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Present lense



Not a bad legal definition of Prime Minister Begin's autonomy plan. However, since the Israeli plan comes out against the "fostering" of self-determination, it remains to be seen whether the transitional period, which is in a sense a trusteeship, brings about precisely what Gerson advocates.

Gerson, a legal scholar currently with the U.S. Department of Justice, concentrates on the most controversial issues—land, curriculum, administration and the judiciary. It is a praiseworthy effort but at the same time offers a rather limited picture of the reality of life in the West Bank. A discussion of the legal changes in the economic and fiscal sphere would reveal the West Bank's full-scale integration into the Israeli system.

The historical portion of the book is less rewarding. The events leading to the 1947 partition resolution are related in too sketchy a manner. There are some unexplained omissions and some errors. For example, the Peel Commission suggested for the first time a "Corpus Separatum" status for

Jerusalem and not a "new Jerusalem and a corridor to it from the coast." There was no "escalating" Arab terrorism against the British in 1947. A reference to the Israeli-Jordanian treaty negotiations of 1950 is lacking. Moshe Dayan was chief of staff and not defense minister on the eve of the Suez expedition. And an assertion that the Israelis' strategic objective in 1956 was to establish a permanent line on the Suez because it "was more defensible than the 1949 armistice lines" is far-fetched.

Exhausted from his heroic effort to squeeze four decades of Palestinian history into a mere thirty pages, Gerson regains his breath and the subsequent discussion is once again lucid and scholarly. After all, history books on Palestine cover the entire spectrum, but legal treatises on Israel's military occupation are rare. In the end, Gerson's book is one of the best yet written on the subject.

Meron Benvenisti

North of the Border

PIONEERS, PEDLARS, AND PRAYER SHAWLS: THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE YUKON. *Cyril Edel Leonoff.* Victoria, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press. 255 pp. \$15.00

THE JEWS OF TORONTO: A HISTORY TO 1937. *Stephen A. Spiesman.* Toronto: McClelland and Steward. 380 pp. \$22.95

Meldola De Sola, the late nineteenth-century rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Montreal, wrote letters to the press under a variety of pseudonyms. Sometimes he went by the name "An American Jew." At other times he signed himself "Briton." And far less often than might be expected he revealed his true homeland, penning the name "Canadian."

Historian Michael Brown calls De Sola's three pseudonyms a reflection of the traditional identity crisis of Canadian Jews. Long after Canadian independence, Brown wrote in his recent doctoral dissertation, they remained "dependent upon and intimately connected with both England and the United States," veering sometimes toward the one, and sometimes toward the other. Only in the past few decades has this tradition begun to change. Echoing their fellow countrymen, Canadian Jews have declared their cultural independence and are beginning to look inward. They are demanding a Jewish identity of their very own.

Predictably, newly self-conscious Canadian Jews have set out in search of their past, their roots in the Northern Dominion. Canadian Jewish history, previously the domain of scarcely a dozen scholars and laymen, has finally begun to interest talented young Jewish students. In 1976 the Jewish Historical Society of Canada was born, spurred on, perhaps, by the American bicentennial. (More accurately, the society was reborn. A previous effort, twenty-five years earlier, ended in failure.) Within a year the society had begun to produce an attractive, semiannual, bilingual journal dealing with "all facets of Canadian

Marie Syrkin

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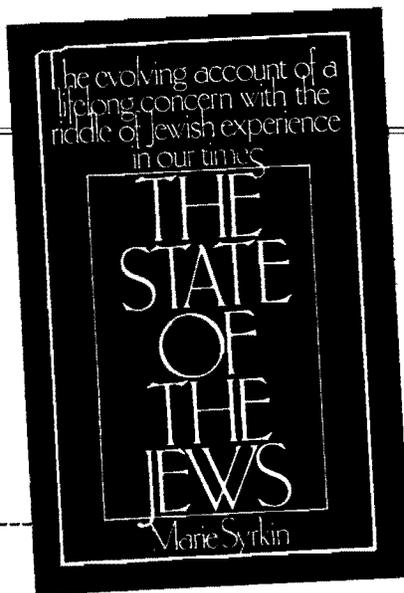
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roads to Palestine, that Zionists preferred Jewish refugees to perish than go to destinations other than Palestine. Despite efforts by Zionists to get the British to admit refugees to such places as Mauritius or other British-controlled areas, the British government refused. This was indeed tragic, particularly in the early stages of World War II, when the Germans, lacking a "final solution," were trying to deport Jews to any country that would take them. For example, in late 1940 the British refused to accept a group of Jews from Luxembourg who otherwise would be deported to Poland. In defense of this action, an official of the Foreign Office Refugee Section, Richard Latham, stated: "These particular refugees, pitiable as is their plight, are hardly war refugees in the sense that they are in danger because they have fought against the Germans, but [are] simply racial refugees." ugees.

Even the few Jews who managed to reach England during the war, as well as those who had come in the 1933-1939 period, encountered serious problems, for British officials tended to look upon them as enemy aliens rather than as a distinct persecuted group. The British actually interned a large number of German and Austrian Jews, and even deported many of them—along with known Nazis—to Canada. Similarly, the British were often insensitive to the plight of Polish Jews who wanted to serve in the British army instead of General Sikorski's anti-Semitic Polish army in England.

Other examples of British policy actions during World War II that worked to the detriment of the Jews were the failure of the British in B.B.C. broadcasts to occupied Europe to highlight Nazi atrocities against the Jews and the lack of British enthusiasm in 1944 for the possible rescue of Rumanian or Hungarian Jews. By this time the facts of the "Final Solution" were already well known; indeed, in a speech in Parliament on December 17, 1942, Eden denounced German atrocities against the Jews. Nonetheless, British officialdom was still not ready to help. In response to an American call to move ahead with plans for rescuing some 70,000 Rumanian Jews, the British Ministry of Economic Warfare declared: "The Foreign Office is con-

cerned with the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews, should they be rescued from enemy occupied country."

Wasserstein documents many more examples of this British insensitivity to the need for saving Jewish lives—from the disinclination by the British Air and Foreign Ministries to press for the bombing of Auschwitz to the British bureaucracy's reluctance, despite Churchill's urging, to establish a Jewish army made up of Palestinian Jews. Ironically, the only role that such British officials as Lord Moyne seemed interested in allowing Palestinian Jews to play involved parachuting some of them into Nazi-occupied Europe to help organize resistance groups. But Moyne (who would later be assassinated by the Stern Group) had an ulterior motive for approving the plan: "The scheme would remove from Palestine a number of active and resourceful Jews . . . the chance of many of them returning in the future to give trouble in Palestine seems slight."

What was at the heart of these British policies that led to the loss of so many Jewish lives in World War II? In the first place, Wasserstein states, saving Jews was very low on the list of British priorities during the war. Second, British policy reflected a preference for Arab over Jewish goodwill; although, as the war neared its end, there was far less need to appease the Arabs. In addition, as Wasserstein shows, the British tended to view the Jews as citizens of the European nations in which they lived, despite the fact that the Jews were being persecuted not as Poles or Czechs but as Jews.

Finally, one must point to the high level of anti-Semitism in British officialdom. While Wasserstein tends to deemphasize this factor, the documents he cites are rife with overt anti-Semitic statements, and many of the position papers to which he refers clearly reflect such attitudes.

Britain and the Jews of Europe is a solid work of scholarship and a major addition to the literature on the Holocaust. If it is read by government officials, perhaps it will prevent a repetition of the actions of British officialdom.

Robert O. Freedman

A Rare Analysis

ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK AND INTERNATIONAL LAW. Allan Gerson. London: Frank Cass. 285 pp. Appen. and maps. \$25.00.

When the Israelis and the Egyptians start negotiating the subject of Palestinian autonomy, two legal problems will threaten the talks: To which territory does the Camp David agreement apply, and what is the meaning of the term "transfer of authority"? On the first issue, the Israelis will claim that autonomy applies only to "Judea and Samaria," while the Egyptians will assert that the Self-Governing Authority will encompass all the areas east of the armistice line of 1948. What is the difference? Only a minor piece of real estate called Jerusalem. As for the transfer of authority, the Egyptians will demand an end to the state of occupation that Israel has enjoyed since 1967 and its replacement by an autonomous Palestinian governmental arrangement. Israel in turn will claim that the military government remains the source of power for five years, when a peace treaty will—it is hoped—be signed.

Both sides will benefit by consulting Allan Gerson's book on these and other related issues. The fact that both Israelis and Egyptians can find arguments in it to support their conflicting points of view is an indication of Gerson's serious approach.

Of particular interest is Gerson's development of the concept of "Trustee Occupant." Evidently written before the 1977-79 peace process, he advocates that Israel assume the role of a Trustee-Occupant in the occupied territories. He wants Israel to "be held responsible for fostering the political and economical self-determination of the region." He has doubts that Israel "is well suited for this task or that it has any natural competence to ensure that self-determination in the West Bank is furthered." Even so, he feels strongly that "Israel's own legitimate interests as well as those of all parties concerned would be best served were it to shed the mantle of belligerent occupant and take up instead that of trustee-occupant."

Jewish history." What was now needed were solidly documented books and dissertations, works to complement the pitifully few rigorous studies published since Benjamin Sack issued his pathbreaking *History of the Jews in Canada* in 1945.

Happily, the volumes have begun to appear. Among the doctoral dissertations are Michael Brown's—referred to above—which deals with the foundations of Canadian Jewish history in the period before the First World War; Jonathan V. Plaut's on the Jews of Windsor, Ontario; and Paula Jean Draper's, just short of completion, dealing with Jewish refugees interned in Canada during World War II. Still other works, including a major study of a province by Alti Rodal and David Rome, are in the works. With the recent publication by Canada's National Ethnic Archives of the *Guide to Sources For the Study of Canadian Jewry*, edited by Lawrence F. Tapper, listing some eighty-five manuscript collections, the study of the Jewish experience should receive great encouragement. (The Guide may be obtained by writing to the National Ethnic Archives, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Canada, K1A ON3.)

The two volumes under review here are products of this new interest in Canadian Jewish studies. The author of *Pioneers, Pedlars and Prayer Shawls* is founder and archivist of the recently formed Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia. Lenoff has produced a photographic study he hopes will offer "a broad-brushed picture of the growth and varied activities of the Jewish people in the Pacific Coast."

In 1858, one hundred Jews descended on the city of Victoria on the Pacific Coast, most of them in search of gold. Few found the instant wealth they sought, but business opportunities presented themselves and a community began to take shape. Eight years later a member of this community, Lumley Franklin, was elected mayor, the first Jew to hold this position in British North America. In Victoria, as in San Francisco to the south, Christians generally viewed Jews as fellow pioneers and treated them accordingly.

From Victoria, Jews fanned outward—to Nanaimo, the Yukon, the

coast and the interior. *Pioneers, Pedlars and Prayer Shawls* captures some of the forgotten worthies who blazed early trails, setting up stores and businesses along their route. But urban opportunities grew, and Jews turned their sights toward Vancouver, which rapidly became the preeminent Jewish city of the region. After Vancouver became the Pacific terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway—a development for which part credit is given to David Oppenheimer, a Jewish mayor of the city—East European Jewish refugees began arriving in Vancouver. By 1918 their influence in the community had become predominant. The pioneers were outnumbered. Rapidly, Leonoff brings us to the present, when 95 percent of British Columbia's 12,000 Jews live in the Greater Victoria area.

Sadly, the quality of the photographs is uneven, and the explanatory text is episodic and often disappointingly brief. Even so, the tale of Jewish communities in British Columbia and the Yukon is worth telling. We join Leonoff in the hope that his effort will stimulate someone to write a full-scale "definitive study" of British Columbia's Jews. Apparently, much valuable raw material is available.

When such a history of Jews in British Columbia is written, one hopes it will approach the quality of Stephen Speisman's *The Jews of Toronto*. Begun as a dissertation at the University of Toronto, this volume certainly ranks among the best Jewish community studies ever written.

Speisman traces the Toronto Jewish community to its origins in the 1830s. By 1856 the Toronto Hebrew Congregation had been formed—now known by the curious name of Holy Blossom (even Speisman is unable to shed any light on the origin of the name). Remarkably, this synagogue was able to accommodate—though uneasily—both traditionalists and reformers into the early twentieth century. (During the same period Toronto maintained a precarious balance between its English and American identities.)

Like most Jewish communities in the Western world, Toronto's was fundamentally changed by the arrival of Eastern European immigrants in the 1880s. A city of just over 500 Jews in 1881, the Jewish community grew to 3,000 in 1901 and was ten times that

size in 1913. These new immigrants earned their living by peddling, picking rags and entering the clothing trades. Theirs was a hard life, but they found time for friends and *landsmanshaften*, their benefit societies. Still, the Toronto community's history is marked by turbulence—squabbles among immigrants, quarrels in the synagogue, and occasionally riots in the streets—especially when street corner preachers tried to convert them. A 1911 anticonversion disturbance led to injuries, arrests and complaints of police brutality. Violence, seemingly triggered by insignificant events, was the immigrant's desperate attempt to fight back against a frustrating, seemingly unjust world.

Speisman is at his best in dealing with Jewish-Christian relations in Toronto; no author of a Jewish community study has ever treated the subject of Christian missions so extensively and with such accuracy. Speisman has also shown great sensitivity in reconstructing and keeping separate the variegated concerns and problems of Jews of different areas and different economic classes in Toronto, avoiding community-wide generalizations. One wishes this volume extended its inquiry past 1937, for World War II had an important impact on Toronto life. But Speisman argues convincingly that by 1937 the Jewish community had matured and unified. Toronto's recent past then deserves a study all to itself.

The book's one drawback is its lack of quantitative data, tables dealing with the population, migration and European origins of Speisman's community. Still, what Speisman has accomplished is no mean feat. *The Jews of Toronto* exploits hitherto untapped documentary sources, especially newspapers and city records. It asks hitherto unasked questions about communal divisions and subsequent reunification after World War I. The new field of Canadian Jewish history can be proud indeed of this scholarly addition.

Jonathan D. Sarna