

Perhaps the worst criticism of this book is that Margolian seems to bemoan all the good Nazis that never entered Canada because of the country's restrictive immigration apparatus, while applauding the fact that a mere 2000 Nazi war criminals and collaborators arrived among the nearly 1.5 million other European immigrants in the first decade following the end of the war. Regarding the entry of *any* Nazi war criminal to Canada, Margolian might have heeded the phrase coined by an earlier Canadian immigration official opposing the acceptance of Jewish refugees, and made famous by Irving Abella and Harold Troper—"None is Too Many".

In sum, *Unauthorized Entry* lacks context and analysis; it is uneven in its quality of writing and is poorly organized; and it is utterly unsuccessful in proving its thesis. Yet despite these rather major flaws, Margolian has cobbled together an interesting book. Its real success lies in its corroboration of earlier arguments that Canada, in fact, did *not* succeed in barring Nazi war criminals from its shores. One only need read Margolian's description—and defence—of how Canadian immigration officials resorted to "spot-checking" the visa applications of former Nazis, in order to discover the real "Truth" about Nazi war criminals in Canada.

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Medres, Israel. *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal 1900-1920*. Trans. Vivian Felsen. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2000, 214 pp. Trans. of *Montreal fun Nekhten*. Montreal: Eagle Publishing Co., 1947.

In his preface to the original Yiddish publication of *Montreal of Yesterday*, the poet J.I. Segal wrote that Israel Medres "momentarily opened for the reader a tiny window through which to view his past, reminding him that not long ago he was a very different person who bore the imprint of the old

country, and had set out to acquire the stamp of a new world of which he has gradually become a part.” In this comment Segal points to an attractive feature of the book while hinting at its principal weakness.

Medres was a journalist for the Canadian Yiddish newspaper, *Der Keneder Adler* from the 1920s to the 1960s. He was much appreciated for his skill with the *felleton*, which the translator, Vivian Felsen, defines in her introduction as “a short personal essay on a public issue written in a light, almost humorous vein.” In 1936 Medres wrote a series of nostalgic pieces about early Montreal Jewish immigrant life for the English-language weekly, *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. Pleased with their success, he appears to have planned a series of linked *felletons* in Yiddish for *Der Keneder Adler*. Since the project did not seem to be appropriate during the war, it was postponed for some years. It was then launched as a twice-weekly series in Yiddish running from Dec. 1st, 1946 until June 25th, 1947. The essays were then collected and published the same year under the title, *Montreal fun Nekhten*.

Medres’s audience would have been primarily the aging Montreal Yiddish readers of *Der Keneder Adler* who had immigrated to Canada in the early years of the twentieth century. Many of them had had a difficult struggle to survive in Canada, but by 1947 most could look back with some satisfaction at a successful adaptation to their new homeland and without any regret for having left the old country. The *felletons* could, accordingly, be a lighthearted and nostalgic review of the first two decades of Jewish life in the area on both sides of St. Lawrence Boulevard between Old Montreal and Ontario Street.

The book handles several topics very well: class divisions and dissensions, the Jewish community’s changing political allegiances, the rise of the Zionist Movement in Montreal, the course of the Plamondon affair, the development of immigrant organizations, Yiddish theatre and vaudeville, and the first Jewish bookstores. Adopting the viewpoint of the immigrant, Medres is able to present a convincing recreation of

those early years. It appears that he tried to stay clear of topics that were beyond his immediate horizon: e.g., relations with English- and French-Canadians, Jewish art and literature, and the role and position of women, and he has little to say about complicated educational and religious questions.

As the number of Yiddish readers declined in Montreal in the post-war years, *Montreal fun Nekhten* was gradually forgotten. Fortunately, interest in the book was revived by Zachary Baker, formerly of the Jewish Public Library, in a paper he presented in March of 1988 at a conference on Yiddish Montreal. Baker did not overlook the book's numerous flaws—factual errors, unsubstantiated anecdotes, the failure to consult important sources of information, a certain weakness in language, and the various issues and topics that were left out. Though Medres was probably aware of the potential value of his record of the foundation of Jewish Montreal, he decided not to make it into a history. It may be that Medres did not fancy himself as an historian, or perhaps he concluded that a scholarly approach would not be appropriate for the audience he had in mind.

However, Baker's detailed account of *Montreal fun Nekhten* caught the attention of Professor Pierre Anctil, who has had a strong research interest in the history of Jewish Montreal. In 1997, Anctil published his French translation of Medres's book, and this in turn has prompted Vivian Felsen to complete the translation of her grandfather's book into English. She has added a useful introduction and numerous notes, which should make the translation accessible to the general public, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Those with parents or grandparents who were part of that now-vanished world will have a particular interest in Medres's sketches.

It is doubtful, however, if publication of the English translation will spark a renewed scholarly interest in Montreal Jewish history. Much has already been written on this subject, and scholars in the field have made good use of the numerous documents available. Those historians who wished to supplement their research by reading Medres would have done so by

reading either the Yiddish original or Anctil's 1997 translation in French. Moreover, as Segal pointed out, the book opens only "a tiny window" into Montreal Jewish history. Certainly the book could be useful background reading for students taking courses in Canadian Jewish history, for it will familiarize them with the social problems generally faced by Jewish immigrants to Canadian cities at the beginning of the twentieth century. But as Medres seems to suggest, the response of the Montreal Jewish community to its problems was unusually bold and comprehensive. This response may be attributed partly to the peculiar circumstances existing in Montreal, partly to the larger Jewish population involved, and partly to the presence of a group of leaders, distinguished by their idealism, intellect, and selfless devotion to the community.

The present edition has been acceptably produced by Véhicule Press, but it could have been improved by better maps and a more imaginative selection of photographs. There are some spelling mistakes, a curious Yiddish transliteration, and, more seriously, considerable repetition that could have been eliminated by a more rigorous editing process. But these are relatively minor flaws, hardly likely to interfere with the general reader's enjoyment of a backward glance into time.

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Safdie, Moshe, *Buildings and Projects 1967–1992* ed. Irena Zantovska Murray. Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo : McGill—Queens University Press, 1996. Published for Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University.

Moshe Safdie is an Israeli-born, Montreal-educated architect who has established a world wide reputation as one of the better architects and urban designers of the second half of the 20th Century. His earliest project for Expo '67, Habitat, launched a