⁹

The next few sections return to the JLC’s efforts to resettle the refugees they had successfully brought into Canada through the garment workers’ schemes. They link the networks, narratives, and practices of solidarity that were developed throughout the DP projects and carried into the political activities of its later years. Indeed, the networks that the JLC built up over the course of the resettlement process served the organisation well in its fight against racial discrimination alongside the unions. Complementing emerging new discourses around human rights and immigration, the JLC would also mobilise the history of its refugee efforts as a narrative of solidarity.

Refugee resettlement in Canada

“Communal organizations” declared a private memo to both manufacturers and unions involved in the Tailor’s Project, “will undertake the responsibility for housing tailors and their families irrespective of their nationality.”¹¹⁰ After the selection teams had returned to Canada, everyone was working on the basis of limited information about the DPs who arrived in batches each month.¹¹¹ It was not until after the troubles of the first *Judenfrei* group of DPs that set sail in November was there some clarity as to their actual numbers and ethnic distribution.

The IRO, supported by the Canadian government, had paid for their transport across the ocean, as well as the train that took them from the port of Halifax to Toronto and

¹⁰⁹ On top of long-running discrimination against Jews and Black Canadians in the workplace, universities, and the delivery of public services, Asians and First Nations were denied the right to vote in some provinces until as late as the 1950s. See Leo Driedger and Howard Palmer, “Prejudice and Discrimination,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 10 February 2011, last revised 4 March 2015, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/prejudice-and-discrimination/>>

¹¹⁰ Private Memo circulated by the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, “RE IMMIGRATION OF TAILORS,” 17 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹¹¹ Memo from W. Friedman and A. Eaton of the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, 21 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

Montreal.¹¹² From the very beginning, however, the JLC and the CJC had been reimbursing the government for expenses incurred by all immigration projects launched under the Overseas Garment Workers Commission. This included personal travel of the union delegates in the selection committees on top of facilitating the filing of paperwork for DPs.¹¹³ State support did not extend to job selection or housing for DPs, who were envisioned to resettle in Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Without a guarantee from local Jewish communities in these cities that all DPs who arrived through the immigration schemes would be cared for on their own initiative, they expected the government to call an end to the whole affair.¹¹⁴

Religious and ethnic sensitivities were another important consideration. Hearing about Jews rejected by the medical examinations and knowing that the quota was still in place, the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers notified their members that they would be of “all denominations and racial extraction,” and therefore urged them “to contact local organizations in the several communities who should make plans to provide [for] their co-religionists or persons of their own faith.”¹¹⁵ The clothing manufacturers included many who were themselves former Jewish garment workers, even union leaders, and for this reason felt a certain sense of obligation to participate in the immigration schemes.¹¹⁶

The manufacturers located their centre of operations in the Council’s main office in Montreal.¹¹⁷ In addition to its main headquarters in the same city, the JLC’s branches in Toronto and Winnipeg together formed a spatial network that allowed individual unions and industries to better coordinate and apportion the distribution of DPs who went to

¹¹² Max Enkin, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 13 April 1986, Tape Number AC 113, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹¹³ Letter from Bernard Shane, writing as representative of the Cloak & Suit Makers’ Union [ILGWU-Montreal] to Maishe Lewis, JLC, 27 May 1948, Volume 15, File 22, ‘B Shane’s Mission to D.P. Camps in Europe – D.P. Tailors Immigration Project 1947-1948,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹¹⁴ Memo from W. Friedman and A. Eaton of the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada (n. 7).

¹¹⁵ ‘RE: TAILORS FROM DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS’, Association News Bulletin issued by the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, 16 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada.

¹¹⁶ Max Federman, Oral History Interview with Ben Schneider, 19 March 1976, Tape Number AC 149-AC 150, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹¹⁷ Private Memo circulated by the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada (n. 6).

each city. According to the original plan, over half (55%) would go to Montreal, 36% to Toronto, and the rest divided between Winnipeg and Vancouver.¹¹⁸

While the Jewish bosses had agreed to employ the DPs in their respective factories, their existing workers did much of the legwork in training and integrating them into their workplaces. Coordinating their efforts through the JLC, members of the ILGWU took the lead for those taken in through the Tailor's project. The AFL and the IFLWU did the same for the potential furriers, with Federman and HersHKovitz agreeing to divide DPs between their respective union shops in various cities.¹¹⁹

With little information about the DPs until they had landed at port -- and as it might be best for the first few batches to avoid Montreal's harsh winter -- it was decided that new arrivals would be gathered on Toronto's Spadina avenue.¹²⁰ Those among the DPs who spoke Yiddish or had some cultural affinity with Spadina's earlier generation of settled immigrants would likely have felt at home in the still-thriving working-class district. The CJC had collected donations to purchase about two dozen homes in the area to serve as temporary hostels for new arrivals.¹²¹ Unionists also agreed to sponsor DPs with whom they shared an employer, until they could find more permanent accommodations.¹²²

When the DPs reached Toronto aboard the Canadian National Railway (CNR), they were received by a welcoming committee who passed them on to the Labour Lyceum on Spadina. The Baker's Union treated the new arrivals to breakfast, but there was little time

¹¹⁸ The numbers were broken down as follows. Montreal got the largest share, with 1,261 DPs; 946 of whom were absorbed by the Montreal Men's Clothing Manufacturers Association and 315 by the Montreal Ladies Clothing Manufacturing Association. In Toronto, they allocated 823 DPs, 436 of whom were absorbed by industries associated with the Toronto Men's Clothing Manufacturers Association and 387 by the Toronto Ladies Clothing Manufacturers Association. The National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, meanwhile, assigned 145 DPs to Winnipeg and 50 in Vancouver. Larger businesses like Tip Top Tailors also separately negotiated to absorb 75 DPs in addition to 40 of their relatives. See "Canada to Receive 2,279 DP Workers for Needle Trades," 6 November 1947, *Daily News Record*, Fonds 31, File 2, 'Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),' Men's Clothing Manufacturers' Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada.

¹¹⁹ Al HersHKovitz, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 19 November 1985, Tape Number AC 111, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹²⁰ Max Enkin, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 24 March 1982, Tape Number AC 132, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Private Memo circulated by the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada (n. 6).

for pleasantries.¹²³ They were duly registered, before being taken to their host families and workplaces.

Over the coming weeks and months, the workplace would become the main site for adjustment to their new lives in Canada. At first, most of the DP tailors and furriers worked as part-time apprentices. In accordance with prior arrangements between the unions and manufacturers, they received compensation at prevailing wage rates and training from their co-workers. Many joined and became quite active in their unions which, alongside the JLC and the Workmen's Circle, hosted labour banquets and other means of fund-raising to support them over the long-term.¹²⁴ In this, the DPs followed the trajectory of earlier generations of immigrants for whom the labour movement became an anchor for Jewish identity while facilitating their integration into Canadian society. While some would leave the garment industry altogether, still others would do well enough to establish their own tailor shops and factories.

The learning process was not one-sided. HersHKovitz felt compelled to practice his rusty Yiddish to better communicate with them in their first few years in the country.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, Kaplansky and Lewis spent a lot of time in Ottawa, lobbying MPs, especially their allies in the CCF, for the Department of Mines and Resources to offer a bit more assistance in the resettlement of the refugees.¹²⁶ The JLC acted as a mediator between the government and the DPs who approached them, some of whom had encountered legal difficulties. Yet there was a great deal of distrust, even in Kaplansky, as few would believe that he would help them for free. Instead, they attempted to bribe officials to seek permits or change their papers, often to little avail. Although the Jewish DPs had been victims of a great tragedy, they were not angels. Some attempted to engage in under-the-table deal-making, inventing names of direct relatives and producing fake documents in the hopes of saving those they had left behind—often friends and very distant relatives with little chance of ever making it to Canada. Among the new

¹²³ HersHKovitz oral history (n. 15).

¹²⁴ The unions and other organisations that provided long-term support to the JLC and DPs affiliated with the garment workers schemes can be identified in its annual fund-raising banquets. See, e.g. lists in Volume 11, File 11, 'Invitation & Guest List: JLC-Toronto Annual Banquet 1965, 1969, 1972,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹²⁵ HersHKovitz oral history (n. 15).

¹²⁶ Kalmen Kaplansky, Oral History Interview with Phyllis Platnick, 20 September 1985, Tape Number AC 109-Side 1, Ontario Jewish Archives, Toronto, Canada.

immigrants there were, as well, petty disputes over jobs and housing: signs, in Kaplansky's view, that they carried something of the mindset of camp life into Canada.¹²⁷

In addition, exchanges with immigration officials around this time reveal some level of hysteria over problems of destination: some Jewish workers were not going to the places originally assigned to them.¹²⁸ Kaplansky admitted that many of the refugees "fresh from the DP camps didn't exactly have the skills required by the industry, some even disappeared upon arriving [and] could not be tracked down."¹²⁹ While it was the argument they had made to the Canadian government, the industries that participated in the Jewish immigration schemes were not at all concerned with finding labour. At best, most of them needed only seasonal workers under a set-up where DP "tailors" and "furriers" could move on after a year at most. For organised labour and industry alike, the whole point of the projects was humanitarian. Yet once everyone had caught wind of the situation, an implicit understanding developed between Canadian officials and the institutional Jewish community that they had to make do with the realities of the time. Deportation, of course, was out of the question. "Our job was to help people," Kaplansky stressed, "not to sit in judgment."¹³⁰

The JLC's humanitarian efforts continue

Problems during the resettlement of the Jewish refugees may well have compelled the JLC to initiate a formal, less covert track for processing future immigration requests. The JLC's efforts in this regard, including for those on its fabled lists, continued well after the Tailor's and Furrier's projects. Chief among these was a private sponsorship scheme begun shortly after 1949.¹³¹ Kaplansky himself took in one woman from Germany, while

¹²⁷ *ibid*

¹²⁸ Assorted correspondences between the JLC, the CJC, JIAS, the CCF [especially with M.J. Coldwell], and immigration officials, Volume 16, File 10, 'Correspondence: Canadian Garment Workers Scheme 1949' and Volume 16, File 11, 'Correspondence: Canadian Garment Workers Scheme 1949 (2),' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹²⁹ Kaplansky oral history (n. 22).

¹³⁰ *ibid*. Kaplansky, speaking at the time of his interview as an official in the government's refugee ministry, comments that these extra-legal dynamics closely resembled the experiences of contemporary refugees. He mentions the case of the Afghans, Pakistanis, and Vietnamese "boat-people."

¹³¹ Assorted documents and correspondences on child adoption and sponsorship schemes in Volume 16, File 12, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1950,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. More on the NY JLC's later humanitarian efforts in Gail

other members of the JLC and the ILGWU sponsored ex-DPs who had moved on to Paris and Sweden but preferred to relocate to North America.¹³² The JLC also attempted to find families separated during the war. As in the past, the NY JLC sent appeals to their colleagues in Montreal on behalf of family members who had found each other and were re-united in France after years of separation in different DP camps.¹³³

With the partial lifting of immigration barriers after 1948, Canadian officials appeared to be much more amenable to their appeals. Like other potential receiving countries, the Canadian government had set up its own resettlement branch under the auspices of its European Chief of Mission.¹³⁴

Lessons learned from the previous immigration schemes also made it easier for the JLC to work through the system. Now it just needed to ensure the accurate location of people eligible for sponsorship in cases submitted for the consideration of officials. While many on the JLC lists had stayed in contact through their office in Paris, some had moved on to other parts of France, or to Austria, Spain, and Italy. It had become difficult, to say the least, to keep track of them.¹³⁵

Malmgreen, "Child Adoption" program, last accessed 18 May 2018, <http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/collections/exhibits/tam/JLC/7child.html>

¹³² Kaplansky temporarily sponsored one Maria Tuszkay from Germany, according to an untitled list of names that connected JLC staff with the addresses and contacts of various DPs affiliated with the garment workers schemes, dated 23 May 1950 [with scribbled revisions from various dates after 1951], Volume 16, File 12, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1950,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³³ One Yiddish-language letter from the NY JLC to Ignacy Falk mentioned the case of two Polish Jewish families, the Gelbards and the Rozenwassers, who were in Paris at the time and wished to immigrate to Canada. See letter from NY JLC to Isaiah Falk, JLC-Montreal, 4 [14?] October 1950, Volume 16, File 12, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1950,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³⁴ In 1951, the JLC, in addition to JIAS, corresponded closely with these officials for a number of cases involving the post-war resettlement of DPs. See e.g. letter confirming landed immigrant status in Canada for a group of sponsored refugees, from C.K. Wicks, Chief-Resettlement Branch for Hector Allard, Chief of Mission (Canada) to JLC-Montreal, cc'd. JIAS and IRO-Paris, 12 February 1951, Volume 16, File 13, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1951,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³⁵ See, e.g. letter from J.M. Langlais, Immigration Inspector-in-Charge to Kalmen Kaplansky as JLC director, on the case of one missing Mojzesz Knaphajs in France, 26 April 1951, Volume 16, File 12, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1950,' [misfiled by archivist] JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Europe, after all, was in serious flux. By the early to mid-1950s, funding governments began pressuring the IRO to phase out the DP camps.¹³⁶ Consequently, some former Jewish DPs desiring to immigrate to Canada were moving around Europe with no fixed address. The IRO in Paris initiated a resettlement drive in preparation for its draw-down, as it struggled with dwindling resources. As one sign of this, by 1951 a greatly diminished IRO could no longer pay for immigrants on the CNR, which consequently urged JLC sponsors to foot the bill for in-land travel from their port of arrival in Halifax to Montreal.¹³⁷ Later the JLC took it upon itself to continue funding in-land railway fares for those sponsored by JIAS and other organisations.¹³⁸

Paradoxically, Canada expressed support for the IRO's resettlement drive. With the end of the organisation's mandate in sight, some officials banked on the implicit hope that with this last strong push, the DPs could be resettled and granted citizenship in the European countries where the camps had been located.¹³⁹

The JLC continued to channel support across the Atlantic to the many thousands whom they could not bring over to Canada. As they had been doing since the war, the Women's Division of the Montreal JLC raised money for Jewish war orphans paired by the JLC's European contacts with foster families in Paris and Stockholm.¹⁴⁰ One raffle contest in 1950, offering an all-expenses-paid trip to New York, noted proudly that the JLC's donors now supported over a thousand children through their long-distance 'adoption' programme for those affiliated with the Friends of the JLC. Most of the JLC's donors at this time were rank-and-file unionists associated with the garment industry in addition to Jewish-owned businesses.¹⁴¹ The JLC's financial support extended to a further 3,000

¹³⁶ Louise Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization: a specialized agency of the United Nations, its history and work, 1946-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).

¹³⁷ Letter from H.U. Boucher, Canadian National Railways, to JLC-Montreal, 27 April 1951, Volume 16, File 12, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1950,' [misfiled by archivist] JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³⁸ Letter from Y. Liwschitz, American Joint Distribution Committee-Paris to JLC-Montreal concerning inland travel costs for the Kobrinski family sponsored by JIAS, 5 April 1951, Volume 16, File 13, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1951,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³⁹ Madokoro, *Dominion of Race*, 165-67.

¹⁴⁰ Gail Malmgreen, "Child Adoption" program, last accessed 18 May 2018, <http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/collections/exhibits/tam/JLC/7child.html>

¹⁴¹ Assorted correspondences on financial transactions between the Canadian JLC, the NY JLC, philanthropists, and the Canadian unions from the years 1947-1950, in Volume 11, Files 14-17, Dorothy Dworkin correspondences, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

children not directly tied to the organisation but supported by various charities, churches, and Jewish organisations (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: From a booklet of raffle tickets raising money for orphans in foster care in Europe and Canada. Source: Volume 16, File 12, 'Correspondence: D.P. Immigration to Canada 1950,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Evaluating the Canadian JLC's role in the refugee projects

In evaluating the relative success of the garment workers' schemes and the Canadian JLC's later humanitarian efforts, it is important to recall that they were launched within a unique set of circumstances which allowed for the development of relations of solidarity among everyone involved. First, the Canadian immigration system, despite itself, offered some room to manoeuvre for independent efforts by the CJC, the JLC, and the trade unions. In addition, it helped that in practice the treatment of DPs throughout during their selection and resettlement in Canada did not mirror the callous nature of parliamentary debates over their fate. The sheer gravity, and messiness, of the situation furthermore meant that the most blatant instances of racial discrimination, like the Jewish quota for the Tailor's Project, could even be overlooked over the course of the selection process. Encountering the DPs in Hanover and Bergen-Belsen swayed Jewish members of the garment schemes as well as government bureaucrats who saw these places with their own eyes. Enkin impressed upon his colleagues back home that "until

one is faced with it as the clothing industry commission was, it is not possible to experience it vicariously.”¹⁴²

Of course, it is important to note that it took time before the Canadian Jewish community itself could assess the full extent of the crisis at hand and collectively extend solidarity with the refugees. Early on, narratives that, in retrospect, would appear insensitive toward mostly working-class Jews fleeing Europe did not escape the lips of more established members of the community. Echoing the arguments of the Canadian government, some saw Eastern European refugees as charity cases that could not rely on indefinite support from institutions like the CJC. This was especially true during the war, when the material pressures of hosting refugees, and the CJC’s reliance on elite-level negotiations with the government, made them too great a burden to bear.

On this matter, relations between the CJC and the JLC were not always smooth. A 1942 letter from Saul Hayes, then National Director of the CJC, threatened the reduction of allowances to several “protégés of the JLC” who had managed to make it to Canada just before the full outbreak of war.¹⁴³ Urging one tailor, for example, to seek employment despite a serious kidney ailment, Hayes continued:

The committee will not accept the responsibility of the demoralization of refugees in Canada -- the quickest way they can be demoralized is if the refugees look upon the committee as a fund to which they can always apply and that they are eternal pensionnaires [sic] of this committee... bad economically and morally insupportable. The cases known as the Labour Committee cases are not receiving any special treatment in this regard but on the contrary we have been much more lenient with these than with the other cases.¹⁴⁴

Such sentiments bring into sharper relief the changes that were taking place within the Jewish community and wider Canadian society. Only with war’s end could there be

¹⁴² Phone interview transcript with Enkin, 28 October 1947, Fonds 31, File 2, ‘Overseas Garment Workers Commission (Part Two of Two),’ Men’s Clothing Manufacturers’ Association of Ontario fonds, 2008-12-4, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹⁴³ Letter from Saul Hayes, CJC National Executive Director to Moishe Lewis as JLC National Secretary, cc’d. Rubenstein, Bronfman, and Solkin, 6 May 1942, Volume 7, File 10, ‘Correspondence: JLC and the War Effort 1942’, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

freedom to even conceive of a project that would bring Jews over to Canada, while considering prospects for their integration through the long-term support of the community. Meanwhile in the tripartite arrangement for the garment workers schemes, which required tight cooperation between the trade unions and manufacturers' associations, we saw signs of the post-war compromise that brought together the fractious class divides that previously characterised the Jewish Canadian community.

Commenting on the overall success of their immigration projects, in Enkin's opinion they had done a better job than the Americans. Despite sharing the same international networks and having more resources at their disposal, the American Jewish community relied primarily on official channels. Even more stringent US regulations limited their ability to make much progress on the issue of DPs, at least until 1949, when the US government followed the Canadian example in recruiting DPs from the IRO camps and eventually exceeded Canada's quota.¹⁴⁵ In Germany, American immigration officers had even approached the Canadian garment workers' delegations with questions about their methods. They wondered "why they couldn't do it was because of American laws [and] bureaucracy," continued Enkin, "they couldn't do it, as we did through rough justice."¹⁴⁶

Another key factor was the CJC's role as both a fund-raising agency and a coordinating body that gathered various strands of a much smaller, and therefore concentrated, Jewish community around one table. The Canadian JLC itself owed much to the presence of the CJC, which provided a crucial platform connecting people across ideological and class divides. Rubinstein, writing shortly after the war, could even remark that "the *raison d'être* and the growth of the JLC in Canada is perhaps even more telling than that of its parent body in the U.S.A.... where there existed no central authoritative Jewish body, such as the CJC in our Dominion."¹⁴⁷

He added that the JLC carried a leadership role in the Jewish community but directed its attention to the concerns of "the tailor, cloakmaker, baker, capmaker and liberal Jew imbued with ideals of a free democratic world," as it adapted itself during the war to become "the organized expression of collective action which everyone yearned for in

¹⁴⁵ Gilmour, "And who is my neighbour?", 171-172.

¹⁴⁶ Enkin oral history (n. 16).

¹⁴⁷ Michael Rubinstein speech, "Ten Years of Strife, Rescue and Aid...", republished article in Reports of the 10th Anniversary National Convention of the Jewish Labor Committee of Canada, 1-3 November 1948, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

those disquieting and uneasy days.”¹⁴⁸ In highlighting the JLC’s own “contribution to the advancement of Jewish life” in Canada, Rubinstein stressed the importance of co-operation with a broad-cross section of their community, even as he argued that “complete uniformity in the Jewish Community for which unfortunately some are hankering, is as impossible and harmful as it is alien to a democratic society.”¹⁴⁹

More mundane questions of scale and reach further differentiated the Canadian JLC, like the CJC, from its American counterpart. While those in New York played a formative role in the work of their Canadian colleagues in the early years of the organisation, their efforts were more dispersed over a much larger Jewish population and trade union base. They had to work through a much more powerful AFL, as well as several Jewish organisations competing to be the central voice of American Jewry. To a certain extent, this diluted their influence, at least as far as DP immigration efforts before 1949 were concerned. By contrast, the Canadian JLC enjoyed a tighter working relationship with the CJC, the garment unions and, through them, the two umbrella groups uniting the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement, the CCL and the TLC. The Canadian JLC had the added benefit of reaching official circles through the auspices of the social democratic CCF. While the American JLC lobbied the Democrats, no such independent third party existed in the US. The JLC’s relationship with the CCF and the labour movement was critical to the success of the DP projects which set a precedent for later refugee sponsorship schemes. These formative years also set the stage for the expansion of the JLC’s anti-racism and human rights campaigns within the unions in the decades that followed.

Post-war solidarities and human rights

As we have seen, responding to the urgent needs of Jews at home and abroad shaped the first decade and a half of the JLC’s existence (1936-1950). While the crises of their community necessarily occupied the centre of its attention, the JLC’s founders found themselves in an ideal position, very early on, to develop a narrative of solidarity that tied the rights of refugees fleeing European fascism with those of immigrants and minorities targeted by North American racism. Steeped in a democratic socialism that spoke in the language of universal humanism, they were equally immersed in a Jewish tradition that

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

recommended hospitality toward the stranger. At the same time, they understood that the political impact of the Holocaust, viscerally felt by the Jewish community – notably an understanding of the links between anti-Semitism, racism, and genocidal fascism -- had not yet percolated through the rest of Canadian society.

With the memory of the war still fresh in the minds of many Jews, the JLC maximised the opening presented by a unique moment of convergence between changes in the domestic labour movement and those taking place in an emerging international order. Goutor notes that the war impacted the unions in ways that allowed them to begin paying closer attention to race and gender issues. For one, the relative prosperity brought about by the North American post-war economy tended to foster less nativist and insular views, especially toward immigration.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, as Naylor points out, the CCF and its labour allies were invested in reconfiguring the relationship between the state and workers as citizens, considering the role of labour in the war effort as well as “the place of citizenship in the international crusade against fascism.”¹⁵¹ As a more confident labour movement pushed for social security and better labour laws, the consolidation of the welfare state provided impetus, “particularly in the context of a broader working-class mobilization, to expand social rights on a domestic one.”¹⁵²

It took more effort, however, for the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement to accept that such rights could extend to immigrants and racialised minorities. The timing of the Canadian JLC’s anti-racism campaigns allowed it to strengthen the link between more long-running forms of discrimination at home and the rights of war refugees. It established the first anti-discrimination committees in unions that would come to acquire intimate familiarity with the JLC’s involvement in the DP projects as well as its anti-fascist connections in Europe. As we saw in Chapter 4, much of this work was done alongside rank-and-file unionists, with the support of their leadership. The JLC was instrumental in the expansion of Labour Committees to Combat Racial Intolerance which operated across Canada’s major provinces and took on various iterations over time.

¹⁵⁰ Goutor, *Guarding the Gates*, 208-214.

¹⁵¹ Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism*, 310.

¹⁵² *ibid.*

In October 1947, the AFL expressed a ringing endorsement of the organisation. At its National Convention in San Francisco, it commended the JLC for “helping to rebuild democratic and Jewish cultural institutions abroad, and in fighting bigotry, intolerance, and racial hatred at home”. A resolution unanimously adopted by the AFL delegates made note of its contributions in Canada and the US, where the American JLC had been working through various city and state-wide labour councils. Through its education programmes, it had championed “the rights of all minority groups, be they Catholic, Negro [sic], Jew or foreign born.” Combatting racism, it stressed in the rather militaristic tenor typical of its time, had been critical to the “welfare and security” of both countries.¹⁵³

This change in tone on the part of organised labour is significant, considering how strongly the mainstream of North American unionists opposed foreign immigration – and most efforts to integrate racialised or migrant workers into the unions -- during the Great Depression just a decade or so ago. The JLC was clearly on the cusp of new developments in the local labour movement as well as in the international arena, where a nascent concept of human rights was emerging out of the political extremes of war. Providing the JLC with a transnational frame of reference for its domestic activities, the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights saw the formalisation of international laws and norms safeguarding the rights of individuals against racial discrimination.¹⁵⁴ Despite its initial reluctance, Canada did eventually sign on to several treaties requiring the elimination of racist laws, but it would take a lot of work for these to have any real effect on domestic legislation.

¹⁵³ AFL Resolution No. 184 on the JLC, unanimously adopted by the AFL, republished in a statement copied to the Canadian JLC, ‘American Federation of Labor Indorses [sic] Jewish Labor Committee, 66th Annual Convention,’ 22 October 1947, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ [misfiled by archivist], JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁵⁴ By the 1950s and 60s, the JLC would increasingly adopt the discourse of human rights as a point of reference, working alongside organisations affiliated with United Nations in Canada and complementing the large numbers of Canadians represented in UN and humanitarian organisations. For a small sample of the JLC’s human rights activities see correspondences and reports in Volume 27, File 16, ‘Reports on Human Rights activities, J.L.C. 1958-1966,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

In pushing for legislative changes at home, the JLC worked closely with the CCF and the Joint Public Relations Committee (JPRC), consisting of B'nai Brith and the CJC.¹⁵⁵ The JPRC had already begun campaigns in the legislative arena much earlier on. The first of these was for a federal Fair Employment Practices Act (FEPA), which among other objectives sought to eliminate racial discrimination in hiring.¹⁵⁶ This time around, Canada followed America, with FEPA patterning itself after laws that had already been put in place by the Roosevelt administration during the war.¹⁵⁷

In addition to Blacks, First Nations, and Asians, Canadian Jews had for many decades been barred from middle-class professional occupations on account of race.¹⁵⁸ Jews especially were restricted from working in universities, banks, and hospitals, while African Canadians faced the worst forms of discrimination in the Maritimes and in certain occupations to which they too were limited, like the railway sector.¹⁵⁹ FEPA set the stage for later campaigns around Fair Accommodations – fighting discrimination in the provision of public services and housing – as well as for provincial human rights codes, pioneered by the first CCF government in Saskatchewan and later followed by the “Red Tory” Leslie Frost administration in Ontario.¹⁶⁰

For the JLC, the real battle lay in the realm of everyday relations in the workplace, where people were socialised to discriminate against those different from them. It prioritised the implementation of such legislation through education, mass publicity, and the training of unionists as “fire-fighting spotters” of racism, hinting in numerous speeches

¹⁵⁵ Reports and correspondences between JLC and JPRC, Jewish Labour Committee 1940-1953, Box 14, 94-111, Canadian Jewish Congress Collection, Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

¹⁵⁶ Report prepared by A. Kirzner, Secretary-Treasurer of the Joint Labour Committee to Combat Racial Intolerance, for the JLC's National Executive Meeting, 20 November 1947, Volume 3, File 3, 'Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,' [misfiled by archivist], JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁵⁷ Like the Canadian equivalent, Roosevelt's legislation through Executive Order 8802 (or the Fair Employment Act) was the first to attempt to eliminate racial discrimination in employment practices, starting with the military and the civil service. See “Fair Employment Practices Committee: United States History,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last accessed 20 May 2018, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fair-Employment-Practices-Committee>>

¹⁵⁸ Walker, “Jewish Phase” in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada, 1-29.

¹⁵⁹ The JLC had a long history of cooperation with Black unionists, especially those associated with the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Porters. See Volume 15, File 9, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Notes: Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport Workers, Inquiry into Discrimination (Part 1) Against Negro Porters 1961', JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁰ Walker, “Jewish Phase” in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada, 10-29.

and slogans that the seeds of “Hitlerism” and blatant acts of discrimination lay in basic attitudes of prejudice. Again, the language used, at least in the early years of the JLC’s anti-racism campaigns was of a particular kind, emphasizing the need for “combat” and a “united front” against efforts to divide workers against one another. The JLC’s allies in the labour movement would adopt the same discourse, coming to recognize that supporters of fascism, “defeated by the might and arms of the democracies,” had always attempted to “divide the ranks of labour primarily through the methods of fanning racial and religious prejudice.”¹⁶¹

Businesses that had been involved in the garment workers’ schemes also expressed early support for the JLC’s campaigns against racial discrimination in the workplace. In one memo to its members written after a joint conference with the AFL and CIO in Quebec, the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers urged its members to donate to the JLC, arguing that “in its fight for preservation of liberty, manufacturers interests are identical with those of the workers. We have one common enemy, “RACIAL INTOLERANCE.” Let us nip it in the bud.”¹⁶²

Over time, the JLC’s campaigns would adopt a somewhat softer tone, moving closer to a human rights-based narrative that, while less militant, moved beyond anti-fascist slogans and a focus on events in Europe, and turned public attention to persistent discrimination against minorities at home. This came alongside the institutionalisation of a broader set of human rights implementation in the government bureaucracy. Popular acceptance of a stronger role for the state in welfare provision extended to the regulation of workplaces in enforcing anti-discrimination policies.

On top of the unions and manufacturers, individual participants in the DP projects became major nodes in the JLC’s networks of solidarity in the civil rights struggles of the late 1950s and 60s. Enkin, for one, would become President of Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple, which became a central site for human rights campaigns involving the CCF/NDP and the JLC, under the religious stewardship of Rabbi Abraham Feinberg.

¹⁶¹ Speech by Claude Jodoin, TLC Chairman, in Report of Standing Committee on Racial Discrimination at the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada Convention at Windsor, ON, 24 September 1946, Volume 3, File 3, ‘Reports, Documents, Resolutions: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶² Memo on “Racial Intolerance” distributed by the National Council of Clothing Manufacturers of Canada, 7 February 1946, Volume 7, File 22, ‘Correspondence: JLC 1946,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Enkin and Feinberg would also help organise the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, leading the way for inter-faith dialogue initiatives in Quebec.¹⁶³

Moishe Lewis, with his son David Lewis, followed the CCF's transition into the New Democratic Party (NDP). Another long-standing member of the JLC, David Orlikow, directed the organisation in the 1960s even as he stood as member of parliament for the federal NDP.¹⁶⁴

Other JLC members continued to work with those they had trained in the labour committees they established in TLC and CCL-affiliated unions. The JLC became the first organisation to overcome long-standing rivalries between both federations before their merger into the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in 1956.¹⁶⁵ After the creation of the CLC, separate TLC and CCL anti-discrimination committees would be rebranded into Labour Committees on Human Rights which worked across various cities and provinces. The Committees became representatives of organised labour in the formation of Canada's provincial Commissions on Human Rights.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ The JLC was especially concerned with outreach to Catholic unions. See, e.g., "Report of the Week-end Labor Conference on Group Relations in Canada," 25-26 February 1950, Volume 34, File 5, 'Correspondence, Minutes, Reports: Montreal Labour Committee Against Racial Intolerance 1950,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. Prior to entering the JLC, Michael Rubinstein was also involved in Christian-Jewish dialogue initiatives as early as 1934. See Rubinstein's interventions in draft report entitled "Public Relations Work of the Jewish-Christian-Relationship Committee under the leadership of Rabbi Harry J. Stern," Volume 9, File 24, 'Speech, notes: Michael Rubenstein, Jewish-Christian Relations 1934,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁴ Series of correspondences between the JLC and David Lewis, Volume 10, File 10, 'Correspondence: David Lewis and CCF Material, 1944-64,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. To a certain degree, the relationship between the JLC and the CCF/NDP was a family operation. See also extensive correspondences with the JLC's representative in Winnipeg, Louis Orlikow, father of the NDP's David Orlikow, in Volume 12, Files 26-28, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁵ Rubinstein would refer to this fact much later in a speech for the JLC's 30th Anniversary, entitled "The Jewish Labor Committee is 30 Years Old: A short summary of its activities," drafted 27 January 1966, Volume 9, File 26, 'Clippings, speeches - Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree -29 January 1966,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. Claude Jodoin corroborates this in his speech, "Notes for address to 30th Anniversary Dinner of Jewish Labour Committee of Canada," 29 January 1966, Volume 3, File 17, 'Clippings, speeches: Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree - 29 Jan 1966,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁶ Dominique Clement, Will Silver, and Daniel Trottier, *The Evolution of Human Rights in Canada*, Canadian Human Rights Commission (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2012), 15-30.

Over the years, the JLC became almost indistinguishable from the CLC and the work of these committees.¹⁶⁷ Quite a few JLC staff would go on to work for the CLC, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, domestic civil liberties associations, or the United Council on Human Rights, sometimes concurrently.¹⁶⁸ These included the JLC's Alan Borovoy and Sidney Blum, famous for testing out anti-discrimination legislation in housing and employment through the Toronto Labour Committee for Human Rights.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, after his JLC stint Kaplansky occupied various roles within the CLC, eventually becoming its representative to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), before being appointed to the government's immigration ministry later in life.¹⁷⁰

The JLC and its allies had come a long way. After 1960, their human rights campaigns would find new impetus in the legal provisions now enshrined in the new federal Bill of Rights, which still required a stronger push in places like Quebec, rural Ontario, and the Maritime Provinces.¹⁷¹

Solidarity with other nations

In 1963, Claude Jodoin would receive the JLC's first Human Rights Award. At his acceptance speech Jodoin, now speaking as a CLC representative, reminisced on his experiences as first chair of the TLC's anti-discrimination committee in 1946. He insisted

¹⁶⁷ JLC-linked union committees existed in various iterations in different provinces, with their responsibilities eventually delegated entirely to the national CLC. In addition to the committees directly tied to the JLC in Toronto and Montreal see, e.g., reports and correspondences from Halifax, Nova Scotia, Volume 40, Files 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15; for Vancouver, BC, Volume 47, Files 1, 4, 5, 8, 12, 16; for Alberta and Saskatchewan, Volume 9, Files 1-3, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁸ By the 1960s, the JLC and various union committees against racial discrimination would be housed in Montreal under the United Council for Human Rights. See Volume 36, File 1, 'Correspondence, Circulars, Constitution: Founding meeting of the United Council for Human Rights by members of the Committee of Ten of the Montreal Labour Committee on Human Rights March 4, 1964; 1963-1964,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁶⁹ Reports and correspondences from the Toronto labour committee, in Volume 8, File 16, 'Misc Correspondence Toronto 1959-1963'; Volume 38, File 19, 'Correspondence: Toronto Labour Committee for Human Rights 1966-1968,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada. See also Alan Borovoy's autobiography, *"At the Barricades": A Memoir* (Toronto: Irwin Law, 2013).

¹⁷⁰ Report by Kaplansky, 'The International Responsibilities of the Canadian Labour Congress by Kaplansky n.d.,' Kaplansky fonds, Library and Archives Canada. Notes on Kaplansky's work for the JLC and CLC are also in an archived article by Arnold Bruner, 'The Genesis of Ontario's Human Rights Legislation, A study in Law Reform: Article by Arnold Bruner 1979,' Kaplansky fonds, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷¹ Richard Foot, "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 8 August 2013, last revised 8 December 2017, <
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-charter-of-rights-and-freedoms/>>

that the JLC itself deserved the Award for its efforts to unite the organised Jewish community and the labour movement. Together, they had “established in Canada a new concept of human rights and dignity,” one that had come into practical implementation through federal and provincial laws against racial discrimination in housing, services, and employment. As a French Canadian, he continued, he could now feel “at home anywhere in Canada from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. We in the labour movement treat all members, regardless of race, colour or creed, regardless of geography, regardless of the language they speak, as equals.”¹⁷²

Jodoin conceded that there was still plenty of work to do. While Montreal, paradoxically, was the epicentre of the JLC’s anti-racism efforts, his home province of Quebec proved difficult to sway in favour of anti-discrimination legislation and was the only province, in addition to Alberta and some of the Maritime provinces, without a human rights code. In Quebec, he acknowledged, “coloured citizens, as well as students from Africa and Asia, have been refused both accommodation and jobs solely because of their colour.”¹⁷³

At the JLC’s 30th Anniversary three years later, it was Jodoin too who would reflect on Canada’s new role in the world, expressed in its support for the United Nations, international peace-keeping, and the protection of minority rights. How different things were a little more than a decade ago, he recalled, when it took a strong push from the labour movement to convince the government to “make up its mind” and intervene meaningfully on behalf of the victims of the Second World War. He mentioned the labour movement’s work for Jewish DPs as an example of its solidarity with other ethnic minorities in Canada and abroad. Noting the role of the garment unions “in arranging with the Canadian Government for the admission of Jewish refugees in 1947, 1948 and 1949, to help the survivors from the Nazi concentration camps in Germany,” he stressed that the atrocities of the war must never be allowed to happen again anywhere: “Auschwitz, Belsen, Buchenwald will be sorely remembered as the worst tragedy and holocaust of the 20th century.” Jodoin concluded that the CLC, as the successor of the CCL and TLC, would continue supporting “oppressed ethnic groups around the world.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Speech by Claude Jodoin, untitled, Volume 3, File 12, ‘Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree, 2 Feb. 1963,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Speech by Claude Jodoin, entitled “Notes for address to 30th Anniversary Dinner of Jewish Labour Committee of Canada,” 29 January 1966, in Volume 3, File 17, ‘Clippings, speeches:

His sanguine remarks belie the more arduous process of overcoming racial prejudices within the labour movement and general Canadian society. A small number of studies have dealt extensively with the JLC's activities from the 1960s onward.¹⁷⁵ In addition to mass public education, the JLC's staff threw themselves into the grunt work of ensuring that recent human rights legislation was carried out in practice. In close collaboration with the CLC, the JLC developed a system of reporting between the JLC's head offices, individual labour committees for human rights, and union scouts sent to spy out instances of racial discrimination as part of their evaluation of general working conditions among CLC affiliates. The JLC would gain recognition, even some notoriety, for its methods of means-testing recent anti-discrimination laws.

Through the work of the committees and its allies, the JLC could reach out beyond the garment unions to address the rights of other minorities – beginning with the issues faced by Black Canadians, and later extending to First Nations, Asian immigrants, and Canada's Francophone minority.¹⁷⁶ The JLC's Sid Blum and David Orlikow developed close relations with Black Canadians affiliated with the sleeping car porters and railway workers' unions, where they worked to address the grievances of those who felt discriminated against by their bosses or fellow unionists.¹⁷⁷ If Canada's working-class Jews tended to be concentrated in the garment industry, the same held true for Black Canadians in the CNR, many of whom were engaged in organised labour's efforts to coalesce with the growing civil rights movement in the United States.¹⁷⁸

As they were still quite new, it took time before the JLC could build public confidence in internal union and government reporting mechanisms to address instances of discrimination. Recognising this, the JLC and its CLC allies developed experimental tests like sending bogus letters to hotels, apartment rentals, universities, and ski resorts by

Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree - 29 Jan 1966,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷⁵ Cited in the previous chapters, see, e.g. Lambertson, "The Dresden Story" and Walker, "The Jewish Phase" in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada."

¹⁷⁶ Correspondences and reports from labour committees on human rights (n. 63).

¹⁷⁷ The JLC had particularly strong ties to Black Canadians organised under the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, which later became financial sponsors of the JLC's human rights committees. See correspondences with Sidney Blum and reports in Volume 15, File 9, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Notes: Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers, Inquiry into Discrimination (Part 1) Against Negro Porters, 1961,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷⁸ News clipping, "JLC Conferences Strengthen Labor-Civil Rights Coalition," JLC News, March 1965, Volume 2, No. 5, Jewish Labour Committee [textual record]-1967,' Canadian Jewish Congress Fonds 17; Series 5-4-1; File 122, Ontario Jewish Archives.

people purporting to be of Chinese, Black, or Jewish descent. These activities hardly endeared them to business owners, academic departments, and landlords who rejected applications from minorities while accusing JLC staff of adopting “Gestapo-like” methods in their zeal to identify and publicise cases of racial discrimination.¹⁷⁹

On-the-ground field investigations were another important part of their toolkit. One famous case involved the JLC undertaking a probe of restaurant owners who refused to serve Blacks and Asians in Dresden, a small town in rural Ontario.¹⁸⁰ Blum led similar fact-finding missions to investigate racial discrimination in Ontario and the Maritimes provinces.¹⁸¹ As both NDP MP and JLC Director, meanwhile, Orlikow used some of his political clout in cases requiring government intervention.

Between 1962 and 1969, a campaign was launched in defence of Africville, a predominantly Black Canadian community in Halifax, which risked displacement owing to redevelopment projects commissioned by the government of Nova Scotia.¹⁸² The campaign failed to prevent the evictions, but the JLC later worked with churches, grassroots organisations, and the local government in Halifax to ensure decent relocation for the displaced.¹⁸³

During this time, the JLC also began devoting itself increasingly to the “Indian Question.” The labour movement became one of the earliest critics of systemic discrimination against Canada’s indigenous First Nations, especially with regard to their working conditions in the prairie provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Various reports, surveys, and correspondences associated with the JLC’s human rights efforts in Volumes 23-27, JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁸⁰ Lambertson, ‘The Dresden Story’

¹⁸¹ Reports and correspondences with Sidney Blum, Volume 40, File 8, ‘Correspondence, Interviews, Address Lists: Sid Blum’s Trip to the Maritimes to investigate discrimination against Negroes, August 1957,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁸² In addition to Dresden, cities in provinces like Nova Scotia in the Maritimes had sizeable black populations descended from slaves who escaped to Canada from the US South through the Underground Railroad; many were also descendants of an earlier generation who had fought for the British during the American Revolution.

¹⁸³ Report on Africville relocation plan, in p. 8 of ‘Report of Activities: Nova Scotia,’ 28 October 1966; see also ‘Report of Activities: National,’ 23 April 1965, ‘Jewish Labour Committee [textual record]-1967,’ Canadian Jewish Congress Fonds 17; Series 5-4-1; File 122, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹⁸⁴ See e.g. Report of the CLC’s Henry Tomaschuk to the JLC’s Human Rights Committee, on Indians forced to subsist on powdered milk and wild meat, while living in rudimentary tents in sub-zero (-50°) temperatures by private contractors that had hired them to clear land for a gas pipeline in Chisholm, Northern Alberta. In Report of Activities in Alberta, 23 April 1965, ‘Jewish Labour Committee [textual record]-1967,’ Canadian Jewish Congress Fonds 17; Series 5-4-1; File 122, Ontario Jewish Archives.

The Toronto and Ontario Labour Committees for Human Rights dealt directly with the many issues faced by First Nations communities. The Human Rights committees worked closely with the Indian-Eskimo Association and the National Indian Council on a large number of discrimination complaints in Toronto, Kenora, and other rural towns and cities across Ontario. With the support of the Ontario Labour Committee, over 400 First Nations led a protest march in Kenora in 1965 highlighting the need to improve their quality of life, and to address problems of poor infrastructure, alcoholism, and poverty on native reserves.¹⁸⁵

In all this, the JLC in countless speeches, letters, fund-raising appeals, and campaign materials refracted the fight against racism through the experiences of their organisation and the Jewish community as a racialised minority in Canada. It would not be far off the mark to suggest it retained something of that old Bundist ethos which sought to guarantee the rights of Jews to their own language, culture, and political institutions in the Pale. Rearticulated in a distinctively Canadian patois of human rights and multiculturalism, the issues faced by immigrants and ethnic minorities concerned the JLC above all.

It was in response to the rise of Quebec nationalism that the JLC developed its most interesting positions along these lines. While the JLC had established a working relationship with the leadership of the Francophone unions, traditional relations between Anglophone Jews and French-speaking Quebeckers were complicated at best. Nativist and fascist movements, like those led by Montreal journalist Adrien Arcand, capitalised on latent Catholic anti-Semitism in the province, where they had an audience.¹⁸⁶ The long regime of Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis became the unfortunate face of an insular conservatism, starkly reflected in the Duplessis government's opposition to

¹⁸⁵ CLC's sections on "Activities of City and Provincial Labour Committees for Human Rights" and "Human Rights and Indian Affairs", quoted from a report to the CLC's National Convention in Winnipeg (April 1966) by a JLC internal report, dated 17 June 1966, 'Jewish Labour Committee [textual record]-1967,' Canadian Jewish Congress Fonds 17; Series 5-4-1; File 122, Ontario Jewish Archives.

¹⁸⁶ Reports and correspondences on Quebec anti-Semitism, Volume 26, File 7, 'Clippings, Translation: L'Antisemitisme du Journal de L'Ile Jesus et Du Comite de Laval Octobre 1964,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Canada's entry into the war on the side of the Allies as well as its ambivalence toward the plight of Jewish refugees.¹⁸⁷

Despite all this, or perhaps for that very reason, JLC leaders expressed enthusiasm for the steady changes they observed in Quebec society over the course of the Quiet Revolution that began in the late-1950s. The JLC supported French language rights throughout the bilingualism debates which began in 1963 through the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.¹⁸⁸ It would be the only Jewish organisation to submit its positive recommendations and report at a public hearing hosted by the Commission. Noting that the JLC cherished "a deep respect for the very survival of French-Canadian culture in an overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon surrounding," an excerpt from that brief comes closest to a narrative of solidarity sublimated through the experiences of Jews as a minority in Christian Europe:

Many of [the JLC's] founders... were the victims of racial, religious, and cultural discrimination, from which they fled. For that reason, its members have an understanding of, and are especially sensitive to, the positive aspirations of our French-Canadian compatriots. Consequently, we want to stress our special alertness to the problems of the co-existence of different ethnic and cultural groups in Canada.¹⁸⁹

"The ethos of Confederation is now in fact one of cultural pluralism," continued the JLC, commenting on the vitality of French Canada within the framework of Canadian federalism and a legal system which protected the rights of minorities.¹⁹⁰ In a speech delivered at the first Human Rights Banquet with Jodoin, Rubinstein took a slightly

¹⁸⁷ Morton Weinfeld, 'Quebec Anti-Semitism and Anti-Semitism in Quebec,' *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, no. 64 (January 2008), [online] last accessed 22 May 2018, <jcpa.org/article/quebec-anti-semitism-and-anti-semitism-in-quebec/>

¹⁸⁸ Reports and assorted correspondences on the "Quebec question", Volume 24, File 6, 'Correspondence: Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, JLC Briefs 1963-1967,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁸⁹ p. 2 in JLC Brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 30 July 1964, Volume 27, File 5, 'Submission: Brief submitted by the JLC to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, July 30, 1964 (French and English),' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

different tack.¹⁹¹ In acknowledging the validity of Quebec's own struggle for national autonomy, he referred to Israel as an answer to the Jews' own national question. But while "a Jewish state solved the national problems of those who live there," those who had made Canada their home faced problems common to minorities everywhere. Jews could therefore side instinctively with the progressive elements of Quebec nationalism as they shared, with French-Canadians, a desire to maintain cultural continuity in the face of what was then the country's dominant Anglophone Protestant milieu.

Rubinstein expressed confidence in the "renaissance of French Canada," suggesting that Quebec's evolution toward a more open and liberal society, while maintaining its own cultural identity, represented a step forward in the direction of ensuring harmony among Canada's ethnic groups. Similarly, the preservation of Jewish identity, in its many iterations, would be the best contribution to the "rich mosaic of Canadian life."¹⁹²

Once again, the JLC was in a unique position to comment on the Quebec question, as it had witnessed directly to the possibility of solidarity between both communities, with French-Canadian and Jewish unionists having assisted with the successful resettlement of DPs in Montreal. The JLC recalled these efforts in a controversy which erupted when one Henry Steingart of the Handbag Workers Union (formerly the Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers Union) published a series of articles in Montreal's Jewish press accusing two French-Canadian unionists of anti-Semitism. At the request of the accused, Arthur Gagnier and Paul Pichette, the JLC quickly arranged for a labour tribunal to decide on the case, which was later resolved in favour of Gagnier and Pichette. The tribunal judged that Steingart had slandered them unfairly and was bitter after having lost an internal election in a union that had already taken significant steps to ensure that Jews and other minorities were represented in the union leadership. Moreover, the French-Canadians had in fact worked closely with the JLC in the resettlement of Jewish

¹⁹¹ Speech by Michael Rubinstein for Claude Jodoin, 2 February 1963, Volume 3, File 12, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree, 2 Feb. 1963,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁹² *ibid.* See also quotes from Rubinstein's speech in News Clipping, "Preserving Jewish Identity Best Contribution to Canada," Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, 4 February 1963, Volume 3, File 12, 'Correspondence, Clippings, Press Releases: Annual Banquet, Claude Jodoin, Human Rights Award Honouree, 2 Feb. 1963,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

DPs after the war, especially through the 1949 Millinery workers' scheme, which came after the Tailors' and Furriers' projects.¹⁹³

The Steingart affair would become a test-case of the JLC's ability to address anti-Semitism within the unions. It is also revealing of the organisation's appropriation of its own past, wielded as a narrative of solidarity with future generations of refugees, immigrants, and racialised minorities within Canada.

A lasting legacy

As the country entered another period of transition, the JLC retained a special commitment to the rights of immigrants and minorities. Major social changes by the late 1960s and 70s urged a rethinking of Canada as an officially binational state, in the context of an increasingly diverse society that drew people from various parts of the world. While the JLC now operated in a very different Canada, long-standing racial prejudices reared their head as tensions flared up again in the wake of a large influx of mostly non-European immigrants and refugees.

In response to these changes, the JLC and CLC intervened in the debates leading up to critical revisions in federal immigration laws passed in 1967.¹⁹⁴ Underscoring the shift in perceptions toward immigrants within the labour movement, the CLC took a surprisingly pro-active stance. With the input of the JLC, the CLC urged revisions to the Immigration Act, highlighting the fact that Canada still applied different criteria to prospective immigrants from places outside Northern Europe. "It is still possible for immigration officers to select immigrants," the CLC continued, "not on the basis of the contribution they can make to the life of the country, but on the basis of their pigmentation or some such reason."¹⁹⁵ The CLC also criticised the administration of existing immigration laws, demanding that "the detention of aliens in our jails for long periods of time at the

¹⁹³ Correspondences and court transcripts of Steingart case, Volume 23, File 12, 'Correspondence/Transcripts: H. Steingart vs. Handbag Workers Union re case of alleged discrimination 1961-1962,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁹⁴ Interventions by the JLC's David Orlikow, also NDP MP, in the immigration debates, Volume 27, File 8, 'Brief on Immigration by David Orlikow, M.P. including draft, Jan. 1965,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁹⁵ CLC's section on "Immigration," quoted from a report to the CLC's National Convention in Winnipeg (April 1966) by a JLC internal report, dated 17 June 1966, 'Jewish Labour Committee [textual record]-1967,' Canadian Jewish Congress Fonds 17; Series 5-4-1; File 122, Ontario Jewish Archives.

instance of immigration officials must cease.”¹⁹⁶ Recognising that immigration flows needed to be carefully balanced with the demands of the domestic economy, the CLC repeated that immigrants should be selected on the simple basis of “good health, useful skills and good character rather than on the colour of skin or country of origin.”¹⁹⁷ In addition, it gave thought to humanitarian considerations, pointing to the country’s refugee efforts to date:

We would make one exception to this general rule which is that some admissions should be made on the simple ground of humanity. This has already been done in the past but to a very limited extent. Canada might have done more.¹⁹⁸

Its anti-racism and human rights activities would come to impress their American colleagues, whose efforts were more diluted by comparison, especially in moments when conflicted race relations between whites, African-Americans, as well as Jews, appeared difficult to overcome.¹⁹⁹

The JLC’s legacy extended to the establishment of permanent human rights and anti-discrimination mechanisms within the CLC, various independent trade unions, and the provincial Human Rights Commissions. For its efforts, the Canadian JLC would earn some recognition from the Canadian government, as it developed strong allies in the NDP in addition to the Departments of Immigration and Labour.²⁰⁰

In sum, this chapter tracked the narratives, networks, and practices of solidarity of the JLC from the time of the post-war resettlement projects to its later years. We retraced the subtle transformations, and continuities, in the articulation of the JLC’s solidarities, from the anti-fascism of its early years to a more liberal human rights-based discourse which served it well in a changing domestic and international environment that proved more receptive to their campaigns. The organisation also carried over the networks of solidarity that it built up over the course of the garment workers’ schemes into this new

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ News clipping, “JLC Conferences Strengthen Labor-Civil Rights Coalition” (n. 74)

²⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that both departments were previously subsumed into the Department of Mines and Resources, tasked with the processing of Jewish DPs. See also ‘Kalman Kaplansky and the Painstaking Progress of Canadian Human Rights: Interview in Rights & Freedoms 1982,’ Kaplansky fonds, Library and Archives Canada.

period. The unique circumstances in which the organization found itself navigating shortly after its founding meanwhile help to explain some of its enduring concerns around refugees and racial minorities. Indeed, few other organisations could refract its solidarities through the particularities of the Jewish experience as the Canadian JLC did. It returned often to its founding years when it worked alongside the labour movement to bring Jewish refugees over to Canada while engaged in the fight against racism across two continents.

CONCLUSION

In 1966, the NDP's David Lewis gave a speech in honour of Rubinstein, whom he had met at university well before the founding of the JLC.²⁰¹ David reflected on the memory of his late father, Moishe, who as the JLC's long-time national secretary was directly involved in the DP projects, alongside his contacts in the CCF. Commenting on the uncommon foresight and historical vision of the JLC's founders, David remarked:

... the greatness of those who founded this Committee in the early thirties was not only their deep humanity but also their wisdom in foreseeing the horror which was to envelope all democratic people in Germany and particularly the

²⁰¹ Speech by David Lewis, on the JLC's History and Jewish identity, 29 January 1966, Volume 3, File 17, 'Clippings, speeches - Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree - 29 Jan 1966,' JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Jewish people. We have often seen rescue organizations built after a calamity. The admirable fact about the JLC and the foresight of the late Vladek and others was that the rescue agency was established before the calamity descended with its full force on millions of people.²⁰²

The JLC had been steeled in the traditions of Jewish socialism which long preceded its establishment. Its political acumen consequently derived from an understanding of racism and its relationship with fascism in Europe and elsewhere. The rise of fascism, continued David, was the “culmination of a long history of racial strife of which the Jews had been particular... but by no means the only victims.” Minorities and immigrants continued to be convenient scapegoats for demagogues banking on the frustrations of otherwise decent human beings during periods of political and economic uncertainty. Even in Canada, he pointed out, where racial prejudice existed in a version more diluted in its polite moderation than in other places, fascism was an enduring threat. The JLC’s efforts in ensuring harmony between diverse ethnic communities continued to be “every bit as important as its rescue work in earlier years. The present task is not as spectacular but in the long run it may be even more valuable since it may help to prevent the kind of human destruction in the future which we have unhappily known in the past.”²⁰³

In response, Rubinstein recalled that the JLC was founded during “a time of despair for the future, increased by the indecision and division which reigned in the ranks of our so-called Democratic West”.²⁰⁴ Overcoming the geopolitical and ideological divides of the time, thousands of refugees were brought over to North America. The JLC worked with allies in the labour movement across Canada and the US, organising relief efforts and anti-racism campaigns on a scale far out of proportion to the small group of committed activists that they in fact were. If the task at hand often seemed overwhelming, then “just being together was, in itself, an encouraging factor.”²⁰⁵

In less than a decade after both speeches, however, the JLC encountered a crisis of identity. As the post-war years brought rising prosperity and the subsequent decline of Jewish membership and leadership in unions, it struggled to reassert its reason for being. In the summer of 1971, the JLC tasked a special committee with planning for the future

²⁰² *ibid.*

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Speech by Michael Rubinstein, 29 January 1966, Volume 3, File 17, ‘Clippings, speeches - Annual Banquet, Michael Rubenstein, HR Award Honouree - 29 Jan 1966,’ JLC Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

of the organisation. In a report delivered to his colleagues in the JLC in Toronto, Al HersHKovitz expressed fears that the leadership of the community was steadily being given over to the Jewish middle and upper classes which were, in the committee's view, becoming increasingly religious and alienated from their dissident roots. 'This boded ill for an organisation which had for a long time positioned itself as the representative of working class Jews and "the voice of the Jewish radical left, other than the communist left."' The JLC had provided a platform for diverse voices to engage with both the Canadian unions and in the institutional Jewish community. But the labour radicals were gone, he warned, leaving behind no other organisation to which young people and secular Jews could orient themselves, or where they could find a home, as HersHKovitz himself had done.²⁰⁶

While the committee highlighted the importance of continued Jewish engagement in the labour movement, by the 1980s the Canadian JLC was no more. With the Arbeter Ring, the Montreal branch, which lasted the longest, concerned itself increasingly with keeping alive the memory of the Jewish left, with commemorative efforts around its democratic and secular traditions.²⁰⁷

On one hand, the Canadian JLC could be seen as something of a victim of its own success. Unlike its American counterpart, it could rest on the laurels of hard-won rights and protections against racism meaningfully implemented by a state which has functioned, despite flaws, with relative effectiveness. JLC figures like Kaplansky and Borovoy, meanwhile, were absorbed into the Canadian state or the CLC, which had taken over much of its human rights work. On the other hand, the JLC's trajectory was the logical result of broader transformations in the labour movement and Canadian society. The "Jewish phase" in labour radicalism and human rights activism would be displaced by new generations of migrant workers who had benefited, in turn, from the successful liberalisation of Canada's immigration system which was the outcome of its earlier victories.

²⁰⁶ Untitled speech transcript, delivered by Al HersHKovitz after a special committee organised with Harry Simon and Louis Lenkinski, Harry Simon Fonds 23, File 4, Ontario Jewish Archives. HersHKovitz remained in the leadership of the Toronto JLC until at least 1972.

²⁰⁷ These included commemorative efforts around Soviet anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Bund, as well as resistance to European fascism during the Second World War. See Volume 26, Files 1-3, on Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter; and Volume 26, Files 4 -5, on Polish Bundist Arthur Ziegelbaum.

Whatever the reason, the JLC's diaspora solidarities had acted in ways that significantly shaped the country's immigration, labour, and human rights policies. A creature of its own time, the JLC arguably advanced a multicultural politics more authentic to the Bundist imaginary in North America than was possible in Europe or the United States.

Revisiting the JLC's diaspora solidarities

In this thesis, I foregrounded the narratives, networks, and practices of solidarity of the JLC, representing one section of the Canadian Jewish diaspora. I focussed on the decades between its founding in the mid-1930s up until the late 1960s -- a period which tracked major transformations in Canada's treatment of immigrants, refugees, and minorities in addition to its role in the international arena.

We started with the JLC's early years, including its ideological roots within the Jewish left. The multiple crises presented by the rise of fascism in Europe, the Second World War, and the Holocaust tested the JLC to its limits, but also offered a political framework for the expression of its later solidarities. As a prism through which the JLC saw its role within the Jewish diaspora and Canadian society, narratives around Jewish history and identity helped anchor its responses to various issues both here and abroad. It often returned to its own organisational history as a source of inspiration as it mobilised solidarity for minorities facing racial discrimination at home.

By attending to the transnational dimensions of the JLC's solidarities, I integrated David Featherstone's insights into an argument on behalf of the *diasporic* nature of its political concerns which had a uniquely internationalist bent. The organisation was founded by Jewish emigres and 2nd-generation immigrant workers who had extensive networks in Europe and the United States. By the same token, the JLC's diaspora solidarities remained intimately connected and invested in the politics of Canada, as well as the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet bloc, and Palestine. In such a way it became something of a superconductor of politics at various temporal and spatial scales, following and responding to political developments across three continents.

While this study concerned itself mostly with Canada, it was crucial to account for parallel developments across these other places. The Jewish diaspora, and specifically the JLC, is an important case study for developing a transnational approach to the minority or immigrant experience. It sheds further light on the solidarities of a diaspora caught up in largescale geopolitics, shot through with internal divisions marked by class inequalities

and differences in ideological commitments. In all this, the JLC attempted to stick to a fine middle course as the post-war refugee crisis forced a renegotiation of allegiances. On behalf of the many thousands stranded in Europe's DP camps, ideological and class divides within the Jewish community were momentarily overcome in response to a dire humanitarian situation. Even as Canada finally started lifting its immigration restrictions against Jews, however, the fractious geopolitics of the emerging Cold War sowed further rifts within the Jewish left, which equally affected the JLC's relations with the Canadian unions and the mainstream Jewish community.

By 1948, these tensions came to a head. In the very same year that the garment workers' schemes were carried out, the signing of the UN Declaration of Human Rights coincided with the founding of the state of Israel. The first provided the JLC with an international frame of reference for its domestic campaigns in support of immigration and in the fight against racism; the second added a layer of complexity to the JLC's solidarities that recalled familiar debates between nationalism and internationalism, or the universal and the particular. Situated within this singular historical moment, the JLC's evolution as an organisation responded to both the needs of the Jewish community and the more universalist commitments attached to the socialist sympathies of its leading members.

As decades passed, the JLC continued to wrestle with transformations in domestic and international politics. Later, the networks it had developed and strengthened in its early years – among Canadian social democrats, the CJC, and the unions -- would work in the service of its campaigns on behalf of other ethnic minorities in Canada. Together they successfully pushed for human rights and anti-racist legislation, and by the 1960s rode the tide of the civil rights movement in Canada and the United States.

Postscript on future research

Future research might usefully foreground the role played by other ethnic diasporas in similar histories of internationalism, labour, and human rights activism. In this, Canada continues to be a useful platform for exploring examples of diasporic politics – past and present -- among minorities in a country where the issues of bi-nationalism and multiculturalism have been widely discussed.

Members of the Jewish diaspora, it is worth adding, remain a unique case study in so far as their political commitments, in the labour movement and in international affairs, were anchored on a distinct diasporic identity, tied to a strong sense of collective history. This

led them to express solidarities that reached beyond their own community, even as an acute awareness of the specific concerns of that community would lead them to extend their solidarities across many different places.

More work along these lines may well provide for a better understanding of the organised left in North America and its relationship with the Jewish community in the post-war period, as one ethnic group among others. Different approaches to nationalism and internationalism have likewise long been a divisive subject within labour or left circles. These debates could be, and were, refracted through the tension between the particular and the universal in diaspora identity as we have seen in the case of the JLC.

Finally, in recent years tensions between sections of the Jewish Canadian community reflect the persistence of a vibrant dissident tradition, as well as the diversity of opinion that has historically characterised the North American diaspora. At the same time, Jewish progressives have continued to be a prominent presence in movements around peace and human rights, in anti-racism activism, as well as in organised labour – many of whom draw on a history of progressive activism while responding to the realities of a diaspora that is no longer strictly ‘working class’. These matters are worth reflecting upon to understand current debates among Jews over the identity of the diaspora in Canada and elsewhere, their relationship with other minorities, as well as their relations with Israel and the Middle East conflict, which arguably has become a defining aspect of that identity. More so, they speak to contemporary issues surrounding Canada and the state’s relationship with the Jewish community, and the contributions that immigrants, including refugees from various conflict-torn places, have made in politics both here and back home.

How these dynamics unfold moving forward is beyond the scope of my research but deserves further inquiry.

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