

**“One shudders to think what might happen to German Jewry”:
Vancouver Newspapers and Canadian Attitudes towards
Nazi Antisemitism, 1933-1935**

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the attitudes and responses of Canadians to the Nazis' antisemitism during the early years of the Third Reich, using Vancouver and the Vancouver press as a point of focus. In addition to providing greater understanding of the public response to Nazi Germany during this period, this research also carries larger implications regarding how attitudes towards the Third Reich may reflect broader notions of Canadian identity and Canadian Jewish identity. In particular, this study demonstrates that responses to Nazi Germany were fundamentally shaped by Canada's longstanding ties to Great Britain. Vancouverites shaped their response to the Nazis from a pro-British, anti-fascist standpoint, rejecting the Nazis' antisemitism as symbolic of the barbarity of fascism itself. Because their condemnation stemmed from this anti-fascist position, Vancouverites did not have to reconcile their opposition to the Nazis with their own racism. Vancouver Jewry, however, were forced to lead a schizophrenic existence, caught between their ethnic obligations and their identity as Canadian citizens. Within the community, Canadian Jews expressed fears about the pervasive antisemitism in Canada and upheld the persecution of their brethren in Nazi Germany as a possible portent of their own future; outwardly, though, Canadian Jewry expressed a confident Canadianness and ignored the problem of domestic antisemitism, ensuring that their appeals for public and government support were visibly rooted in an obligation to intervene in Germany not as Jews, but as Canadians defending basic democratic principles.

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Dedication

To my family, and to all of my teachers over the years who helped to instil in me a love of learning and of history.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandfather, Wolf Studniberg, *z"l*, who survived.

Introduction

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and set into motion a series of events that would lead a short six years later to a world war and the near annihilation of European Jewry. Indeed, Hitler wasted no time in initiating a National Socialist revolution in Germany. In late February 1933, a fire in the Reichstag, possibly set by Communists, resulted in an emergency decree that effectively invested Hitler with dictatorial powers. Despite restrictions imposed upon Germany by the Allied victors of the First World War, the country began to rearm under Hitler's rule. Beginning in April 1933, the Nazis also enacted their first series of anti-Jewish measures: a week after initiating a nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1, 1933, the new regime demanded the dismissal of Jews from the German civil service and, several weeks following this expulsion, called for the large-scale burnings of books written by Jews and other "enemies" of the Reich. July 1935 saw a violent antisemitic riot break out in the heart of Berlin's most fashionable district; this popular agitation was followed a few months later by a renewed wave of restrictions against German Jews, embodied in the infamous Nuremberg Laws which deprived Jews of their citizenship. Clearly, Germany was marching forward in a new direction, under new—and extreme—leadership.

Despite the geographical distance, Canada did not exist in isolation from these developments. While Ottawa navigated a diplomatic path with the new Germany, the Canadian public learned about and responded to the Third Reich in a variety of ways. Using Vancouver and the Vancouver press as a point of focus, this study examines the responses of the general Canadian public to Nazi Germany, specifically the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures, during the first few years of Hitler's rule. Questions of culpability, of why Canadians or Canadian Jews could or could not have done more to help German Jews during the 1930s, are not important here; rather, this research is focused less on how Canadians responded to Nazi Germany and more on how these responses point to larger issues of what it meant to be Canadian at a time when dictatorship seemed to be the order of the day in much of the world. Thus, it is Canada and the average Canadian who are the primary actors here; Nazi Germany is almost secondary to this analysis, and Hitler serves merely as a catalyst. What is important is how the sabre-rattling and Jew-baiting of the Nazis provoked Canadians, an ocean and an entire continent away, to respond specifically as Canadians.

Vancouver presents an interesting case study. Historians have called Vancouver an "instant city"; changes which normally occur over several generations were, in Vancouver,

“telescoped” into a few short years.¹ In 1886, the area only had one thousand residents, but by 1931 the city housed a population of over 250 000.² Vancouver’s rapid growth distinguished itself from other Canadian cities, but the city was also unique in other ways. As historian Walter Sage maintains, “The figures clearly show that British Columbia was *British* in the broadest sense of the term.”³ Norbert MacDonald explains in his comparative history of Seattle and Vancouver that British immigrants accounted for “a disproportionately large number of Vancouver’s business leaders and civic bureaucrats,” and over time helped “shape the city’s economy, labor organization, political life, and educational system.”⁴ Vancouver’s Britishness lent the city a distinct ambience. While other Canadian cities like Toronto and Halifax were also very British in character, Vancouver’s British majority actually became more dominant during the first few decades of the twentieth century, helping to make the city one of the least ethnically diverse in the country.⁵ With the exception of large Chinese and Japanese communities, early 20th-century Vancouver could claim a preponderance of white, English-speaking Protestants. After the British, Germans and Scandinavians made up the largest ethnic group in the city, about six per cent of the total population in 1911.⁶

Given Vancouver’s ethnic composition and its growing importance in 1930s Canada, it is surprising that there has not been a study that examines the reactions of Vancouverites to developments in the Third Reich. While some scholars have considered antisemitism in Western Canada,⁷ most major studies on Canadian Jewish history tend to focus on the larger metropolitan

¹ Norbert MacDonald, *Distant Neighbors: A Comparative History of Seattle & Vancouver* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 31.

² Graeme Wynn, “The rise of Vancouver,” in *Vancouver and Its Region*, eds. Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 69.

³ Walter N. Sage, “British Columbia Becomes Canadian, 1871-1901,” in *Historical Essays on British Columbia*, eds. J. Frieson and H. K. Ralston (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1980), 64.

⁴ MacDonald, *Distant Neighbors*, 60.

⁵ Census results from 1921 and 1931 also show that central and northern European groups had the highest intermarriage rates (that is, marriage with the British/Canadian majority) and the lowest mother-tongue retention rates, suggesting that Germans were more assimilated into Vancouver’s mainstream British culture than other ethnic groups. In contrast, Vancouver’s Jewish community, small when compared with the major Jewish centres in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg, exhibited the highest endogamy rates of any ethnic group in the city (although resistance to marriage outside of the community was, and remains, a trait common to Jewry almost everywhere). Nevertheless, Vancouver Jewry was highly interwoven into the city’s social, political and economic fabric. See Edward N. Herberg, *Ethnic Groups in Canada: Adaptations and Transitions* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1989), 46, 103, 109.

⁶ MacDonald, *Distant Neighbors*, 59.

⁷ For works which focus either wholly or in part upon antisemitism in Western Canada, see Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) and Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000). For other works on antisemitism in Canada, see Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1990); Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd.,

centres of Montreal and Toronto, where the majority of Canada's Jewish population has long been based. There has been relatively little attention paid to Jewish issues in Vancouver. In focusing on the city, this paper is thus partly aimed at redirecting some scholarly attention to Western Canada. But there is also a wider relevance to studying Vancouver: its particular British character and West Coast location aside, Vancouver can be easily compared to other major cities. After all, many of Vancouverites' responses to Nazi Germany, including holding mass protest meetings and organising boycotts of German goods, were not unique to Vancouver but could be observed in Toronto, Montreal, New York or London as well; and, for its part, the Vancouver Jewry tended to follow the example set by larger Jewish communities in eastern Canada. At the same time, however, the uniqueness of the city's ethnic relations and its frontier history makes Vancouver a particularly interesting place to study.⁸ Vancouver's large Japanese and Chinese populations and the pervasive anti-Orientalism among the city's Anglo-Saxon majority meant that Vancouver's Jews were largely spared the antisemitism facing their co-religionists elsewhere in the country. It is possible that the relatively more Jew-friendly atmosphere in Vancouver shaped the public's response to the Nazis' antisemitism in a particular way. Finally, Vancouver is also important because of its very secondary position: by examining how the people of Vancouver, far removed from the halls of power in Ottawa, learned about and responded to events in Nazi Germany, one can learn a great deal about basic public attitudes.

Just as there is a lack of scholarship on Vancouver and Western Canadian Jewish history, there is a sparse historiography on Canadian responses to Nazi Germany more generally. Irving Abella and Harold Troper have led the way with their foundational study, *None Is Too Many*, a highly critical account of the Canadian government's restrictive response to the Jewish refugee crisis during the 1930s. While Abella and Troper do provide a detailed picture of the pervasive

2000); Paula Jean Draper, "The Politics of Refugee Immigration: The Pro-Refugee Lobby and the Interned Refugees 1940-1944" *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 7, no. 2 (1983): 74-88; Richard Menkis, "Antisemitism in the Evolving Nation: From New France to 1950," in *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds. Frank Dimant and Ruth Klein, 31-51 (Toronto: Institute for International Affairs, B'nai Brith Canada, 2001); David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties: On Antisemitism In Canada, 1929-1939: A Chapter on Canadian Jewish History*, Section 3 (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, 1977); and Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 126-144, 220-239 and 301-312.

⁸ Robert A.J. McDonald notes that early 20th-century Vancouver retained elements of its "frontier" past to a greater degree than other North American cities. The result, McDonald implies, was that Vancouver society remained relatively open and fluid. See Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), xii. In general, a review of the existing historiography on Vancouver reveals a tendency to focus on the pioneer days of the late nineteenth century, when Vancouver transitioned from a frontier outpost to a booming railway terminus. Those works that do address early 20th-century Vancouver revolve around questions of racial and ethnic tensions between Vancouver's predominant Anglo-Saxon population and the city's Chinese and Japanese communities.

antisemitism present in Canadian society at the time, their focus is mostly on the anti-Jewish leanings of high-ranking government officials and on the stymied efforts of Canadian Jewry to secure refuge for their beleaguered brethren in Europe. Other studies of the Canadian response are similarly focused on particular groups, at the expense of an analysis of general public attitudes.⁹ Moreover, there are only a handful of works which explore the response of the Canadian press to Nazi Germany: David Goutor's article on the Canadian media and the Holocaust examines the "poverty of coverage" of the genocide of European Jews found in Canadian papers during the final stages of the war, while Cyril Levitt and William Shaffir draw extensively on both the mainstream and Jewish press in their analysis of the 1933 Christie Pits riot in Toronto. There is a larger body of work on the response of the American media: Deborah Lipstadt and Laurel Leff have both published notable works on the coverage of the Holocaust in mainstream American papers, and a handful of scholars including Arthur Morse and Rafael Medoff have created detailed accounts of the response of American Jewry to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.¹⁰

However, most of these studies on reactions to the Nazi regime tend to gloss over the early years of the Third Reich in favour of focusing on the intensification of Jewish persecution during the late 1930s and during the war. Much, though, can be gained from an examination of early responses to Nazi Germany, because it is these initial reactions which set the tone for later responses to the Nazis, including the Holocaust itself. The early 1930s are also fascinating because of the state of minority relations in Canada at the time. Indeed, early 20th-century Canada was far from a welcoming, multicultural place, as race riots in Vancouver's Chinatown and antisemitic incidents in Montreal and Toronto can attest. There is a considerable body of

⁹ See, for example, Alan Davies and Marilyn F. Nefsky, *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight during the Nazi Era* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Max Beer has also produced a Master's thesis on the response of the Montreal Jewish community, including the local press, to the Holocaust. See Max Beer, *What Else Could We Have Done?: The Montreal Jewish Community, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Jewish Press and the Holocaust*. Master's thesis, Concordia University, 2006. For more scholarship on the Canadian response, see David Goutor, "The Canadian Media and the 'Discovery' of the Holocaust, 1944-1945" *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études juives canadiennes* 4-5 (1996-1997): 88-119 and Cyril H. Levitt and William Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits*. (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987). Historiography on the American response to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust includes: Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Laurel Leff, *Buried by The Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Random House, 1968.); Rafael Medoff, *The Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1987); and Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust 1938-1944* (Bridgeport, CT: Hartmore House, 1985).

scholarship on racism and prejudice in early 20th-century Canada,¹¹ but no work consciously asks the question of how reactions to an openly racist and exclusionary regime in Germany—at a time when nativist sentiments had reached a fever pitch at home—may or may not have provoked Canadians to come to terms with their own discriminatory predilections. For these reasons, this study is focused on early responses to the Nazi regime, during the first three years of Hitler’s rule from 1933 to 1935.

One cannot fully examine the Vancouver response to Nazi Germany, though, without considering what it was that Vancouverites were reading and saying about the Third Reich. Newspapers are an ideal resource in this pursuit, since, particularly in the early 1930s, they stood as one of the primary ways that people accessed information about world and local events. Famed media theorist Marshall McLuhan writes that each type of media impinges upon people’s senses in unique ways;¹² for their part, newspapers have an indelible influence on the public

¹¹ Scholarship on racism and nativism in Canada during the early 20th century tends to focus on three main topics: antisemitism, anti-Orientalism and anti-radicalism. Tangential to this scholarship on antisemitism is a body of work on fascist groups which emerged in Canada during this time. See for examples Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978) and Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). For scholarship on anti-radicalism in Canada during this period, see Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1988). Nativism was also shaped in a significant way by the tides of war. For scholarship on the treatment of German Canadians during the two world wars, please see John Herd Thompson, “Ethnic Minorities During Two World Wars.” *Canada’s Ethnic Group Series*. Booklet No. 19 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991); Donald Avery, “Ethnic and Class Relations in Western Canada during the First World War: A Case Study of European Immigrants and Anglo-Canadian Nativism,” in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David MacKenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 272-299; Robert H. Keyserlink, “The Canadian Government’s Attitude Toward Germans and German Canadians in World War II” *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada* 16, no. 1 (1984): 16-28, and Mary Halloran, “Ethnicity, the State and War: Canada and Its Ethnic Minorities, 1939-45” *International Migration Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 159-167. For a more theoretical analysis of nativism, particularly its impact on immigration policy, see Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1982), Gurcham S. Basran, “Canadian Immigration Policy and Theories of Racism,” in *Racial Minorities in Multicultural Canada*, eds. Peter S. Li and B. Singh Bolaria, 3-14. Toronto: Garmond Press, 1983; Franca Iacovetta, “The Writing of English Canadian Immigrant History” *Canada’s Ethnic Group Series*. Booklet No. 22 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1997); William H. Katerberg, “The Irony of Identity: An Essay on Nativism, Liberal Democracy, and Parochial Identities in Canada and the United States” *American Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (Sept 1995): 493-524, and Reg Whitaker, “Canadian Immigration Policy Since Confederation.” *Canada’s Ethnic Group Series*. Booklet No. 15 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991). Finally, it is important to note that nativism took a different form in Quebec, where French Canadian nationalism replaced pro-British attitudes. There is a sub-body of literature that discusses the impact of French Canadian nationalism during this period on minorities. For an example of how antisemitism in interwar Quebec was shaped by this movement, see Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and extremist right-wing nationalism in Quebec from 1929 to 1939*, trans. Madeleine Hébert, Claire Rothman and Käthe Roth (Montreal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1993) and Jacques Langlais and David Rome, *Jews and French Quebecers: Two Hundred Years of Shared History*, Barbara Young, trans. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1991).

¹² McLuhan also describes newspapers as being “inseparable from the democratic process.” See Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 45 and Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964), 188. For more on the

sphere. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas maintains that the press, as a public institution, “did not claim to *be* the public, but to *speak for* the public.”¹³ To Habermas, newspapers not only serve as the mouthpiece of the public but also fulfil an important function as an educator of the public; furthermore, the press also offers a platform for the masses, a window of access to the public sphere itself.¹⁴ Brian McNair follows with this idea in his study of the relationship between journalism and democracy. For McNair, letters to the editor stand as “relatively unmediated representation[s] within the public sphere *of* the public,” and newspapers in this way provide “a space in which the debate can take place *between* citizens.”¹⁵ But the place of the mass press in the public sphere also means that newspapers are in some ways mediated institutions: as Habermas notes, the newspaper publisher is not only “a merchant of news” but also, and perhaps most importantly, “a dealer in public opinion.”¹⁶ McNair agrees, stating that since the late 19th century journalists have “added to their core function of reportage and information-relay the intellectual labour of interpretation—making sense for their audience of an ever more complex world.”¹⁷ In other words, the press began to shape public opinion through the very act of informing.

Habermas has noted that, with the expansion of the public sphere throughout the course of the 20th century, the driving force of journalism devolved from serving the public interest to the pursuit of profit; in the early 1930s, however, it is clear that newspapermen regarded their profession as very much a noble one and saw their papers as an integral part of the social fabric. Certainly, the editorial staff at the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Vancouver Daily Province* and the *Jewish Western Bulletin*—the three papers examined in detail here—believed their publications fulfilled a valuable service. To Robert Cromie, owner and publisher of the *Sun* from 1912 until his death in 1936, his newspaper both “furnished the raw material of sound public opinion”¹⁸ and operated

media, its development in Canadian history and its relationship with government and the public, please see Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978); Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2000); Edward, Gerald, J. *The Social Responsibility of the Press* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); James Curran, “What Democracy Requires of the Media,” in *The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 120-140; Arnold Edinborough, “The Press,” in *Mass Media In Canada*, ed. John A. Irving (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962): 15-28.

¹³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁵ Brian McNair, *Journalism and Democracy: An evaluation of the political public sphere* (London: Routledge, 2000), 108.

¹⁶ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 182.

¹⁷ McNair, *Journalism and Democracy*, 61.

¹⁸ “No Substitute for Daily Newspaper,” *Vancouver Sun*, March 15, 1933, 2.

as the public's voice, encompassing the mood and attitudes of general society. Newspapers, particularly his own, brought "the whole world to every man's doorstep" and were thus "the greatest single educative force on earth today."¹⁹ The *Vancouver Daily Province* may not have been quite as openly boastful, but its editorial staff similarly described their paper as "an independent, clean newspaper for the home, devoted to public service."²⁰ Building on this theme of public service, advertisements to attract subscribers stated that the newspaper "reflects the ambitions, the life and the spirit of Vancouver people...It is the paper that thinks and works for VANCOUVER and for THIS END OF CANADA."²¹ The *Sun* and the *Daily Province* brought Vancouver closer to the world, countering any trend towards isolationism that the city's West Coast location might otherwise have nurtured. The *Jewish Western Bulletin*, the main organ of British Columbia's Jewish community since 1930, fulfilled a similar purpose for Vancouver's Jews. The editors declared that the *Bulletin* "has sought to bring its readers in close touch with the happenings of Jewry the world over—to awaken Jewish consciousness—and to bring its readers in perfect unity."²²

Maintaining, then, both Habermas' theoretical framework and the perspectives of Vancouver's own newspapermen, this study upholds the press as both an important public service and a window into public opinion. But, even if one were to put aside Habermas, it remains clear that newspapers in the 1930s exerted a considerable influence on the development of public opinion by selecting and disseminating the information which entered into the mind of the masses: to adopt Deborah Lipstadt's dictum, even if the press did not determine what the public thought, it did nevertheless influence what the public thought *about*.²³ Of course,

¹⁹ "A Newspaper Service," *Vancouver Sun*, July 25, 1933, editorial, 6.

²⁰ Editorial, *Vancouver Daily Province*, January 1, 1933, 6.

²¹ "The Voice of Vancouver," *Vancouver Sun*, September 30, 1933, 1.

²² Editorial, *Bulletin*, April 13, 1933, 2. Considering that this study is inherently transnational in scope, it is worth pausing here to consider the Vancouver papers in an international context. Although the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* had a full staff, complete with foreign correspondents stationed in England and in continental Europe, the papers could not claim the widespread readership and certain cachet that bigger name papers like the *New York Times* and the *London Daily Herald* enjoyed. Both mainstream Vancouver papers subscribed to wire services and frequently printed stories from the *Times* and *Daily Herald*. These outsourced stories were typically reports on important developments in European locales where the Vancouver papers did not have their own journalists stationed. The fact that the *Sun* and *Daily Province* drew on other publications for stories underlines the editors' dedication to providing their readers with a comprehensive picture of current affairs.

²³ In analysing these newspapers' coverage of Nazi Germany I have looked for guidance to existing scholarship on the press' response to the Holocaust. Deborah Lipstadt's 1986 book, *Beyond Belief*, examines the American press' coverage of events in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945, while Laurel Leff's more recent work, *Buried by The Times*, adopts a more specific focus in examining the way the *New York Times* minimised the Holocaust in its reporting. Both Lipstadt and Leff insist that the way the press told the story of Nazi antisemitism shaped the American reaction. Leff places a heavy burden on the *New York Times*, one of America's most important papers, for

newspapers also do shape public opinion, both explicitly, through editorials and biases in reporting, and implicitly, in terms of the placement of certain news features within the paper itself. Accordingly, in analysing the coverage of Nazi Germany in the Vancouver press, this study will consider both the specific content of the reporting as well as the discursive way in which the information was presented within the pages of the newspapers themselves. By using the *Vancouver Sun*, *Vancouver Daily Province* and the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, this paper seeks to discover the extent to which developments in the Third Reich penetrated the awareness of Canadians and what Canadians decided to do with their knowledge of what was unfolding in Hitler's Germany.

Since it is a central premise of this study that reactions to Nazi Germany reveal a great deal about self-held attitudes towards Canada, it is important to understand how Canadians regarded themselves before it is possible to fully contextualise responses to Nazi Germany. In *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71*, José Igartua provides a potentially valuable framework for analysing Canadian responses. Igartua argues that, in the years following the Second World War, English Canada shed its definition of itself as British. This shift, he explains, can be represented in the decline of ethnic notions of nationalism (rooted in genealogical and racial ties) and the subsequent rise of civic nationalism (rooted in a common culture or ideology and the legal and political equality of members). For Igartua, the dominant rhetoric in Canada prior to the 1960s was both ethnic and civic: there was a common perception that Britishness was something that even “lesser” ethnic groups could rally around.²⁴ By applying Igartua's breakdown of ethnic and civic nationalism to the period in question here, it becomes evident that interwar nativism was in effect a manifestation of ethnic nationalism, the upholding of a Canadian identity grounded on notions of superiority of British institutions and culture. It is important to note that Canadian citizenship did not exist as such in the 1930s; rather, Canadians were legally and officially regarded as Canadian nationals and British subjects, and they remained so until the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946 recognised Canadian citizenship as a distinct legal category. In the years preceding the Second World War, then, Canadians were not only connected to Britain by historical ties but were, in a sense, British themselves.

This paper argues that press and public opinion regarding the Nazis' antisemitism, for both Jew and Gentile, was filtered through this nationalist lens, shaped by recognition of

treating the Nazis' persecution of Jews “as routine, back-page fodder” and thus contributing to the United States' indifference to the plight of European Jewry. See Leff, *Buried by The Times*, 108 and Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*.

²⁴ José E. Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 35.

Canada's identity as a British dominion. Attitudes towards Hitler and his regime were based upon a fundamental disagreement with dictatorship and fascism specifically, as political systems which contradicted British (and Canadian) ideals of peace, order and good government. Hitler's violent antisemitism was seen as a tiny facet of a system that on the whole was regarded as quite oppressive; Jews were looped in with Catholics, Communists and Socialists as one among many groups targeted by the Nazis. The Nazis' antisemitism was criticised by Vancouverites from this general anti-fascist standpoint, despite the fact that anti-Jewish feeling was quite strong throughout Canada at the time. Hitler's anti-Jewish measures were taken as proof of the barbarity of fascism more generally, with the treatment of Jews in Germany standing in stark contrast to the perceived convivial home Jews found in British lands like Canada. Vancouver's Jewish community also upheld the Nazis' antisemitism as evidence of the regressive nature of fascism. However, although confident in their good fortune to find a home in Canada, Vancouver's Jews at the same time were wary of increasing antisemitic incidents across the country. Caught between their self-proclaimed identity as Canadians, complete with the proud British heritage such an identity entailed, and their status as a repeatedly discriminated against people, Vancouver's Jews existed in a liminal space in which any call to action against Nazi Germany's atrocities had to be framed within the need to act both as Jews looking out for their brethren and as freedom-loving Canadians defending democracy itself.

Background: General Attitudes towards Hitler and Nazi Germany

Although this study is primarily concerned with Canadian attitudes towards the Nazis' antisemitism, it would be useful to first develop a clear understanding of general responses to Hitler and Nazi Germany, since responses to Nazi racial policies followed larger patterns of thought regarding the Third Reich. Above all else, National Socialism was seen to be fundamentally opposed to basic Canadian values of liberty and democracy. In the pages of the Vancouver papers and in the minds of the Vancouver public, a binary of dictatorship versus democracy came to define the politics of the 1930s. Commentary on Nazi Germany—or Fascist Italy or Soviet Russia—included, almost as a matter of course, lamentations for the apparent passing of democracy. In the fall of 1935, nearly three years after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the *Vancouver Sun*'s editors noted despairingly that, with all the dictatorships emerging in Europe, it seemed as though “the human race has managed to get itself into a very dark sort of blind alley.” Indeed, the paper offered a discouraging diagnosis of the world

situation: “The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune have piled so heavily into the carcass of Democracy lately that many people are beginning to believe that the grand old lady is dead. The forces of Fascism have been spearing her without mercy. And Communism has all but displayed her severed head on a pike pole.”²⁵ The people of Vancouver looped Nazi Germany together with the world’s other totalitarian states at the time. In the minds of Canadians, fascism was simply the flip side of communism: both were totalitarian regimes, and both therefore represented (in the opinion of the *Province* editors) “a pathological condition, a malady which overtakes peoples when they despair of their capacity to govern themselves.”²⁶ Regardless which extreme of the political spectrum it happened to fall along, dictatorship was equated by the Vancouver press and public with instability and chaos.

Initially, though, the press did not take the Nazis very seriously. The Vancouver papers at first dismissed Hitler, who was, after all, one of many demagogues shaking his fist on the European stage at the time. During the first few months of Hitler’s rule, none of the Vancouver papers thought much of his staying power. In its first issue after Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor in late January 1933, the *Jewish Western Bulletin* did not even have an article marking this change in government in Germany, even though the position of German Jews featured prominently in the paper’s general coverage. Editorial staff at the *Bulletin* dismissed Hitler, confident that “the wave of Hitlerism” would soon pass, while the *Sun* insisted weeks before Hitler even came to power that the Nazi leader appeared “to be slipping towards eclipse with his moment in the sun having ended.”²⁷ Shortly after Hitler came to power, the *Sun*’s editorial staff responded to the new Chancellor’s threat to violently crush all opponents by declaring, with more than a little bit of humour, that “we are constrained to think that under his administration more tongues will wag than heads will roll.”²⁸ Not-so-subtle remarks like these make it clear that, during this initial period, the *Sun* on the whole thought that Hitler was full of hot air. Both the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* took this doubt a step further, reporting on the possibility of the reestablishment of the imperial system in Germany. On February 18, 1933, the *Province* ran an article describing Princess Hermine, wife of the former Kaiser, arriving in Berlin to meet with government officials about the possible restoration of the monarchy, seeming to

²⁵ See “Dictators Lead, People Push,” *Vancouver Sun*, September 27, 1935, editorial, 6, and “Democracy, The Fighting Faith,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 1, 1935, editorial, 6.

²⁶ “Saluting All the Colors,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, February 16, 1935, editorial, 6.

²⁷ “The Difficult Problem the Jewish Youth in Germany Are Facing,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, February 2, 1933, and “Brown Shirts Fade,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 21, 1933, Sunday Magazine, 10.

²⁸ “Pulling Hitler’s Teeth,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 31, 1933, editorial, 4.

ignore altogether the fact that Germany already had a government under Hitler. If anything, *Sun* journalists believed that “Adolf Hitler and his Nazis” would speed up “a growing, solidifying nationalistic spirit that works for the return of the former Prussian ruling family.”²⁹

A year and a half into Hitler’s rule, the *Province* was still expressing the hope that Germans would come to realise how ridiculous fascism was, writing that it could not be long “before the German people themselves realize that some of these things [the Nazis do] are essentially ridiculous.”³⁰ Canadians only reluctantly came to accept that Hitler enjoyed popular support, as reports began to come in from Germany depicting the intense hold Hitler seemed to have over the German people. “Word pictures” from correspondents who travelled to Germany each espoused the same basic idea: that Germany had undergone a dramatic transformation under Hitler, and that this change was thorough and portentous. Journalist Morris Gilbert, writing from Germany in August 1933, stated that the Nazi leader’s support was so absolute that no one could deny that “Germany today belongs to Adolf Hitler.”³¹ Jotting down his observations from the Nazis’ annual Nuremberg rally in the summer of 1933, Gilbert described a nation enraptured:

After five months of absolute Hitlerism, Germany today is in the throes of a camp-meeting revolution. Millions of the population have hit the political sawdust trail with whooping and hallelujahs, brown-shirted arms flung out in the Nazi salute. They are turning Hitlerism into religion, religion into Hitlerism. It is hysterical and bewildering. With all the energy of a great and vigorous race, they are proclaiming that this is the Promised Land for Germans, and that Adolph Hitler is their prophet and their guide. ... everywhere are streaming banners—red-white-and-black of the Old German Empire, flame-red of the National-Socialist dictatorship.³²

Hitler’s mass appeal was undeniable, and his popular support made the situation incredibly grave. “It would be very foolish of us to disregard its strength merely because we do not like it,”³³ the *Sun* warned its readers. Despite their own misgivings about fascism as a political system, by the summer of 1933 Vancouverites could no longer deny that National Socialism possessed considerable political force and that the situation in Germany was very serious. “We may or may not like Hitler,” newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst stated, as quoted in

²⁹ See “Ex-Kaiserin In Berlin; May Discuss Politics With Hitler Followers,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, February 18, 1933, 2, and “Mankind Must Learn Mastery of the Machine,” *Vancouver Sun*, February 20, 1933, 2.

³⁰ “Democracy by Default,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, June 11, 1934, editorial, 6.

³¹ Morris Gilbert, “Militarism Speeds Nazi Revolution,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 25, 1933, Sunday Magazine, 3, and Morris Gilbert, “Hitler Exploits War Grievance to Strengthen His Hold on Germany,” *Vancouver Sun*, September 2, 1933, Sunday Magazine, 3.

³² Morris Gilbert, “Militarism Speeds Nazi Revolution,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 25, 1933, Sunday Magazine, 3.

³³ Clifford Sharp, “Hitler’s Strength,” *Vancouver Sun*, September 2, 1933, 2.

the *Province*, “but if you are in Germany the fact is obvious, indeed unavoidable, that the vast majority of the German people do like him and do support him aggressively and emotionally.”³⁴

Increasing recognition of Hitler’s power was accompanied by increasing awareness of the tyrannical and militaristic nature of his regime. Reports coming out of the country hinted at a sinister militarism that had taken root under the Nazi regime. Morris Gilbert described a country “indulging in a riot of militarismus [sic]. Salutes! Heil Hitler! Salutes again! The heel-clicking at public meetings is so persistent that it would be funny if it were not so sinister.” The Third Reich, Gilbert concluded, “is based on a powerful and fundamental purpose...the revival of the proud, greedy German war-demand of 1914 for ‘a place in the sun.’”³⁵ It was feared that the Nazis’ aggressive militarism would open the door for another major war. Commentators spoke of Europe as “nothing less than a slumbering volcano,” while newspaper headlines screamed about “Storm Clouds Over Europe” and the world’s alarm as “German Militarism Grows More Defiant.”³⁶ In August 1934 a *Province* editorial similarly called Germany “the great question mark written across the dark and unquiet sky of Europe.”³⁷ Reflective of the city’s British roots, the Vancouver press upheld Britain as the “sheet anchor”³⁸ keeping everything together and Germany as the *enfant terrible* rocking the boat. Vancouver citizenry largely fell behind this depiction, although some residents of German background spoke out against what they perceived

³⁴ “Nazi ‘Diggers’ Drilling,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, November 10, 1934, 7.

³⁵ Morris Gilbert, “Militarism Speeds Nazi Revolution,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 25, 1933, Sunday Magazine, 3.

³⁶ See “Europe a Slumbering Volcano,” *Vancouver Sun*, July 27, 1934, editorial, 6; “Germany Faces New Chaos By Hitler’s Folly,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 13, 1933, 1; and “Europe Alarmed as German Militarism Grows More Defiant,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 12, 1933, 1.

³⁷ “I Am Germany,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, August 3, 1934, editorial, 6.

³⁸ See “Britain Fears Only Miracle Can Prevent Warfare In Europe,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 12, 1933, 1. As this drama unfolded in Europe, Canadian attitudes towards war itself remained decidedly mixed. Most Canadians opposed war on the grounds of its terrible human costs, and this was the dominant message found in the Vancouver papers. In the summer of 1934, the 20th anniversary marking the beginning of the First World War received considerable coverage in the Vancouver press, with the papers expressing the hope that a reminder of the horrors of the last war would be enough to deter another one. Doing its most to ensure that this point would get across, the *Sun* published a series of photos from the Great War “as a moral lesson on the foul horrors of war.” The paper’s editors stated that “no one can examine them without feeling that warfare, stripped of its tinsel and hysteria, is a filthy and unnecessary business” (see “War’s Horrors In Picture,” *Vancouver Sun*, February 1, 1934, editorial, 6). This dread of war, however, was countered by the determination of Canadians to defend democracy against the dark forces of fascism. In May 1935, a local church leader spoke out against the forces of “Communism, Fascism and Hitlerism,” warning that “the tramp of marching feet can be heard all around the world today.” His message, which seemed to resonate with many Vancouverites, was that Canadians needed to “organize the peace forces before the others get out of control” (see “Says War Would Involve Canada,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 15, 1935, 14). Echoing this idea a couple of weeks later in a letter to the *Province*, a young Canadian stated that “we do not want war,” but that, “if driven to an issue, it is better to be able to defend ourselves rather than to be overthrown and slaughtered.” Another writer, this time to the *Vancouver Sun*, rejected pacifism on the grounds that “no man who is a man or semblance of one” could sit by “without sacrificing his all” to protect Canadian women and children. The writer concluded his letter with the following wish: “God forbid that if occasion ever arise we shall be found unprepared.” See “Call to Arms,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 25, 1935, Sunday Magazine, letter to the editor, 10, and H. H. Cleugh, *Vancouver Sun*, July 3, 1933, letter to the editor, 4.

as the unfair maligning of Germany. Pleas that the papers showcase less obvious bias in their reporting must have fallen on deaf ears, however, because the majority of articles dealing with Nazi Germany remained coloured by this pervasive fear of war. It seemed to be universally held that the key to world peace was to be found in Germany, and the press accordingly watched every move Hitler made.

In rejecting Nazi Germany as a fascist and militaristic state, the Vancouver press and public drew upon Canada's heritage as a British nation and upon British ideals of freedom and democracy, asserting a strong and enduring loyalty to Britain even as they denounced Hitler's tyranny. A year into Hitler's rule, the *Sun* carried an editorial from London's *The Observer*, in which the editor described Nazism as "above all...an anti-democratic religion in the sense of abjuring the English-speaking tradition of parliamentary method."³⁹ Operating within this binary of dictatorship and democracy, the Vancouver press thus defined National Socialism as being everything that British constitutional government was not. Vancouverites also recognised that Canada, as a British dominion, had its own liberal tradition of which to be proud. Referring to the likelihood of a fascist revolution in Canada, the *Sun*'s editors cried out, "What would old Sir John A. Macdonald have had to say about that?"⁴⁰ A letter to the editor from an individual writing under the pseudonym "Stedfast" echoed this appeal, stating that "Canada, nor any part of Canada, will never be tempted to try such a dangerous experiment."⁴¹ Writing from Germany in the fall of 1933, M. H. Halton bemoaned how "that great old idea on which we Anglo-Saxons have been nurtured for a thousand years, the idea of freedom of thought, has no value here."⁴² The real problem with dictatorship, then, was that rulers like Hitler and Stalin rejected time-tested British (and Canadian) principles. The *Sun* opposed importing fascism from Europe, insisting that "the peoples of Great Britain and the self-governing dominions have not been learning the art of government for centuries to turn the business over to a dictator at this time of day."⁴³

There is, in these declarations, an evident pride in persevering with and defending democracy, despite the fact that parliamentary rule was not necessarily the easiest course. In a

³⁹ J. L. Garvin, "Hitler and Hitlerism," *Vancouver Sun*, December 30, 1933, 2.

⁴⁰ The editorial was spurred by the upcoming federal election, and referred to calls from a minority of Canadians for a fascist government. By way of a conclusion, the editor states defiantly that "Canadians don't want communism; they don't want fascism. They DO want open-minded, liberal-minded, rational-minded application of obvious principles to obvious needs. That's what they need. Will they get it?" See "The Secret Is Out!" *Vancouver Sun*, February 7, 1935, editorial, 4.

⁴¹ "Dictators," *Vancouver Sun*, June 4, 1935, letter to the editor, 4.

⁴² M. H. Halton, "New Germany's Enslaved Womenhood," *Vancouver Sun*, November 8, 1933, 13.

⁴³ "Canada and Swastika," *Vancouver Sun*, September 2, 1933, editorial, 4.

masterful full-page editorial appearing in December 1933, the *Sun* unequivocally denounced dictatorship as harmful for the nation-state. The paper compared dictators to nurses who smother their infant-nations to the point that nations “will not learn to walk, politically speaking,” and as a result will not be able to govern themselves, even when their “Dictator-Nurses” die off. The editorial concluded by asserting that Canadians are interested in examining dictatorships in places like Germany “not merely as theory but because we ourselves, some fine day, might be piled into a baby carriage of this type, with some dictator telling us to ‘Hush’ and ‘Mind Nursie.’” The paper implored readers to “make up [their] mind whether this country should join the baby carriage procession or continue the difficult task of learning how to walk politically through self-government.”⁴⁴ Ultimately, what it came down to was that the Canadian character seemed to be inherently incommensurable with totalitarian rule. Forged in the hearty, independent air of British North America, the Canadian spirit, like its British parent, was apparently incorruptible. It was understandable, the *Sun* suggested, that Germans and Russians were unable to completely shake off the yoke of centuries of authoritarian rule and would thus bow down before a dictator, but “the British peoples...are still as stubborn as Caesar found them. They are not in the least likely to bend their necks to yokes invented by [British fascist] Sir Oswald Mosley or anybody else.”⁴⁵

In formulating their responses to Hitler and his regime, Canadians thus called upon their identity as a British people whose dedication to democratic government and peaceful order meant that Hitler’s image was irreparably joined with fascist rule and tyranny. In their depictions of the Third Reich as backwards and militaristic, Canadians positioned themselves as staunch opponents to a fascist government which represented everything that the British Empire sought to counter. It was the Nazis’ militarism and reckless turn towards dictatorship which resonated most strongly in the Vancouver press because these were the things which Canadians, as a British people, were most prepared to step up and defend against. As this paper will demonstrate, responses to the Nazis’ antisemitism followed this general pattern of opposition to the Third Reich from a pro-British, anti-fascist standpoint. In fact, Canadians were so deeply rooted in their identity as a freedom-loving British people that it was possible for them to condemn the Nazis for their anti-Jewish measures without any apparent recognition of Canada’s own racial and ethnic problems.

⁴⁴ “Four Powerful Nurses,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 16, 1933, Sunday Magazine, editorial, 4.

⁴⁵ “Canada and Swastika,” *Vancouver Sun*, September 2, 1933, editorial, 4.

“Every now and then the Nazis remind us not to think of them as civilized”: Vancouverites Respond to Nazi Antisemitism

Overall, the Vancouver response to the Third Reich was one of fundamental condemnation. The general public and mainstream press denounced Hitler’s anti-Jewish policies as reflective of the general backwardness of fascist Germany. This condemnation did not stem, however, from a particular affection for the Jewish people but rather was rooted in the belief that antisemitism violated a basic British ideal of tolerance. Despite the fact that 1930s Canada was far from a tolerant place in practice, in theory the country could claim a long tradition of freedom and acceptance based in the overall British experience. With their historical, political and cultural identity so closely tied to Britain, the people of Vancouver could not afford to acknowledge the presence of racism and antisemitism in their own country. This reality, though, was an inescapable one for Canadian Jews, who were forced to negotiate a liminal space between commitments to their Jewish identity on the one hand and to their own Britishness on the other hand. Canadian Jewry thus recognised and attempted to fight against domestic antisemitism while simultaneously falling in line with the general Canadian response, which emphasised the universal implications of the Nazis’ persecution of German Jews over the particularity of the Jewish experience.

Before one can fully understand the response of Vancouverites to the Nazis’ antisemitism, it is necessary to first examine how the Nazis’ anti-Jewish policies and actions were reported in the Vancouver press. The nature of coverage in the Vancouver papers affected how the public came to see and ultimately respond to Nazi antisemitism. Already by 1930, Hitler’s antisemitism would have been no secret to Vancouver readers. In September 1930 the *Daily Province* stated matter-of-factly that the Nazis were “anti-semitic” and that “they threaten pogroms against the Jews.”⁴⁶ After Hitler came to power in January 1933, it became even more apparent that “the new Germany [was] to be all-German.”⁴⁷ Even though there was minimal violence against German Jews during this initial period, the *Sun* declared that “one does not have to dig deeply” to realise that “the power of Hitlerized Germany, both official and unofficial, relentlessly pursues Jewry.”⁴⁸ With the flow of Jewish refugees out of Germany beginning in the spring of 1933, the Vancouver newspapers began to print eyewitness reports of Jews being

⁴⁶ “Big Issues Hang On Result of German Polling,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, September 14, 1930, 3.

⁴⁷ “Hitler Makes Germany ‘State of Iron,’” *Vancouver Sun*, April 12, 1933, 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

tortured by Nazis. The *Daily Province* declared that the Nazis were simply out of control: “There is no longer any doubt,” the paper stated, “that to be either of Jewish faith or of Jewish origin and to exist in Germany now constitutes a crime in the eyes of the ruling faction there.”⁴⁹ The papers were also deeply troubled by what they regarded as the unprecedented nature of this persecution. Taking into account Hitler’s volatility and the intensity of anti-Jewish hatred in Nazi Germany, the Vancouver press understood that conditions could easily worsen. Only four months after the establishment of the Third Reich, taking into account everything that had already unfolded, the *Sun*’s editors remarked that “one shudders to think what might happen to German Jewry.”⁵⁰

Initially, the mainstream Vancouver press seemed to operate under the perception that anti-Jewish actions in Germany were the result of young Nazi “hotheads,” rather than a mainstay of the ruling regime itself. This idea was propagated by Nazi officials like H. Seelheim, German consul for Western Canada, who in the spring of 1933 responded to accounts of early violence against Jews in Germany by stating definitively that these isolated cases “had either been brought about by communistic provocateurs or by irresponsible young National Socialists.”⁵¹ For its part, the mainstream Vancouver press also separated these rash Nazi agitators from the German government. Perhaps taking to heart Seelheim’s assurances that the German government “will see to it that also in the future no Jew comes to the slightest harm,”⁵² the *Province* offered this bewildering statement in April 1933: “The Nazis are boasting that the Jews will be exterminated, but the government insists there is no persecution.”⁵³ Failing to recognise that antisemitism was a central platform of National Socialism, and continuing to maintain what was in reality a flawed distinction between party practice and state policy, the mainstream Vancouver press tended to underestimate the significance of anti-Jewish sentiments coming from Germany during these early years of the Third Reich. A turning point was a riot which broke out in Berlin in July 1935. The violence, unfolding as it did in the heart of Germany’s capital and tolerated, if not encouraged, by the local police, forced Vancouverites to recognise that state-sponsored antisemitism was an inescapable, and central, aspect of the new Germany. Writing from Germany after witnessing the riots first-hand, Vernon McKenzie expressed this realisation

⁴⁹ “Nazi Atrocities at Fever Heat, Say Exiles,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 20, 1933, 3.

⁵⁰ This quotation also appears in the title of this paper. See “Inviting Reprisals,” editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, May 5, 1933, 6. Speaking to the Vancouver press’ belief in the unprecedented nature of the Nazis’ antisemitism, the *Sun* observed in April 1933 that “the stormy picture that emerges today” from Germany was one of “an anti-Semitic campaign with no modern parallel in its extent.” See “Hitler Tyranny Protest,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 7, 1933, 14.

⁵¹ H. Seelheim, “Jews In Germany,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 6, 1933, letter to the editor, 6.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ “The Heel of Hitler,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 9, 1933, editorial, 6.

simply but eloquently: “Two years ago,” he wrote, “I believed sadistic anti-Semitism a temporary Nazi policy practiced by Nazis not yet under central party discipline. I fear that I was wrong.”⁵⁴

Although the Vancouver press clearly came to recognise the Nazis’ antisemitism and understand the grave implications behind this hatred, the way that the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* presented their coverage of Jewish persecution actually undermined the strength of the message. Essentially, while the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* acknowledged that Hitler had a special loathing for Jews, neither paper upheld Jews as the Nazis’ primary victims.⁵⁵ An article appearing in the *Province* in August 1935 listed the Third Reich’s enemies as including “Jews, Roman Catholics, ‘Steel Helmet’ war veterans, Oppositionist pastors in the state Evangelical Church, ‘disloyal’ university students, socialists and Communists.”⁵⁶ The lines distinguishing one victim group from another were so blurred in the minds of Vancouverites that an article appearing in the *Sun* about the Nazis’ suppression of Catholics contained, within the main body of the article itself, a seemingly unrelated notice of a nationwide meeting of the Canadian Jewish Congress.⁵⁷ With these various groups all earning the opprobrium of the Nazis, the Vancouver papers turned most frequently to coverage of the Nazis’ suppression of communists. Reports frequently announced the arrests of communist leaders and clashes with Nazi Stormtroopers, and the papers’ complaints about extreme censorship under Hitler’s government concentrated on raids on leftwing publications. This focus on communism was not unwarranted, of course; Hitler did oversee a series of anti-communist measures during this initial period as part of his attempt to crush his political opponents and consolidate his power. Furthermore, it is understandable that

⁵⁴ Vernon McKenzie, “Germany’s Engima, Her War On Jews,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 15, 1935, 5. It appears as though the Berlin riots were a turning point for observers of Nazi Germany outside of Canada, as well. In her work on the American press, Lipstadt notes that the riots, as the first major incident to occur in a major German city, let alone the capital, was prominently featured on the front pages of papers across the United States. See Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 41.

⁵⁵ David Goutor traces a similar pattern in his study of the Canadian press during the latter part of the war. Goutor (see Goutor, “The Canadian Media and the ‘Discovery’ of the Holocaust,” 106). In their studies on the American press, both Lipstadt and Leff present similar findings. Although American newspapers responded angrily to acts of persecution by the Nazis, Lipstadt notes that “the persecution of the Jews constituted only one small segment of the story of Nazi Germany and was never the central theme of the reports about the new regime.” (See Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 15.) For her part, Leff writes that the *New York Times* “witnessed the persecution of the Jews, but treated it as a minor footnote...as routine, back-page fodder.” (See Leff, *Buried By The Times*, 108.) In general, scholarship on the responses of the American press to Nazi Germany tends to be highly critical. Lipstadt and Leff are both highly condemning of the American papers for minimising the Holocaust in their coverage; historian Max Frankel calls it “the century’s bitterest journalistic failure.” See Max Frankel, “Turning Away From the Holocaust: *The New York Times*,” in *Why Didn’t the Press Shout? American and International Journalism During the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Yeshiva University Press and KTAV Publishing House, 2003), 80.

⁵⁶ “Nazi Campaign Against Masons,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, August 2, 1935, 10.

⁵⁷ “Nazis Break Up Catholic Convention,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 6, 1933, 9.

the Canadian public would have had a deep interest with communism during this time, as Canada had been facing its own Red Scare for over a decade prior to Hitler coming to power.

This fascination with communism, however, and the general looping together of all groups victimised by the Nazis, affected how the mainstream Vancouver newspapers presented Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany. The *Sun* and *Daily Province* may have frequently mentioned the plight of Jews in the Third Reich, but it was rarely presented as a leading story on its own merits. Most often reference to the Nazis' antisemitism came as a footnote in pieces primarily about the suppression of communism or other examples of the Nazis' extremism. During the first year of Hitler's rule, the most detailed analysis of Nazi antisemitism appearing in either the *Sun* or the *Daily Province*, which happened to be an article referring to anti-miscegenation measures, focused not on Jews but on the "Aryan" women who were accused of having had intimate relations with Jewish men.⁵⁸ In another example, the *Daily Province*'s coverage of the Nazis' April 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses regarded the non-Jewish employees of Jewish-owned department stores as the ones to suffer the most under the antisemitic measure.⁵⁹ In fitting with the tendency of the papers to include Jews with other groups targeted by the Nazis, coverage of Jewish persecution in the Vancouver press comes off as being almost a second thought, or a tiny facet of a system that was, on the whole, seen to be quite oppressive.

Moreover, articles that were primarily about Jewish persecution appeared mostly in the middle or towards the back of the papers, often on the very last page or appearing in weekend magazine supplements entirely separate from the main newspaper. Not only is a reader's judgment of the significance of an issue implicitly affected by its placement in the paper, but readers are also less likely to even read an article that appears farther back in an issue.⁶⁰ A small, three-sentence notice appearing on the last page of the weekend issue of the *Province* reported on the promulgation of a decree allowing the Nazis to confiscate the property of enemies of the

⁵⁸ Both the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* report an incident of a young Aryan woman, accused of having had sexual relations with a Jewish man, being paraded through the streets of Nuremberg with a placard around her neck reading "I have offered myself to a Jew." The woman's hair was also cut off as a mark of her shame for betraying her race. Neither paper mentions the punishment allotted to the woman's Jewish lover, although both write that this "medieval" method of punishment was to become standard in dealing with such "crimes." See "Britons Halt Nazi Activity," *Vancouver Daily Province*, August 19, 1933, 7 and M. H. Halton, "Germany's Savage Philosophy of War," *Vancouver Sun*, November 1, 1933, 20.

⁵⁹ *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 1, 1933, 1.

⁶⁰ There is a big difference between placing an article on the front page of the paper and burying it in the back. In a study conducted in the late 1980s, researchers discovered that pages located towards the front of a newspaper were opened by a higher proportion of readers than pages towards the back. See Leo Bogart, *Press and Public: Who Reads What, When, Where, and Why in American Newspapers* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 161.

Reich; the brief article acknowledged that this development was “the strongest weapon yet placed at the disposal of Nazi officials,”⁶¹ yet the size of the piece and its placement in the paper meant it could be easily overlooked by the average reader. Similarly, notice of Jews being excluded from the German air force appeared in a tiny, one-sentence notice in the *Sun*, while an article about Hindenburg’s 86th birthday in the same issue received more than three times the space.⁶² News that Jews were being shipped to concentration camps appeared on page eleven of the *Sun*; the notice was one-sentence long and was easily missed, sandwiched as it was between two large ads.⁶³ What is more, articles that started off about Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany rarely ever finished on the same note; in fact, in many cases, a few paragraphs referring to Nazi anti-Jewish measures would be followed by a much longer discussion of other news relating to the Third Reich.

The most grievous example of this tendency can be found in a *Sun* article about Mischa Elman, a visiting Ukrainian Jewish violinist. The article—appearing on the last page of the paper—mentions how Elman was banned from performing in Germany and quotes the violinist’s fears about the future of German Jewry. Elman declared that “German Jews are receiving much worse treatment at the hands of the Nazi Government than the world at large realizes.” He stated emphatically that “it is a situation that should call forth protest from the entire world.”⁶⁴ Without offering any acknowledgement of Elman’s bold appeal for intervention on the behalf of German Jews, the article abruptly switches to a discussion about Elman’s trip to Winnipeg. Reports like this one, which alluded to the serious situation facing German Jewry but were presented without any commentary, were thereby minimised in the minds of Vancouver readers, who were left with the impression that the Nazis’ antisemitic measures were not significant enough to warrant thorough analysis in the press. In this way, information about Jewish persecution in Germany, although occasionally presented quite clearly, did not usually receive very comprehensive coverage in the mainstream Vancouver papers.

Another important aspect of the coverage of Nazi antisemitism in the mainstream Vancouver papers was the tendency of the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* to qualify reports about anti-Jewish measures in Germany by referring to the trustworthiness of news sources. The *Daily Province* acknowledged that “some of the stories of Jewish persecution... would be almost

⁶¹ “Hitler Will Confiscate Properties of Enemies,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, July 15, 1933, 34.

⁶² See “Jews Barred From Hitler Air Force,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 1933, 4, and “Pres. Hindenburg 86 Years Today,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 1933, 9.

⁶³ “Berlin Jews Taken to Prison Camps,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 31, 1933, 11.

⁶⁴ “Jews Abused,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 16, 1933, 18.

incredible” if they did not come from “travellers who are prone neither to invention nor to exaggeration.”⁶⁵ Years later the paper was still expressing its amazement, writing that “if the news did not come from sources too numerous and too reputable for doubting...it would be impossible to believe some of the stories out of Nazi Germany about the treatment accorded to the Jews.”⁶⁶ Although intended to underline the extremeness of events in Germany and pre-empt any accusation of falsehood, these kinds of disclaimers backfired by directing attention to the possibility that stories from Germany could be inaccurate, and thus introducing a sliver of doubt into the reader’s mind. Occasionally the *Province* was more explicit, saying, for instance, that reports from refugees fleeing the Saar region in western Germany had to be “taken with a grain of salt.”⁶⁷ The implication here is that the word of Jews was not always to be trusted. The *Province*, apparently the more sceptical of the mainstream Vancouver papers, declared on one occasion that it was, fortunately, not necessary “to take the word of the Jews for the fact of the hateful persecution of their race and religion under the rule of Adolf Hitler” because the Nazis did not “trouble to deny what they are accused of doing.”⁶⁸ The *Sun* was not completely trusting of reports from Germany, either, although its publishers were less direct in voicing their doubts. The clearest denunciations of Nazi antisemitism and the most explicit reports about the conditions of Jews in Germany which appeared in the paper were usually presented not as straightforward newspaper reports but rather as speeches or reports originating from Jewish individuals or organisations, like the Mischa Elman piece. In October 1935, the *Sun* published a statement from Herbert H. Lehman, Governor of New York from 1933 to 1942, in which Lehman offered a clear indictment of the Nazis’ antisemitism.⁶⁹ The fact that this statement was coming from a prominent American Jew did not likely escape the attention of the average reader of the *Sun* in 1935, and the end result may have undermined the authoritativeness of the statement. Overall, however, the message from the mainstream Vancouver press about the credibility of reports coming from Germany was ambivalent. While the *Sun* and *Province* are partly guilty of minimising the Nazis’ persecution of Jews in these various ways, the Vancouver papers nevertheless did ultimately determine that, “after making due allowance for exaggerations

⁶⁵ “Nazi Atrocities at Fever Heat, Say Exiles,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 20, 1933, 3.

⁶⁶ “It Is A Foul Thing,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 4, 1935, editorial, 6.

⁶⁷ “Saar Is Freed Of Last Opposition,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, January 19, 1935, 7.

⁶⁸ “It Is A Foul Thing,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 4, 1935, editorial, 6.

⁶⁹ H. H. Lehman, “Nazi Treatment of Jews,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 19, 1935, 2.

and inaccuracies, it was evident from information received from private sources that the situation of the Jews in Germany is deplorable.”⁷⁰

And yet, few details about specific examples of Jewish persecution were offered by the mainstream Vancouver press. Neither the *Sun* nor the *Daily Province*, for instance, provided many details on the mass book burnings in May 1933 of the works of Jewish authors and other “enemies” of the Reich, a grand spectacle that highlighted the intensity of anti-Jewish feeling of the regime. Although providing oblique references to Jews losing their jobs, the mainstream Vancouver papers contained only one brief mention of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, passed 7 April 1933, which removed all Jews and other “non-Aryans” from their positions as teachers, judges and professors. Other legislation passed in the spring of 1933, including laws which restricted the number of Jewish students at German schools and sharply curtailed the practices of Jewish lawyers and doctors, also received minimal notice in the mainstream press. In fact, only a couple of anti-Jewish incidents were reported in any extensive manner in the pages of the mainstream Vancouver papers during these early years of the Third Reich. The first, chronologically, was the nationwide boycott against Jewish businesses, orchestrated by the Nazis in April 1933. Reports in the *Sun* and *Daily Province* framed the Nazis’ boycott, which they deemed as largely ineffective, as a defensive response on the part of the Nazis to worldwide Jewish-led protests against Germany. The second exception to the rule was press coverage of the July 1935 riot in Berlin, an apparently spontaneous outbreak of violence which saw Jewish homes and businesses trashed and Jewish individuals beaten on the fashionable Kurfürstendamm, one of the capital’s most central and famous boulevards. Both the *Sun* and the *Province* published reports and eye-witness accounts of the violence which were exceptional for their exclusive focus on the antisemitic nature of the riot. This close focus on Jews appears to have been an aberration, however: only two days afterward *Sun* columnist Arthur Brisbane published a report on the “savage and cowardly attacks on Jews in Berlin” that actually focused more on the rise of anti-Catholic sentiments in the aftermath of the riots.⁷¹ The *Sun* thus fell quickly back into its old pattern of reporting on Jewish persecution as merely the tip of the iceberg of Nazi oppression.

In contrast, the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, perhaps unsurprisingly, contained much more detailed reports on the Nazis’ anti-Jewish measures. Headlines announced the latest persecutory

⁷⁰ “Hitler Tyranny Protest,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 7, 1933, 14.

⁷¹ See “Anti-Jew Disturbances Rock Berlin,” *Vancouver Sun*, July 16, 1935, 9 and, for contrast, Arthur Brisbane, “Today,” *Vancouver Sun*, July 19, 1935, 7.

steps taken by Hitler's regime, while articles outlined conditions in concentration camps based on first-hand accounts from released or escaped prisoners.⁷² In 1934, the *Bulletin* also began to include a section entitled "Review of Events" in each week's issue, which included short blurbs describing recent developments in countries around the world; not a week went by without some mention of the latest actions taken against Jews in Germany. In addition to more thorough reporting on the Nazis' antisemitism, the Jewish press was also more explicit in underlining the fact that German Jews were being persecuted specifically because they were Jews. Here the Jewish press diverged considerably from the mainstream papers. Whereas the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* recognised Jews as targets of the Nazis' suppression, the papers did not usually elaborate on why Jews were facing persecution over other groups. For example, in January 1935 the *Province* reported on Jews from the Saar being warned by the Nazis not to vote in the upcoming plebiscite, scheduled to decide whether the region should be annexed to Germany;⁷³ presumably, the Nazis did not want Jews to participate in the plebiscite because they would vote against joining Germany, but the paper does not mention this fear nor does it offer an explanation as to why Jews would not choose to live underneath Nazi rule. As this discursive analysis of the Vancouver press has demonstrated, there were certainly key differences in terms of the nature of coverage among the different papers. The *Jewish Western Bulletin* paid much more attention to the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures, while the mainstream papers, in contrast, obscured the Nazis' antisemitism even as they recognised the seriousness of the issue.

However, when one turns to examine Vancouverites' early responses and attitudes towards Nazi Germany, it becomes apparent that Vancouver Jewry was not always so prescient. Indeed, initially upon Hitler's ascension as Chancellor, the Vancouver Jewish community was, in fact, quite optimistic. In early March 1933, the *Bulletin* reprinted an editorial from one of Toronto's Jewish papers, *The Jewish Standard*, whose editors asserted that they "do not believe that [German Jewry] is faced by an organized movement to deprive it of its citizenship or root it out of the economic life of the country." The paper concluded that "Germany Jewry will be spared" because "Hitlerism and all the violent anti-semitism which is preached, will very likely not constitute the programme of the government."⁷⁴ As a whole the Canadian Jewish community initially regarded Nazism as a phase, one which was merely the latest in a line of antisemitic regimes which had plagued Jews over the centuries. The *Bulletin*, for example, in comparing the

⁷² See "Sixteen More Jews Murdered at Dachau," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 10, 1933, 1.

⁷³ "Nazis Urge Saar Jews To Leave," *Vancouver Daily Province*, January 12, 1935, 1.

⁷⁴ "Hitler Without Hitlerism?" *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 9, 1933, 1.

Nazis in Germany to the Inquisition in medieval Spain, asserted that antisemitism was a phenomenon which could occur anywhere and at any time; here the Jewish press was in fact reprinting the views of the editors of the *Daily Province*, who had themselves posed the question of “where, or for what cause, the next outbreak of this human perversity and injustice and cruelty will occur in the world.”⁷⁵

Building off this belief that Hitler’s antisemitism was nothing new, Canadian Jewry at first expressed a great deal of bravado about the situation brewing in Germany. Vancouver Jews dismissed Hitler as another Haman, a biblical figure who had attempted to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Haman’s defeat, which forms the focus of the Jewish holiday of Purim, resonated strongly with Jews who invoked the story for proof that, first of all, Hitler’s hatred of the Jews was decidedly unoriginal and, secondly, that Hitler too would be defeated. A *Bulletin* piece described Haman as the “prototype for all of the malevolent charges against the Jews in all lands and at all times.” The article went on to state that “the Haman of this day, the German Hitler,” spewed stories and invented charges against the Jewish people which

are not novel. They are age old and we Jews know by experience how to endure these attacks and how to treat them...While our hearts are filled with sympathy for our compatriots and our brethren in Germany, we believe they well know how to treat this circumstance just as Jews in all ages past have been able to outdistance Haman...The Jews are an ‘Am olam,’ an everlasting eternal people...Nations may come and nations may go, but the Jew by virtue of the divine spark which is in him seems to outlive and to outdistance them all. This spark of God, working in and through the Jew, that divine urge which has successfully carried him on despite all the traducers and all the Hamans of the centuries is still dominant in him. Yes, the Jew will continue to live, despite every pogrom, every economic boycott and every scurrilous attack.⁷⁶

This message of enduring defiance underpinned invocations of the Haman legend. “The Jews who survived all Hamans will survive this modern Haman-Hitler,” Mordecai Jaffe declared in an article appearing in a June 1933 issue of the *Bulletin*.⁷⁷ Similar expressions of defiance punctuated coverage in the Vancouver Jewish press throughout the first six months of Hitler’s rule. On May 4, 1933, the *Bulletin* printed the following poem by Phillip M. Raskin, which neatly encapsulates this attitude:

Hitler, we shall outlive you,
As we outlived the Hamans before you;
Hordes of slaves may crown you chief,

⁷⁵ “After 4000 Years,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, June 1, 1933, 4.

⁷⁶ “Purim: Haman’s Accusations—Are They True?” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 9, 1933, 2.

⁷⁷ Mordecai Jaffe, “Why Are Vancouver Jews Silent?” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, June 1, 1933, 4.

Throngs of fools—adore you.
 One day you shall fall from your tower of Might,
 From Pride's uppermost steeple
 With the brand of Cain carved on your brow,
 And the curse of an innocent people.
 The Torquemadas of all time,
 The Tituses and the Neros,
 Cursed is their vanity and might—
 Their martyrs are hailed as heroes.
 We are the deathless sons of the Earth,
 Life is our God-given charter;
 And what is another auto-da-fe
 To a race—an eternal martyr?
 Hitler, we shall outlive you,
 However our flesh you harrow;
 Our wondrous epic shall only add
 The tale of another Pharaoh.⁷⁸

The poem was presented as an open letter from a Jew to Hitler, and extols the endurance of the ancient Jewish people who, due to millennia of persecution, have been hardened to the kind of vitriol lately being expelled by the Nazis. Raskin's poem demonstrates the popularity of imagery which conflated Hitler with Haman and all the other enemies of the Jewish people throughout history. This Hitler-as-Haman motif was a prominent feature of Jewish responses to Nazi Germany. Nahum Goldmann, a leading figure in world Jewry, warned Hitler in 1934 that Jewry had known more powerful adversaries than the Third Reich and has "always outlasted them."⁷⁹ For their part, the editorial staff of the *Bulletin* declared: "We have for 3000 years encountered the enmity of numerous nations which have long vanished—Egyptians, and Chaldeans, Rome and Spain, France and Germany, and Russia. There is scarcely a town in Europe in which ancestors of ours have not been burnt at the stake, not a street through which our forefathers have not fled into exile."⁸⁰ The implication here was that the Nazis represented nothing new, and, thus, were not as threatening as they appeared. As the *Bulletin* noted in May 1935, after two and a half years of violence and persecution in Germany, "the Judophobia [sic] of Nazis is sometimes amusing when it is not tragic. Sometimes it is illuminating as presenting Jewish history in epitome."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Phillip M. Raskin, "A Jew to Hitler," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, May 4, 1933, 2.

⁷⁹ "New Hitler Drive Against Christianity," *Vancouver Sun*, August 21, 1934, 1.

⁸⁰ Editorial, *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 12, 1934, 2.

⁸¹ "Review of the Week: Germany," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, May 30, 1935, 1. Historian Abraham Brumberg notes that the American Yiddish press also dismissed Hitler as "no more than a windbag, stupid, filled with *khutspe*, yet not one to be worried about." See Abraham Brumberg, "Towards the Final Solution: Perceptions of Hitler and Nazism in the US Left-of-Center Yiddish Press, 1930-1939," in *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American and*

However, it is possible that in calling upon this experience of struggle and in dismissing Hitler as another Haman, Jews were in fact displaying a false bravado intended to bolster lagging spirits in the face of an increasingly formidable enemy. Certainly, by the summer of 1933, the Vancouver Jewish community was beginning to accept that Hitler would likely be around for a while, and that his anti-Jewish policies represented a real threat to Jewish life in Germany. A *Bulletin* editorial in August 1933 noted that “as the Nazis tighten their strangle-hold on the Jewish people in Germany, the more evident does it become that this nightmare is going to last for some time to come.”⁸² In November 1933 the editor of the *Bulletin* declared that, regardless of what might happen with Germany’s military, political or economic aspirations, Hitler “has and will continue to fulfill his promises he has made concerning the Jews of Germany.”⁸³ As the sun set upon the first year of the Third Reich, the future for their co-religionists in Germany seemed to be growing increasingly bleak. In December 1933, American Rabbi Jonah Wise noted that “the Jewish situation in Germany becomes even more tragic as the Nazi regime continues to entrench itself in power...The ‘cold pogrom’ continues unabated. Every day more Jews are deprived of their jobs, driven out of professional practice, deprived of their livelihood.”⁸⁴

As with the general Vancouver public, the July 1935 riots in Berlin truly brought the matter home for Vancouver Jews, who noted that “the significance of the riots lies not so much in the actual damage and injury that day as (1) in the fact that the violence could show itself in the centre of refinement and bon vie [sic] as Berlin’s fashionable quarter, and (2) possible presaging the coming of even greater violence.”⁸⁵ This threat of worse to come was apparently fulfilled with the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws in the fall of 1935. For Vancouver Jews, the Nuremberg Laws, which deprived German Jews of their citizenship and strictly regulated minutiae of their daily lives, represented the final nail in the coffin of German Jewry. “The economic future of German Jewry—which means its physical existence—is wrapped up in those laws,”⁸⁶ the *Bulletin* editorial staff lamented in October 1935, nearly three years after Hitler came to power. While the *Sun* and *Province* did perceive the seriousness of Hitler’s antisemitism, the *Bulletin* was particularly explicit in underlining the fact that the Nazis wanted to do much more than simply boycott Jewish businesses: “It is complete annihilation,” *Bulletin*

International Journalism During the Holocaust, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Yeshiva University Press and KTAV Publishing House, 2003), 23.

⁸² “A Cry Has Come Unto Us,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 3, 1933, editorial, 2.

⁸³ “Hitler Against the World,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, November 9, 1933, editorial, 2.

⁸⁴ Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, “The Tragic Situation in Germany,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, December 7, 1933, 1.

⁸⁵ “Review of the Week: Germany,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, July 18, 1935, 1.

⁸⁶ “Hope of Reich Jews Dimmed By Events,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 10, 1935, 1.

editor David Rome wrote in the summer of 1935, on the eve of the Berlin riots. “Conversion or homage will not be enough. By whatever means, the enemy intends to wipe the seed of Abraham from the earth, and if he cannot [sic] do it by ignominy, he will do it by starvation; and if he cannot do it by starvation he will do it by brutal massacres. This is a bald statement that Hitlerism had made time and again, and whatever other charges we may lay against Nazism, vacillation in its Jewish program is not one of them.”⁸⁷ To Vancouver’s Jews, it was clear, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that their German brethren faced economic, social and physical extermination.

In formulating their responses to the Nazis’ antisemitism, the general Vancouver public was equally clear about the gravity of the situation. Although the mainstream Vancouver press did not always place Nazi antisemitism front and centre during these first few years of the Third Reich, the Vancouver public nevertheless issued a sweeping condemnation of Nazi racial policy which was informed in large part by the press’ recognition of the extent and seriousness of Hitler’s hatred of the Jews. In the minds of Vancouverites, Jews deserved the rights of equal citizenship, and Hitler’s desire to deny them these rights demonstrated “the aberrations of the Nazi movement in Germany.”⁸⁸ Journalists writing in the *Daily Province* asserted that “[Hitler’s] orders and actions against the Jews are as stupid as they are unjust.”⁸⁹ The *Sun*’s editors carried a similar tune, insisting that “Jew-baiting is a cheap and sorry sport that does no credit to the broadest pretences of our civilization.” The paper went on to state that “racial hatred for Jews is stupid and reprehensible” and that the persecution of Jews in Germany was inspired by “utter folly.”⁹⁰ Antisemitism was upheld by Vancouverites as proof unequivocal of Germany’s regression under Nazism. The *Daily Province*’s editors avowed that Hitler’s anti-Jewish diatribes sounded “like an evil breath from another and less informed age,” an opinion echoed by a letter-writer to the paper who declared that Hitler was “thrust[ing] the world back to the Dark Ages, when persecution of the Jews was the favorite pastime.”⁹¹ In referring to the “medieval racial and religious persecution”⁹² in Germany, the Jewish community made a similar connection between the Nazis’ antisemitism and the regime’s backwardness. “In a few weeks I traveled ten centuries, from a century of progress in Chicago to a dark century of despair in Germany,”

⁸⁷ David Rome, “How Do We Stand With Hitler?” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, July 18, 1935, 1.

⁸⁸ Bruce Cutton, “Why Hitler Hates and Fears the Jewish Race,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 28, 1933, 4.

⁸⁹ T. V. Scudamore, “Germany’s Place in Dangerous Times,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, September 30, 1933, 5.

⁹⁰ “Jew-Baiting In Germany,” editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, March 28, 1933, 4.

⁹¹ See Editorial, *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 2, 1933, 6, and “Charlie Hitler,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, August 26, 1933, letter to the editor, 10.

⁹² “No Future For Jews In Germany,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, July 27, 1933, 1.

American Rabbi Irving Reichert declared, as quoted in the *Bulletin*.⁹³ Hitlerised Germany was a “revival of the Middle Ages, with its cruelty and barbarism.”⁹⁴ Delivering an address to the local Kiwanis Club, Dr. A. O. McRae asserted that “the civilized world resents this policy...as a long slip backward.” McRae concluded that antisemitism “revives the Europe of the dark ages, a period of ignorant prejudice, of lawlessness and violence.”⁹⁵

On the whole, then, the Vancouver press and Vancouverites in general were quite unambiguous in their denunciation of Nazi antisemitism. The clearest example of this conviction can be found in a protest meeting against Nazi Germany, hosted by Vancouver’s Jewish community on April 6, 1933. The meeting, and the coverage of it in the Vancouver press the following day, is remarkable for demonstrating the strength of Vancouver’s response to the Nazis’ persecution of German Jewry. “The hall,” the *Sun* described,

was packed to the doors with a gathering that was indicative of practically every religious belief represented in Vancouver, all shades of political opinion and men and women in all walks of life. It was a typical cross-section of Vancouver’s citizenry in protest against an un-Godly and uncivilized intolerance of race and belief. On the platform were men and women high in the esteem of the community in their particular lines of endeavor who voiced their deprecation of tyranny and intolerance.⁹⁶

The 1500 people present at the assembly, coming from this wide range of positions and backgrounds, added their voice “in no uncertain manner to the chorus of protest which has echoed around the world against the reported atrocities and persecution of Jews in Germany under the Hitler regime.”⁹⁷ It would be no exaggeration to say that every speaker—most of whom were in fact not Jewish—offered an unequivocal condemnation of the Nazis’ persecution of Jews.⁹⁸ The *Daily Province* applauded “the intense interest of Vancouver citizens in the plight of the Jewish people,” writing that the fact “that such a crowd had turned out to protest intolerance in Germany was a tribute to the people of Vancouver.”⁹⁹

⁹³ “No Future For Jews In Germany,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, July 27, 1933, 1.

⁹⁴ Moses Gaster, “Whither the Jews?” *Vancouver Sun*, June 23, 1934, 2.

⁹⁵ “Anti-Jewish Plan Scored,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, January 4, 1934, 18.

⁹⁶ “Hitler Tyranny Protest,” *Vancouver Sun*, 7 April 1933, 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Both mainstream papers quoted the speakers at length. Reverend de Pencier, Archbishop of New Westminster, stated that “we in a free country and enjoying freedom which is ours can not be but saddened when we hear of those who are oppressed.” Another clerical figure, Reverend Nelson Harkness, protested that “the day has passed when that sort of thing should exist.” The sole Jewish speaker at the meeting, Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser of Vancouver’s Beth Israel congregation, explained that German Jews only wanted “the right to live and work in peace,” and declared that it was “unworthy of a country with the cultural background of Germany to deny Jews this right.” See “Persecution of Jews By Nazi Scored,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 7, 1933, 24 and “Hitler Tyranny Protest,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 7, 1933, 1.

⁹⁹ “Persecution of Jews By Nazi Scored,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 7, 1933, 24.

While the April 1933 protest meeting was the largest and most publicised one held in Vancouver during these early years of the Third Reich, it was certainly not an uncommon event to see citizens gather together to discuss Nazi Germany. The Vancouver papers were constantly announcing upcoming lectures and meetings held throughout the city, and, indeed, throughout North America and much of Western Europe as well. Professors of history, economics and sociology from the University of British Columbia delivered public lectures about the evils of Nazism, while the papers reported on mass protest marches and rallies in London, New York and Toronto. Some meetings were clearly addressed to a specifically Jewish audience and were organised by religious and community institutions in the city, but for the most part the multitude of lectures, meetings and luncheons were open events. Most commonly, these events revolved around large, central questions dealing with fascism, including the likelihood of war erupting due to Hitler's latest machinations, the apparent worldwide crisis of democracy and the loss of freedoms in Germany. Debates between high school and university students were also held on various questions, such as whether or not Germany was justified in its rearmament or whether dictatorship did in fact spell the end of civilisation.¹⁰⁰ Many of these gatherings also dealt centrally with the issue of Nazi antisemitism, and the dominant tone at the gatherings was one of clear opposition to Nazi Germany. Above all, these many debates, lectures and meetings provided a space for Vancouverites to engage intellectually with questions dealing with Nazi Germany. Furthermore, the frequency and number of these meetings suggest that the Third Reich featured considerably in the daily consciousness of Vancouverites during these early years.

Reflective of the tendency of the Vancouver papers to focus on the broader implications of Nazism, coverage of these meetings and talks in the press highlighted the fact that Nazi Germany was at odds not only with religious tolerance but with modern civilisation in general. Indeed, the diverse composition of the crowd at the April 1933 meeting only underlined the fact that, in the minds of the citizens of Vancouver, Nazism posed a universal threat. The speakers at the meeting spoke explicitly of this threat, emphasising that "Hitler and his crowd...[were] not a matter of the Jews in Germany only."¹⁰¹ Tapping into this widely held sentiment, the *Sun* and the

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, "Anti-Nazi Outbreak Arouses Toronto," *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 6, 1935, 3, "Hitler's Germany," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 19, 1934, 1, and "Germany Justified: Britannia School Team Victors In Debate" *Vancouver Sun*, January 18, 1934, 13.

¹⁰¹ Professor Edward Odium, a regular columnist for the *Vancouver Sun*, stated emphatically at the meeting that "civilization is threatened by Hitler and his crowd. It is not a matter of Jews in Germany only." Echoing Odium, Rabbi Bokser declared that "no country in the world has the right to elevate racial persecution to be a national policy. Nazi Germany challenged not only Jews, but the whole civilized world." See "Hitler Tyranny Protest," *Vancouver Sun*, April 7, 1933, 1.

Daily Province portrayed Nazi antisemitism as a threat to humanity as a whole rather than as a problem unique only to Jews—this was true not only in their reporting on the April meeting but generally throughout their coverage of Nazi Germany, as well.¹⁰² In January 1934, the *Province* reflected on the abuses levelled by the Nazis upon German Jews during the previous year, and called Jews “a living monument of man’s inhumanity to man.”¹⁰³ “Every now and then the Nazis remind us not to think of them as civilized,” *Province* editors noted, with a touch of irony, in response to the July 1935 Kurfürstendamm riots.¹⁰⁴ The suffering of German Jews was seen as symptomatic of the Nazis’ general depravity, as a clear sign of the danger to civilisation which National Socialism represented. In protesting against the Nazis’ treatment of Jews, Canadians were thereby protesting against Nazism above all else.

Condemning the Nazis at protest meetings and within the pages of the Vancouver papers was one thing, but the issue became more blurred when Vancouverites were forced to put aside their rhetoric and respond to the physical presence of Nazism in their city. In March 1935, the visit to Vancouver of the *Karlsruhe*, a German warship, forced the people of the city to confront a large, militaristic embodiment of Nazism within their own midst. In the weeks leading up to the ship’s arrival, the public was caught in a fierce debate over whether the *Karlsruhe* should even be allowed to anchor in Canadian waters and, if it did, what kind of reception the city should prepare for its German crew. One side of the debate, propagated most vociferously by members of anti-war and anti-fascist organisations, argued that the *Karlsruhe*, as part of the armed forces of Nazi Germany, was “an agent of barbarism” and should not be welcomed in the city.¹⁰⁵ Referring to Hitler’s tyrannical measures as “revolting,” one letter-writer declared: “I would not as an individual invite a Nazi or a supporter of that regime to my house, and I certainly object to our official representatives in the community welcoming the Nazi ship on my behalf.”¹⁰⁶ Anti-fascist groups and local trade organisations petitioned the city of Vancouver not to spend any money on receptions or entertainment for the *Karlsruhe* crew. Anyone who supported the idea of welcoming Nazis to the city was deemed to be as bad as Nazis themselves: one Vancouver man

¹⁰² Part of this trend towards universalising the Nazis’ antisemitism stemmed from the recognition that hatred was something that could easily be transferred to another group of victims. In a *Sun* editorial entitled “The World’s Prize Demagogue,” Hitler is described as a man who “must always have something to hate and to persecute.” The editorial continued: “If Hitler will go to such absurd lengths to gratify his gutter prejudices against the Jews, what will be the next object of his dislike?” See “The World’s Prize Demagogue,” editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, April 8, 1933, 4.

¹⁰³ “What a Bold Year Was 1933!” *Vancouver Daily Province*, January 14, 1934, Sunday Magazine, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Editorial, *Vancouver Daily Province*, July 17, 1935, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Ken Clark, “More About Karlsruhe,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 8, 1935, letter to the editor, 5.

¹⁰⁶ “Against the Karlsruhe,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 11, 1935, letter to the editor, 8.

suggested that supporters of the *Karlsruhe* should be sent “back to Hitler, where they belong.”¹⁰⁷ On the other side of the debate, German Canadians and some First World War veterans asserted that the *Karlsruhe* should not be seen as necessarily synonymous with Nazism. One letter-writer to the *Province* declared that “the visit of the cruiser Karlsruhe is a friendly one to Canadians and Germans living here.”¹⁰⁸

In the end, the city of Vancouver did spend municipal funds to hold receptions for the officers and crew of the visiting German ship, which dropped anchor in Vancouver harbour on March 15, 1935. Reflecting the debate which had taken place in the weeks previous, responses to the ship’s arrival were mixed. A *Sun* article described the crowd which had gathered to watch the ship arrive as quiet and uncertain. Over the course of the ship’s stay in Vancouver, though, the city ultimately came to regard the *Karlsruhe*’s visit with enthusiasm. Tens of thousands of people sought to take tours of the German war vessel: as one Vancouver journalist noted, the fact was that “a ship, whatever her nationality, caught at the imagination of the watchers.”¹⁰⁹ At the same time, there were some skirmishes, including an incident where a group of communist demonstrators caused a disturbance by throwing rocks outside a reception for the *Karlsruhe* crew hosted by the Vancouver German community.¹¹⁰

The visit of the *Karlsruhe* proved to be a divisive issue, revealing the nuances in public opinion towards Nazi Germany, but the incident is also important for highlighting the central way in which national identity played a role in formulating responses to the Nazi regime. Many of the people who wrote into the *Province* and the *Sun* in opposition to the *Karlsruhe*’s visit explicitly identified themselves as British; two individuals even wrote into the papers under the pseudonyms of “Englishman” and “Irishman,” respectively.¹¹¹ Opposition to the ship’s visit was thus rooted in the same pro-British, anti-fascist standpoint which informed general responses to Nazi Germany. Although ultimately the ship was welcomed to Vancouver, the strongest voices opposed, rhetorically if not in actuality, the presence of a German warship in a Canadian

¹⁰⁷ “He Objects,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 14, 1935, letter to the editor, 16.

¹⁰⁸ E. Thumm, “For the Karlsruhe,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 11, 1935, letter to the editor, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Pat Terry, “Dramatic Arrival of German Warship,” *Vancouver Sun*, March 15, 1935, 1.

¹¹⁰ See “Rocks Fly At Welcome to Germans,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 16, 1935, 1. Although beyond the scope of this study, the ethnic German community in Vancouver stands as a distinct voice within the general public. German Canadians frequently wrote into the *Sun* and *Daily Province*, urging the public not to write Germany off simply because of its current leadership. The German community placed itself in favour of welcoming the *Karlsruhe* to the city, and, indeed, arranged receptions and other entertainment in honour of the ship’s crew. Exploring the response of Vancouver’s German community, which made up a significant proportion of the city’s population, would provide a fascinating focus for future study.

¹¹¹ See “Against the Karlsruhe,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 11, 1935, letter to the editor, 8 and “He Objects,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 14, 1935, letter to the editor, 16.

harbour. The arrival of the *Karlsruhe* represented an opportunity for Vancouverites to step up and direct their opposition to Hitler and everything his regime stood for at a real, physical manifestation of Nazi Germany. An editorial in the *Bulletin* recognised the importance of the *Karlsruhe*'s arrival, noting that "it is now that we must make our attitude clearer than ever—an attitude of unalterable opposition to all that goes under the name of Hitlerism." Raising its voice beyond the membership of the Jewish community to reach the ears of all Vancouverites, the paper went on to declare that "it is imperative that all who are loyal to the interests of the essentials of civilization and of humanity should brace themselves for a proud and determined resistance."¹¹² The fact that this "proud and determined resistance" did not pan out in reality should not negate the intensity with which many Vancouverites spoke out against the *Karlsruhe*'s visit.

As demonstrated by this editorial, Canadian Jews quickly identified the universalising trend regarding public opinion on the Nazis' treatment of German Jews and adopted this strategy wholeheartedly in their own advocacy work. Dr. Moses Gaster, former Chief Sephardic Rabbi in Great Britain, declared that "the treatment of Jews (in Germany and elsewhere) is a thermometer by which the rise of temperature can best be measured." Helping the Jews of Germany, Gaster asserted, was "not only a question for the Jews of Europe, but for the nations themselves. If Jews, in their hundreds of thousands, or millions are reduced to the state of pariahs and outlaws, how can the healthy development of the rest of the people be possible?"¹¹³ Religious leaders within the Vancouver community made similar statements which upheld Jews as a kind of indicator species: if Jews were safe and treated well, then society in general was surely moving forward in a positive direction. Speaking at the April 1933 protest meeting, Rabbi Bosker of Vancouver's Beth Israel Congregation declared that if the world decided to look on at the suffering of Jewry with indifference, "let us go home and weep, for civilization is dead." Nazi Germany, Bosker declared, "challenges not only Jews, but the whole civilized world."¹¹⁴ In November 1934, another Vancouver rabbi, Samuel Cass, delivered a lecture at the University of British Columbia, where he stated definitively that "the problems of today are the problems of all mankind, not of the Jewish people." For Cass, "the Hitlerite doctrines are the subversion of all

¹¹² "Karlsruhe," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 14, 1935, editorial, 2. For more on the visit of the *Karlsruhe* to Vancouver, see Serge M. Durflinger, "'Six Thousand Tons of Fighting Apparatus': Canadian Reactions to the Visit of the German Cruiser *Karlsruhe* to Vancouver, March 1935," *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* 36, no. 2 (April 2006): 1-13.

¹¹³ Moses Gaster, "Whither the Jews?" *Vancouver Sun*, June 23, 1934, 2.

¹¹⁴ "Hitler and His Propaganda Denounced At Meeting Of Vancouver Citizens," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 13, 1933, 1.

the ethical and spiritual values which have come to spell civilization.”¹¹⁵ In June 1935, Cass gave another public talk, this time at the Vancouver Board of Trade, where he defined Nazism as “unquestionably Christianity’s greatest rival.”¹¹⁶ At protest meetings like the large one held in early April 1933, the Jewish organisers ensured that the speakers list was primarily made up of leading Christian clergy and non-Jewish professionals or local dignitaries.¹¹⁷ Calling upon the Christian duty of Canadians was a strategic way of attracting help from beyond the Jewish community.

This universalising strategy, moreover, seemed to be quite successful, in large part because it reflected the purchase which British ideals of tolerance held in Canadian society. In September 1934, the *Sun* reported on the opening of an emergency appeal for funds to help European Jewry, organised by and addressed primarily to Canada’s Jews, although the paper noted that “donations have already been received...from Christians desirous of being associated with this humanitarian undertaking.”¹¹⁸ Although framing Nazi antisemitism as part of the larger threat to world civilisation posed by the Third Reich may have had the unintended consequence of minimising the particularly Jewish nature of the Nazis’ persecution, this approach does appear to have successfully captured the attention of the general public. To a certain extent, this universal focus was quite appropriate; after all, Hitler’s dictatorship revoked the rights of many “enemy” groups, not just Jews, and Canadian Jewry understood that the best way to appeal to their fellow citizens and convince their governments to take definitive action against Nazi Germany was to highlight the threat that Hitler posed to the whole world, not just the Jewish world.

The constant pull between ethnic attachment and citizenship obligations which confronted Canadian Jewry during this period is particularly apparent in the decision to adopt this universalising strategy. It would be an oversimplification, though, to declare that Canadian Jews were denying their Jewishness by choosing to emphasise instead the universal threat in Nazism; after all, their appeals were motivated largely by their Jewishness to begin with. Rather, it is likely that Canadian Jews were simply well attuned to public opinion, and were aware that

¹¹⁵ See “Jewish Race Made Scapegoat,” *Vancouver Sun*, November 19, 1934, 6, and Samuel Cass, “From Week to Week,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 7, 1935, 1.

¹¹⁶ “Hitlerism Attacked By Rabbi S. Cass in Address to Ad Men,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, June 18, 1935, 7.

¹¹⁷ This strategy of universalising Jewish suffering was taken up by other communities in the country. In his discussion of a large protest meeting hosted by Montreal’s Jewish community in March 1933, around the same time as the meeting in Vancouver, Max Beer notes that Montreal Jewry “was convinced that any action on behalf of European Jewry had to be taken with the support of the non-Jewish community.” See Beer, *What Else Could We Have Done?*, 41.

¹¹⁸ “Appeal for Jews,” *Vancouver Sun*, September 13, 1934, 5.

Canadians as a whole seemed to be interested in the Nazis' antisemitism only so far as it represented the backwardness of Hitler's fascist regime. Universalising the suffering of German Jews by making claims to the Nazis' threat to civilisation as a whole thus allowed Vancouver Jewry to make appeals for assistance that would resonate more deeply with the general public. Of course, at the same time, there was another reason behind this need to universalise the suffering of German Jewry: while not explicitly denying their Jewishness, Canadian Jews did apparently feel the need to subsume their religious and ethnic identity as Jews beneath their self-proclaimed identity as Canadians in light of insecurities about their position in Canada. Their response to the Nazis' antisemitism was shaped in a fundamental way by this insecurity.

Ever cognisant of their vulnerabilities as a minority group, Canadian Jews wanted to reassure themselves that the Canadian public was aware of the Nazis' persecution of German Jews. To this end, the Vancouver Jewish community kept a close eye on the extent of coverage of Nazi antisemitism in the mainstream Vancouver press. Occasionally the editorial staff of the *Bulletin* would note that "the daily press throughout the world has had very little to say" about the situation of Jews in Germany. These occasional lulls in reporting were unacceptable and worrisome to Vancouver's Jews, because the absence of reporting did "not mean that our brethren in that country are suffering less" but only that Canadians apparently cared less.¹¹⁹ For the most part, though, the Jewish community seemed reassured by the amount of coverage in the mainstream press. Every few weeks the *Bulletin* had a section entitled "Local Press Comments on the German Situation," where the paper would often reprint editorials originally appearing in the *Sun* or *Daily Province* which expressed clear denunciations of Nazism. Attitudes towards Nazi Germany varied very little from paper to paper, but the Jewish community seemed particularly in tune with the positioning of the *Sun*. Following the organisation's western conference in Vancouver in the summer of 1934, the B'nai B'rith sent in a letter to the *Sun* "to express its profound sense of appreciation for the courtesies extended [to the organisation]...through the columns of your paper."¹²⁰ The *Bulletin* also leaped effusive praise upon the liberal-leaning *Sun*, declaring that "in its relations to Jews it was perfect" and that "both its news columns and its editorial columns have been eminently fair and friendly."¹²¹ The feeling, apparently, was mutual: the *Sun* frequently took out ads in the pages of the *Bulletin* to entice advertisers and subscribers from the Jewish community. The *Province* never earned this

¹¹⁹ Editorial, *Jewish Western Bulletin*, June 22, 1933, 2.

¹²⁰ Edward A. Zeisler, "B'nai B'rith," *Vancouver Sun*, July 26, 1934, letter to the editor, 6.

¹²¹ "Attitude of the 'Sun'," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 14, 1935, editorial, 2.

kind of explicit praise from the Jewish community; instead, its reporting of Nazi antisemitism was regarded by the *Bulletin* as a measure of how serious the situation in Germany was becoming. In the aftermath of the July 1935 Berlin riots, for example, the *Bulletin* noted that “things are brewing in Germany,” so much so that “even the conservative correspondent of the Southam Press (represented in Vancouver by The Province) reports riots.”¹²²

Despite their overall satisfaction with the level of reporting on Nazi antisemitism in the local press and the wave of disapproval emanating from Vancouver citizenry, the city’s Jews were not under any illusions about the security of their position in Canadian society. Canadian Jewry understood that the Nazis’ successful campaign against German Jews would carry grave implications for Jews everywhere. An editorial in the *Bulletin* in January 1934, a year into Hitler’s rule, worried that the downfall of German Jewry would lead to “a fresh violent disturbance of Jewish life,” with unforeseeable results: “If the German Jewish Community is indeed doomed as a corporate body, how will the Jewries of other lands fare as a consequence?”¹²³ Indeed, Vancouver Jews were painfully aware that anti-Jewish sentiments had already found a fruitful base in Canada, and they made no distinctions between Nazi and Canadian antisemitism. On the contrary, Vancouver Jews drew a clear line connecting the persecution of Jews in Germany and antisemitic incidents in their own country, so much so that domestic cases of antisemitism were reported in the same breath as incidents in Germany. In August 1935, for example, the *Bulletin* reported on an anti-Jewish rally held in Berlin and, in the following paragraph, provided an update on a series of antisemitic incidents in Val David, Quebec.¹²⁴ Implicit here is the realisation that what was unfolding in Germany could happen in Canada, too, and in fact already was to a certain extent. This fear, furthermore, was shared by Jews across the country. The editor of Toronto’s *Der Yiddisher Zhurnal*, a Yiddish-language daily, wondered if “the history that we [Jews] have experienced in different countries and in different times [could] also occur here at the present time?”¹²⁵ The question was posed in response to a recent outbreak of violence between Toronto’s Jews and local Swastika Clubs, which reached a climax with the Christie Pits riot, an event which involved ten thousand Jewish and non-Jewish people and wreaked havoc in the streets of Toronto.

¹²² “Review of the Week: Germany,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, July 18, 1935, 1.

¹²³ “Another Side of the German-Jewish Situation,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, January 18, 1934, editorial, 2.

¹²⁴ “Review of the Week: Germany,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 22, 1935, 1.

¹²⁵ S. M. Shapiro, “The Night of the 16th,” *Der Yiddisher Zhurnal*, August 22, 1933. Taken from Levitt and Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987), 192.

In the aftermath of the Christie Pits riot, the *Bulletin*'s editor issued the following rallying cry to Vancouver Jewry: "We as Canadians and Jews must fight the invasion of these [Swastika] groups," the *Bulletin* stated, "which are trying to force and foist upon us in Canada...an outlook such as exists in Nazi Germany and breeds only tyranny, torture, persecution, discrimination and eventually oblivion and chaos."¹²⁶ Canadian Jews had to be ever vigilant if they were to ensure that "some Hitler of the 'Free North'" would never rise to prominence and that "the saber of Fascism"¹²⁷ would not be swung in Canada. "Fascism is Fascism, no matter where it rears its ravening maw and rending claws," a *Bulletin* editorial stated. The editorial went on to attempt to shake Canadian Jews out of their state of dangerous complacency:

I hear some of you laugh at the idea; Canada, you say, is a land of gently democratic backgrounds, a land having no traditions of racial strife and friction. In Germany three years ago Jews laughed and said much the same thing; Those Jews do not laugh in Germany today. Straws show which way the wind blows. As Jews we cannot afford to discount the danger to ourselves in any Fascist control of Canada...Will the Jew of Canada be caught napping?¹²⁸

This call for vigilance was constantly renewed by Vancouver's Jewish leaders. As a notice in the 28 March 1935 issue of the *Bulletin* reveals, Rabbi Cass led an Anti-Defamation Commission in the city on behalf of B'nai B'rith and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Cass used the *Bulletin* as a platform to encourage "members of the Community to notify him of all matters that may come to the attention of any individual."¹²⁹ If constant reporting on antisemitism in Canada, Germany and around the world was not enough to force Vancouver Jews to be on the alert for antisemitism in their own city, appeals like this from community leaders brought the message home.

Indeed, far from being a haven for persecuted minorities, interwar Canada was a not a forgiving place for religious or ethnic minorities, who had to withstand a steady flow of racial, religious and ethnic discrimination directed at them from the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority. Many scholars have turned to nativism to explain the racist nature of normative ethnic ideas in Canada during this time. The concept is particularly valuable for highlighting the intersection between nationalism and racism, specifically as it was manifested in the desire, particularly dominant during this period, to maintain a racially homogeneous nation—a white and specifically British Canada. Vancouver's potent Britishness meant that the city was a hotbed of nativism. In particular, early 20th-century Vancouver was a focal point for anti-Asian

¹²⁶ "We Must Fight Hitler Propaganda In Canada!" *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 31, 1933, editorial, 2.

¹²⁷ "Watchman, What of the Night?" *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 19, 1934, editorial, 2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ "Anti-Defamation," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 28, 1935, 6.

sentiments directed at British Columbia's large Chinese and Japanese minorities. Historians Patricia Roy and Peter Ward have devoted considerable attention to the role of nativism in B.C. history. Both scholars cite popular stereotypes which saw the figure of John Chinaman as dirty, immoral and cheap, and his Japanese counterpart as cruel and militaristic. Pervasive notions of a "Yellow Peril" in the province were built on fears of the apparent high birth rate of the Japanese community, the perceived dominance of major industries by Asian workers and the anticipated military invasion of Western Canada by Japan.¹³⁰ As the *Sun* and the *Daily Province* reported on the increasing persecution of Jews in Germany, the Vancouver papers also noted the occurrence of skirmishes and riots in Chinatown.¹³¹ Clearly, interwar Vancouver was not a friendly place for Asians.

But in the midst of this ethnic strife, Vancouver Jews were fortunate to find the city to be a relatively welcoming and safe environment. In her study of Jewish settlement in British Columbia, Christine Wisenthal notes that the first Jewish immigrants to the region "were received with a remarkable degree of tolerance and became well-integrated into the British host society."¹³² Wisenthal argues that these first Jews, mostly Western European in origin, were highly valued for their entrepreneurial and mercantile skills and were thus treated as "insiders" in the frontier colony, an experience which starkly contrasts with the more typical Jewish reality of existing on the margins of society. Successive waves of immigration from Eastern Europe did not become quite as wholly integrated into British Columbia life, but nevertheless antisemitism did not become an issue. Wisenthal suggests that Jews were overlooked by the majority British population in Vancouver because "racial disturbances... were mainly directed at the more visible Asian minorities."¹³³ In this regard, Vancouver's Jewish community enjoyed relations with their non-Jewish neighbours which were considerably more convivial than those experienced by their counterparts in the larger Jewish centres of Montreal and Toronto. While Ontario and Quebec newspapers also contained sweeping condemnations of the Nazis and Canadians held similar protest meetings in cities and towns across the country, it is likely that these particular circumstances in British Columbia—namely the apparent lack of antisemitism—made it easier

¹³⁰ See Peter W. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) and Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

¹³¹ See for an example "New Year Race Riot," *Vancouver Sun*, January 2, 1934, 1.

¹³² Christine Wisenthal, "Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914." (Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia. April 1987), iii.

¹³³ Wisenthal, "Insiders and Outsiders," 142.

for Vancouverites to express their own opposition to the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures without having to justify the existence of antisemitic sentiments in their own backyard.

And so, while their Jewish neighbours braced themselves against hostility both abroad and at home, the general Vancouver public seemed blissfully unaware of the existence of antisemitism in Canada. Each year at Rosh Hashanah, politicians from all levels of government offered New Years' greetings to the Jewish community; while the Canadian Prime Minister, Premier of British Columbia and mayor of Vancouver spoke at length about the struggles of German Jewry, none mentioned the struggles Canadian Jews faced. For the most part, Vancouverites seemed afflicted by a peculiar form of selective blindness when it came to antisemitism in Canada. The mainstream Vancouver papers made repeated declarations which flatly denied that there was any Jewish problem in the country. In the summer of 1934, the *Sun* reflected on recent "disturbances and upheavals in Europe in which discrimination and persecution have reared their ugly heads against the Jews" and concluded that it was a good thing that "nothing of the kind exists in Canada...because we would dislike to think that Canadians had sunk to that point of bigotry and prejudice which is the final ebb of national degradation."¹³⁴ According to the *Sun*'s editors, there was, apparently, "no sign that revival of religious intolerance threatens us."¹³⁵ Vancouverites believed that Canadian Jews were lucky to live in a freedom-loving, peaceful Canada, especially compared to the daily violence and discrimination facing the Jews of Germany. Although the Vancouver press occasionally reported on domestic incidents of antisemitism—including, for example, cases of vandalism in a Jewish cemetery in Winnipeg, tensions in Toronto following the Christie Pits riot and discrimination towards Jewish clients in an Ontario insurance firm¹³⁶—these incidents were invariably cast as the workings of an aberrant minority. Following a public warning from the Canadian Jewish Congress regarding antisemitic organisations in Canada, the *Daily Province* concluded that, fortunately, "the best citizens of Canada are actively opposing this propaganda."¹³⁷ The average Canadian, the Vancouver press indicated, would not approve of such discrimination. Coverage of concrete manifestations of antisemitism in Canada, rare though it was, was thus accompanied by clear editorial denunciations of such attitudes. Reflecting, for instance, on an intern strike at a

¹³⁴ "A Great and Virile Race," *Vancouver Sun*, July 5, 1934, editorial, 6.

¹³⁵ "Religious Intolerance," *Vancouver Sun*, November 6, 1933, editorial, 6.

¹³⁶ For examples, see "Vandals Wreck Jewish Cemetery," *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 8, 1933, 1; "Anti-Jew Riot," *Vancouver Sun*, August 17, 1933, 1; and "Cancelled Jewish Fire Policies," *Vancouver Daily Province*, January 5, 1933, 2.

¹³⁷ "Jewish Leader Warns of Anti-Semitism In Canada," *Vancouver Daily Province*, July 10, 1934, 1.

Montreal's Notre Dame Hospital in the summer of 1934, in which interns walked out in protest of the hiring of a Jewish doctor, the *Sun*'s editorial staff declared that "the utter stupidity of anti-Semitism is perfectly illustrated by their action."¹³⁸

One reason why antisemitism may have been a non-issue in the minds of Vancouverites was the popular perception that Jews were exemplary citizens. A *Daily Province* editorial which condemned Hitler's antisemitism as "extraordinary" declared that there was no evidence "of any modern instance in which the Jew has not been a good citizen of the country in which he lives and in which he was born."¹³⁹ The editorial staff of the *Sun* agreed, referring to the recently arrived Rabbi J. L. Zlotnick as a "cultural asset," who, like "every cultivated Jew...make[s] such tremendous contributions to the civilization of the world."¹⁴⁰ Vancouver's mayor, Louis D. Taylor, was also full of praise for Jews, declaring that "Vancouver is to be congratulated on the initiative and enterprise of its Jewish Community, as well as of the generous and cooperative spirit so often displayed by its members. They have proven to my complete satisfaction to be citizens of high calibre of this district and of our Dominion."¹⁴¹ This powerful endorsement of Jews from a leading public figure explains why Vancouverites, who observed the flood of Jewish refugees beginning to leave Nazi Germany, were bewildered that the Nazis would so easily let some of their most valuable citizens go. Contrary to Ottawa's position, which was for the most part highly opposed to letting in refugees, the Vancouver public recognised that Canada stood to potentially gain a lot from the crisis. A letter-writer to the *Daily Province* stated that "we in Canada have a most excellent opportunity to add to our population a very high class of intelligent people, professors, scientists, musicians, right at the top of their profession, if we but showed sympathy, and very little assistance to these high-class German refugees who have been banished from their fatherland." The letter-writer concluded that if Canada "hesitate[s] before she says no to this suggestion...she may be losing a valuable prize."¹⁴² In short, it was popularly held that Germany's loss could be Canada's gain. This positive attitude towards Jewish refugees was reflected in Arthur Brisbane's daily column in the *Sun*, when Brisbane suggested, rather

¹³⁸ "Montreal." *Vancouver Sun*, June 19, 1934, editorial, 4

¹³⁹ Editorial, *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 2, 1933, 6.

¹⁴⁰ "A Cultural Asset," *Vancouver Sun*, September 8, 1934, editorial, 6.

¹⁴¹ "New Year's Greetings From Mayor Taylor," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 6, 1934, 1.

¹⁴² J. Neild, *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 13, 1933, letter to the editor, 17. As Abella and Troper note in their study, *None Is Too Many*, Canada had one of the worst records of all refugee-receiving countries in the 1930s. Canada took in less than 5000 Jews from 1933 to 1939, while relatively more impoverished and much smaller countries like Bolivia took in more than four times the number of refugees. Abella and Troper point primarily to antisemitism within the Canadian government, including in particular the racism of high-ranking immigration officials, as the main reason behind Canada's paltry record. For more on Canada's response to the Jewish refugee crisis, see Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*.

remarkably, that Jews were the key to a nation's success and that Germany, like Portugal and Spain hundreds of years earlier, would grow to regret expelling its Jews.¹⁴³

The quintessential German Jewish refugee, who epitomised the great loss that Germany was foolishly bringing upon itself with its irrational hatred of Jews, was Albert Einstein. Einstein was a significant figure, for both Jews and non-Jews. Not only were the Vancouver papers interested in following the movements of the scientist as he fled persecution at the hands of the Nazis, but the *Sun* in particular also wanted to hear Einstein's personal opinion on what was going on in Germany. The paper printed excerpts of interviews with Einstein from London newspapers, in which the scientist spoke of Germany as being in "a state of barbaric hysteria which produces the cruelest atrocities."¹⁴⁴ The Vancouver press, it seemed, valued Einstein's opinion and regarded him as an authority on Jewish persecution. Indeed, the *Sun* declared that Einstein was the "most celebrated of modern physicists and savants and the most distinguished single victim of Nazi persecution."¹⁴⁵ Einstein's uniquely privileged position and international renown makes the papers' focus on him as a symbol of Jewish persecution somewhat misguided, since most Jewish refugees were not respected Nobel Prize-winning scientists. At the same time, the decision to concentrate on him is also quite understandable given the general attitude of the Vancouver press towards the Nazis' antisemitism. Einstein was a figure whom Vancouver readers could easily recognise, and the fact that the Nazis were relentlessly pursuing this admired scientist just because he happened to be of Jewish origin only further underlined the ridiculousness of the Nazis' antisemitism and heightened the sense that Canada could stand to gain a great deal in offering refuge to the thousands of Einsteins fleeing the Third Reich. For Jews in particular, Einstein was a new symbol to bolster community morale. His popular appeal combined with his identity as a specifically Jewish victim of the Nazi regime allowed Canadian Jews to focus on him without having to reconcile their Jewishness with their desire to fall in line with the dominant Canadian outlook—in Einstein, the two were one and the same. While Haman was a figure Vancouver Jewry evoked for internal consumption, to reassure themselves that Hitler was not a new or particularly frightening threat, Einstein was a figure whom both Jews

¹⁴³ Brisbane offered his endorsement of Jews in response to a recent antisemitic rally in Berlin. "Marchers carried placards reading 'Jews are our misfortune,'" Brisbane wrote. "Those Nazis will change their minds about that placard if they succeed in driving out all Jews, including many of the world's greatest scientists. Long ago, Portugal and Spain also declared that 'Jews are our misfortune' and drove out the Jews. Now look at them. They were great nations, leading the world in enterprise, and commerce. All that has vanished." See Arthur Brisbane, "Today," *Vancouver Sun*, May 18, 1935, 24.

¹⁴⁴ Albert Einstein, "Stupid Nazis," *Vancouver Sun*, October 7, 1933, 2.

¹⁴⁵ "'Hitler Brewing War,' Einstein Warns," *Vancouver Sun*, October 21, 1933, Sunday Magazine, 3.

and non-Jews could identify with, a symbol of the greatness of the Jewish people and of the irrational and dangerous policies of the Nazis.

This popular support for Jewish refugees, together with the sweeping condemnation of the Nazis' antisemitism from the Vancouver public, sits uneasily against a background of racial and ethnic strife in Vancouver and Canada more generally. Nevertheless, for the majority of Canadians it was still possible to condemn Nazi Germany for its treatment of Jews even as ethnic strife peaked in their own country. It is possible that what the people of Vancouver were really condemning was not antisemitism but fascism itself, which, as a political system, was antithetical to Canadian—and British—principles of peace, order and good government. This interpretation fits in with the tendency of Vancouverites to universalise the Nazis' antisemitism as problematic for humanity and civilisation as a whole, as a dangerous portent of worse to come. Antisemitism was seen through the same anti-fascist lens with which Vancouverites regarded Hitler and National Socialism more generally: the Nazis' hatred of Jews and violent antisemitic measures were but one manifestation of fascism's general backwardness. The language that Vancouverites used to denounce Nazism was thus drawn from a rhetoric of Britishness. British ideals of liberty and tolerance were contrasted with the medieval brutality of the Nazis.

In contrast to Nazi Germany, Great Britain was upheld by Vancouverites as a great friend to the Jewish people. Embodying this favourable attitude towards Jews was Britain's blunt rejection of "the whole German conception of ethnic nationality and treatment of minorities" in favour of a policy of toleration in which "Jews deserved the same fair treatment as any other citizens of the nation."¹⁴⁶ It was this kind of attitude which had made Britain into a bastion of hope for Jews around the world, at least in the minds of the British themselves. Writing in London's *Quarterly Review*, but reprinted in the *Vancouver Sun*, Professor Montagu Frank Modder declared that "the present position of the Jew in England is perhaps the happiest that he has ever occupied in the history of his race since the destruction of Jerusalem."¹⁴⁷ Britain, then, was seen as a kind of substitute Zion for Jews, a holy land where their rights and freedoms would be protected under the banner of democracy. Vancouverites agreed with this depiction of Britain, as one letter-writer to the *Sun* asserted: "The British have ever been friendly disposed toward the Jew."¹⁴⁸ Of course, Canada, as a British dominion, could claim a similarly kind disposition towards its Jewish citizens. In its regular "This Day in Canadian History" column, the *Daily*

¹⁴⁶ "Britain Defends Freedom of Jews," *Vancouver Sun*, October 4, 1933, 20.

¹⁴⁷ Montagu Frank Modder, "England and the Jews," *Vancouver Sun*, November 25, 1933, 2.

¹⁴⁸ "British & Jews," *Vancouver Sun*, October 11, 1933, letter to the editor, 8.

Province marked the 103rd anniversary of Jews enjoying full rights in Canada, recounting the passing of a bill by the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada which granted Jews “the same rights and privileges as those enjoyed by other subjects of His Majesty.”¹⁴⁹ This pride in Canada’s openness towards Jews could be found throughout the papers’ coverage of Nazi Germany. The *Sun* editors stated that the people of Vancouver “are glad to honor the Jews because we value their presence as citizens, respect and like them as friends. But we like to think that in doing so we honor ourselves too in being so singularly free from those petty intolerances and stupid hatreds that disgrace and shame any nation that indulges in them.”¹⁵⁰

In condemning the Nazis’ antisemitism, Canadians were thus calling upon a long tradition of tolerance and freedom, rooted in Canada’s enduring British heritage. Here the opposition to antisemitism from an anti-fascist standpoint becomes especially clear. Canadians disapproved of Nazi antisemitism because such sentiments were innately contradictory to British ideals. In June 1934, for instance, only a few weeks before a bloody purge in Germany would spark a renewed outpouring of condemnation of Hitler’s dictatorship, *Daily Province* editors stated that fascism was “repugnant to the British tradition of tolerance and personal liberty.”¹⁵¹ Nazi racial theory was dismissed as “arrant nonsense” and the increasing persecution of Jews in Germany was upheld by the Vancouver papers as a striking illustration of “the insane follies into which people can be led by race prejudice.”¹⁵² Indeed, for Vancouverites, Nazi Germany offered a lesson of what Canada should, at all costs, avoid: “Canada is interested in the charges of German atrocities against Jews,” a *Sun* editorial explained, “because it shows the extent to which a bigoted narrow nationalism can be framed into hate of a superior people, or a superior country.”¹⁵³ One *Sun* reader wrote into the paper to draw attention to the “still innumerable reservoirs of hate and distrust” that existed in the city, while another letter-writer continued with this theme, declaring that “right here it is all so uncalled-for and untimely.”¹⁵⁴ To the people of Vancouver, there was, apparently, no room for that kind of outlook in Canada.

Because of its inherent opposition to honoured British values, Vancouverites staunchly opposed the presence of fascism in Canada. British Columbia, perhaps more than any other

¹⁴⁹ “Quebec Gave Jews Equality,” *Vancouver Daily Province*, March 19, 1934, editorial, 6.

¹⁵⁰ “A Great and Virile Race,” *Vancouver Sun*, July 5, 1934, editorial, 6.

¹⁵¹ Editorial, *Vancouver Daily Province*, June 8, 1934, 6.

¹⁵² See V. Gordon Childe, “The Aryan Nonsense,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 21, 1933, 2, and “Latest Aryan Wisdom,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 3, 1935, editorial, 4.

¹⁵³ “Germany’s Culture Flees,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 19, 1933, editorial, 6.

¹⁵⁴ See Roy A. Hunter, “Suspicion, Venom,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 27, 1933, letter to the editor, 4 and Harold McConnan, “Fascism,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 29, 1933, letter to the editor, 4.

province, was posed to become a land “where the British flag will forever fly, where British laws and justice will be respected and enforced.”¹⁵⁵ If Britain refused to bow down to fascism, then certainly Canada would not give in to the dark forces of dictatorship either. Should “this reptile raise its head in Canada,” a letter-writer to the *Sun* warned, “watch its reception with the lovers of liberty, truth and justice.”¹⁵⁶ In a radio address in December 1933, nearly a year after Hitler’s ascension as Chancellor in Germany, Vancouver Member of Parliament Ian Mackenzie argued that neither communism nor fascism had any place in Canada. “We need no sickles and we need no swastikas in Canada to overcome our problems at home,” Mackenzie declared.¹⁵⁷ Years later, this staunch anti-dictatorship sentiment still held powerful sway in Canada. In 1938, the Toronto-based magazine *Saturday Night* published an article about Canada’s own would-be Hitler, Quebec fascist leader Adrien Arcand. In a biting poem, the magazine offered the following “solemn advice” to Arcand:

The beaver does not wish to wear
A fascist symbol in his hair
He is a staid heraldic beast
Monogamous from west to east
All other brutes of fur or horn,
Lion, eagle, unicorn,
Might love democracy and leave her,
But not our mild domestic beaver.¹⁵⁸

Arcand, along with anyone else who wished to see the swastika and the maple leaf entwined, was not welcome in Canada. A letter-writer to the *Sun* in May 1934 stated that those people “who so admire the present regimes in Germany and Italy...are not wanted by a nation that aspires to be free.”¹⁵⁹ Canadian fascist groups themselves recognised the importance of Britishness and incorporated loyalty to Britain as much as possible into their platforms, with slogans such as “Keep Canada British!”¹⁶⁰ This strategy was not very effective, however. The intersection of pro-British nativism with fascism in Canada remained problematic because the anti-democratic basis of regimes like Hitler’s in Germany contradicted highly lauded British principles of religious tolerance. As the *Sun*’s editors noted, religious tolerance is “one of the essential ingredients in the democracy which we cherish. Democracy is more than just the abolition of

¹⁵⁵ R.E. Gosnell, “A Greater Britain on the Pacific,” *Westward Ho! Magazine*, 1908. Quoted in Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 93.

¹⁵⁶ William Gordon, “No Fascism Here,” *Vancouver Sun*, March 22, 1934, letter to the editor, 6.

¹⁵⁷ “Canada Wants No Swastikas,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 18, 1933, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Joyce Marshall, “Arcand and the Beaver,” *Saturday Night* June 11, 1938, 12.

¹⁵⁹ “Fascism,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 7, 1934, letter to the editor, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, 46.

autocratic government. In its broad sense, it is a scheme of society under which each individual is permitted to live his own life as he sees fit...Any infringement on this right is a denial of the very essence of democracy.”¹⁶¹ Since, in the minds of many Canadians, antisemitism was central to the basic threat represented in fascism, fascism itself was unacceptable.

Despite their vigilance over growing antisemitism in Canada, Vancouver Jews were vocal about their gratitude to live in a free, British dominion. The enthusiastic participation of the broader Vancouver community in the April 1933 protest meeting reassured Vancouver Jewry that even though such meetings might “have little practical influence with Chancellor Hitler and his followers,” at the very least these demonstrations proved that “there is widespread sympathy among the Gentiles of all communities with the justifiable indignation of their Jewish compatriots.”¹⁶² Canadian Jews most certainly saw themselves as patriots who had a shared interest with all other Canadians in defending the integrity and freedom of their country. Indeed, this language of patriotism was a prominent feature of reporting in the Jewish press. On the eve of Canada’s 67th birthday, the editor of the *Bulletin* declared that “on this Dominion Day, Vancouver Jews join our Canadian compatriots in thanksgiving for the peace vouchsafed in our dominion.” The editor also offered the express wish that, “in recognition of the tolerance Jews here have enjoyed as their own, we hope that both national peace and sectional tolerance will continue to be associated with good Canadianism.” Like their Gentile neighbours, Vancouver Jews castigated racism “as being in opposition to those principles on which our Dominion was built.”¹⁶³ In an editorial celebrating King George V’s upcoming silver jubilee, the *Bulletin* noted that the occasion was a fitting one “to sum up the debt of Jewry to Great Britain.” According to the editor, the British Commonwealth stood as “a shining exception” amidst all the “varieties of race hatred and Jew-baiting in all corners of the world,” a land where the equality accorded to Jews was “a matter of right and justice...given as a matter of course.”¹⁶⁴ Even when they took into consideration the existence of antisemitism in Canada, Vancouver Jews upheld Canada as being better than most insofar as “questions of race or creed, comparatively speaking, have had less effect on our national life than in most countries.”¹⁶⁵ Indeed, awareness of the intense persecution and struggles facing their brethren overseas made it impossible for Canadians to take their comparative security for granted. As one Vancouver Jew noted, each day brought worse

¹⁶¹ “Religious Tolerance,” *Vancouver Sun*, November 6, 1933, editorial, 6.

¹⁶² “The Vancouver Protest,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 6, 1933, 6.

¹⁶³ “Dominion Day,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, June 28, 1934, editorial, 2.

¹⁶⁴ “The Jubilee and Jews,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, May 2, 1935, editorial, 2.

¹⁶⁵ “Toronto’s Nazis,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 24, 1933, editorial, 2.

news from Europe “and increased reason to be grateful to God that we are living under the protection of this free and peace-loving Dominion.”¹⁶⁶ Although conditions in Canada were not ideal, the religious freedom and relative security which Canadian Jews enjoyed lent an inestimable value to their citizenship. Far from undermining their Canadianness by raising questions of divided loyalty, the ethnic identity of Canadian Jews actually enhanced their pride in being Canadian. In a sense, Canadian Jews came to value their citizenship through the lens of their Jewish identity.

And yet, the constant give-and-take between their ethnic attachment as Jews and their civic identity as Canadians continued to complicate Jewish life in the country. In fact, it was because of this recognition of the comparative security and freedom which life in Canada offered them that it became fundamentally important to Canadian Jews that they should do nothing which might jeopardise their position. Accordingly, Vancouver Jews noted the importance of acting as Canadians first and foremost, and Jews only secondary. In the weeks leading up to the federal election in the fall of 1935, the *Bulletin* editors implored readers to remember that “in these elections we vote as Canadians” and that there was “no such thing as a ‘Jewish vote.’” The editorial concluded with the following note: “Citizenship is a priceless possession. Let us not neglect it. It is important that each and every one of us vote.”¹⁶⁷ This explicit acknowledgement of the importance of citizenship came only a few weeks after the Nazis promulgated the Nuremberg Laws, which revoked the citizenship of German Jews. Witnessing their German brethren have their basic identity and rights as Germans forcibly taken from them surely made Canadian Jews regard their own citizenship in a new, and perhaps somewhat rosy, light. It was imperative that Canadian Jews do their bit as Canadians, and never forget that their first allegiance must be to their country. Vancouver Jewry vowed “to more than carry its part of the general social service burden” by meeting its fundraising goals and avoid burdening the city’s relief boards during these early Depression years.¹⁶⁸ Although the *Bulletin* was “primarily devoted to matters of Jewish concern,” the paper’s staff noted that “no people, and least of all the scattered Jewish race, lives unto itself. Jewry is not a nation marooned on a remote island, isolated from contact with men. Its interests are closely interlocked with those of other people.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ C. Adler, “On New Year’s Day,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 3, 1935, 5.

¹⁶⁷ “The Federal Elections,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 10, 1935, editorial, 2.

¹⁶⁸ “Jewish Charity,” *Vancouver Sun*, November 3, 1933, 3.

¹⁶⁹ “The Financial Crisis,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, January 12, 1933, 2.

Nevertheless, focusing on their common purpose with other Canadians did not preclude efforts to help German Jews. Indeed, Canadian Jews were also greatly concerned that they did not neglect their obligations to their suffering co-religionists in Germany. Although incredibly important as demonstrations of solidarity between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens, protest meetings and intellectual debates about Nazism usually did not result in practical change; what was needed was the active involvement of Vancouver Jews. Periodic appeals for funds earmarked for the assistance of German Jewry were circulated throughout the community, and Vancouver Jews were implored to contribute “unstintingly and generously” to this cause “that has no parallel in modern history.”¹⁷⁰ The seriousness of the situation, which was only too clear to world Jewry, meant that there was no time for apathy. In a flyer advertising a mass community meeting to attract donors for the Emergency Appeal for the Relief of Stricken European Jewry, the Canadian Jewish Congress applied a liberal dose of traditional Jewish guilt to encourage Vancouver Jews to contribute to the fund, declaring that “to you it means GIVING—to them LIVING.” In case this stark reality check did not prove sufficient, a notice in the *Bulletin* announcing the upcoming meeting included the following appeal:

If you who read this appeal have the slightest sympathy and regard for the very lives of our persecuted and suffering people, you cannot ignore and turn a deaf ear to their pitiful appeal for help. We must be human and not selfish and self centered. Do you want our own people to perish? Your indifference and absence from this meeting will indicate that you do not care have not the slightest interest. THAT is not Judaism.¹⁷¹

The implication here—that being a good Jew required one to intervene actively on behalf of one’s suffering brethren—was a common feature in appeals for help from Vancouver Jewish leaders. Dr. C. Adler, a prominent figure in the local community, declared that “our duty to them...consists not in giving vent to our feelings through untimely and futile outcries, which may offer us some satisfaction but do them no good, but in actively sacrificing some of our means for the improvement of their lot.”¹⁷² Fundraising, though, was just one recourse that Vancouver Jewry could take; even the simple but meaningful act of living consciously as a Jew in a free country like Canada stood as an open act of defiance towards those in Germany who would wish to curtail such freedoms among their own citizens. In September 1933, during the first High Holiday season following Hitler’s rise to power, the *Daily Province* noted that

¹⁷⁰ “A Cry Has Come Unto Us,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 3, 1933, editorial, 2.

¹⁷¹ See “Mass Meeting, Tuesday, September 25th,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 20, 1934, 1. The full-page ad appears on page 4 of the same issue.

¹⁷² C. Adler, “On New Year’s Day,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 3, 1935, 5.

Vancouver's Jews were preparing for Rosh Hashanah "with more than usual emphasis this year because of the persecution of Jews by Hitler in Germany."¹⁷³

In these active responses towards Nazi Germany, the Vancouver Jewish community did not deviate in any great way from the attitudes or tactics taken by the main centres of Canadian Jewry based in Montreal and Toronto. However, the peculiarities of the Vancouver Jewish community—namely its small size of 2000 people compared to Montreal's 60 000 and Toronto's 46 000,¹⁷⁴ as well as its distant West Coast location—meant that Vancouver Jewry suffered from something of an inferiority complex when it came to relations with Canadian Jewry more generally. Vancouver Jews fastened onto combatting the Nazis' antisemitism as a way to prove their mettle and demonstrate to their eastern Canadian co-religionists that they were prepared to do their bit. Indications that Vancouver Jewry was falling short in this task sparked a stream of stern words from local leadership. In an impassioned article entitled, "Why Are Vancouver Jews Silent?", Mordecai Jaffe bemoaned that "Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, etc. have already formulated their positions, and we are still silent... We must not be the exception. We too, must do something."¹⁷⁵ A similar appeal followed months later, in September 1933. The *Bulletin* stated that "throughout the world money has been collected to aid our distressed brethren but Vancouver so far has done nothing. Are we still to remain outside the pale of world Jewry in this matter?"¹⁷⁶ An emergency meeting determined that support would be strong-armed from the community if need be: "It was decided," a report informed readers of the *Bulletin* after the meeting, "that every member of the Jewish faith living in Vancouver should be interviewed at once and efforts made to collect all monies within the next few days."¹⁷⁷ In advance of renewed fundraising the following year, the *Bulletin* warned that "it is only fair that Vancouver Jews should realize their proximity and become prepared to aid."¹⁷⁸ When Vancouver Jews listened to these appeals and worked satisfactorily to assist their beleaguered German brethren, the community congratulated itself for having "done what it felt its duty" and "easily put[ting] us in the class of cities with large Jewish populations."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ "Jews Prepare for Sacred Holidays," *Vancouver Daily Province*, September 18, 1933, 3.

¹⁷⁴ Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 31, 33.

¹⁷⁵ Mordecai Jaffe, "Why Are Vancouver Jews Silent?" *Jewish Western Bulletin*, June 1, 1933, 4.

¹⁷⁶ "The Special Emergency Meeting," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 21, 1933, 16.

¹⁷⁷ "Emergency Campaign Meeting for German Jewry," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 28, 1933, 2.

¹⁷⁸ "Appeals," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 9, 1934, editorial, 2.

¹⁷⁹ See Editorial, *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 13, 1933, 2 and Editorial, *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 25, 1934, 2.

It was important for the Vancouver community to keep up with its counterparts elsewhere in the country because unity among Jewry was considered crucial to defeating Nazi Germany. Hitler had at his disposal the support of millions of Germans who were ready to rally up behind their *Führer*; if Canadian Jewry—or, indeed, world Jewry—was not united in its purpose and actions, there could be little hope of combatting this powerful nationalistic force and helping their beleaguered German brethren. “If we must go down, let us go down like men and not cringe,” a *Bulletin* editorial declared shortly after Hitler came to power, “if we have got to fight, let us not beg for mercy. But we are not going down as there are still reserves of strength. If we united together, if we used the powers they had, we might have a different story to tell.”¹⁸⁰ The magnitude of the problem represented a threat to Jewry the world over, which meant that Jews around the globe were faced with the same great task, as a *Bulletin* editorial made clear in July 1933: “To us, as to all Jews the call has come to stand in the breach and bring deliverance.”¹⁸¹ A year later, in August 1934, the paper’s editorial staff repeated the necessity that “the aid of no Jew must be lacking. All must help all.”¹⁸² A cohesive front was key, an opinion strongly espoused by the *Bulletin*. In an editorial printed in the paper’s 1934 special Rosh Hashanah issue, the *Bulletin* stated that “even in this City—small though the Community is—we have many different sections.” What was needed was “a perfect unity in the Community—a united Jewry.” This unity was a prerequisite for peace and harmony in society:

First, let us take stock of ourselves. Let us unite with a common object. Let us forget our petty grievances, our small ambitions, our minor indifferences...How can we teach brotherly love, good will and better understanding to others, when we do not practise it ourselves...How, again can we ask our Christian neighbours to trust us, when we do not trust one another. Today more than ever a united Jewry is necessary.¹⁸³

In an address to the Jewish community during Rosh Hashanah in 1934, Rabbi Cass placed a similar emphasis on the need for Canadian Jews to unite together before they could successfully turn their attention to Germany: “The time has come,” Rabbi Cass wrote, “when the Jew must salvage Judaism, before Judaism can bring salvation to the Jew.”¹⁸⁴

Moreover, Jews asserted that they had the *right* to fight back as a unified whole, as Mordecai Jaffe implored in an article appearing in the *Bulletin* in June 1933, six months after the Nazis’ rise to power:

¹⁸⁰ “Taking Up the Challenge of Anti-Semitism,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 16, 1933, editorial, 2.

¹⁸¹ Editorial, *Jewish Western Bulletin*, July 27, 1933, 2.

¹⁸² “Appeals,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 9, 1934, 2.

¹⁸³ “A Rosh Hashona Message,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 21, 1933, editorial, 4.

¹⁸⁴ Samuel Cass, “The Old and The New Year,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 6, 1934, editorial, 2.

The Jewish people were never so conscious of the fact that power for the survival of all these persecutions, tortures and troubles can come only from union, that the time of passive resistance, of putting out the throat to meet the axe of the executioner is long since past, and all civilized humanity gives us the human right of fighting for our existence, of defending ourselves with effective means and of standing up against the danger with practical deeds.¹⁸⁵

It was this appreciation for the need for unity against a larger force which was partly behind calls for the reformation of the Canadian Jewish Congress in January 1934. Canadian Jewry needed an authoritative body to represent their interests and organise their responses to Nazi Germany. If nothing else, a *Bulletin* editorial noted in early January 1934, “the idea of a Canadian Congress for the protection of Judaism...has done a great deal in awakening Canadian Jewry to the sense of its responsibility. It has proved to the world that disunited though we may be...yet when danger threatens, like Israel of old, we forget our petty grievances and differences, and unite in a common cause against the common foe.”¹⁸⁶ Cooperation between Jews was a step forward, “a new and hopeful symbol of Jewish unity in the face of a great disaster.”¹⁸⁷

It was also critical that the community be unified in its behaviour and in the outward face it showed to the rest of Canadian society. In order to deter domestic antisemitism, which Canadian Jews could hardly afford to invoke as they entered into a serious struggle to save their German brethren, it was necessary to make sure that Canadian Jewry not draw any negative attention to itself. At a national Congress meeting held in Toronto in January 1934, Louis Rosenberg spoke of the need for Canadian Jews to lead respectable, lawful lives, since to do otherwise would represent a luxury which Jews “[were] not in a position to tolerate.”¹⁸⁸ It was critical that Canadian Jews conduct themselves in a manner beyond reproach, because any deviation from the norm could spark renewed antisemitism and derail their efforts to help German Jewry. This line of thinking was not unique to Canadian Jewry, but was in fact also shared by other minority groups in their responses to nativism. The Chinese in British Columbia,

¹⁸⁵ Mordecai Jaffe, “Why Are Vancouver Jews Silent?” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, June 1, 1933, 4.

¹⁸⁶ “Vancouver Jewry Aroused,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, January 4, 1934, editorial, 2.

¹⁸⁷ See “Canadian Jews Accept Their Responsibility,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, September 6, 1934, 11. The role of the Jewish press in fomenting this unity cannot be overemphasised. The *Bulletin* saw itself as both “the voice of the Jewish Community of Vancouver” and a tool to “awaken Jewish consciousness” by bringing “its readers in close touch with the happenings of Jewry the world over.” The *Bulletin* was not unique in this regard, but joined an army of other Jewish newspapers which served communities across the world. When New York City’s *Jewish Daily Bulletin* temporarily went out of publication in the summer of 1935 due to lack of funds, Vancouver’s *Bulletin* staff lamented the demise of the paper, calling it “a serious loss.” The Jewish press was an essential source of news about what was going on in Germany and elsewhere in the Jewish world; the absence of this key lifeline meant that unity among world Jewry would be difficult to achieve. See Editorial, *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 13, 1933, 2, and “A Serious Loss,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 1, 1935, editorial, 2.

¹⁸⁸ “Jewish Congress,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 29, 1934, 7.

for example, sought to minimise antagonism by ducking under the public's radar as much as possible. In her study on anti-Orientalism in British Columbia, Patricia Roy gives the anecdote of two Chinese men who were found smoking opium and gambling beside a decaying human corpse in a room in Chinatown. In response to this incident, the Chinese consul for Western Canada admonished the two law-breakers for reinforcing popular stereotypes and “[giving] people an occasion to despise us.”¹⁸⁹ Jewish community leaders made similar appeals. In March 1934, a member of the Western Executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress spoke at a Congress meeting and reminded his audience that they had to “ever be on guard to set our own house in order and keep it unsullied and without reproach.”¹⁹⁰

In general, this emphasis on leading model lives follows the traditional tactic of North American Jews to rely on quiet diplomacy in their dealings with mainstream society. This strategy, which involved the discreet intervention of community leaders with the government to try to secure aid for Jewish refugees, has come under fire by some historians and Jews for being insufficient in the face of the scale of the tragedy unfolding in Germany. In *None Is Too Many*, historians Abella and Troper acknowledge the ineffectiveness of Canadian Jewry but do not blame Jewish leadership for taking up a strategy of quiet diplomacy in their dealings with the King government. European Jewry, stuck in the eye of the storm, may have validly accused world Jewry of not doing enough, and some Canadian Jews may also have criticised Congress leadership for their timidity, but ultimately quiet diplomacy was the only realistic recourse open to Canadian Jews. Being too vocal in their demands that the Canadian government step up and

¹⁸⁹ Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 48.

¹⁹⁰ See “Western Jewry Faces Anti-Semitism,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, March 22, 1934, 6. Canadian Jewish leaders continued to make these kinds of appeals well into the 1930s. In January 1939 at a meeting of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Congress President Samuel Bronfman declared that “it is the responsibility of Congress to see that the Jews are good citizens in their respective communities across Canada, and to so conduct themselves that they will gain the respect of their fellow citizens...the non-Jewish citizens. We have got to be just that much better to gain their respect.” See Beer, *What Else Could We Have Done?*, 61.

Another major trend regarding the responses of minorities to nativism was to invoke the language of nativism directly, by underlining their own Britishness and thus asserting their right to belong in Canada. For example, Ben Steiner, a local Toronto Jewish leader, interviewed by the *Toronto Daily Star* in the days following the Christie Pits riot, explained that British influences had moulded the Jewish youth to fight back: “These boys are British,” Steiner said, “They have been brought up in Canadian schools, and have learned something of the British bulldog idea never to give up without a fight.” See Levitt and Shaffir, *The Riot At Christie Pits*, 181. Interestingly, as Patricia Roy illustrates in her work on anti-Orientalism in British Columbia, Japanese Canadians also called upon their Canadian upbringing to combat racism. Roy quotes Minoru Ito, a Japanese Canadian living in Victoria whose statement in the *Victoria Times* in 1929 echoes Ben Steiner's nearly identical sentiments. Ito declared that “we [Japanese Canadians] have been brought up and educated here along with you as brothers, and we have to live and die in Canada. We are yellow in color but we are Canadian at heart.” See Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 148. This assertion of Canadian identity speaks to the nativist fear of the inassimilability of these minority groups; Steiner's and Ito's statements demonstrate that at least some ethnic groups responded to such sentiments by asserting that they were, in fact, already assimilated.

help European Jewry may have exacerbated the very real strands of antisemitism running through the Canadian population. The fact of the matter was that Canadian Jewry simply “was not an important part of the domestic power equation,” as Abella and Troper note. For that reason alone, Abella and Troper state that “it is a harsh but undeniable conclusion that the Jewish community—no matter what it did...could never get any more than the government, for its own reasons, was prepared to give, which was never much.”¹⁹¹

As they embarked upon this path of quiet diplomacy and made appeals to the government to secure assistance for their German brethren, Canadian Jews emphasised their identity as Canadians by calling upon a rhetoric of nationalism. The mass protest meeting of April 1933 concluded with the drafting of a resolution, to be forwarded on to the Prime Minister and the Premier of British Columbia, which implored the Canadian government to make “appropriate representations” on behalf of “this meeting of citizens of Vancouver.”¹⁹² Throughout the 1930s, Canadian Jews continued to send petitions and resolutions to Ottawa and to international bodies like the League of Nations. Following with their general strategy of universalising the suffering of German Jews, Canadian Jewry endeavoured to represent the issue as a distinctly non-Jewish problem. In a meeting between the Canadian Jewish Congress and Prime Minister Bennett in August 1935, for example, Congress officials made sure that the Prime Minister understood that they also “represented the best in Canadian non-Jewry.”¹⁹³ The petition which Congress delivered to Bennett underlined the fact that the undersigned were Canadian citizens who shared with “millions of our Canadian fellow citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish,” a great distress over conditions in Nazi Germany. Helping German Jews was “a matter of the defence of our own free institutions and democratic ideals”; Canadian Jewry requested that Ottawa act “in the light of the humanitarian traditions by which our Government has been guided” and because of “the danger to world peace” and “the threat to Canadian citizens who are Jews” found in “this unleashing of barbarism and race hatred” in Germany.¹⁹⁴ While triggered by the obligation felt by Canadian Jews towards their German brethren, these appeals were rooted in Canadian Jewry’s fundamental desire to be recognised as Canadians above all.

¹⁹¹ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 283.

¹⁹² “Hitler and His Propaganda Denounced At Meeting Of Vancouver Citizens,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, April 13, 1933, 1.

¹⁹³ See “Canadian Jewish Congress Urges Steps Be Taken to Restore Rights of German Jews in Protest to League of Nations,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, November 7, 1935, 2, and “It Is Up To Ottawa,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 22, 1935, editorial, 2.

¹⁹⁴ “The Petition Presented to Premier Bennett,” *Jewish Western Bulletin*, August 22, 1935, editorial, 2.

These appeals, of course, carefully crafted to avoid sparking any undue criticism or accusations of divided loyalty on the part of Canadian Jews, strategically ignored the very real problem of antisemitism in Canada. There was an inherent illogic in calling upon a government which did not always treat its own Jewish citizens very well to help persuade a regime an ocean away to accord fairer treatment to its Jews. But Canadian Jews were only too aware of this contradictory state of affairs. They understood, perhaps too well, that they would not get government or public support if they framed their appeal as stemming from their desire to help Jews for the simple fact that they were Jews, hence the emphasis on the universal implications of the Nazis' antisemitism. Canadian Jews were thus faced with the choice of consciously privileging their Canadianness over their Jewishness in order to secure their own survival and hopefully those of their relatives overseas.

Conclusion

As the menace of Hitlerism grew overseas, Vancouver Jews became increasingly grateful to have found a home in Canada, with its legally enshrined freedoms and dedication to democratic governance. This gratitude partly explains their ability to ignore, at least occasionally, the existence of significant anti-Jewish sentiment within their own country, a self-deception made easier thanks to the refuge offered by a relatively Jew-friendly atmosphere in Vancouver. Nevertheless, within the community and in concert with other Canadian Jews, Vancouver Jews expressed worries about virulent streams of antisemitism in the country and interpreted the persecution of their German brethren as a possible portent of their own future should antisemitism continue to grow unhindered in Canada. They invoked biblical figures like Haman, figures which had no purchase beyond the Jewish community, both to reassure themselves that Nazism did not pose a great threat and to foster a sense of solidarity and kinship amongst themselves and with German Jewry. But, outwardly, Canadian Jewry privileged its Canadianness over its Jewishness. In their appeals for government intervention, Canadian Jewish leaders did not mention the antisemitism that had found fertile ground in the country, careful to avoid sparking any undue criticism or accusations of divided loyalty. Quietly, they extolled the need for members of the community to live good, peaceful and orderly Canadian lives in order to avoid provoking further antisemitism. Vancouver Jewry, driven by the additional insecurity of its small size and distant West Coast location, was particularly concerned with doing its bit to help Jews in Germany but, like Jews elsewhere in the country, made sure that these calls to action were outwardly rooted in an obligation to intervene not as Jews looking out for their own but as Canadians defending basic democratic principles which formed the basis of their society.

Vancouver, and Canadian, Jewry was thus racked by an insecurity that is reflected in its responses to Nazi Germany. Vancouver Jews led a schizophrenic existence, forced to negotiate a complex identity that was both, but not simultaneously, Canadian and Jewish. Caught between their identity as Canadians who could claim freedom and religious tolerance as birth right due to a long legacy of British liberty and as Jews who were shackled by a historical experience of perennial persecution, Canadian Jews were trapped in a liminal space where they were forced to reconcile the ambiguities in their position to the best of their ability. The result of this compromise meant that Canadian Jews, like their Gentile neighbours who had to ignore their own racism in order to fully condemn the Nazis, had to also negotiate with a set of blinders. Canadian Jewry had to pick its battles, and went back and forth between campaigning on behalf

of German Jews and asserting their own rights for equality and freedom as Canadian citizens. Of course, this game required a delicate balancing act, and Canadian Jews had to be careful not to focus exclusively on the suffering of German Jews and in doing so jeopardise their own position by inadvertently lowering their guard against domestic antisemitism. If Canadian Jews were not more vocal or more assertive in their efforts to secure assistance for German Jewry, this unending tug-of-war between patriotism for their country and solidarity with their kin is likely to blame.

The treatment of Hitler and the Nazis in the mainstream Vancouver press betrayed public attitudes towards the Third Reich. The fact that the Nazis' antisemitism was roundly condemned by editorial staff and the public alike and yet was also presented in the mainstream papers as a mere footnote to larger stories about the general barbarism of the Nazis suggests that the general sense of fear and uncertainty regarding fascism itself bled into the papers' coverage of Jewish persecution, too. Taken together, it is clear that developments in Nazi Germany penetrated Canadians' awareness to a great extent, and that, more importantly, the nature of the press' coverage of the Third Reich was intimately connected to the public's response to Nazism. Moreover, it is also clear that these responses were fundamentally shaped by historical, cultural and political ties between Canada and Great Britain. For both Jew and Gentile, attitudes towards Hitler and his regime more generally were based upon a deep-seated disagreement with fascism and dictatorship as political systems which contradicted British and Canadian ideals. Denunciations of Nazi Germany as a retrograde state were accompanied by the determination of Canadians to actively fight back by opposing the growth of fascist organisations in Canada and by pledging their willingness to take up arms to defend against the dark forces of fascist Germany. This powerful anti-fascist sentiment in turn shaped public responses to the Nazis' antisemitism. Vancouverites viewed the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures as proof undeniable of the barbarity of fascism itself. Condemning the Nazis' hatred did not necessarily mean having to recognise their own, however; in turning a blind eye towards the prevalent antisemitism within Canada itself, Vancouverites were able to draw a stark contrast between the (relatively) hospitable home Jews found in British lands and the medieval and brutal treatment they encountered in Germany.

On the one hand, it is no surprise that Canadians, heirs to a British legacy of freedom and democracy, would have found little to admire in Hitler's brand of fascism; on the other hand, the fact that Canadians were so quick to denounce Nazism, even when struggling with their own

issues of racial and ethnic tolerance, is particularly significant given Ottawa's obvious indifference regarding the plight of Jewish refugees. There is a larger relationship at play here between the news, public opinion and democracy. The press, as the mainstay of early-20th century media, played a critical role in shaping the overall Canadian response to Nazi Germany. Vancouver's papers connected the city to developments occurring nearly half a world away, and provided a platform for the public to express its anxieties, frustrations and expectations. The people of Vancouver came together over a mutual condemnation of Nazism, and the press was a vital factor in the development and expression of this opinion. The foundations of the Holocaust may have been set with Hitler's rise to power on January 30, 1933, but the genocide of European Jewry did not become a reality until nearly ten years later; what this analysis of Vancouver newspapers has shown is that well before the sun had set upon even the first year of the Third Reich, and consistently for several years afterwards, there existed grave concern in Vancouver and throughout most of the world about what was unfolding in Germany. If, by the summer of 1933, public opinion was already decidedly against Nazism and wary of the militaristic aggression of the Third Reich, one can only imagine that, as the Nazis' persecution of Jews increased in the late 1930s and Hitler moved the world closer and closer to the brink of war, Canadians would have only become more and more solidified in their opposition to Nazi Germany.

Shortly after Hitler announced Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in October 1933, the *Daily Province* published an editorial predicting a looming disaster. However, the paper offered a kernel of hope, too: "It is not yet an utterly hopeless impasse... The wind has been sown—it is not yet certain that the whirlwind must be reaped. The twelfth hour has not struck; there is still time for the emergence of sanity in the counsels of Europe."¹⁹⁵ The people of Vancouver knew what needed to be done: Hitler, with his ambitious visions and reckless strategies, had to be tamed; his Nazi followers, along with their ideologies of militarism and hate, had to be neutered; and the Jews of Germany, their lives hanging in the balance, had to be offered relief. The role that the Vancouver press played in shaping this awareness of Nazi Germany was considerable. Thanks to the reporting of the *Sun*, the *Daily Province* and the *Bulletin*, Vancouverites knew, if not the details of specific events, at least the important outlines of what was unfolding in Nazi Germany. They knew, at any rate, enough to be concerned. In a sense, though, it was inevitable that Hitler would be seen as an evil dictator in the minds of the

¹⁹⁵ "The New Crisis," *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 14, 1933, editorial, 6.

average Canadian. Vancouverites' concern regarding the Third Reich was, perhaps, a foregone conclusion: historical, social and political realities of the Canadian context meant that condemning the Nazis for their barbarism and racial policies, even in the face of pervasive nativist and antisemitic sentiments in Canada, was the only practicable recourse available to the citizens of Vancouver if they hoped to maintain their identity as a strong, proud and freedom-loving British people.

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