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**Commemoration and Cultural Revitalization:  
The Lifeworld of Montreal's Hungarian Martyrs  
Synagogue and Hungarian Jewish Sisterhood<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

*Building upon fairly recent scholarship on the reception of Holocaust survivors in Canada and Montreal more specifically, this article examines a synagogue and sisterhood specific to Hungarian Holocaust survivors in Montreal, most of whom arrived in the wake of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Holocaust survivor accounts suggest a barrier between them and previously settled Canadian Jews, particularly in the realms of sociability and synagogue life. This barrier was heightened among Hungarians given the language gap, contributing to their impetus for a synagogue of their own, named the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue. Their Holocaust commemoration events and dances were distinctive in their reverential discourse of martyrdom, and sense of cultural revitalization. The primary source base for this article is the memorial volume of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue (which includes commemorative poetry), with insight and context from oral history interviews.*

## Résumé

*S'appuyant sur des études assez récentes sur l'accueil des survivant.e.s de l'Holocauste au Canada et à Montréal plus particulièrement, cet article examine une synagogue et sororité spécifiques aux survivants hongrois de l'Holocauste à Montréal, dont la majorité des fidèles sont arrivés à la suite de la révolution hongroise de 1956. Les témoignages de survivant.e.s de l'Holocauste suggèrent l'existence d'une barrière entre eux et les Juif.ve.s canadien.ne.s précédemment installé.e.s, particulièrement en ce qui traite à la sociabilité et à la vie synagogale. Pour les Hongrois.e.s, cette division était renforcée par une barrière linguistique, les incitant à créer leur propre synagogue, appelée Congrégation des Martyrs Hongrois. Les événements et les danses de commémoration de l'Holocauste organisés à la Congrégation des Martyrs Hongrois se distinguaient par leur discours révérencieux sur le martyr et leur sens de revitalisation culturelle. La source principale de cet article est le volume commémoratif de la Congrégation des martyrs hongrois, incluant la poésie commémorative qu'il contient, augmenté et mis en contexte avec des entrevues d'histoire orale.*

During the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue (also known as the Beth Hazikaron Martyrs Synagogue, or informally, the Schnurmacher shul) in Montreal's Snowdon neighbourhood in 1983, its executive president József Halmi spoke to an audience of over five hundred at Congregation Shaar Hashomayim with a sense of wonder and communal accomplishment: "Dear Celebrating Public, Very few cities can boast of having a Hungarian Jewish congregation or of having a synagogue built by Hungarian Jews. Jewish Montrealers can be proud and I believe they are."<sup>2</sup> Halmi (1914–2016), born in Szatmár County, was a survivor of the Nagyvárad Ghetto, Auschwitz, Dachau, and a death march.<sup>3</sup> He was instrumental in the development of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue, its acqui-

sition of its own building and Torah scrolls, and its Holocaust commemorations, among other events.<sup>4</sup>

Halmi had thus articulated a historically significant reality that spoke to Holocaust survivors' adaptation to Montreal, their religious and cultural lives, and their intergenerational transmission of historical memory. In this article, I shall focus on the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue and closely associated organizations such as the Hungarian Jewish Sisterhood as a lens on earlier phases of Holocaust commemoration, the commitment to Hungarian literature and culture, and other events which address solidarity among Hungarian Jews in emigration.

The Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue is most significant in how it honoured its namesake through annual commemorations, addressing the horrific traumas suffered by Hungarian Jewry in the Holocaust and their resultant problems of national identification. It was distinctive in its Montreal setting, both in comparison with elsewhere in Canada—Montreal being the most important and demographically diverse locale for Hungarian Jews until the 1970s—and in the Hungarian poetic and cultural sensibilities that informed memorial activities, which contrast with the Yiddish-speaking ones of default (or more known) commemorations, such as those of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

This demographically and denominationally representative group of the refugee wave of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and its aftermath speaks to the dynamic tension between the interpretations by Hasia Diner and by Adara Goldberg on Holocaust commemoration and the reception of Holocaust survivors in North America. Diner has compiled and interpreted vast evidence on American Jewish incorporation of the Holocaust into curricula and liturgy, whereas Goldberg emphasizes that this drive for memorialization did not correlate with actual accommodation of Holocaust survivors.<sup>5</sup> Akin to Goldberg, I examine this contrast to address a lacuna in Canadian Jewish historiography, while more specifically attending to the question of how linguistic isolation and different configurations of denominational identity contributed to varied receptions of Hungarian Holocaust survivors in Montreal, and their reactions in turn. The philosophy and headline events of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue shed light on these variables of Jewish identification and Canadian acculturation.

This analysis plausibly constitutes a micro-historical response to Péter Hidas's article on the policy complexities of receiving the 1956 wave of Hungarian Jewish refugees in Canada, a sustained point of comparison to Kata Bohus's article on Toronto's reception of these refugees, and an additional case study to Zelda Abramson's point on multiple layers of linguistic isolation in her book *The Montreal Shtetl*.<sup>6</sup> While Christopher Adam's insightful doctoral dissertation has devoted a few paragraphs to the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue in the context of modern Jewish ethno-religious

identifications (largely as a comparative foil to Christian Magyar identities), my lens here will primarily consider Rabbi Miklós Schnurmacher's congregation in light of variations of Holocaust commemoration, linguistic differences between other Holocaust survivors and, more saliently, with previously settled Canadian Jews.<sup>7</sup>

## Contexts of Exclusion and Reception

The Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue needs to be appraised in the context of Canadian Jewish institutions misunderstanding most Holocaust survivors who arrived before 1956, and even after that juncture. Between roughly 1948 and 1968, the long shadow of the de facto exclusion of less integrated Holocaust survivors from more settled synagogues still loomed large, a parallel issue to the divergence of Holocaust commemorations based on ethnic and denominational sub-communities. I should emphasize that while linguistic barriers were a primary motivation for the Hungarian subgroup of the Montreal Jewish community to have their own "liturgical niche," the decorum of *ghelers* (settled Canadian Jews) who did not understand the needs of their recently arrived brethren also played a significant role for several years, which fuelled institutional differences for a generation.

Many recently arrived Jews reported being turned away from synagogues. For example, Gábor Altmann was turned away from Yom Kippur services in 1948 by the same West End synagogue which in 1963 hosted a large commemoration for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.<sup>8</sup> Hailing from Nagyálló, where travelling minyans and holiday hospitality were the norm (according to Elaine Kalman Naves), this must have been a jarring experience.<sup>9</sup> Altmann told Zelda Abramson more broadly: "There was no welcoming then from the synagogues I went to. I have no memory of a mentioning of the Holocaust, not even in a sermon from a Rabbi. I didn't see anybody approaching and supporting me."<sup>10</sup> Munkács-born Peter Kleinmann, also speaking on behalf of his fellow survivors Arthur Schwartz (from the denominationally diverse Košice, or Kassa) and Simon Weiss, had a similar experience of Yom Kippur in 1949, relaying that a synagogue official told them, "Everybody standing in the back without seats, please leave the synagogue."<sup>11</sup> Kleinmann saw this as a venomous indifference, given their unfathomable loneliness.<sup>12</sup>

Adara Goldberg observed this phenomenon on a wider scale. She notes that survivors arriving in the 1948–1952 wave were more likely to suffer from this particular form of discrimination than those who came after 1956. Even though these situations became overall less common as survivors integrated and became financially self-sufficient, they were still salient for this subsequent wave of refugees. In his May 1983 article commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Schnurmacher shul, Wesley Goldstein wrote: "that first year [1957 for many] at High Holiday time, most were unaware of the need to purchase seats, and consequently could not participate in services."<sup>13</sup> The work of the Budapest Home Association for

the '56ers helped fill that gap until the Martyrs Synagogue successfully followed shortly thereafter.

Before describing the process that led to the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue's purchase of its own building, context on different chapters of Hungarian Holocaust survivor immigration to Montreal is in order. Some of these survivors' challenges may have explanatory potential for understanding the priorities of the Martyrs Synagogue, even if they themselves were not members.

The first demographically appreciable wave of Hungarian Holocaust survivors arriving in Montreal were part of the War Orphans Project, spanning from September 1947 to March 1952 and totalled 1,123 souls.<sup>14</sup> Most of this group hailed from "Greater Hungary" and tilted towards young men above the age of eighteen, given the abysmal survival rates of Jewish children in the Holocaust. More than four hundred of these orphans came to Montreal, roughly two hundred of whom were Hungarian.<sup>15</sup> The available primary source evidence indicates that an important contingent of these Montreal Hungarian orphans (most notably Ted Bolgar and Paul Herczeg) were enthusiastic about integrating into Canadian society, while also maintaining their Hungarian idioms and solidarity with fellow survivors through groups such as the New World Club and the Happy Gang Club, as well as through local Jewish institutions such as the YM-YWHA and the Jewish Public Library.<sup>16</sup> In Herczeg's interview with Abramson, he states that given their two to three week grace period of English lessons before having to find work, his group of orphans had it easier than the later cohorts and those who came as part of work schemes such as the Tailor Project.<sup>17</sup>

After a convoluted immigration process starting with the British embassy in Vienna, Hermann and Eva Gruenwald arrived in Montreal in July 1950.<sup>18</sup> Gruenwald remarked on the prevalence of the *shlissel gelt* (extra initial deposit, literally "key money") phenomenon resulting from landlords who circumvented rent controls, echoing the findings of Abramson.<sup>19</sup> This reality may have influenced congregants to further prioritize, as with residences and businesses, having a synagogue of one's own.

Gruenwald's feeling of demotion of class positionality in his early days in Montreal resounded with the sentiments of many congregants, and paralleled the difficult reception faced by Hungarian transmigrants from Israel. Although this was not the main route undertaken by congregants to move to Montreal, an important minority did fit this category. Lilly Toth, a major organizer of the 1960s sisterhood dances, was friends with a transmigrant family who was involved with the Continental Social Club. While Toth's friend has implied the relative dignity and safety of her Canadian adaptation compared to earlier places of post-Hungarian settlement, she emphasized how the lack of a Canadian embassy in Israel extended the journey to get to the final destination of Montreal in 1953.<sup>20</sup>

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and its aftermath ultimately brought a total of about thirty-nine thousand Hungarians to Canada (among them seven thousand Jews). Ten thousand of the total diaspora population settled in Montreal, of whom it is estimated four thousand were Jewish.<sup>21</sup> Young refugees have expressed the lingering memory of displacement, and their parents' concerns of a recrudescence of antisemitism. In Elaine Kalman Naves's second family memoir, entitled *Shoshanna's Story*, she expounded upon her memories of outbursts of antisemitic rhetoric about the unfolding crisis.<sup>22</sup> This led her mother Shoshanna to believe that 1956 could be a coda of 1944, and hence that it was imperative to leave the country.<sup>23</sup>

What explains the difference between the experiences of Hungarian (and non-Hungarian) Holocaust survivors who arrived in 1948, 1951–53, and those who came in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution? The differences in reception of Hungarian Jewish refugees between 1948, 1952, and 1956–57 were not hard and fast, and varied significantly according to the circumstances of each family, and the particular bureaucratic configuration they faced from the government and Jewish social services. That being said, the demographic balance of 1948 was composed of young single men, while later arrivals tended to lean towards nuclear families. Taking into account the Tailor and Furrier projects around 1948–49, these different phases of arrivals can be on the whole characterized by a roughly similar alacrity of finding work. The divergence between these years mainly centred on the degree of professionalism of Jewish social services and government support, which significantly increased by 1951 and 1956, respectively. Between these years, the most important change was that of the general setting aside of discriminatory categories of Jewish transmigrant.

Adara Goldberg remarks that the increasing professionalization and competence among Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS) social workers in the early 1950s “cut both ways,” meaning that while many survivors benefited from their improved understanding of post-traumatic stress, as well as documentary and legal services, they were also subject to a greater bureaucratic burden.<sup>24</sup> The 1951–53 wave had an important contingent of Israeli transmigrants, who were not supposed to receive support from JIAS given that Israel was perceived as a site of resettlement, not transit. Goldberg and Abramson both emphasize this rule and the manifold exceptions to it, especially when there was sufficient sponsorship or there was a risk of them becoming dependent on Canadian welfare.<sup>25</sup>

The '56ers were not officially screened, and even the Duplessis regime was more or less on board with the federal government's generosity towards them.<sup>26</sup> This contrasts significantly with previous arrivals, as one of Abramson's interviewees remarked that “there was nothing available from the Quebecois government: 1948, 1949, 1950, nothing.”<sup>27</sup> In terms of both the federal and Quebec governments, anticommunism was a key factor motivating generosity in 1956–57, given the geopolitical significance of the Hungarian Revolution.<sup>28</sup>

Compassion fatigue, the “Holocaust fatigue” articulated by Goldberg in terms of the overworked JIAS social workers, and their false assumptions that those who arrived in the early 1950s would be more “healed,” may have been equally true in 1956–57 among similar sectors of the Montreal Jewish community, thereby leading the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) to delegate too much responsibility to governmental authorities.<sup>29</sup> The compassion of communal worker Joseph Kage, shone through in the interviews of social workers by Abramson, but the reality of continued compassion fatigue in the community may have led to this delegating. Franca Iacovetta points out that Kage’s invocations of sympathy for Holocaust survivors and all immigrants were directed at all sectors of the Canadian public—probably an attempt to attenuate compassion fatigue.<sup>30</sup>

In the early 1950s, the CJC and the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) often disagreed about important matters, with the latter pushing the former to continually resettle and integrate Holocaust survivors.<sup>31</sup> These disagreements continued into 1956–57, with the AJDC going all out to help Hungarian Jewish refugees, a decisive policy compared to the vacillations of the CJC.<sup>32</sup> I thus emphasize that the JDC was much more enthusiastic in allocating resources to Jewish refugees of ’56 than the CJC, presumably indicating the latter’s compassion fatigue—having been overstretched for so long—and having less resources to begin with. Although I did ask many of my interviewees, such as Edith Kondor Szwarcok, Tibor Varga, Betty Kis, Susan Hoffman, and Tom Romer whether they were helped by JIAS (the latter four replying in the affirmative, with Agnes Meinhard corroborating their account of JIAS help as a general postwar phenomenon), most were not able to provide enough detail to allow for empirical generalizations, mainly owing to the fact that most of them were children at the time.<sup>33</sup>

Although there was no official distinction between Hungarian and other Holocaust survivors in their Canadian reception (until the opening of the gates in 1956–57), there is evidence in the form of memoirs which suggests a language-based gap between them. Gruenwald remarked that, in the fur business, the attitude of “don’t trust that Hungarian” was not marginal, in significant part due to Hungarians’ overall lesser command of Yiddish. He conceded that these social and linguistic differences softened over time, and that marriages between Hungarian women and Polish men were fairly common.<sup>34</sup> But in the 1950s and 1960s, language was still a crux of institutional difference among Jews. *Landsmanshaften* (mutual aid associations) tended to bridge the language gap for new arrivals and address its psychosocial effects.<sup>35</sup> The Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue and Sisterhood did likewise, with communal cohesion focused on the hallowed memory of their dead, further enhanced by the popularity of Rabbi Schnurmacher.

## The Origins of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue

The idea for the Martyrs Synagogue began in the mind of Rabbi Miklós Schnurmacher as he was ministering to the needs of his fellow enslaved Jewish men in *munkaszolgálat* (forced labour battalion) in Ukraine, a distinctive chapter of the Hungarian Holocaust. He decided to dedicate his career to the memory of these forced labour servicemen and their relatives murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, particularly by commemorating their Yahrzeits (death anniversaries) and saying Kaddish (liturgy praising God in honour of the deceased).<sup>36</sup> The nomenclature of “martyr” as contrasted with “victim” or “deceased,” based in the communal solidarity beheld by Rabbi Schnurmacher, found wide resonance in his eventual congregation. The term addresses the genocidal murder of family, friends, and landsmen because they were Jewish, and in recognition of their innocence in light of their severely misplaced trust of the Hungarian state, and as chains in an eternal tradition.

Even under the capricious rule of the Hungarian military and proximity to Nazis, Rabbi Schnurmacher did his best to preserve mementos of his compatriots.<sup>37</sup> His studies at the Rabbinical College in Budapest preceded and followed his enslavement, part of the momentum of his vow to become a congregational leader.<sup>38</sup> Thanks to the logistical help of his brother-in-law, the Schnurmachers were able to embark on the treacherous path to the Austrian border in late 1956, and they were initially sponsored by this same brother upon arrival in Montreal.<sup>39</sup> Initially, Rabbi Schnurmacher worked as both a peddler and a rabbi.<sup>40</sup> He officiated at life-cycle events, recited Kaddish for his comrades, and promulgated the idea of a synagogue centred on honouring these martyrs and in line with “Hungarian Jewish rites.”<sup>41</sup>

Given the meticulous research of historian Sándor Dományi (who had a similar wartime ordeal as Rabbi Schnurmacher) and József Halmi, one can presume that the first synagogue setting addressing the goal of honouring martyrs was the ad hoc *shul* setup of the 1957 High Holidays in the Budapest Home Association’s repurposed club space. The Budapest Home Association (Club), founded in 1952, featured visits from Hungarian celebrities such as Pál Jávor, and was focused on sports, card games and dance soirées in addition to culture. It also provided financial assistance to the refugees of ’56, and provided a precedent for both the founding of the synagogue and the hosting of debutante balls of the subsequent two decades.<sup>42</sup> The Budapest Home Club can also be likened to the New World Club and Happy Gang Club, which were loci of solidarity among Holocaust survivors, including a significant cohort of Hungarian orphans who arrived in 1948 (such as Ted Bolgar and Paul Herczeg) and shortly thereafter.<sup>43</sup> In 1958, it split into the Balaton Club and the Continental Social Club. Dományi and Halmi seem to have suggested that these clubs were superseded by the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue.<sup>44</sup>

The most involved founding congregants of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue, beginning with High Holidays services in 1958, tended to be small business owners, lawyers, other professionals, as well as some blue-collar workers (e.g. construction).<sup>45</sup> László Hoffman, a landsman of Rabbi Schnurmacher, along with the rabbi and cantor Izso Habermann, made the 1958 High Holidays logistically possible for his new congregation. In 1959 the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue was incorporated, with the help of furniture entrepreneur Magda Kondor and former lawyer and up-and-coming businessman Zoltán Barna.<sup>46</sup> Notables such as Lajos Bogler (a member of the *Va'ad Ha'ir*, or Jewish community legal council) and Dományi emphasized the initial destitution of the founders of the Martyrs congregation as refugees, their intellectual tendencies, and their love of freedom.<sup>47</sup> Rabbi Schnurmacher liaised with the Protestant School Board to hold services at the Bedford and Van Horne schools. Probably due to the competitive spirit of more established synagogues and municipal zoning regulations, this arrangement had to end, presumably once the congregation's purchased its own building in 1968.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Synagogue, Space, and a Sense of Rootedness**

In 1965, the Hungarian-speaking Jewish Association explicitly prioritized the building of the Martyrs Synagogue.<sup>49</sup> This was a point when a successful coterie of survivors was presumably more established, and could therefore shift their attention to synagogue-building.<sup>50</sup> In a 1967 meeting, community members Zoltán Barna and Dezső Fejes stipulated that other Hungarian Jewish organizations and private individuals had to help Rabbi Schnurmacher pay for the purchase of permanent premises.<sup>51</sup> By the following year, the rabbi was able to buy the building, a car repair shop on 3910 de Courtrai.<sup>52</sup> With the intervention of the notable György Hegedűs in 1969, the executive committee modified the legal status of the new synagogue from 'rabbi's property' to a communal hub intended to unite Hungarian Jews of Montreal, thereby allowing for institutional consolidation under its aegis (e.g. with the Hungarian Speaking Jewish Association and the Hungarian sisterhood).<sup>53</sup>

The de Courtrai location was large enough to accommodate close to 150 congregants, and maximum occupancy was frequently reached during the High Holidays.<sup>54</sup> Some educational and commemorative events were held instead at Chevra T'hilim, Chevra Kadisha B'nai Jacob, and elsewhere, in addition to the larger social events such as fundraising galas and Purim or debutante balls. Reflecting the community's momentum, 1967 featured the founding of the Hungarian section of Combined Jewish Appeal, and in 1968 the founding of the Golden Age Club. By the 1971 formal inauguration, the Martyrs Congregation had 300 members, almost doubling in less than a decade to 550 members in 1980.<sup>55</sup>

Oral histories, even from a relatively limited number of congregants centred on the second generation, shed light on the meaning of the synagogue experience as it pertains to conceptions of identity, intergenerational relations, and bridging the rupture of the Holocaust. Barna noted that, although his father was not interested in being pious as such, he had longed for the psalms and prayers of his youth in Poroszló. His father told him that he went to shul “because it evokes a tradition.”<sup>56</sup> The multitude of Hungarian cantors engaging with the Martyrs Synagogue allowed for this affective sense of liturgy to be recreated. A daughter and niece of survivors from Hajdúhadház, herself more interested in the introspective value of synagogue attendance, noted the importance of personal conversation among attendees during the High Holidays. While this was common among secular Jews who go to Orthodox synagogues in Montreal, there was an additional landsman sociability that was characteristic of immigrant shuls.<sup>57</sup> The general sense conveyed from these and other interviews was that the synagogue was a community centre in its own right, and that Divine services lovingly hearkened to an obliterated past, even if a significant number of congregants were no longer able to engage with a covenantal belief in God as their families may have done before the Holocaust.

### **“Shvesterek-Testvérek”: The Hungarian Sisterhood and Some of its Cultural Events**

This sociability was the lifeblood of the Hungarian Martyrs Sisterhood. Whether considered as adjunct to the Martyrs Congregation or in its own right, it functioned as a “surrogate family.”<sup>58</sup> In 1960, Bea Brody and her circle of friends pioneered the sisterhood for the sake of charitable work, especially at a local level. The inspiration was primarily drawn from sisterhoods back in pre-Holocaust Hungary.<sup>59</sup> The sisterhood provided efficient help to those in need, even before the synagogue’s construction. Akin to the outreach of a *landsmanshaft*, Magdi Dományi’s tenure as sisterhood president from 1962 to 1967 was marked by *bikur holim* (visiting the sick), emergency financial assistance, and translation to deal with bureaucracy.<sup>60</sup>

The sisterhood of the Schnurmacher Synagogue is arguably most remembered for its social gatherings and formal dance events, particularly the debutante ball and Purim ball. These events featured Central European standbys such as the waltz and the *csárdás* (a traditional Hungarian folk dance). The celebrated adolescents were treated like royalty, who were introduced with flowery walking sticks.<sup>61</sup> This was representative of a rags-to-riches tale, given the fact that the ‘56ers and other Hungarian Holocaust survivors often arrived with virtually nothing. Parents deeply appreciated this repertoire meant to elicit nostalgic connections with the high culture of the old country, having been denied this experience as a result of the war years, the Holocaust, and Stalinism.<sup>62</sup> The debutante ball in particular was really for the parents to vicariously resurrect their own lost adolescence. While there were notables and spectators from the more established Jewish community, these events were essen-

tially internal to the cohorts of Hungarian Holocaust survivors and their children who had arrived in Montreal by the early 1960s.<sup>63</sup>

At a sisterhood event eulogizing the renowned entertainer Panni Faragó, President Ferenc Hardy gave Andor Zsoldos and Ernó Agoston honorary lifelong memberships to the Martyrs Congregation, demonstrating the synagogue's appreciation of poets and their commemorative relevance.<sup>64</sup> The sisterhood held a thematically similar event on April 13, 1975, just a few days after Yom HaShoah, and just after the month of Nisan, when mourning liturgies and practices are truncated among observant Jews.<sup>65</sup> Tibor Fleischer recited an Erzsébet Balla poem highly relevant to Holocaust memorialization: "A ditch is dug in the sky, by the Jewish army," evoking poignant memories of the suffering of those in the forced labour battalions. Balla, among the most celebrated literati invited by the synagogue, wrote an incisive novel on Budapest in 1944, *Józsefkörút 79* (79 *József Avenue*), in which a narrative of being shot into the Danube by the Arrow Cross was based on the experience of a congregant, an individual by the last name Kornitzer.<sup>66</sup> Sisterhood notables Irene Romer and Lilly Toth, two major figures in the Martyrs Synagogue's Holocaust commemorations, read passages from Balla's short stories.<sup>67</sup> Holocaust commemoration was woven into aspects of the synagogue and sisterhood's programming, consciously and subconsciously, but it was most directly addressed at the annual Yom Hazikaron ceremony, usually in June.<sup>68</sup>

### **Martyrs Memorial Day: A Key Node in Montreal Holocaust Commemoration**

The Martyrs Memorial Day (Yom Hazikaron) ceremonies constituted a central gathering place for Hungarian Jews to mourn the Holocaust in a personal and familial way, with important parallels to Yizkor (memorial prayers four times a year) and *yahrzeit* observances. It was the temporal correlate to their material objects of memory, the *mazkir* plaques, that were the essential point in negotiations to merge this immigrant synagogue with a larger one, the Chevra Kadisha B'nai Jacob.<sup>69</sup>

The Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue, in its time, was probably the only synagogue in North America to specifically commemorate the Hungarian chapter of the Holocaust. This may very well have been the only public venue where this was possible. László Barna said: "Don't forget, in '56, you didn't talk about the Holocaust."<sup>70</sup> This makes sense given many of these refugees came from situations in which they had recently had to dissimulate their identities.

This space for Holocaust commemoration was all the more important in that survivors struggled to share their experience with others. Elaine and Judith Kalman, in a different but comparable context to Judy Weissenberg Cohen, did not have the proper opportunity to tell people about their horrific ordeals.<sup>71</sup> Weissenberg Cohen expressed the inanity of trying to convey the Holocaust to settled Canadians for quite

some time after arriving in Montreal, basically until the 1961 Eichmann trial.<sup>72</sup> Judith Kalman relayed how her own peers at the Temple Emanu-El Beth Shalom parochial school gawked at Holocaust photos like colonial outsiders—leaving her feeling profoundly distanced from her more settled and higher-class cohort of co-religionists—let alone being able to commemorate her cataclysmic family trauma or express her intense Holocaust post-memory.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, not only was Holocaust commemoration and cathartic conversation central to the Martyrs Synagogue, but it was also imbricated with other communal and educational events.

After giving a bit of background on early Holocaust memorialization, and outlining the Martyrs Synagogue's commemorations chronologically, I shall briefly contextualize them vis-à-vis Holocaust memory culture in Montreal up until the early 1980s.

In *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, Hasia Diner articulates the abundance of memorialization in the United States in the first seventeen years following the Shoah.<sup>74</sup> Diner addresses the variable of commemoration dates, remarking that the eclipse of the Tenth of Tevet by Yom HaShoah V'HaGevurah (commemorating the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) by the early 1960s represented the subordination of halakhically and communally meaningful memorial practices to Israeli presuppositions of physical resistance.<sup>75</sup> This centring of physical resistance may have inadvertently marginalized larger commemorative opportunities for Hungarian Jewry, given the near-absence of diplomatic and physical resistance outside of Budapest, and the excruciating dilemmas that they faced as they were confronted with ghettoization and genocidal deportations.<sup>76</sup> The passivity often (inaccurately) ascribed to Hungarian Jewry would not mesh well with these general patterns of commemoration.<sup>77</sup>

These excruciating dilemmas were well-set in the Hungarian historical record as a result of the concerted efforts of historians, journalists, and aid workers mainly in pre-Stalinist Budapest. But in the DP camps, the most important locales for Holocaust commemoration and cathartic discussion for survivors, there was less discursive space to contextualize the Hungarian chapter of the Holocaust in its specific historical trajectory and devastating challenges for identity.

Bergen-Belsen, which Weissenberg Cohen perceived as a “nationally and religiously diverse” *shtetl* (small Jewish town), was probably the most important of the DP camps. She pointed out that Polish Jews, who were generally considered less passive, were in charge.<sup>78</sup> Weissenberg Cohen remarked that “the Bergen-Belsen DP camp was also a place where you could always find a shoulder to cry on. We talked about our experiences all the time, at least in the Hungarian section.”<sup>79</sup> As per the Polish Jews being in charge—also keeping in mind an important cohort of fellow Yiddish-speaking Lithuanian and Romanian Jews—Belsen's cultural and educational infrastructure was geared towards Yiddish-speaking survivors.<sup>80</sup> While this hub of Yiddish-language

institutions helped the Weissenbergs (Judy and her sister Évi) learn the language necessary for their journey to Montreal and ultimately Toronto, there was a sense of linguistic isolation in that public commemorations specific to the Holocaust in Hungary were not so plausible in Belsen.<sup>81</sup>

This contrasts with Hungary (in the Trianon borders) until the full imposition of Stalinist rule in 1948. The National Relief Committee for Deportees (Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság, DEGOB) interview project of 1945–46, for instance, documented the testimonies of 5,000 survivors of the Holocaust in “Greater Hungary.”<sup>82</sup> The DEGOB also circulated a newsletter, *Hírek az elhurcoltakról* (News on the Deported), which perhaps can be likened to the *Unzer Shtimme* (Our Voice) of Belsen.<sup>83</sup>

Thanks to the Hungarian-speaking Jewish Association, the downtown Montreal Y held the first Martyrs Memorial Day in 1960, garnering an audience of 650 souls. The official speaker was Ödön Antl, a major figure in the World Federation of Hungarian Jews who returned for subsequent commemorations, and the formal opening of the synagogue’s own building in June 1971.<sup>84</sup> The 1965 commemoration at the Chevra T’Hillim Synagogue featured a psalm of grief recited by Cantor William Frischman, a mournful speech by Rabbi Schnurmacher, lighting of candles by the sisterhood leadership, a closing speech by the lawyer Zoltán Barna, Kaddish led by Schnurmacher, and ended with the Israeli national anthem “Hatikvah” in unison.<sup>85</sup> Every year, the Israeli consul general was represented, much like in Holocaust commemorations significantly later.<sup>86</sup> The first Martyrs Memorial Day, described in detail in the Dományi and Halmi memorial book, took place on June 20, 1965, which corresponds to 20 Sivan 5725. This is significant because the Orthodox Hungarian rabbinate, with respect to the Polish custom to fast on that day in memory of the tragedies inflicted upon European Jewry, chose 20 Sivan as a day for mourning the Holocaust.<sup>87</sup> This was in keeping with the ascription of Orthodoxy to this synagogue. The commemoration of June 1, 1975 (22 Sivan 5735) was on the Sunday closest to 20 Sivan.<sup>88</sup> However, what was probably more decisive for the timing of the commemoration was the reality that the majority of provincial Hungarian Jews were deported in June of 1944.<sup>89</sup>

In Montreal as well as in other major Canadian cities, the default community-wide Holocaust memorials prior to the late 1970s were the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising commemorations.<sup>90</sup> An archived communiqué of the Canadian Jewish Congress from 1963 citing poet Jacob Glatstein indicated that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising should not be characterized as an attempt to redeem Jewish honour, contra Hannah Arendt’s essentialized understanding of the Holocaust, but should rather emphasize the banding together of diverse factions who physically resisted.<sup>91</sup> Many of the readers of this document had presumably absorbed Arendt’s perspective on the Eichmann trial, and in this text could find evidence countering the prevailing assumption of Jewish passivity. As noted by Aba Beer in his October 1987 interview with Myra Giberovitch, survivors themselves were not at the forefront of these commemo-

rations; these events were a paean to resistance but did not constitute a forum for testimony.<sup>92</sup> Holocaust survivor organizations such as the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression were involved, but not in a subjective vein. Participants such as the esteemed rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung and Jacob Glatstein, both of whom construed genocidal despair and a hopeful glimmer of resistance as *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctifying of the divine name), as well as a modernism that would categorize the uprising as a generalizable archetype of the quest for liberty, indicate an array of martyrdom discourses that valorized physical resistance.<sup>93</sup>

Dományi and Halmi have featured heart-rending, liturgically resonant poems in their selection of Martyrs memorial events they included in the congregation's memorial volume. Zseni Várnai's poems, recited by sisterhood president Irene Romer at commemorations such as in 1977, often feature rich pastoral detail that could have brought to mind the landscapes of the Hungarian hometowns of the survivors.<sup>94</sup> Her reverence for traditional Jewish life, mellifluous poetry, and honouring of survivors fits with the style of László Bródy, whose poem "The Great Miracle" is excerpted in the 1983 memorial book as follows:<sup>95</sup>

No forest beast was ever hunted so

No herds were ever, so driven on the range

I learned history a long time ago

No tyrant was ever such a tyrant before.<sup>96</sup>

This passage, which speaks to the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust, and the shock of the viciousness of their co-nationals under irredentist rule, most of all in 1944-45, could be read as a retort to the overused generalization "sheep to the slaughter" that many public discourses decontextualized from the testimonies of heroic Vilna partisan and Eichmann trial participant Abba Kovner.

The poem "Six Hundred Thousand," by Ernő László, a reference to the estimated number of victims of the Holocaust in "Greater Hungary" (including Jews who converted to Christianity), articulates the diversity of Jewish life in these lands and their shared genocidal oppression. I excerpt it here:

Life is behind them. They march and march  
 Servants or masters belittled or praised.

Did they measure dry-goods or write in fever?  
 Did she come home and kiss the door post?

Did she till the soil or bring up an orphan?  
 Did she labour or squander her day?<sup>97</sup>

These stanzas speak to the tremendous variety of occupations, class positionalities, degrees of religious observance, and attitudes towards the charms of some Hungarian urban centres (especially Budapest and Nagyvárad [Oradea] after 1920 but including some larger provincial towns as well) among Jewish women in Hungary.<sup>98</sup> The appertaining memorial explicitly speaks to this unity in diversity: “Every Hungarian Jewish brother and sister is cordially invited.”<sup>99</sup>

The last stanza has a distinct resonance of Psalm 137. Compare the following with the injunction not to forget Jerusalem as part of the *Birkat HaMazon* (grace after the meal) blessing:

Jew! Forget them if you can

But first tear out your heart with your own hands.<sup>100</sup>

This clarion call to memory is reminiscent of Elie Wiesel’s linking of memory and the sacred and his maxim “to forget the victims would be to have them killed again.”<sup>101</sup> It is in keeping with the sentiments of many survivors in Montreal, such as Peter Kleinmann, who gave an account of his Holocaust memory vis-à-vis a phenomenology of time in *The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah*.<sup>102</sup> Kleinmann reflects on the inner omnipresence of his Holocaust memory, warping the difference between past and present, while addressing the changing motives of memory of genocide over the generations.<sup>103</sup> He stresses the conscious effort to articulate the ineffable and affectively unique memories of the Holocaust into language in spite of the impossibility of doing so, while emphasizing its inherent link to memorialization of each survivor’s hometown, in his case Munkács.<sup>104</sup>

One of the Várnai poems recited by Irene Romer may have expressed a connotation of resurrection, thereby conveying a religious sense of martyrdom in a more digestible form. This made sense in a setting composed of non-Haredi Jews, for whom the theodicy of Hungarian borderland rabbis would have been absolutely inappropriate. Another Várnai poem possibly recited by Romer captured of the ineffability of her pain over being separated from her loved ones. This paralleled the feeling of many Hungarian survivors, who were probably not given a place to publicly articulate their grief until the Martyrs Synagogue gave them occasions to do so.

Clearly, catharsis similar in power to the Jewish mourning process was central. This compares with Holocaust discourses and commemorations practiced by Hungarian Hasidic Jews in Montreal, which have not yet been studied in a direct ethnographic way. The work by Naomi Seidman on the ninety-three martyrs of Bais Yaakov, a network of Orthodox Jewish schools for girls, may speak to some of the ways that the Holocaust is promulgated to Hungarian Hasidic children in Montreal, given the school's central location in *frum* Hungarian Montreal.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusions

Zelda Abramson's concluding section, "The Tzedakah-Charity Paradox," in *The Montreal Shtetl* speaks to the gaps in community organizing between established Canadian Jews and cohorts of Holocaust survivor immigrants, particularly those from 1948-53. In this text, Abramson asserts that despite the material generosity of the CJC and JIAS, this was not matched by established Jewish institutions and many individuals in terms of empathy, sensitivity, and spiritual warmth.<sup>106</sup> Hidas's article shows that, in some sectors, this distancing may have remained and intensified for the 1956-57 refugees, that is to say with regards to the cohort most involved with the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue.<sup>107</sup>

It can then be claimed that this congregation, its sisterhood, and allied organizations constituted a resoundingly positive answer to the problem of exclusion, as they seem to have taken many opportunities to invite Jews from more established backgrounds to key events, and were noteworthy in their fundraising for Israel and other causes, much like the *landsmanshaft* organizations of non-Hungarian Holocaust survivors.<sup>108</sup> Further inquiry should be done on Holocaust survivors' responses to exclusion, especially the founding of synagogues and the publication of yizkor books, with comparisons to the reception of other Jewish refugees, and in other Canadian contexts.<sup>109</sup>

The Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue and the Hungarian Jewish Sisterhood were special in their Holocaust commemoration; while early Holocaust commemoration was not limited to them, they represented the only public space where the specific tragedy of Hungarian Jews could be memorialized. This was at a time when public Holocaust commemorations zeroed in on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and its Zionist or neo-Bundist lessons.<sup>110</sup> The only other Montreal-area public discourses on the Holocaust in Hungary, besides the Beth Hazikaron, were among Hasidim, who would presumably have interpreted the experience differently, and some of whose leaders would have done so under a perplexing "because of our sins" theodicy.<sup>111</sup>

The cultural events organized by the Hungarian Jewish Sisterhood and the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue also speak to a nostalgic recovery of fin-de-siècle and interwar Hungarian literary ferment, while remaining fully cognizant of the ultimate failure of the Hungarian social contract, that is to say, the brazenly traitorous and

ungrateful attitudes of the Hungarian state, civil service, and much of the non-Jewish middle class that crested during the Holocaust.

These two representative organizations were mostly the result of innovations by '56ers, although crucial groundwork was laid by the Budapest Home Association in 1952. While '56ers were demographically most important for the synagogue and sisterhood, previous waves of immigrants also made their mark. One can thus infer a reciprocal sense of responsibility between these different cohorts, given the limited support outside of Hungarian Jewry of Montreal. Further studies could consider this dynamic for Hungarian Jewish immigrants who came after the early 1960s as well as comparisons with other subgroups of the Montreal Jewish community, and how patterns of Holocaust commemoration, synagogue attendance, and cultural events were different among Hungarian Holocaust survivors in Toronto and elsewhere.

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1

I profoundly appreciate the recollections of all my interviewees and contacts, particularly of the Romer family and of László Barna.

2

József Halmi and Sándor Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal and the History of the Hungarian Martyrs Synagogue of Montreal / A Montréal Magyar Zsidóság és a Montréal Mártírok Temploma Hitközség Története* (Montreal: Collated by Ruth Beloff, 1983), 88. Sándor Dományi (1918-2013) was a historian, primary chronicler of the Hungarian Martyrs Congregation, and a devoted part of its organization and life. The above-mentioned bilingual memorial volume starts in Hungarian and continues in English. Both sides contain the same news articles and feature the same events, the main difference being that the Hungarian side has a few more photos and different graphics.

3

József Halmi, interview by Gerry Springer, May 13, 1996, interview 54694, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA; Elizabeth Blau, interview with author, August 3, 2021.

4

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 48-51, 54, 88.

5

See Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 6.

6

Peter Hidas, "Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees, 1956-57," *East European Jewish Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2007): 75-89; Kata Bohus, "Hotel California: Hungarian Jewish Refugee Experiences in Toronto After the 1956 Revolution," *Ktav Et* 2 (2012): 1-25; Zeld Abramson and John Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl: Making Home after the Holocaust* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2019), 188, 197-201, 232-235.

7

Christopher Adam, "Communists vs. Conservatives and the Struggle for the Hungarian Soul in Canada, 1940-1989" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2012), 60-62, 75-81.

**8**

Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 198.

**9**

Elaine Kalman Naves, *Journey to Vaja: Re-constructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 11-14, 66-71.

**10**

Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 198.

**11**

Naomi Kramer and Ronald Headland, *The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1998), 118.

**12**

Kramer and Headland, *The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah*, 119.

**13**

Wesley Goldstein, "Hungarian synagogue marks 25 years," *Canadian Jewish News*, May 19, 1983.

**14**

Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 82.

**15**

Ibid., 86.

**16**

Ibid., 85-87. Also see George Reinitz, *Wrestling with Life: From Hungary to Auschwitz to Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 77-91; Leslie Mezei, *A Tapestry of Survival* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2019), 75-77.

**17**

Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 104.

**18**

Hermann Gruenwald, *After Auschwitz: One Man's Story* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 133-135.

**19**

Ibid., 133-134; cf. Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 101, 117, 131-132, 170; also see Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 185.

**20**

Friend of Lilly Toth, interviews with author, July 17, 2018 and November 3, 2021. I have honoured the interviewee's request not to reveal their name in this article.

**21**

Peter Hidas, "Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees," 75; Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 240. The figure of 4,000 Jews is based on Sándor Dományi's estimate that 1,500-1,600 Hungarian Jewish families decided on Montreal as home. See Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 9.

**22**

Elaine Kalman Naves, *Shoshanna's Story: A Mother, A Daughter, and the Shadows of History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 2003), 106.

**23**

Ibid., 110-123.

**24**

Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 181-182; Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 110-120, 147-153, 172-178.

**25**

Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 182-185; Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 172-173.

**26**

Hidas, "Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees," 81; Hidas, "Arrival and Reception: Hungarian Refugees, 1956-1957" in Christopher Adam, Tibor Egervari, Leslie Laczko, & Judy Young, eds. *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2010), 236-237.

**27**

Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 216.

**28**

Ibid., 255.

**29**

Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 183-185; Hidas, "Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees," 81-82. This contrasts with previous waves of postwar immigration, as per Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 248.

**30**

Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 52; cf. Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 247.

**31**

Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 120, 151, also 174, 243, 247; Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 184.

**32**

Hidas, "Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees," 76-77, 81-82.

**33**

Edith Szwarcok, interview with author, June 11, 2021; Tibor Varga, interview with author, June 15, 2021; Betty Kis, interview with author, June 18, 2021; Susan Hoffman, interview with author, June 23, 2021; Tom Romer, interview with author, June 29, 2021; Agnes Meinhard, interview with author, September 15, 2021.

**34**

Gruenwald, *After Auschwitz*, 140; also see Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 200-201.

**35**

Myra Giberovitch, "The Contributions of Montreal Holocaust Survivor Organizations to Jewish Communal Life" (master's thesis, McGill University, 1988), 75.

**36**

Ibid., 9; Tommy Schnurmacher, *Makeup Tips from Auschwitz: How Vanity Saved my Mother's Life* (Victoria, BC: Tellwell Talent, 2019), 162.

**37**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 9.

**38**

Ibid.; Schnurmacher, *Makeup Tips from Auschwitz*, 159.

**39**

Schnurmacher, *Makeup Tips from Auschwitz*, 3, 157.

**40**

Ibid., 159.

**41**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 10.

**42**

Ibid., 8.

**43**

Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 85-87.

**44**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 8-9.

**45**

Halmi and Dományi, *A Montréal Magyar Zsidóság és a Montréal Mártírok Temploma Hitközség Története* [this information is more clearly indicated on the Hungarian side of the memorial volume], 12; Szwarcok, interview; László Barna, interview with author, November 3, 2021; Hoffman, interview.

**46**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 10; Szwarcok, interview; Barna, interview.

**47**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 40.

**48**

Schnurmacher, *Makeup Tips from Auschwitz*, 161-162.

**49**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 39.

**50**

Ibid., 39-41.

**51**

Ibid., 34.

**52**

Ibid.; Schnurmacher, *Makeup Tips from Auschwitz*, 162.

**53**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 34.

**54**

Romer, interview.

**55**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 87.

**56**

Barna, interview.

**57**

Synagogue attendee whose mother and aunt hailed from Hajdúhadház in eastern Hungary, interview with author, June 21, 2021.

**58**

Barna, interview.

**59**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 12.

**60**

Ibid., 12, 16.

**61**

Ibid., and see Halmi and Dományi, Hungarian section, 29.

**62**

Barna, interview.

**63**

Cf. Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 75.

**64**

Ibid., 67.

**65**

Ibid., 65.

**66**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 65.

**67**

Ibid.

**68**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 10; "Hungarian Shul Merges with Chevra Kadisha," *Canadian Jewish News*, May 9, 2002.

**69**

Nathan Rosenshein, interview with author, June 30 and August 17, 2021; Schnurmacher, *Makeup Tips from Auschwitz*, 162.

**70**

Barna, interview; cf. Elaine Kalman Naves, *Shoshanna's Story: A Mother, A Daughter, and the Shadows of History*, 115-117.

**71**

Ibid.; Weissenberg Cohen, *A Cry in Unison: Sistering for Survival* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2020), 98-102; cf. Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 216-220.

**72**

Weissenberg Cohen, *A Cry in Unison*, 72-73, 99-100, 102.

**73**

Judith Kalman, *Called to Testify: The Big Story in My Small Life* (Toronto: Sutherland House, 2022), 14.

**74**

Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, passim.

**75**

Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 51-59ff.

**76**

See Zoltán Vági, László Csósz, and Gábor Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a Genocide* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 243-278. Regarding the practical impossibility of physical resistance in the spring of 1944 in the Hungarian provinces and borderlands, see Isabella Katz Leitner, *Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 1978 [2018]), 10-11.

**77**

For an incisive critique of the discourses of passivity ascribed to urban Subcarpathian Holocaust victims and survivors, see Raz Segal, *Days of Ruin: The Jews of Munkács During the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013), 112-122.

**78**

Weissenberg Cohen, *A Cry in Unison*, 85-86.

**79**

Ibid.; cf. Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 217.

**80**

Weissenberg Cohen, *A Cry in Unison*, 86.

**81**

Ibid., 90-108.

**82**

Ferenc Laczó, *Hungarian Jews in the Age of Genocide: An Intellectual History, 1929-1948* (Leiden, NL, Brill: 2016), especially 104-106.

**83**

Ibid., 105; Weissenberg Cohen, *A Cry in Unison*, 86; Moshe S. Kraus, *The Life of Moshele Der Zinger: How My Singing Saved my Life* (Ottawa, ON: Baico Publishing, 2017), 98. Regarding early liturgical memorialization in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp, see Kraus, *The Life of Moshele Der Zinger*, 94-99.

**84**

The World Federation of Hungarian Jews was primarily concerned with West German and later Hungarian restitution for the Holocaust, and was particularly concerned for the stateless survivors who fled Hungary in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution. See "Hungarian Jews in America Form Branch of World Federation" Jewish Telegraphic Agency, November 13, 1951, <https://www.jta.org/archive/hungarian-jews-in-america-form-branch-of-world-federation>, accessed June 22, 2023; Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 19.

**85**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 51.

**86**

Ibid., 51, and passim.

**87**

Asaf Yedidya, "From Collective *Shiva* to a Fast for the Ages: Religious Initiatives to Commemorate and Mourn the Victims of the Holocaust, 1944-1951," *Religions* 13, no. 3 (2022): 242. See also Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 52.

**88**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 66.

**89**

This has been noted in "Hungarian shul merges with Chevra Kadisha," *Canadian Jewish News*, Thursday, May 9, 2002; Tommy Schnurmacher, email to author, March 20, 2022.

**90**

On a less public scale, *landsmanshaften* organized commemorations for their destroyed communities. This finding was ascertained by a combined media keyword search "Warsaw Ghetto Commemorations" in the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives. Also see Giberovitch, "The Contributions of Montreal Holocaust Survivor Organizations to Jewish Communal Life," 68, 71-74.

**91**

Jean Sadler, Press Officer. "Record Turnout Warsaw Ghetto Anniversary Meeting," April 18-19, 1963, Canadian Jewish Congress files, Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Montreal, QC. CJC 2A1963, 2/19.

**92**

Aba Beer, Interview by Myra Giberovitch, October 13, 1987, interview 1B-7 / Part 2, transcript, Myra Giberovitch file Box 1, File 10, p. 17, Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

**93**

Canadian Jewish Congress, "Record Turnout Warsaw Ghetto Anniversary Meeting,," Norman Erwin, "Confronting Hitler's Legacy: Canadian Jews and Early Holocaust Discourse, 1933-1956 (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2014), 2-3.

**94**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 52.

**95**

"Laszlo Brody," *Jewish Virtual Library*, 2008. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/laszlo-brody>, accessed July 12, 2023.

**96**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 52.

**97**

Ibid., 53.

**98**

Mary Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 139-201.

**99**

Halmi and Dományi, *The History of the Hungarian Jewish Community in Montreal*, 53.

**100**

Ibid.

**101**

See for example, Gary Henry, "Story and Silence: Transcendence in the Work of Elie Wiesel" in "Elie Wiesel: First Person Singular," *Public Broadcasting Service*, 2002, <https://www.pbs.org/eliewiesel/life/henry.html>, accessed June 17, 2022.

**102**

Kramer and Headland, *The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah*, 81-87, 119-121, 123-128.

**103**

Ibid., 121-122, 128.

**104**

Ibid., 119-121.

**105**

See Naomi Seidman, *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition* (London, UK: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in Association with Liverpool University Press, 2019). See also, <https://thebaisyaakovproject.religion.utoronto.ca/>

**106**

Abramson and Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl*, 247-251.

**107**

Hidas, "Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees," *passim*.

**108**

Giberovitch, "The Contributions of Montreal Holocaust Survivor Organizations to Jewish Communal Life," 79-109.

**109**

Ibid., 17, 87-89.

**110**

The Workers' Circle (Arbeiter Ring), which played a major role in these commemorations, can be considered neo-Bundist. As a political ideology, it is encapsulated by the op-eds of Beryl Wajzman in *The Suburban*, who marries an unapologetic realism with a Cotlerian idealism (as per the Honourable Irwin Cotler's belief that the Biblical precept "justice, justice you shall pursue" should be central in the mobilization of political power and foreign policy). One could compare his thoughts on

the commemoration of the S.S. Louis tragedy with those of MP Anthony Housefather at the same Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial in April 2018 at the Gelber Centre in Snowdon, and with the work of Adara Goldberg on the subject. See Joel Goldenberg, "Montrealers mark 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Warsaw Ghetto uprising" *The Suburban*, May 2, 2018. [https://www.thesuburban.com/news/city\\_news/montrealers-mark-75th-anniversary-of-warsaw-ghetto-uprising/article\\_9a4e7e83-a23b-5d72-b027-91904a601c6a.html](https://www.thesuburban.com/news/city_news/montrealers-mark-75th-anniversary-of-warsaw-ghetto-uprising/article_9a4e7e83-a23b-5d72-b027-91904a601c6a.html), accessed October 31, 2023. Also see Beryl Wajzman, "Reflections on a decade: Raising conscience in an unconscionable time" *The Suburban*, July 5, 2017. [https://www.thesuburban.com/opinion/op\\_ed/reflections-on-a-decade-raising-conscience-in-an-unconscionable-time/article9ce7bfa-c426-5343-b24f-4d20c968d9b2.html](https://www.thesuburban.com/opinion/op_ed/reflections-on-a-decade-raising-conscience-in-an-unconscionable-time/article9ce7bfa-c426-5343-b24f-4d20c968d9b2.html), accessed October 31, 2023.

**111**

See Jean Ancel, "The She'erit ha-Pletah: Holocaust Survivors in Northern Transylvania," in Randolph Brahm and Brewster S. Chamberlin, eds. *The Holocaust in Hungary: Sixty Years Later* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 161-164. See also, Sean Remz, Dilmurat Mahmut, Abdulmuqtedir Udun, and Susan J. Palmer, "Towards a Uyghur Theodicy? Comparing Uyghur Philosophical Discourse on an Ongoing Genocide with Jewish Religious Responses to the Holocaust," *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 14, no. 1 (January 2023): 190-222, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/asrr2023825100>.