

“But You Can’t See the Fear That People Lived Through”: Canadian Jewish Chaplains and Canadian Encounters with Dutch Survivors, 1944–1945

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One day in late February of 1945, Rabbi Samuel Cass, Chaplain of the First Canadian Army, traveled through the village of Sint-Michiëlgestel in the Netherlands on his way to minister to a group of Canadian Jewish soldiers. But a nonmilitary matter intervened, and not for the first or last time. He encountered on the road a Jewish woman of fifty-eight, originally from Amsterdam. She was alone, as the Nazis had deported her husband and three children. She was destitute, having used all of her resources to secure a hiding spot for two years. Cass found her roaming the streets and wearing the only clothes she owned—one stocking, a pair of shoes, a sweater and a dress. Cass the chaplain became Cass the relief worker and made inquiries about the possibility of local assistance. This was not easily accomplished, as the Nazis had devastated the nearby Jewish community.¹

Just one story, but revealing. It speaks to the specific anguish of the Jewish victim in the midst of the larger anguish of the Nazi occupation, to the ad hoc nature of so much of the relief, and to the development of a sense of responsibility toward these survivors. The encounters between Canadians and Dutch survivors have received little attention in public consciousness² or historical research.³ The images and stories of the American liberators of Buchenwald and the British at Bergen-Belsen were overwhelming in 1945⁴ and have continued to overwhelm, with much of the research on the postwar period focusing on the interactions between survivors and the British and Americans.⁵ But this is problematic. Just as an excessively “Berlin-centered” approach to a history of Nazi policy distorts because it ignores regional variations,⁶ so the interactions between liberating forces and native populations must be analyzed with a view to variations. American Jewish chaplains and relief agencies may have been active in the Netherlands, but it is the Canadian forces that played a central role in the liberation of the Netherlands, and Canadian soldiers remained there in large numbers after the war while awaiting demobilization. From the fall of 1944 to the end of 1945, the Jewish chaplains of the Canadian army were best positioned to view the condition of Dutch Jewry and to try to offer relief.

This paper will study the encounter between the chaplains and surviving Dutch Jews from several perspectives. In the first section, I will examine the chaplains’ emotional and intellectual responses to the Holocaust as they witnessed it in the Netherlands. The chaplains represented a Canadian Jewry

that was quite distinct from prewar Dutch Jewry, and this led to some tensions between the chaplains and Dutch Jews. For the most part, however, the chaplains were pained by what they saw and felt a deep sense of obligation to the survivors. In the second section, I will show how the chaplains acted on these feelings and examine how they tried to provide relief to the survivors through a series of individual and organized initiatives. This paper will thereby add to an understanding of the lives of Dutch Jews in the immediate postwar period⁷ and to the rich literature on the relationship between chaplains and the survivors of the Holocaust.⁸ In the third section, I continue to track the chaplains' relief activities but shift the focus to their appeals to the home front. This brings us to an investigation of some of the earliest Canadian responses to the Holocaust. The paper will show how Jews in Canada responded to the call for support for Dutch Jews, revealing enthusiastic responses from some quarters but restrained response from others. In the final section, I turn to the role of the chaplains as religious leaders and teachers, expressing views on the future for Jews and Judaism in the Netherlands, specifically, and more generally on the face of postwar Jewry. Their perceptions and aspirations became especially apparent in a series of one-week courses for Canadian Jewish soldiers offered in the second half of 1945. Although the numbers who attended were relatively small, the chaplains' "classroom" offers a site where we can examine both the chaplains' agenda for postwar Jewry and the responses of students/soldiers who were exposed to that agenda.

The Chaplains Encounter the Survivors

Almost seventeen thousand Canadian Jews served in the armed services of Canada during World War II.⁹ There were never more than nine chaplains ministering to these Jewish personnel, and this number was only reached near the end of the war. According to the Rabbi Gershon Levi, who served as the chief Jewish chaplain of the army between early 1941 and the end of the war, "Given sufficient manpower, there should and could have been half again as many, and much sooner."¹⁰ The Canadian chaplains who played the largest role in aiding Dutch Jewry, as well as in conveying the needs of survivors to other Canadians, were Rabbis Samuel Cass and Isaac Bertram "Bert" Rose. Cass was born in Toronto in 1908, ordained at the Conservative Movement's Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and served as rabbi at Vancouver's Conservative Congregation Beth Israel between 1933 and 1941. In 1943 he married Annabel Goldfine of Montreal. When they were apart they regularly exchanged detailed letters. In October 1944, just as the Allies were pushing through Belgium and into the Netherlands, he took over the role of chaplain for the First Canadian Army from his friend and classmate at JTS, Gershon Levi.¹¹ In March of 1945, the Ottawa-born Rose joined Cass in the Netherlands, arriving with Canadian troops who had fought in Italy and were now to participate in the final Allied

thrust into Germany and the Nazi-controlled regions of the Netherlands. Rose was Orthodox, receiving his training at the Orthodox Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York. Despite their denominational differences, Cass and Rose had a close working relation with little obvious friction.¹²

Cass and Rose represented a community with a strong Jewish identity and a national political organization. In 1939, Canadian Jewry numbered about 167,000. According to the 1931 census, the vast majority of Canadian Jews spoke English but declared Yiddish as their native tongue. The demographer Louis Rosenberg saw this as a marker of strong ethnic identity.¹³ The rate of intermarriage was low, estimated by Rosenberg to be 5.5 percent in 1934.¹⁴ By the late 1930s the Jewish community had a political umbrella organization, the revitalized Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC). Originally founded in 1919, CJC languished in the interwar years but was revived in 1934 in response to increasing antisemitism and government barriers to Jewish immigration.¹⁵ These barriers never fell, and very few refugees from Nazi Europe found their way to Canada. In the face of their political impotence, and with the situation for German Jews only worsening, even the Canadian Jewish left accepted the wealthy Sam Bronfman as president of CJC in early 1939.¹⁶ In 1940, the CJC set up a War Efforts Committee to encourage enlistment and to offer support to soldiers.¹⁷ As a step toward the professionalization of CJC, Bronfman hired a young lawyer, Saul Hayes, as executive director of the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees. In 1942, Hayes was moved into the top position of executive director of CJC.¹⁸

Across the ocean in the Netherlands, interwar Dutch Jewry was only somewhat smaller in size than the Canadian Jewish community. At the outset of World War II, about 140,000 Jews lived in the Netherlands, including 15,000 German Jews who had fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s. But some of the social characteristics point to significant differences between the two communities. Most notably, in 1934, the intermarriage rate in the Netherlands was almost 17 percent, about three times higher than the rate in Canada.¹⁹

With the Nazi occupation, the legal assault on Dutch Jews was quickly followed by physical persecution.²⁰ As the Nazis tightened the noose around Dutch Jews, many Jews became *onderduikers*, or “those who dive under.”²¹ One recent study estimates that about 28,000 Jews were in hiding. Just over 16,000 of them survived.²² A number of Jewish parents managed to place their children in Christian homes; many survived, but often as orphans. The majority of Dutch Jews, however, suffered another fate. In the summer of 1942, the Nazis transformed the refugee camp Westerbork into a transit camp and in January 1943 also started using a concentration camp at Vught, in the south, as a transit camp. The Nazis deported 107,000 Jews from July 1942 to September 1944. Most met their deaths in Sobibor and Auschwitz; at most, 5,500 returned.²³ The surviving Dutch Jews endured a cold response from Dutch authorities,²⁴ partly

because of controversial decisions by the government-in-exile. The latter had decided not to make distinctions among its citizens, as it had before the war. Although the intention was to avoid recreating interwar tensions, the impact on Dutch Jewry, which had suffered disproportionate losses, was devastating. The problem of Jewish orphans also created tensions between Jews and Dutch authorities.²⁵ The *Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie* (Jewish Coordinating Committee), established in January of 1945 in Eindhoven, struggled to establish itself as the legitimate authority of Dutch Jewry and to represent Jewish interests in those challenging times.²⁶

Between the fall of 1944 and the end of 1945, members of the two Jewish communities came into contact. Samuel Cass and, to a lesser extent, Bert Rose, recorded the evidence of the human and physical devastation of Dutch Jewry at the hands of the Nazis. Cass reported meeting his first group of liberated Dutch Jews in Breda on 25 November 1944.²⁷ Only thirty Jews survived in hiding, he informed Annabel, out of Breda's prewar Jewish community of more than two hundred. The Nazis deported the others, and nothing was known of their fate. "The stories of these people," he wrote Annabel, "will never really be adequately told."²⁸ He also learned of the upheaval in the lives of the hidden when he met a group of Jewish women from Amsterdam who had been "underwater" in the country on the south side of the Maas River. Several weeks later, he encountered for the first time in the Netherlands the specific problem of hidden children. Many had been raised as Christians, and many, he knew, were now orphans.²⁹

Over the next two months, Cass saw more evidence of the destruction of the Jewish communities in the Netherlands. Of Breda's synagogue, Cass wrote, "All that was left were the four bare walls and a leaking roof, the evidences of a wild orgy of vandalism were all around us. I have been informed that the act of desecration was performed by local Nazis.... Not a vestige was left of the Sifre Torah, nor even a 'blettel' [page] of a Siddur [prayerbook]."³⁰ The scene in Nijmegen was both painful and haunting: "[A]nd here too I discovered another synagogue in ruins and filled with odds and ends of furniture and pictures of Jews who had been deported to the Nazi abbatoirs in Poland."³¹ In early 1945 Cass described the loss of the religious infrastructure to a colleague, Rabbi Herman Abramowitz, the chair of CJC's Religious Welfare Committee:

The reorganization of religious and communal life is a task for generations. Neither Rabbi, nor teacher nor *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] are to be found in their midst today. Thousands of children, who will be parentless after all the searches have been made for their fathers and mothers, have been brought up by their Christian beneficent guardians in the practices and rites of Christianity.... It is painful to see what has been done to Synagogues.... Nor can we minimize the physical needs....³²

Looking to find a suitable language to describe these survivors, Cass used the intense imagery from the vision of Zechariah (3:2), and called them “a firebrand plucked from the fire.”

In the spring of 1945, Canadian forces resumed the fighting that would result in the liberation of the remainder of the Netherlands. The Second Canadian Corps pushed north, and on 12 April 1945 they liberated Camp Westerbork. The camp housed 876 inmates at liberation. Cass was in Paris on the day of the liberation, but when he heard about the camp he made his way back as quickly as he could. He arrived on Friday 20 April, early in the afternoon, with a plan for a quick preliminary visit. He ended up staying over the Sabbath, conducting services and listening to the stories of the survivors. By then, the images and stories of Bergen-Belsen, liberated on 15 April 1945, had seared the imagination of many and quickly became the iconic images of Nazi bestiality. But Cass came to understand the purpose of Westerbork and tried to see beneath the relatively favorable conditions in the camp and imagine the psychological terror. After returning from a visit to Westerbork with two journalists on 24 April, he related to Annabel his understanding of the camp:

Everything looks so good on the surface that even L.S.B.³³ was puzzled. With the papers full of the cannibalism at Belsen, it is almost a shock to find a Camp where the survivors are all well and the physical surroundings good. But you can't see the fear that people lived through every moment of their existence, nor can you see the 110,000 Jews who were herded like cattle on the “Transports” leaving twice weekly.³⁴

Cass's understanding was both sensitive and perceptive, and similar to the judgments of later historians.³⁵

The soldiers of Second Canadian Corps also encountered the desecration of synagogues. Within two weeks of capturing Nijkerk, a group of Canadian soldiers and members of the Dutch resistance forced Nazi collaborators to clean up the synagogue, which included cleaning the carpets by beating each other with them. These moments were both photographed and filmed by Canadians, and the film became an army newsreel celebrating the humiliation of the Nazis and taking pride in the freedom of religion delivered by Canadian soldiers.³⁶ As the Second Canadian Corps pushed northward, the First Canadian Corps, newly transferred from Italy, headed west. Rose, serving as Jewish chaplain to the First Canadian Corps, wrote back to Canada to try and organize relief for the surviving Jews.³⁷

After V-E day, Cass and Rose recognized the increased challenges facing Dutch Jewry. In May and June, the chaplains made visits to nearby centers for convalescence in both Germany³⁸ and the Netherlands and met many survivors of Bergen-Belsen and other concentration camps. Cass heard stories of their time as slave laborers in Auschwitz, of the relatives who were gassed and incinerated,

and he saw the tattoos on their arms.³⁹ “They have literally lived through the valley of death,” Cass wrote, “and their stories are just impossible to imagine for people who have never really suffered. That they remain human is a remarkable feat.”⁴⁰ Cass and Rose continued to pay attention to the plight of those Jews who had been in the Netherlands, and throughout 1945 they were concerned about the ongoing grinding poverty⁴¹ and the situation of the Jewish orphans.⁴²

The words of these two chaplains show their growing and pained sense of the tragedy that befell Dutch Jewry. Cass, however, struggled with more than the devastation itself. There were times when he was at a loss to comprehend the behavior of Dutch Jewry. This is not altogether surprising, given the differences between Cass, who, like most Canadian Jews, was the Yiddish-speaking child of eastern European Jews, and more acculturated Dutch Jews. In April 1945, Cass encountered the Jews of Enschede, who surfaced from their “underwater” locations. Of one couple, the community’s rabbi and wife, he had curious words of praise: “[T]hey are a young couple and by far the most worthwhile people I’ve met in Holland,” implying a great deal about the others. Even they, however, posed a challenge, as he told Annabel: “[S]till trying to pry open the mind of a Dutch Jew.”⁴³ Less than two months later, Cass expressed other frustrations about the divisions among Dutch Jewish leaders. Perhaps it should not have been a surprise—given both the prewar levels of integration of Dutch Jews and the cues by the new Dutch authorities who did not want different policies for different groups—that some Dutch Jews questioned the very legitimacy of a separate Jewish community. Cass, however, bristled at the paralysis that seemed to be taking place within the Dutch Jewish leadership. He was also exasperated that some advocated supporting only the surviving Dutch Jews, as opposed to non-Dutch Jews who may have been liberated, for example, from Westerbork, or refugees who had settled in the Netherlands before the war and wanted to return. In one of his bleakest expressions of frustration, he wrote “Some say the world has changed or learned little in these bloody few years and I add—Jews too.”⁴⁴

These expressions of bewilderment and frustration, however, were few in comparison with the pained recognition of what had happened to Dutch Jewry. The chaplains certainly never let these negative sentiments detract from their tireless commitment to act on behalf of the Dutch Jewish community.

Chaplains as Relief Workers

When Samuel Cass first encountered the deep-seated problems facing European Jewry in the fall of 1944, he expected to see help coming from the international Jewish relief agency, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, or Joint). He was wrong. “I am amazed that to this day no adequate Jewish leadership is forthcoming,” he wrote from Belgium to his wife in mid-November 1944, “and everyone in Canada was led to believe

that the Joint & others would be right in with the liberating armies. . . .⁴⁵ Several weeks later, Cass reported from Breda to the president of CJC, Samuel Bronfman, that the situation in Belgium was bad but matters were even worse in the Netherlands, and again wondered “why no representatives of the JDC have yet appeared on the scene.”⁴⁶

By mid-January 1945, Cass learned—as the American Jewish chaplains already knew—that the Joint was not moving into newly conquered areas. The Joint could not protect its workers in the insecure situation before the end of the war, and it relied on local communal agencies to administer the distribution of relief. The local agencies in the Netherlands, however, either did not exist or were still weak.⁴⁷ The chaplains needed little encouragement to take on relief work. They became purveyors of information in place of missing persons bureaus. Drawing on their abilities as scroungers and fundraisers, they also served as provisioners of goods and services to individuals and agencies.

Shortly after his arrival in Europe, Cass became aware of what he called “the great hunt”⁴⁸—that is, the overwhelming desire of liberated Jews to find relatives. From the time of his earliest encounters with surviving Jews, Cass decided to offer information, not exaggerated hope, to those in distress. In Antwerp in early November 1944, Cass shared a podium with a Polish Jewish doctor, a member of the Polish forces which had fought alongside Canadians in the last year of the war. Cass felt that the doctor had unwisely assured people that they would be reunited with deported family members: “I thought that these people had lived through enough tragedy,” he wrote to Annabel, “and some way must be found to normalize their whole outlook and square it off with reality. Raising hopes which ultimately for most of them will not come true is adding insult to injury.” Cass also decided that he should avoid emotional oratory and offer instead “facts and news” about the contemporary Jewish world.⁴⁹

With the liberation of Westerbork, Cass continued in his role as information broker, serving as another address in that amorphous web of survivors looking for relatives and vice versa. Cass chose to be proactive rather than wait for inquiries. He obtained a list of camp inmates at the time of liberation, and within days of arriving in Westerbork he prepared a form letter on which he left blank the name of the inmate. If and when he had the necessary information, he would fill in the form and send it to possible relatives.⁵⁰ Over the next few weeks, Cass also fielded inquiries from an American serviceman hoping to find his parents alive in Westerbork;⁵¹ a Jew in Gloucester who was asking on behalf of someone in Jerusalem whether a family member survived;⁵² and Nathan Phillips, a Jewish lawyer in Toronto (later its mayor) who asked Cass to look in Westerbork for the family members of a friend from New York City.⁵³

As Cass and Rose encountered survivors coming from Germany, the pressure to find relatives intensified. The World Jewish Congress (WJC), one of many organizations trying to gather information, approached Gershon Levi about

data on the survivors in the liberated camps. Although these chaplains usually could not provide information about camps not in their zone, Levi did inform the WJC that “these chaplains [in the Netherlands] have been in considerable contact with former inmates of camps who have returned to the Netherlands, and they have sent on quite a quantity of information to the relatives of the people concerned.”⁵⁴

Information was only one commodity among many, and other needs pressed. Cass quickly perceived that the survivors lacked the most basic of necessities, namely food, clothing, and medical supplies. The demand was enormous. Occasionally, Cass kept a list of those he helped. According to one such list, in the last week of May he distributed clothing to more than 170 women, providing them with everything from “1 set of underclothes” to “coat, gown, a pair of drawers, a woman’s smock, a handkerchief.”⁵⁵

The chaplains exploited several sources to supply the necessities, including army stores and captured enemy stores. When Cass heard that the latter were being opened in Amsterdam, he hurried there to secure furniture and other needs for Jewish hostels and orphanages.⁵⁶ Providing food was especially challenging. Cass had heard the stories of generous but misguided soldiers in Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen who had offered survivors food that they could not tolerate. Therefore, when he encountered a group of female camp survivors living near Enschede, Cass knew that he had to find specific types of nourishment for them. Because he felt that “Holland does not have an adequate supply of these nutritious foods,” he returned to his base and secured vitamins and other appropriate foods.⁵⁷

Cass and Rose often turned to their flock of Canadian Jewish soldiers for support. Sometimes they asked the soldiers to give up one of their few small luxuries. In his Hanukkah 1944 newsletter to the Jewish soldiers of the First Canadian Army, Cass asked them to bring chocolates and sweets for parties with civilians in Antwerp, Ghent, and Breda.⁵⁸ The soldiers responded to the call: “I am proud to say that our men contributed thousands of chocolate bars, bags of candy and other delicacies as Chanukah gifts to children. I also purchased and scrounged all that we needed for parties and teas held in conjunction with the holiday.”⁵⁹ Well before Passover, he asked the soldiers to set aside some tinned items that might make observing the festival easier for the newly liberated Jews, especially in the Netherlands.⁶⁰

Once the war was over, Cass and Rose called on the soldiers for even more direct assistance. For the chaplains, being Canadian Jewish liberators of the Netherlands bore some specifically Jewish responsibilities: “Our role, now that the V-E has come, is essentially that of liberator. In every town and village you will find Jews who have emerged from hiding who will need your help, perhaps in food, clothing, or money. Do all you can for them....”⁶¹ Several months later they renewed the request. Certain that “one of the most vivid memories many of

you will carry [will be the] first hand experience of the suffering of our people,” the chaplains called for donations of food, clothing, and various comfort items, as well as parcels that might arrive after repatriation.⁶² Cass also turned to non-Jews, as when he approached a group of entertainers to help the women survivors he had met in Enschede. Although they traveled lightly, they gave selflessly of their clothing, and Cass was moved by their generous response.⁶³

Turning to the Home Front

The chaplains also looked for support from Canada. As already noted, the Joint did not move into newly liberated areas. However, when Cass discovered that the Joint had started to provide money to American chaplains, he turned to the CJC. He asked Congress to either provide the Canadian chaplains with funds or press the Joint to support the chaplains in the Netherlands. In the end, the chaplains worked more closely with British organizations, such as the Chief Rabbi’s Emergency Fund and the Jewish Relief Unit of the Committee for Relief Abroad, than with the Joint. CJC’s Saul Hayes confided to Cass in September 1945: “I personally believe the J.D.C. missed an opportunity in not trusting the chaplains as an advance party, with large sums for distribution.”⁶⁴

Hayes and CJC, however, themselves became the target of the chaplains’ complaints. In January 1945, Cass felt that CJC had yet to prove itself. Far too much of the CJC war effort, he complained, was expended on “reams and reams of self-praise,” and the last straw for him was when he received, too late for Hanukkah, a parcel from CJC containing a “cheap and meaningless” cardboard toy. Roiling with fury and disgust, he packed up the doll and sent it back.⁶⁵ Cass’s complaints and dramatic gesture seem to have led to results. In early February, Hayes sent a telegram informing Cass that CJC had approached the Joint to provide him with support and had also set up a fund in London for other expenses that Cass would incur. Some form of funding was in place by the end of February.⁶⁶

But the tensions resurfaced. In late June 1945, Cass wrote with exasperation to Annabel: “I don’t know much about the Congress collection of clothing nor why they are so hush-hush about it. They don’t consult me.... It should have been done months and months ago. The Chief Rabbi’s Committee is sending me quite a bit.”⁶⁷ Rose also made a number of approaches to CJC for assistance, only to be rebuffed. In April 1945, he suggested a campaign of twinning Canadian Jewish communities with Dutch Jewish communities, but Hayes considered it impractical.⁶⁸ Several months later, Rose again turned to Canada for more help in relief to Dutch Jewry, only to receive this vague reply from Hayes: “This is being furnished, but due to a number of political complications, it is not going forward in the amounts we would like.”⁶⁹

Cass and Rose also turned directly to Canadian Jews for help, sometimes in defiance of CJC. In May, Cass wrote to a group of women in Ottawa, headed

by one seemingly tireless Goldie Roberts, who had supported Canadian soldiers with comfort packages. Cass pointed out that the situation of Dutch Jewry was dire, especially for survivors returning from the camps. While he was loathe to say the support to soldiers should stop, “one must frankly state there is no comparison between the two needs.”⁷⁰ As the year progressed, Cass and Rose continued with their aid to Dutch Jews and their appeals to Canada, insisting on the importance of material aid from Canada. In August, Rabbi Oscar Fasman of Ottawa wrote to both Rose⁷¹ and Cass,⁷² asking about the work of the various relief organizations and wondering whether individual parcels could make much of a contribution. Rose maintained that they did:

Parcels from Canadian cities have been coming in regularly. But no large organizations are helping here, with the exception of some minor work by the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergen. Comm. And now the Joint is doing just a wee bit largely in terms of money. Which means every ounce of food and clothing from other sources, small though it be, is valuable in the extreme.⁷³

Some substantiation for this view comes from the Dutch themselves. A representative of the Jewish community of Apeldoorn asked Cass to pass on the thanks of the community for the food packages for the Jewish New Year, as well as the clothing “because still much is needed.”⁷⁴ In the fall of 1945, Frederika de Paauw of Amsterdam wrote to her mother and other family members in Palestine of the struggle to start over after the war and mentioned the Canadians stationed in the Netherlands as one of the groups “showing concern for various matters.”⁷⁵

During the High Holidays, Cass and Rose provided gifts to a number of institutions in Amsterdam and took care of one hundred impoverished families.⁷⁶ Israel Medres, the well-known Canadian Yiddish author whose son was serving in the First Canadian Army, wrote an article about the participation of the Canadian Jewish chaplains in the reconstruction of Dutch Jewry. The Department of National Defence picked up on the story, issued it as a release in October, and CJC quite eagerly looked to spread the release.⁷⁷

But Rose wanted something more tangible than publicity and decided to circumvent Congress in making his appeals for Dutch Jewry. Without consulting Cass,⁷⁸ he turned in October 1945 to Rabbi Harry Joshua Stern of Montreal for help. The language of Rose’s letter to Stern, which appeared in the Anglo-Jewish newspaper *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, was urgent and demanding:

As you probably know, the Jewish chaplains in Holland have a golden opportunity in providing relief to our Jewish brothers in Holland.... We foresee a very severe winter for the people of this country and especially a great shortage of warm clothing. I’m appealing to you now and even demand of the people in Canada to send me parcels of warm clothing such as sweaters, scarves, woolen garments, etc. and food such as tea, coffee, sugar, tinned meat and

fish, cooking oil, vitamin-pills. These parcels will be distributed to the neediest cases and will go a long way toward maintaining life.⁷⁹

Rose gave Canadian Jews an address overseas, and thus the opportunity to send relief directly.

Many Jews from Canada responded to the call. Packages continued to flow from Ottawa, now with provisions for civilians. In the late summer and early autumn, the women of Ottawa sent more than three hundred parcels.⁸⁰ In October 1945 “The Goodwill Service Club” of Toronto heard of the needs in the Netherlands and started sending parcels of food and clothing.⁸¹ The chaplains also attracted the support of the Vancouver chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women. The women of that chapter, some of whom were Cass’s congregants when he was rabbi there between 1933 and 1941, wrote to him in the fall of 1945, asking for advice on where to send donations. Cass, who was working with Dutch Jewish communal organizations, suggested that they send their parcels of food and clothing to the Jewish orphanage in Laren (the *Berg-stichting*) and to *Le-ezrat Ha-yeled*, the Jewish organization responsible for orphans.⁸² The women struck a “Laren Committee,” and between October 1945 and early 1947 the committee members estimated that they sent out a total of 160 parcels of food and clothing, weighing in sum more than a ton.⁸³

Some donors had to overcome the feeling, perhaps stemming from the expectations of national unity during the war, that giving only to nonsectarian causes was appropriate. But after Bert Rose’s direct appeal, Rose Finiffter of Montreal wrote that she recognized the unique plight of the Jews and was ready to aid Dutch Jewry:

There are various collections made for all peoples, and we give freely to them, but somehow the realization of the discrimination against, and the sufferings of our own race forces me to desire to help as much as possible to give help direct, instead of leaving it to chance to have some aid given them on sufferance.⁸⁴

She sent a parcel to Rose with the promise that she would start up a knitting and sewing group to provide even more clothing.⁸⁵

Rose, however, had less success in convincing CJC to support his efforts. After he made his direct appeal in October 1945, Saul Hayes wrote to the chaplain and voiced his disapproval. What were the reasons for this tension? Hayes, the Jewish professional, stressed the broad bureaucratic vision of CJC, which claimed to weigh all the concerns of the Jewish community, as opposed to the immediate concern of Rose for the Jews he encountered in the Netherlands. As Hayes said in his response to Rose:

While I am in perfect agreement with you that Canadian Jews have interest enough to cover the needy of Poland, Holland, Belgium as well as other countries, what sometimes happens is that when people give relief of a personalized kind, they are often immunized against general appeals, as a result of which the important relief work is affected.⁸⁶

Rose, however, was not persuaded, as he informed Cass after receiving the letter: “I have had a strong letter from Saul Hayes asking me not to interfere with requests to individuals in Canada to send parcels over here because it interferes with their campaign. I have replied stating that I disagree very strongly with his views.”⁸⁷

Other reasons, not explicitly stated by Hayes, could also explain why CJC, and indeed Canadian Jews more generally, did not completely share the concerns of the chaplains overseas. Not many Canadian Jews had close connections with Dutch Jewry. In contrast, the Canadian Jewish connections to Europe were deep, as the majority of Canadian Jews were either immigrants from Poland, Lithuania or the Ukraine, or the children of those immigrants. Several weeks after the Soviet liberation of Majdanek in July of 1944, the Toronto branch of the Federation of Polish Jews issued a statement declaring that the surviving remnant of Polish Jewry was going to need large-scale relief and that Jews should be ready to offer that support.⁸⁸ This grass-roots response from the community could easily overwhelm other calls for aid. Canadian Jews had to establish priorities, and this often meant looking past Dutch Jewry and toward the remnants of Eastern European Jewry.

And then there were the hellish conditions in Bergen-Belsen. Even in Ottawa, which had supported the chaplains and would continue to do so, Rabbi Fasman made it clear that there were other powerful appeals:

A number of Ottawa men who entered the camp [Bergen-Belsen] have written home with urgent entreaties that their families do something for the luckless people who are still displaced.... I realize that there must be sufficient poverty and tragedy right in Holland, but it so happens that several families in Ottawa have located relatives in Belsen and feel that our community should not overlook the needs there.⁸⁹

One of these letters that found its way into Fasman’s hands was from a Canadian serviceman who was in Bergen-Belsen in September for four days, including Yom Kippur. During those four days, he wrote his wife, “I cried my eyes out.” He prayed on the morning before Yom Kippur with two hundred people and “every one was saying kaddish.” He described the appalling food, clothing, and living quarters of the survivors. He recounted the tragedies he had heard, including one child who saw a Nazi murder his father in order to remove a couple of gold teeth.⁹⁰ Fasman got the letter—and the message—from the soldier’s wife.

So, apparently, did Cass. In late December 1945, Cass responded to Fasman's letter of early November, in which the rabbi informed Cass that members of the Ottawa Jewish community were keen on getting aid to Bergen-Belsen. Cass wrote back with the assurance that parcels were going directly to the notorious camp in Germany:

In fact, we sent in lorry loads. All chaplains have been there, including myself, and we did not go empty handed. Arrangements have been made for all parcels now en route to be sent to Belsen. All individual donors have been notified to stop sending packages to us, and to send directly to Belsen, especially over the winter months and the coming spring.⁹¹

Cass's letter signals a shift away from emphasizing relief to Jews in the Netherlands, although some groups, such as the women of Vancouver, continued to support Dutch Jewish agencies.

Jewish Perspectives on Postwar Reconstruction

The chaplains faced issues that went beyond immediate and tangible relief, questions that they needed to answer both for themselves and for the soldiers. Two of the most pressing were: What was to become of Jewish religious life in the Netherlands? What was to be the political future of the Jews in Europe generally and in the Netherlands more specifically?

By their actions, Cass and Rose helped reintroduce Judaic life into the Netherlands. Celebrating Jewish holidays and overseeing the repair and rededication of synagogues became important moments of renewal. During Cass's time overseas he led services for his soldiers in difficult and dramatic settings, such as conducting the Passover seder in Germany. In the Netherlands Cass and Rose also led services for civilians, sometimes with soldiers, sometimes on their own. These were often emotional moments for the participants. On proposing a Passover service for a town, the local rabbi and his wife "both burst into tears for they hadn't observed Pesach for three years."⁹² Rose held Shavuot services in Amsterdam and conducted a memorial service for both the Canadian soldiers killed during the war and the Dutch Jews who fell victim to the Nazis. On this occasion, the majority of those gathered were non-Jews, including three Amsterdam police officers, and Rose expressed his appreciation for the Dutch who hid Jews.⁹³

If the desecration and destruction of synagogues by the Nazis were meant to mark the erasure of Jews and Judaism, then the cleaning, rebuilding, and rededication reinscribed Judaism on the Dutch landscape. While Rose was in Amsterdam for Shavuot, Cass was in Groningen, where the synagogue was transformed in time for the festival:

I think I described the synagogue during the week, dirty, smelly and filthy with the hands of the vandals and barbarians who had left nothing on the

four walls. This synagogue is a big one, all in stone, seating about a thousand people. What a transformation when I walked in, the floor scrubbed, chairs in place, beautiful Persian rugs on the floor and on the stairs leading to the *Oron Kodesh* [Holy Ark], and the hangings on the *Oron Kodesh*, and the floral decorations which the women arranged were most beautiful.... There were about one hundred civilians present in addition to my soldiers. It was a moving service of re-dedication of this synagogue.⁹⁴

The act of transforming a desecrated synagogue held specific meanings for the Canadian war effort and its soldiers. The newsreel of the synagogue in Nijkerk being cleaned and restored ends with Canadian soldiers opening up the ark and revealing the Torah scrolls, a visual statement of the army restoring Judaism where it had only recently been outlawed. The voice-over narration universalizes the message. Jews showed courage by carrying on their religion underground, but what really was needed was the liberation that the soldiers offered: “Now with victory comes freedom of thought and an honored place for free practice of all religious thought.”⁹⁵

In the eyes of Cass and Rose, the soldiers were indeed heroic, but the chaplains drew their language from Jewish history and the religious calendar. Thus, in addressing the meaning of Hanukkah of 1944, Cass made the ancient and modern parallels explicit: “Now I am looking ahead to CHANNUKAH, our feast of lights, recalling the glorious heroism of the Maccabees, who like us, were fighters for liberty and freedom of religious expression....”⁹⁶ In advance of Passover, he saw that the story of liberation from slavery was especially poignant and pertinent: “For surely now we stand before the final overthrow of a most cruel tyranny and bondage which have enslaved and crushed millions, and which threatened to engulf us all.”⁹⁷

By these references to the Maccabees and to Passover, by their support for the rebuilding of a religious infrastructure, and by their general hard work for relief, the chaplains tried to explain and improve the spiritual and material conditions of the surviving Dutch Jews. But the chaplains, especially Cass, had little long-term hope for Dutch Jewry specifically and European Jewry more generally. Already before the war, Cass was an ardent Zionist. What he saw in Europe only reinforced his commitment to fight for a Jewish state. In April of 1945, shortly after the liberation of Westerbork, Cass saw the children there dancing the hora and singing songs of Jewish Palestine, and he wrote to his wife, “I wonder whether even the Zionists in Canada realize what magic Zion conjures up for all, young and old, who have only this one hope for normalcy.”⁹⁸ After meeting some survivors of the camps, who no longer had homes, he decided that “Youth *aliyah* is the only normal solution there can be for their future. Even the small number of Jews who survived will have a difficult time establishing themselves.”⁹⁹

Cass took note of those Jews who had wanted to move to Palestine and fanned their ardor. In Enschede, shortly after its liberation, he addressed a newly established Zionist youth group.¹⁰⁰ In Apeldoorn, he spent long evenings talking to a doctor and his family who had just returned from Belsen, and he told Annabel that the conversation was exclusively about “Jews, Palestine, Anti-semitism, immigration and children.” He wrote with approval of the doctor who had decided, despite his good practice, that “making a living is not everything. The feeling of being at home [i.e. in Palestine] is infinitely a greater treasure for themselves and their children.”¹⁰¹ Cass encouraged another man to continue in his cultural work on behalf of those in the Netherlands who wanted to move to Palestine. The young man followed up on the meeting and requested, in Hebrew, help in getting teaching materials.¹⁰² By late May, Rose had also observed that the majority of younger Dutch Jews wanted to go to Palestine.¹⁰³

The clearest statements of Cass’s long-term vision for European Jewry came in two letters to his colleague Oscar Fasman. Writing in late October 1945, Cass evaluated the schemes for relief, and after reflecting on the organizations that were trying to help, he explained that while any and all relief was necessary, it was nevertheless a stopgap answer:

[T]he whole point is that the problem ultimately is not to perfect relief organizations as much as to open the doors of Palestine, so that these survivors can once more resume a life that partakes of human dignity. In the meantime, we must not overlook even the least effort that will give them hope and strength, and a measure of comfort.¹⁰⁴

By the end of December of that year, Cass was more convinced than ever:

I fear we have missed the boat entirely in basing our action on old philosophies which thought ONLY in terms of relief and not in terms of political action—which would give status and dignity to our survivors. What is most needed is every type of action which will make our people FREE...; they need GEULAH [redemption]. A relief programme can be based only on the theory that they will be here for a long time to come—which is a MOCKERY of all their MARTYRDOM.¹⁰⁵

Cass did not just convey these sentiments in private; he and Rose had occasion to state their views in sermons and, above all, in a series of courses that they offered Jewish servicemen awaiting repatriation. On 18 August 1945, Rose wrote with enthusiasm to David Rome in Montreal: “I have finally brought a great idea into fruition. There is now established in Amsterdam a Jewish Chaplain Centre....”¹⁰⁶ Consisting of two large houses that Rose had managed to secure the month before,¹⁰⁷ the center served two functions. It became a center for Jewish life in Amsterdam, and in its first month of operation it housed two concerts of Jewish music as well as exhibitions of Jewish art.¹⁰⁸ But

the centerpiece of the Chaplains' Centre, its *raison d'être*, was the education program for Canadian Jewish soldiers. In the curriculum, the chaplains offered a Jewish variant to the Canadian plans for the repatriation and rehabilitation of Canadian soldiers. Every Monday afternoon between 13 August 1945 and 23 November 1945, a group ranging in size from ten to thirty-eight soldiers arrived in Amsterdam for a four-day course on Jewish life. At the end of the course, the students were asked to write an evaluation of the course. The students' responses tell us what they learned—or said they learned—from their chaplains, and how they planned to return, as Jews, to “civvy street.”¹⁰⁹

Although the chaplains and their guest speakers covered a surprisingly wide range of topics in their short courses, the emphasis here is on what they conveyed to their students on the situation of world Jewry and, more specifically, the devastation all around them. They offered their students a Jewish perspective on postwar reconstruction. Occasionally using guest speakers from the local community, they gave lectures on Dutch Jewry. They took the soldiers on field trips to the Jewish hospital in Amsterdam to meet orphans or see survivors in various states of health. Some of the soldiers acknowledged that the lectures gave them a clearer sense of the aftermath of the Nazi onslaught: “It brought me more closely,” one soldier wrote, “to the problem of Jewry throughout the world, and the suffering that went on during the German occupation.”¹¹⁰ The soldiers were also affected by the visits. “The conducted tour of the old Jewish hospital is one that will remain for [*sic*] me for some time. I especially liked the idea of donating my canteen rations...”¹¹¹ Another was affected more by the people he saw than by the other sights: “[S]eeing the old historic synagogue was something in itself, but most touching that afternoon is seeing for ourselves the young sick tots, and older folks who came from Germany's concentration camps, and to be privileged in giving the younger children some candies.”¹¹² Only one soldier expressed the view that he and the others should not have been forced to go to the hospital as part of the course.¹¹³ Another wished that he and others had further exposure to the Nazi onslaught and thought there should be a tour to the “German horror camps.”¹¹⁴ But the encounter of these Canadian soldiers with the Holocaust was affected by the geography of Allied plans for the liberation of Europe, and they thus saw it from the perspective of the Netherlands.

Cass and Rose also looked to complement a more general training for Canadian citizenship with a politicization of the Jewish soldier into Jewish communal life and its specific institutions. The chaplains thus introduced the soldiers to the activities of the so-called parliament of Canadian Jewry, the CJC. Cass, Rose, and guest lecturers also spoke of the work of international relief organizations such as the Joint. The chaplains, however, emphasized one solution to the problem of refugees over all others: immigration to Palestine.

The chaplains conveyed to their soldiers the Zionist solution that Cass expressed forcefully in various letters to colleagues and family. In doing so, the chaplains took something of a risk. In general, Canada supported the policy of repatriation for displaced persons, Jews included. The narration on the newsreel of the repair of the Nijkerk synagogue emphasized that Canadians had restored the Netherlands to its tolerant former self. Moreover, Canada had very little interest in the Middle East, and certainly in Ottawa, the government was studiously ignoring the pleading of Zionist groups to pressure Great Britain.¹¹⁵

Cass and Rose, however, had no reservations about promoting Zionism in their classes, and they tied the fate of postwar Jewry to a home in Palestine. To get their message across, the chaplains made use of the Jewish Brigade. The Jewish Agency, which was the *de facto* government of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, supported the Brigade (est. 1944) both as a demonstration of Jewish commitment to defeating the Axis and as a way of getting British military training for the Jews of Palestine. Postwar, the members of the Brigade overtly performed the military guard duties assigned to them. Clandestinely, however, they organized survivors and took advantage of their strategic location in Italy to help direct refugees toward ports of embarkation in the Mediterranean. The Brigade was transferred to Belgium and the Netherlands, but if the British thought they could weaken its underground activities, they were mistaken. Members of the Brigade continued to offer Zionist education in the displaced persons camps, organized immigration to Palestine, and gathered arms for the *Haganah* (Jewish underground defense force in Palestine).¹¹⁶

Rose was in contact with the Brigade within weeks of its arrival in the Netherlands. “The Jewish Brigade now has 2 Battalions in Holland,” he wrote to Fasman at the end of August, “& we have of course established very strong contact.”¹¹⁷ The Brigade was probably thrilled to have another opportunity to reach Jewish servicemen. On at least one occasion, a member of the Brigade wrote to Cass asking for help in the recruitment of Canadian soldiers who might be interested in “religious settlement in Palestine,”¹¹⁸ and there were probably other less official attempts.¹¹⁹ Publicly, Cass and Rose invited members of the Brigade to speak to the Canadian soldiers about Zionism and the Yishuv, and they happily complied.

The Canadian soldiers appreciated learning about the relief work being done in Europe and recognized the need for Jewish political organizations, such as the CJC, to serve as advocates for Jews at home and abroad.¹²⁰ But the students also embraced, as did the chaplains, both the Zionist diagnosis of the problem of the refugees and the prescription for remedying it. What they learned led them to see an inextricable connection between the plight of the refugees and Palestine, or as one student expressed it, “We came upon during the classes the sufferings and needs of the Jewish people, and the great need of obtaining Palestine for our people as soon as possible.”¹²¹ Even the coolest of

responses towards Zionism saw the need for Palestine: “Although I don’t believe it [Zionism] is an end to the Jewish problem, it will suffice until we can develop something more reliable where we can protect ourselves with our own might and not be on the mercy of others.”¹²²

Nothing brought home to the soldiers the Jewish claim to Palestine more effectively than their encounter with members of the Brigade. Soldiers appreciated hearing from other soldiers. Capt. Choter Ishay of the Brigade had legal training and worked as an advocate for the refugees; when he spoke to the Canadians they were, in the description of one soldier, “spellbound.”¹²³ Another soldier was in awe of the members of the Brigade and commented, “even the driver seemed a capable fellow and knew what he was talking about.”¹²⁴

The impact of the Brigade was threefold. First, its members brought to life through their words and the stories of their own lives the Yishuv and the Jewish claim to Palestine. One soldier appreciated that a visiting member of the Brigade was speaking of “the true facts of his own experience;” another soldier said he felt that he was getting “the inside dope.”¹²⁵ Another graduate of the course amplified the responses of many others: “I can think of no better way of bringing to Jewish boys the life of Jewry and their aims and problems in Palestine.”¹²⁶ Second, Canadian soldiers came to see the members of the Brigade as advocates for the survivors. Brigade members were, the Canadians sensed, motivated by a deep sense of caring and were therefore worthy of support, even emulation. Thus, in the words of one of the soldiers, the lecture by a member of the Brigade “impressed me with the strength and determination of the Jews in Palestine to help the cause of the Jews in Europe. He has my deep sympathy. I hope I too can help.”¹²⁷ Third, the Brigade fostered optimism at a bleak time and conveyed the message that the hope for a Jewish homeland was not far-fetched. One of the Canadians wrote:

I was especially struck by the intense pride and great sincerity shown by the two men from the Jewish Brigade in their feeling for Palestine. If all Palestinians and Jews throughout the world are as ardent for the cause as these two, I don’t think their [*sic*] is any doubt as the ultimate fulfillment of our aim for a Jewish homeland.¹²⁸

The chaplains had clearly conveyed one of their messages. They could only hope that the soldiers would indeed take the lessons home with them, as promised by one of the graduates of the course: “Now when I am repatriated to Canada, I will know how to conduct myself in the Jewish community and what improvements help make.... This is one veteran that is not only going to make a lot of suggestions but act on them as well.”¹²⁹

Conclusion

The historiography of the Holocaust has become fuller with the recent research on the immediate postwar period.¹³⁰ This research, however, must go beyond the admittedly important events taking place in Germany's concentration camps. To properly document the pan-European experiences of liberation and the early days of the survivors and responses to survivors, historians must be alert to various sources and be sensitive to the differences in experiences and the varied settings. In this paper, I have used, above all, the chaplains' correspondence to contribute specifically to the knowledge and understanding of Dutch Jewry and Canadian Jewry, and thus to the issue of liberation. I will summarize the significance of the research for both of these areas.

The Canadian forces had prominent roles in the fighting in the Netherlands from the fall of 1944 until the end of the war, and they remained there as a liberating army. The Canadian Jewish chaplains were thus in an excellent position to witness and describe the phases in the re-emergence of Dutch Jewish life. Cass wrote poignantly of the surfacing of Jews from their "underwater" settings. He went to Westerbork within days of its liberation and recorded his impressions of what he saw as well as his inferences about what was occurring below the surface. From his words, we hear descriptions of the Jews returning to the Netherlands after the liberation of the concentration camps in Germany. Above all, the chaplains took note of the enormous needs of Dutch Jewry, the destruction of their communal infrastructure, especially the synagogues, and the first halting steps to rebuild Dutch Jewish communal life.

This has also been an examination of the impact of the experience on Canadian Jews, and it expands the standard portrayals of Canadian Jewish life during the war and immediately thereafter. The prewar experiences of Dutch Jewry differed from those of Canada's Jews, and there were certainly times when Samuel Cass was bewildered and frustrated by the behavior of Dutch Jews. For the most part, however, we see that after ascertaining the needs, the chaplains became information brokers, relief workers, scroungers, and fundraisers. When occasion called, they would lead religious services. They also mobilized Canadian Jewish soldiers in their relief work. Cass and Rose offered the Jewish soldiers in Europe an added sense of purpose. They called the soldiers "Maccabees" for their role in restoring Judaism where it had been defiled. When the chaplains had some of the soldiers under their wing for slightly longer times—as at the Chaplains' Centre—they pressed upon the soldiers, by lectures and field trips, the severity of the devastation and the obligation of Jews after the war to rebuild Jewish life. The chaplains moved many soldiers to action, as well as to reflection. The chaplains, in short, called for the soldiers to be Jewish liberators within the larger liberation project and offered a Jewish variant on training for repatriation within the general concern of how to return Canadian soldiers to civilian life.

The chaplains also had some success in reaching out to Jews on the home front. Individuals and groups—especially women’s groups—were ready to transition from sending packages for soldiers to parceling up and forwarding goods to needy Jews in the Netherlands. But there were limitations to the support that the chaplains could muster. Canadian Jewish Congress wanted to centralize fundraising, perhaps to maintain its prominent role in the Canadian Jewish community. More likely, the CJC perceived that Canadian Jews were turning to help their relatives and the others who were being held in the well-publicized camps of Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. The community set priorities in its aid, and certain groups of Jews in the new postwar Diaspora attracted more attention than others.

The chaplains themselves helped eclipse the issue of aid to Dutch Jewry. As we saw in Cass’s response to Dutch Zionists coming out of hiding, or as we learned from the emphasis on Zionism in the courses at Chaplains’ House, the chaplains had little hope for an ongoing Jewish life in the Netherlands. Instead, they pinned their aspirations on the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and certainly in the chaplains’ course, their message struck a chord with some of the soldiers.

Perhaps both of these issues—the priorities set by the Jewish community on the home front and the prominence of the Zionist solution—have pushed from the collective memory of Canada’s Jews the role that their chaplains and soldiers played in the reconstruction, in Jewish terms, of postwar Netherlands. The general neglect of Canadian Jewry in Jewish historiography has meant that these experiences have not been folded into the narrative of the immediate postwar years. It is, however, a story that needs telling to broaden and deepen our understanding of the various impacts of the Holocaust, on both the Jews directly affected in Europe and the Jews farther away who had to consider how they would react to the near-destruction of European Jewry.

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Notes

¹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 20 February 20 1945, Samuel Cass fonds, MG 30 D225, Volume 3, file 8, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, Ontario. I have used the original letters instead of Samuel Cass, “A Record of a Chaplain’s Experience. World War II, 1942–1946,” DHL thesis, 1950, Appendix I, Daily Record. The latter was drawn from the letters, but some entries were reworded and some remarks critical of the Jewish and allied leadership were excised in the thesis. The thesis does, however, give the location of daily activities, while the letters could not include that information during the war. I have used the thesis for identifying locations.

²The standard study of the reception of the Holocaust in the Canadian Jewish community has no mention of the Canadian encounter with Dutch survivors, or the liberation of Westerbork, as being included in Holocaust commemoration. Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). Some Canadian veterans have, however, gone to Westerbork when they returned for various commemorative events. See, for example <http://www.vacacc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=feature/netherlands2005/pic_journal/2005_05_09#> accessed on 2 March 2008.

³Gerald Tulchinsky has dedicated several pages to the topic in his *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 230–234. Volumes that were published on the anniversary of the liberation included memoirs by Canadian soldiers and Dutch civilians, as well as some testimony by survivors. David Kaufman and Michiel Horn, *A Liberation Album: Canadians in the Netherlands, 1944–1945* (Toronto, Montreal, New York: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1980); Lance Goddard, *Canada and the Liberation of the Netherlands, May 1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2005).

⁴See the testimony of Samuel Cass on arriving at Westerbork, below.

⁵Some of the recent research includes Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); the recent issue of *Holocaust Studies* 12, nos. 1–2 (2006) on Bergen-Belsen; Ze'ev Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany*, trans. John A. Broadwin (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

⁶For a recent warning about an excessively German-centered approach, see Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), xv. The study of commemoration has also been approached with sensitivity to the specifics of the national environment; this is especially obvious in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996).

⁷The Canadian presence has received scant if any attention in the work on Dutch Jewry in the immediate postwar period. The following are major studies of the Holocaust in the Netherlands that include a discussion of the liberation and immediate postwar period; these have been valuable in giving context to the current study, but they pay little or no attention to the interactions between Canadian soldiers and Dutch survivors: Bob Moore, *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945* (London: Arnold, 1997), 225–252; Chaya Brasz, *Removing the Yellow Badge: The Struggle for a Jewish Community in Postwar Netherlands* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995); idem, “After the Second World War: From ‘Jewish Church’ to Cultural Minority,” in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. J.C.H. Blom, R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, I. Schöfer, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Oxford: Littman, 2002), 336–361; Dienke Hondius, *Return: Holocaust Survivors and Dutch Anti-Semitism*, trans. David Colmer (Westport: Praeger, 2005). Especially striking is the lack of Canadian material in chapter ten, “Foreign Observers’ Impressions of the Netherlands, 1945–1946,” 137–148; idem, “Bitter Homecoming: The Return and Reception of Dutch and Stateless Jews in the Netherlands,” in *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to Their Countries of Origin After WWII*, ed. David Bankier (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 108–135; Conny Kristel, “Revolution and Reconstruction: Dutch Jewry after the Holocaust,” in *The Jews are Coming Back*, 136–147.

⁸Alex Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame: American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944–1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), emphasizes the relief work of the chaplains but does not see that they had a great impact on the soldiers, especially because the latter were not easily brought into relief work. Deborah Dash Moore focuses more on the lives of American Jewish soldiers but does emphasize the role of the chaplains in confronting and explaining the horrors at the time of liberation of camps such as Buchenwald. See Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 200–247.

⁹Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 209–210.

¹⁰S. Gershon Levi, *Breaking New Ground: The Struggle for a Jewish Chaplaincy in Canada*, ed. David Golinkin (Montreal: National Archives Canadian Jewish Congress, 1994), 35.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 32–34.

¹²*Ibid.*, 34–35.

¹³Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939), 256–257.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983), 10–16.

¹⁶Michael R. Marrus, *Mr. Sam: The Life and Times of Samuel Bronfman* (Toronto: Viking, 1991), 261–266.

¹⁷CJC also pressed the military to hire a rabbi to join the Canadian Chaplain Service and would ultimately fulfill the role that church organizations had in recommending or approving chaplains for service in the various branches of the armed forces. Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 204–214; Levi, *Breaking New Ground*, 4–17.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 278–279; Irving Abella, “Hayes, Saul,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 8, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 475–476.

¹⁹This paragraph is summarized from J.C.H. Blom and J.J. Cahen, “Jewish Netherlanders, Netherlands Jews, and Jews in the Netherlands,” in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, 330–395; statistics in *ibid.*, 233–234.

²⁰See P. Romijn, “The War,” in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, 296–335 for a survey of the period.

²¹Bob Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 146–160; see also J. Presser, *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, trans. Arnold Pomerans (New York: Dutton, 1969), 381–405, for a historical survey with personal observations.

²²Marnix Croes, “The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 491.

²³Brasz, “After the Second World War,” 337.

²⁴Moore, *Victims and Survivors*, 228–232; Hondius, *Return: Holocaust Survivors and Dutch Anti-Semitism*, 91–112; Brasz, “After the Second World War,” 340–341.

²⁵The reasons for the tension are complex and not immediately relevant to this paper. See, however, Brasz, “After the Second World War,” 355–357 for a summary.

²⁶A. de Jong (Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie) to Rose, 24 May 1945, DA 18, 5/5, Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee National Archives (CJCNA), Montreal, Quebec; Cass to de Vries, 31 May 1945, Cass fonds, 6/33, LAC; A. de Jong (Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie) to Rose, 7 June 1945, DA 18 5/5, CJCNA.

²⁷Saved in his files, however, is a copy of the program for a service of thanksgiving in the synagogue in Tilburg, dated Sunday 12 November.

²⁸Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 25 November 1944, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC.

²⁹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 9 December 1944, Cass fonds, 3/6, LAC.

³⁰Samuel Cass to Samuel Bronfman, 25 November 1944, Cass fonds, 6/30, LAC.

³¹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 25 January 1945, Cass fonds, 3/7, LAC.

³²Samuel Cass to Herman Abramowitz, 16 January 1945, Cass fonds, 6/30, LAC.

³³Lionel S. B. Shapiro, a well-known Canadian journalist.

³⁴Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 24 April 1945, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC. The emphasis is mine.

³⁵See, for example, Romijn, “The War,” 329: “The atmosphere in the transit camps was not defined so much by any immediate mortal danger as by the latent, almost indefinable, threat to life in the future,” and the elaboration in *ibid.*, 329–30.

³⁶Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 231 and photograph between 214–215; Canadian Army Newsreel #73. The photographs are dated 30 April 1945. The newsreel has been incorporated into a CD by Richard Menkis and Ronnie Tessler, *Canada Responds to the Holocaust, 1944–1945* (Vancouver: Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2005), also downloadable at www.canadaresponds.ca (accessed on 1 June 2008).

³⁷Unfortunately, the originals seem to have been lost, but Rose’s letter of 8 April 1945 is cited in Saul Hayes to Rose, 25 May 1945, DA 18 5/19, CJCNA, and Rose’s letter of 9 April is cited in War Efforts Committee to Rose, 30 April 1945, DA 18 5/19, CJCNA.

³⁸On camps in Langestut and Heide Kaserne, see, for example, Letter and Report of Isaac Rose to Administrative Headquarters, 3 June 1945, Cass fonds, 7/1, LAC. A number of displaced persons were sent to the Emsland region, close to the Dutch border.

³⁹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 29 May 1945, Cass fonds, 3/11, LAC.

⁴⁰Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 9 June 1945, Cass fonds, 3/12, LAC.

⁴¹Samuel Cass to Fasman, 25 October 1945, Cass fonds, 7/5, LAC.

⁴²Samuel Cass to Mrs M. Brown, 21 December 1945, National Council of Jewish Women Collection, Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia Archives (JHSBC), Vancouver, British Columbia.

⁴³Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 22 April and 26 April 1945, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC. The emphasis is in the original.

⁴⁴Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 31 May 1945, Cass fonds, 3/11, LAC.

⁴⁵Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 12 November 1944, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC.

⁴⁶Cass to Bronfman, 27 November 1944, Cass fonds, 6/30, LAC.

⁴⁷Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame*, 6–35.

⁴⁸Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 31 October 1944, Cass fonds, 3/4, LAC.

⁴⁹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 12 November 1944, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC.

⁵⁰One of Cass’s forms, dated 22 April 1945, is reproduced in Paula Draper and Harold Troper, eds., *Archives of the Holocaust. Vol. 15: National Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, Montreal* (New York: Garland, 1991), 335.

⁵¹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 29 April 1945, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC.

⁵²Ilse Magen to Samuel Cass, 16 May 1945, Cass fonds, 6/33, LAC.

⁵³Nathan Phillips to Samuel Cass, 23 May 1945, Cass fonds 6/33, LAC.

⁵⁴Gershon Levi to K. Baum (World Jewish Congress), 17 August 1945, DA 18 7/1, CJCNA.

⁵⁵“List of Clothes distributed to Jews returned from Concentration Camps in Germany and Poland,” Cass fonds, 7/2, LAC.

⁵⁶Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 24 June 1945, Cass fonds, 3/12, LAC.

⁵⁷Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 28 May 1945, Cass fonds, 3/11, LAC.

⁵⁸Samuel Cass, mimeographed circular letter to Jewish members of the First Canadian Army, 29 November 1944, Cass fonds, 7/30, LAC.

⁵⁹Cass to Abramowitz, 16 January 1945, Cass fonds, 6/30, LAC.

⁶⁰Samuel Cass, mimeographed circular letter to Jewish members of the First Canadian Army, 11 February 1945, Cass fonds, 7/30, LAC.

⁶¹Jewish Chaplains’ letter, mimeographed circular letter to Jewish members of the First Canadian Army, 15 May 1945, Cass fonds 7/30, LAC.

- ⁶²Bulletin, 1 August 1945, Cass fonds, 7/30, LAC.
- ⁶³Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 29 May 1945, Cass fonds, 6/33, LAC; Cass to Miss Hazel Murray, 11 July 1945, and Cass to Mr. Mannie Zimblar (manager), 12 July 1945, Cass fonds, 7/2, LAC.
- ⁶⁴Hayes to Cass, 28 September 1945, Cass fonds, 6/30, LAC.
- ⁶⁵Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 13 January 1945, Cass fonds, 3/7, LAC.
- ⁶⁶Hayes telegram to Cass, 9 February 1945, Cass fonds 6/30, LAC; Gershon Levi to Cass, 14 February 1945, Cass fonds, 6/24, LAC; Abramowitz to Cass, 23 February 1945, Cass fonds 6/30, LAC; Wollow, Secretary of War Efforts Committee, to Rose, 26 February 1945, DA 18 5/19, CJCNA.
- ⁶⁷Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 13 January 1945, Cass fonds, 3/7, LAC.
- ⁶⁸Hayes to Rose, 25 May 1945, DA 18, 5/19, CJCNA.
- ⁶⁹Hayes to Rose, 9 August 1945, DA 18, 5/19, CJCNA.
- ⁷⁰Samuel Cass to Mrs. G. Roberts, 31 May 1945, Cass fonds, 6/33, LAC.
- ⁷¹Fasman to Rose, 14 August 1945, DA 18 5/16, CJCNA.
- ⁷²Fasman to Cass, 14 August 1945, Cass fonds, 7/3, LAC.
- ⁷³Rose to Fasman, 29 August 1945, Oscar Fasman collection, Ottawa Jewish Archives, Ottawa, Ontario.
- ⁷⁴L. Slagter to Cass, 6 September 1945, Cass fonds, 7/4, LAC.
- ⁷⁵Shulamit Frederika Melkman-de Paauw, *Ish eyno yode'a ma yeled yom: Mikhtavim ishiyim metukfat ha-shikum shele-achar ha-Sho'ah be-Holand* (Tel Aviv: Gevanim, 2003), 52, letter dated 16 October 1945.
- ⁷⁶Cass to Fasman, 25 October 1945, Cass fonds, 7/5, LAC.
- ⁷⁷David Rome (Canadian Jewish Congress) to Rose, 11 October 1945, DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.
- ⁷⁸Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 29 October 1945, Cass fonds, 3/16, LAC.
- ⁷⁹*Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (19 October 1945), clipping. My thanks to Eiran Harris and Janice Rosen of the CJCNA for tracking this item down.
- ⁸⁰N. Mirsky to Rose, 24 November 1945, Cass Fonds, 7/7, LAC.
- ⁸¹Mrs. Faye Singer (The Goodwill Service Club, Toronto) to Cass, 9 October 1945, Cass fonds, 7/9, LAC.
- ⁸²Mrs. M. Brown (Vancouver Council of Jewish Women) to Cass, 12 October 1945, Cass fonds, 7/5, LAC; Lil Shapiro to Cass, 16 December 1945, Cass fonds, 7/9, LAC.
- ⁸³Undated, early 1947 (from internal evidence), Laren Report, National Council of Jewish Women Collection, JHSBC. My thanks to Barb Schober for bringing this document to my attention.
- ⁸⁴(Miss) Rose D. Finiffter to Rose, 31 October 1945, DA 18, 5/4, CJCNA.
- ⁸⁵Ibid.
- ⁸⁶Hayes to Rose, 15 November 1945, DA 18 5/19, CJCNA.
- ⁸⁷Rose to Cass, 26 November 1945, DA 18 5/16, CJCNA.
- ⁸⁸Draper and Troper, *Archives of the Holocaust*, Vol. 15, 373.
- ⁸⁹Fasman to Cass, 6 November 1945, Cass fonds, 7/6, LAC.
- ⁹⁰Leo to Fannie [no family name], 19 September 1945, Fasman Collection, Ottawa Jewish Archives.
- ⁹¹Cass to Fasman, 27 December 1945, Oscar Fasman Collection, Ottawa Jewish Archives.

⁹²Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 22 April 1945, Cass fonds, 3/5, LAC. Actually, it would have been the “Second Passover.” Already in the Bible, an individual who could not participate in the Passover rituals could do so one month later.

⁹³“Ottawa Rabbi Participates in Historic Dutch Ceremony,” *Congress Bulletin* (May 1945) based on Canadian Press report of 20 May 1945, copy of cables in DA 18 5/3, CJCNA, reporting on the ceremony on Saturday 19 May 1945.

⁹⁴Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 20 May 1945, Cass fonds 3/11, LAC.

⁹⁵See above, n. 36.

⁹⁶Samuel Cass, mimeographed circular letter to Jewish members of the First Canadian Army, 29 November 1944, Cass fonds, 7/30, LAC.

⁹⁷Samuel Cass, mimeographed circular letter to Jewish members of the First Canadian Army, 11 February 1945, Cass fonds, 7/30, LAC.

⁹⁸Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 23 April 1945, Cass fonds, 3/11, LAC.

⁹⁹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 29 May 1945, Cass fonds 3/12, LAC.

¹⁰⁰Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 28 April 1945, Cass fonds, 3/11, LAC.

¹⁰¹Samuel Cass to Annabel Cass, 26 June 1945, Cass fonds, 3/12, LAC.

¹⁰²Undated Hebrew letter (catalogued with letters from September, 1945), Werner Weinberg to Cass, Cass fonds, 7/4, LAC.

¹⁰³Canadian Press report quoting Rose, copy of cables dated 20 May 1945, in DA 18 5/3, CJCNA.

¹⁰⁴Cass to Fasman, 25 October 1945, Cass fonds, 7/5, LAC.

¹⁰⁵Cass to Fasman, 27 December 1945, Oscar Fasman Collection, Ottawa Jewish Archives. Capitalization in original.

¹⁰⁶Rose to Rome, 18 August 1945, DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹⁰⁷Rose to Cass, 17 July 1945, DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹⁰⁸Rose to Yeshiva College, 10 September 1945, DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹⁰⁹There are a total of 113 responses, preserved in Cass fonds, 7/23; 7/24; 7/25, LAC, and DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹¹⁰Cass fonds, 7/24, LAC.

¹¹¹DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹¹⁴Cass fonds, 7/23, LAC.

¹¹⁵David J. Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A Study in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 27–38.

¹¹⁶Literature on the Brigade is extensive. For excellent relevant information for our context, see Yoav Gelber, “The Jewish Brigade in Belgium,” in *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians and Germans*, ed. Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998), 477–482.

¹¹⁷Rose to Fasman, 29 August 1945, Oscar Fasman collection, Ottawa Jewish Archives.

¹¹⁸Aronsfeld to Cass, 26 September 1945, Cass fonds, 7/6, LAC.

¹¹⁹Rose has alluded to the chaplains’ participation “in the so-called ‘illegal’ Aliya to Palestine” in a recent publication. Rabbi Dr. Isaac B. Rose, “Words of Tribute,” in *Breaking New Ground*, x.

¹²⁰DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Cass fonds, 7/24, LAC.

¹²⁷DA 18 7/9, CJCNA.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰See the research cited above, n. 5.

Jewish Canadians were only one generation removed from lands under German occupation from 1933 to 1945 and maintained close ties to Jewish relatives in those lands. These ties affected the community's response to the Holocaust, including, for instance, the disproportionate representation of Jews in the Canadian armed forces. Jewish Canadians were also heavily involved in postwar relief efforts for displaced persons and Holocaust survivors in Europe. Anti-Semitism in Canada. Prejudice towards people of the Jewish faith, or anti-Semitism, was a socially acceptable part of mainstream Canadian society. Six survivors, some of whom will be returning to the site for the last time, tell Kate Connolly their stories. We lived in Trjgy, a very small, mostly poor town in Czechoslovakia with a population of approximately 1,000 mainly farming families, including about 10 Jewish families. The town was a typical low-income community with a tailor, a shoemaker, a grocery store, where people struggled to get by, but where everyone knew each other and there was easy communication between the neighbours, though that didn't mean we were equal. It was a difficult time for Jewish families, as suddenly the law no longer protected us and overnight we lost our civil rights. My father's lumber business was confiscated and given to a non-Jew, and we received no compensation. American Jewish Archives Journal. Volume. 60.