

anced resolution which is not an end but a beginning. "A poem," he writes, "is not a destination, it is a point of departure."

Klein's influence as a poet and man of letters on subsequent Canadian Jewish writers is significant. In style, theme and awareness of the Jewish past, Klein has shaped an important group of succeeding Canadian poets. Irving Layton, Eli Mandel, Miriam Waddington, Leonard Cohen and Seymour Mayne all attest to his prominence in various poems and essays. Mayne, a young Montreal poet, in his elegy on Klein describes the variety and mixture of Klein's world when he writes of his "richness and pundit's brilliance" while disguising the "grand with the puny."

And through it all, "rising behind Montreal's gothic french and english" is "yehushalayim with her gates."

The subjects and forms of Klein's writing reflect a tension between the traditional and the modern which characterizes the situation of much contemporary art. But ultimately, he becomes not just a Canadian Jewish poet and writer. He becomes, as he says of the artist in his long and important poem, "The Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," "the n'th Adam taking a green inventory/in [the] world." And for the poet, as for Klein, "To praise/The world is breath/To him."

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CRISIS AT THE BRONFMAN CENTER:

THE "MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH" CONTROVERSY

By A. JAMES RUDIN

THE PASSAGE OF nearly three decades since the end of World War II has not yet healed the terrible wounds left in the wake of the Holocaust. It is not only among survivors that the agony is felt: the new Jewish generation, born since 1945, is likewise haunted and tortured by the Holocaust. We and our children are destined to live out our lives atop a seething volcano of guilt, anger, shame, bitterness, despair, and hate. Generally, the eruptions touch only an individual; but occasionally an entire Jewish community is stricken. The consequence is the raising without answering of profoundly disturbing questions, which can destroy any carefully nurtured sense of group unity and leave in its wake a dazed and divided people. The Montreal Jewish community underwent just such a shattering ordeal in early 1972.

The Saidye Bronfman Center in Montreal is named for a member of Canada's most distinguished and influential Jewish family. A gift from the Bronfmans, the Center was designated as a performing arts institution under the aegis of the local Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association. Although the SBC building is physically adjacent to the main 'Y' facility, and is organizationally a part of the 'Y,' the Center's Executive and Artistic Director, Marion Andre, attempted to maintain an independent stance and program. In this he was supported by the Center's principal patron, Mrs. Phyllis Lambert (née Bronfman). Under Andre's direction in the early '70s, the SBC became an exponent of avant-garde drama, and it emerged as one of Montreal's leading English language theaters.

In the Spring of 1971, the Bronfman

Center leadership chose the Holocaust as its major programmatic theme for the 71-72 year. Lectures were planned along with a visual exhibition. A "teach in" was proposed and some appropriate dramatic readings were also scheduled. In keeping with the Center's basic purpose, a modern play was chosen to highlight the year-long Holocaust theme. The play chosen was Robert Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth*, a work that had already drawn mixed reviews in its commercial theater performances in London, New York, and Tel Aviv. Based on Shaw's slender novel of the same name, *The Man in the Glass Booth* is a thinly disguised re-enactment of the 1961 Eichmann trial in Israel. The play's central character is the German Jew, Goldman, who lost his wife and three children in the Holocaust, but somehow managed to survive. After the war he becomes an immensely coarse and crude New York millionaire; but a man obsessed with his own searing memories and the guilt of one who has survived the Nazi death camps. Shaw portrays Goldman as a schizophrenic who assumes the identity of a dead distant cousin, Dorff, who had been an SS officer during the war. Dorff's function was to murder large numbers of Jews.

Israeli security agents, believing Goldman to be Dorff, capture him and remove him to Jerusalem to stand public trial for crimes against the Jewish people. Goldman faces his judges in a protective glass booth wearing an immaculate SS uniform. As the trial progresses, Goldman's obsession leads him to justify and even celebrate Hitler and Nazism:

. . . People of Jewry, let me speak to you of my Fuehrer with love. He who answered our German need . . . a great wide sweep of the right arm . . . the call of love from the people. . . . Heil Hitler. . . . He gave us our history . . . in *Gotterdammerung* we loved him . . . there was only him . . . he never deserted us. All but he! . . . While he lived, Germany lived. . . . People of Israel, we never denied him. . . . And if, if he were able to rise from the dead, he would prove it to you now. . . . If only we had someone to rise to . . . throw out our arms to . . . love . . . and stamp our feet

for. . . . Someone to lead. . . . People of Israel if he had chosen you . . . *you* also would have followed where he led.

During the trial Goldman is allowed to cross-examine the witnesses. The following brief exchange clearly illustrates Shaw's attitude towards the post-Holocaust Jewish community:

GOLDMAN. (Shouts) You South African Jewish?

YOUNG MAN. Yes.

GOLDMAN. You live in Johannesburg?

YOUNG MAN. Yes.

GOLDMAN. Doin' well?

YOUNG MAN. Yes, I am doing very well.

GOLDMAN. No further questions.

The denouement comes when Goldman is recognized by an old woman in the court, and as his true Jewish identity is revealed, the presiding judge asks: "Why did you do it? Haven't you done more harm than good? Is it not what you have said against us that will be remembered?" As the play ends, Goldman locks himself in the glass booth and begins to remove his clothes. The judge orders him to be carried out of the court, and Shaw's final stage direction reads: ". . . For the moment they (the Court officials) do not know how to get the man out. The lights fade."

The Man in the Glass Booth is thus Shaw's attempt to translate Hannah Arendt's controversial Holocaust theories into a stage play. Shaw implies that both victim and victimizer are guilty of evil; that the line between the hunted and the hunter is a thin one (Goldman becomes Dorff who becomes Goldman again). All people, regardless of their moral, cultural, and religious backgrounds, are capable, indeed, are quite prepared to commit atrocities against fellow human beings. According to Shaw, it is simply an accident of history that determines who murders and who is murdered. Hitler found his murdering instrument in the German people, but any other people can be energized to do likewise.

Further, Shaw indicates that the Jewish people learned little or nothing from the Holocaust. Rather, they became accomplices to vicious racism in South Africa.

The Man in the Glass Booth is Robert Shaw's personal explanation for evil and genocide.

THE MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH was scheduled to open a month-long run at the Saidye Bronfman Center on February 28, 1972. Ticket sales for the play had already begun the previous summer as part of the total subscription series. Individual performance tickets went on sale in early January. A number of Montreal Jewish organizations selected dates for their members to attend, and all the Wednesday matinee tickets were purchased by the Protestant School Board. (Unlike the United States, Montreal does not maintain a "public" school system: there are Catholic and Protestant School Boards supported by public funds. Many Jewish parents, if they do not send their children to Jewish day schools, generally enroll their youngsters in the Protestant system.)

According to Harry Kosansky, the Executive Director of the Montreal YM-YWHA, the Canadian Jewish Congress was asked to consider sponsoring the play's opening performance. Saul Hayes, the CJC's Executive Vice President, suggested that instead of the Congress, the Association of Survivors of Nazi Oppression might be a possible first night sponsor. Canadian Jewry numbers among its members a rather significant number of death camp survivors. This is primarily due to the restrictive United States immigration regulations that were in effect after World War II. Canada, in contrast, had liberal immigration laws during the same period. Currently, about 35,000 survivors and their families live in Montreal, comprising nearly a third of the city's total Jewish population.

On February 4, three representatives of the Survivors' Association met with Marion Andre to discuss the play and possible first night sponsorship. One of the survivors, Abba Beer, had been imprisoned at the Lemberg concentration camp, and at this meeting he discovered, for the first time, that Mr. Andre (whose last name is Czerniecki) had also been a Jewish inmate at Lemberg. The Association lead-

ers made no decision about sponsorship, but rather, they asked for and received a copy of *The Man in the Glass Booth* for study. Rehearsals were already underway and the Saidye Bronfman Center had committed approximately \$20,000 to the production—about a fifth of the Center's annual expenditures.

Five days later the President of the Survivors' Association, Issie Veisfeld, a past President, Lou Zablow, and Beer, met with Andre, Kosansky, and Mr. Samuel Shirar, the Center's Chairman. At this session, the Association members expressed intense displeasure with Shaw's play and requested that the production be cancelled. For them *The Man in the Glass Booth* was "insulting," "offensive," "obscene," and "an anti-Semite's paradise." They were especially upset because it appeared from the play "that both the Germans and the Jews committed equal crimes during and after the war." The "dignity and honor of the 6,000,000 martyrs of the Nazi Holocaust" were "being challenged." Worst of all, the survivors were outraged that an "anti-Semitic spectacle should be performed in and produced by a Jewish institution."

Despite these strong objections, Andre, Kosansky, and Shirar felt that the play should be performed as planned. On the following day, February 10th, the officers of both the 'Y' and the SBC met and saw no justification for cancelling *The Man in the Glass Booth*. However, a private stage reading of the play was scheduled for February 16th, with only Jewish community leaders invited to attend.

CLEARLY, a confrontation was building. The 'Y' and SBC officials saw the reading as an opportunity to present the play as an educational tool, and they probably hoped that an actual staging of the production would lessen the mounting community opposition. If that was their hope, they were to be sorely disappointed.

On Wednesday the 16th, just a dozen days before opening night, about forty Montreal Jewish leaders were present at the Saidye Bronfman Center for the special reading. The select audience included

'Y' and Center officials as well as Survivors' Association officers. In attendance were also Manuel G. Batshaw, the Executive Director of the Allied Jewish Community Services, Murray B. Spiegel, the Chairman of the Eastern Region of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Rabbi Leonard Poller of the Jewish Board of Ministers and representatives from the Canadian Zionist Federation, Pioneer Women, Mizrachi, Young Herut, and the Jewish War Veterans.

Kosansky, the 'Y' Executive Director, believed that the "vast majority" of those present at the reading "saw nothing objectionable in the play," but Rabbi Poller felt the reading was inadequate, for the "full canvas was not presented . . . the reading was unfair to both the play and the producer." However, the Survivors' Association representatives were in Kosansky's words, "still adamant in their objections" to *The Man in the Glass Booth*. A day or so after the reading, the Association publicly denounced Shaw's play:

. . . its key message is to prove that only by accident of history, Hitler came to the Germans and led them willingly to murder millions of people. If by any other accident of history Hitler would have chosen the people of Israel, the Jews would also have followed him and committed the same crime on others. That is what the play is about.

On February 17th, the officers of the 'Y' met in special session to discuss whether or not to cancel the production. Many factors were considered, for if the play was performed at the SBC, the 'Y' would certainly be accused of rendering a great disservice to the survivors and the play's performance would contribute to a deep division within the Montreal Jewish community. There might be picket lines and demonstrations with possible physical violence. The 'Y' and its leaders would, of course, be severely and publicly criticized for bringing *The Man in the Glass Booth* to the Saidye Bronfman Center.

However, if the play were cancelled, it might be interpreted that Shaw's work was, indeed, anti-Semitic, something that

both 'Y' and Center officials denied. Kosansky and others strongly believed that a significant portion of the Jewish community wanted to see the production; a cancellation would be seen by that group as a capitulation to a "pressure group" and a form of artistic censorship.

The financial picture was also discussed as well as the long range impact of a cancellation, i.e. the availability of Government money for future productions, the engagement of actors and directors for other Center programs, and the obtaining of rights to other plays. After weighing all these considerations, the 'Y' officials decided to go ahead with *The Man in the Glass Booth* as scheduled.

Another Jewish meeting was held on February 17th in Montreal, when the Survivors' Association took their cancellation demands to the Canadian Jewish Congress. The following resolution was adopted with only one negative vote cast against it: "The Executive Committee of the Eastern Region of the Congress recommends to the 'Y' that the play *The Man in the Glass Booth* be cancelled." Other Jewish organizations supporting the Congress' position included Hadassah, the Canadian Zionist Federation, Mizrachi, and most important of all, the Allied Jewish Community Services. The AJCS is similar to a local American Jewish Federation, and its constituent members include a host of Montreal health, welfare, educational, and relief agencies, including the YM-YWHA.

THE 'Y' AND the SBC leadership now found itself increasingly isolated from most of the organized Jewish community. On February 20th an emergency meeting of the Board of Directors of the 'Y' was called. It was a long meeting, and in the end the Board decided that the "play will proceed." Kosansky issued a terse statement to the Montreal press: ". . . a play has been scheduled to be shown, and there is no change of plans." The Montreal Jewish community's reaction to the Board's action was almost immediate.

The Saidye Bronfman Center ticket office was flooded with many angry phone

calls cancelling reservations, and there was one bomb threat as well. Other people, however, felt "it was important" to see *The Man in the Glass Booth*, especially after all the publicity within the Jewish community and in the media. Indeed, the local National Council of Jewish Women reserved 20 seats for one of its study groups.

Hostile telegrams were sent to the 'Y' and the SBC. Most were signed by leaders of various Jewish groups including the national President of the Canadian Hadassah, the Chairman of Young Herut, the Executive Director of the Zionist Revisionists. There were also protest telegrams from the Jewish Defense League, the Montreal Bergen-Belsen Association, several Yeshivahs, and various Landsmanschaft groups. Many telegrams simply read: "Stop Shaw's dirty play."

The campaign to force cancellation of the play reached its climax with the public distribution of hand bills printed in Yiddish and English that had been prepared by the Survivors' Association. They urged the Montreal Jewish community to demand cancellation, and if *The Man in the Glass Booth* actually opened on February 28th, Jews were asked not to cross the picket line that the survivors would set up in front of the Saidye Bronfman Center. Not surprisingly, the Yiddish version of the hand bill contained much sharper language than the English text:

[the play] . . . is in sharp contrast to all Jewish ideals and sentiments including "Love your neighbor as yourself" . . . [the 'Y' leaders] ignore the voice of the people . . . your protest will be the best lesson for the stubborn leaders of the 'Y.'

As the wave of protest mounted, the Survivors' Association announced plans to march in their former prison uniforms on the play's opening night, and the very real threat of physical violence and possible property destruction was voiced.

The controversy took on international overtones when in mid February the *Canadian Jewish News* of Toronto printed the following item in its coverage of the rapidly unfolding *Man in the Glass Booth* story:

Jack Engels, President of the [Montreal] 'Y,' spoke with Gideon Hausner, who prosecuted Adolf Eichmann for Israel, in a telephone conversation on the week end. Hausner endorsed the play and said every Jew should see it.

But in a March 5th letter to Zablow, Hausner denied ever giving such an "endorsement":

. . . I said nothing of the kind . . . the play is a cartoonist's view of the Holocaust and the Eichmann Trial. . . . I did not like the play which I saw in London. . . . I never recommended it, on the contrary; I suggested . . . another play which I am prepared to recommend.

The Toronto paper's published report of Hausner's apparent endorsement of *The Man in the Glass Booth* exacerbated an already tense situation and it confused many members of the Montreal Jewish community.

ON THURSDAY, February 24th, the 'Y' Board met again in emergency session at which time it voted to cancel the production that was slated to open in four days. On the following day, Board president Jack Engels printed an announcement in both the *Montreal Star* and the *Montreal Gazette*:

We regret to announce the cancellation of the play *The Man in the Glass Booth*, which was originally scheduled to start a one-month run on Monday, February 28. The play, planned as part of the Saidye Bronfman Center's current program theme—the Nazi holocaust—has aroused deep and painful emotional reactions among many members of the community, particularly those pitiful few who survived that most terrible ordeal, but who still bear its scars. It was out of respect and compassion for the feelings of those survivors who live among us, as well as in response to the stated desire of the majority of the community to spare them further suffering, that the Board of Directors of the YM-YWHA & NHS voted to cancel the production. We are certain Montreal theater-goers, in spite of their disappointment, will concur with this decision.

Engels also issued a statement explaining his organization's decision:

. . . A mounting crescendo of protest . . . taken up by a majority of community organizations was forcefully presented . . . an atmosphere characterized by soul searching concerning artistic merit versus deep and painful human emotions. . . . The Board regretfully decided to cancel the play.

Although the Survivor's Association immediately expressed its "deep gratitude" for the Board's decision, the controversy entered a new and even more painful phase: the use of the general public as a Court of Final Appeal.

Two of those most concerned with *The Man in the Glass Booth*, Robert Shaw and Marion Andre, made their views known soon after the play's cancellation. The *Star* printed excerpts from an earlier interview with Shaw. The English playwright and actor said:

Certain Jews claim the play is pro-German, anti-Semitic, well they are stupid Jews . . . only the stupid Jews get so emotional about the German thing in it. Intelligent Jews are terribly moved by the play. . . . I am the most pro-Jewish writer alive, because I have said through Goldman, "Listen you are such a great people, that it is up to you to set a good example, and I am prepared to upset you if necessary. . . ." I am moved by the irony of observing the way the Israelis behaved with Eichmann and the way the Jewish community in Johannesburg collaborates in apartheid. . . . Were not the survivors sometimes the worst?

Andre, the play's director, issued a lengthy personal statement following the cancellation. He cited "bomb threats," "pressure groups," "obscene phone calls," and the threat of "real violence" as contributing to the "furor" over the production. He admitted the play "is not a 'masterpiece,'" but it does point out the "feelings of guilt which a survivor harbors for staying alive . . . it implies that the Holocaust came about as the result of perversity of human nature and . . . the dedicated complicity of the vast majority of the Germans." The director felt that attacks against the play were "deceitful," a form of "demagoguery and intimidation." Shaw's central message is that people "must continually be on guard

against their own weaknesses which make them follow where tyrants want them to go. This warning has been deliberately travestied to make it sound insulting and anti-Semitic." Andre called the cancellation "an outrage . . . an act of coercion . . . the curtailment of freedom . . . one cannot block it at home and demand that it be restored elsewhere."

THE DRAMA CRITICS of the *Gazette* and the *Star* reached differing conclusions concerning the cancellation. The *Gazette's* Dave Ellington conceded that the entire affair might be a "private matter" for the Jewish community to resolve, but he regretted the closing:

Many other Montrealers, French, English, et al would have attended the play, and perhaps been given an even greater understanding of just what it was to have been a survivor of the camps. Now they will not have that chance, and in this context we all lose.

But Michael Ballantyne of the *Star* wrote:

There can be no jokes about Buchenwald, no musical comedies about Auschwitz, and one has to admit no subtle artistic games with the Eichmann Trial.

He was prepared to suspend "natural liberal attitudes" and "ideals of free speech" in the face of the survivors' "unimaginable pain." The "only human response" was to accept the cancellation of *The Man in the Glass Booth*.

The 'Y' *Beacon*, an official publication of the Montreal YM-YWHA defended the original choice of the play, calling it "an appropriate statement written on the Holocaust," but in a "situation unique in the Jewish community, the members of the 'Y' Board vetoed their cherished beliefs to obey the rabbinic dictum, 'All Israel is responsible for one another's welfare.'" Monte Berger, the President of the AJCS, wrote in a newsletter:

The Board . . . deserves high commendation and appreciation . . . for their very significant decision to cancel the play. . . . The action was taken by the 'Y' in the interests of a unified Jewish community

and respect for the deep feelings of some people who experienced the Holocaust.

Samuel Levin, the Executive Director of the Eastern Region of the Canadian Jewish Congress stated:

After full consideration, the YM-YWHA decided to cancel the play . . . the decision was arrived at after a full and unfettered venting of views on the part of all parties concerned and after democratic vote within the various component elements of the community.

A Jewish editor of a suburban paper wrote that "one must respect the feelings of the wounded . . . artistic freedom comes second . . . however, this strangely moving play . . . should have been given wide spread viewing by students and young people as part of their education as Jews . . . it is unfortunate the leadership reacted unwisely and unfairly to pressure from others."

IN THE MONTH following the play's cancellation, the *Star* and the *Gazette* were filled with comments and letters, both pro and con. These letters indicate the deep emotional response that the affair triggered among both Jews and Christians. A random sampling captures the intense division that *The Man in the Glass Booth* created in Montreal.

Morton Weinfeld, the National Director of the Canadian Student Zionist Organization wrote:

I believe that the survivors are heroes. Jewish heroes, in an almost mystical sense of the term. My response to the Holocaust, as one who did not experience it, begins with a deference and a silent respect for the wishes, and the feelings of those who survived. I do not think, therefore, that the Jewish community, or one of its organs, should take upon itself an action which would cause anger and anguish to some of the survivors. . . . I accept this 'curtailment' of my freedom. . . . I regret the cancellation of the play, but will live without it.

Michael Solomon, a Jewish refugee from Europe, touched upon another theme, which made reference to a production that the Saidye Bronfman Center had

earlier presented: *The Dutchman* by Leroi Jones. Both the play and its author had drawn sharp criticism from members of the Montreal Jewish community for its anti-white and anti-Semitic message:

The issue has something to do with the longstanding policy of the Saidye Bronfman Center to produce a special kind of play. I have watched many people leaving in the middle of a performance wondering whether the venomous, anti-Semitic diatribes launched against 'Jewish leeches and Jewish slum lords' in Leroi Jones' obscene play *The Dutchman*, were uttered on the stage of a Jewish endowed cultural institution or coming from a revolutionary barn of a Greenwich Village theater.

One member of the Jewish community commented:

What a weird commentary on human feeling and memory. In a Jewish institution . . . victim and murderer are smeared with the same brush. And when some raise an outcry to stop this desecration they are accused in the name of 'liberalism,' 'free speech,' 'art.' What an abuse of language. . . .

Two members of McGill University's Jewish Studies program wondered:

Is it possible to equate the feelings of guilt of victims who were forced to witness the extermination of their closest kin with the guilt of the perpetrators of this crime by trying them in the same dock, in the very same 'glass booth'?

Some people were upset that the 'Y' had chosen to produce the play at all:

. . . There is no doubt that the play is anti-Semitic, and as such has no place to appear on the stage of a Jewish cultural center . . . the decision of the YMHA to take it off was the right one, but I was sorry to read that the governing body made the decision 'regretfully.' It is sad that what prompted them to do it was pressure by the Jewish leadership and other groups, and not their re-evaluation of the play itself and their understanding of the Holocaust.

Eight faculty members of McGill's English Department, on the other hand, denounced the cancellation of the play:

The cancellation, thus, helps the unhindered rise of the racist and chauvinistic Brown Plague again, in some updated form. This prohibition is, therefore, not only an attack on the liberty of speech and theater in the abstract, but an example of those very delusions the play wishes to expose and cure: a classical Freudian repression. And repressions fester....

It was not only University English professors who decried the cancellation of *The Man in the Glass Booth*, but some members of the Jewish community as well: One of the leaders of the Saidye Bronfman Center wrote:

... the play deserved to be shown ... the charges levelled against it were misguided, and that to halt it would be to deny the community one of the more important and unforgettable pieces of theater in the city.

Others stated in letters to the *Star*:

The directors of the SBC made the decision after pressure from a group of people who disagreed with some of the statements in the play. This is not only censorship, but social cowardice too. ...

I am ashamed that Jewish community leaders gave in to the pressure of a very small minority to stop the staging of the play ... they had no right to impose their will on the whole population of Montreal. They managed to find fault in the play which was staged in many countries, even in Israel where the greatest number of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust are living today....

I didn't know that there exists in Montreal an NKVD which decides what we poor souls are allowed to see. ...

Do Holocaust survivors have a unique sensitivity to that monstrous event that renders only them able to write about it? This question and others were discussed in several letters:

... Robert Shaw was neither a victim nor a Nazi victimizer; he is, nevertheless, a reputable and sensitive writer ... how can one say that only those who are personally involved may write about a subject? ... Should artists as well as historians be so restricted ... an honest writer has been suppressed. ...

A non-Jewish woman who had seen

The Man in the Glass Booth in New York, dismissed the play as "weak and unbalanced ... unimportant and not worth a fuss." But she ended her letter to the editor with an ominous and familiar threat:

... it just isn't worth the strain to think that anyone could possibly compare the results of the Jewish 'chosen people' concept with the results of the Nazi 'master race' concept. Unless—and perhaps this is the warning that Robert Shaw had in mind—unless Israel forgets and begins persecuting non-Jews, by not allowing them to marry, be buried, and maybe even to live in the land of the 'chosen people.'

It is interesting to note that the American Film Theater, headed by Ely Landau, has announced that it will soon release a production of *The Man in the Glass Booth* for showings in specially selected theaters around the country. One wonders whether the proposed film will spark the same controversy within the American Jewish community as the stage version did in Montreal.

THE LEADERSHIP of the Saidye Bronfman Center was badly shaken by the play's cancellation and its aftermath. One observer noted that all the participants were a "little less sure of themselves or of their previous attitudes." The future role of the SBC was clearly at issue, especially after Marion Andre resigned to accept another position in Toronto. Could the Center "try to serve the world of public self-expression—which is art—at the same time it serves a particular community not without constant conflicts of interest?"

Since the *Glass Booth* conflict, the Bronfman Center has shifted its stance under its new director, Nahum Ravel. An amateur Yiddish drama group presented a musical based on Theodor Herzl's writings, and last summer the Center featured a light comedy presentation. It is most unlikely that either would have even been considered under Andre's administration.

But the original choice of the play and its subsequent cancellation raise important questions for Jewish communities everywhere, not merely for Montreal. Clearly,

the Holocaust is among the most powerful influences in Jewish life today. Unlike the birth of Israel, with which the Holocaust is symbiotically linked, the destruction of European Jewry remains, for many reasons, a difficult, if not impossible, theme for Jews to deal with in any adequate or systematic way. When one combines this unresolved, and probably unresolvable, emotional dilemma with an ambiguous and unsatisfying dramatic treatment of the theme, and then adds to the mixture an articulate and organized survivors' group, one has all the ingredients necessary for a major explosion.

Moreover, the 'Y' and especially the Saidye Bronfman Center were seen by many members of the Montreal Jewish community as an example of Jewish universalism gone wild. The Center's plays were criticized (even an Ibsen production) not for their technical qualities which were high, but for their failure to deal constructively and authentically with genuine Jewish concerns and needs.

As the Survivors' Association members built a broad coalition of support for their demands, the 'Y' felt it "could not withstand the alienation of being alone." Its Executive Director publicly wondered if the community responded "out of compassion or out of a feeling of guilt." Great concern was also voiced about maintaining the "unity of the Jewish community," and yet the confrontation was played out in full public view and in the Montreal media as well. There was no orderly procedure developed to defuse and depolarize the tense situation. Instead, the Montreal Jewish community was treated to the unpleasant spectacle of one emergency meeting after another, heightened rhetoric, and escalating demands mixed with threats of physical violence, some self-righteous posturing in the name of "artistic freedom," a major reversal of policy, and finally, a fierce exchange of views in the Montreal press. Surely, there must be a way to resolve such conflicts in an orderly fashion without the savage overtones and destructive undertones that were so prevalent in Montreal.

CAN EXISTING Jewish community institutions successfully resolve explosive issues without allowing them to become ugly confrontations? On March 7th, barely a week after the play's cancellation, seventeen executive directors of the various Montreal Jewish agencies met to discuss that question. After an intensive debate, the group decided to engage a social psychologist to meet with key professional and lay Jewish leadership in order to sort out precisely what and why things happened, and to prevent a recurrence in Montreal. However, no such social psychologist was ever hired, and the matter was allowed to rest and to fester, unexamined and unanalyzed.

The executive directors also noted how quickly the Survivors' Association was able to muster broad community support for its position, working outside the formal process of decision making. The directors agreed it would have been well had their group acted as a "community cabinet" during the crisis. This they failed to do with regrettable and perhaps predictable consequences.

Yet, an active member of the Montreal Jewish community, attorney Gary Moscovitz, did see some positive gain from those consequences:

... The whole issue surrounding its *choice* as well as its *cancellation* has now been born as a viable entity apart from the play itself. Even without its presentation, comment and discussion have been given wings which hopefully will produce a recognition and acceptance that Judaism insists on a priority of commitment, not only to the well-being, but also to the sensibilities of other Jews.

The "comment and discussion" was still intense when I interviewed some of the central personalities a year and a half after *The Man in the Glass Booth* had been cancelled. Abba Beer of the Survivors' Association said: "I'm sorry it had to be us who did it, but I would have done anything to prevent that play from opening." Alan Rose, the Associate Director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, told me that *The Man in the Glass Booth* controversy was "the Dreyfus Trial for the

Montreal Jewish community, dividing families and friends. People chose sides whether the play should or should not be cancelled. *The Man in the Glass Booth* was chosen for its excitement. People are still not talking to each other."

The 'Y's Kosansky was concerned that "the Montreal Jewish community has learned little or nothing from the episode. Some organizations used the play as an excuse to exercise power. Lots of young people wanted the play, but the 'Y' couldn't be ostracized and there was a conscious fear of physical violence." However, Batshaw of the AJCS saw the matter in different terms from either Rose or Kosansky: "The organized Jewish community had a full and fair hearing of the issue and it was satisfactorily resolved." Batshaw's organization absorbed the \$20,000 loss that resulted from the play's cancellation.

I AM convinced that the original choice of *The Man in the Glass Booth* was the first of many errors that were made in Montreal. Shaw's play is an inappropriate and an inadequate vehicle to raise critical questions about guilt, culpability, and justice. As Michael Ballantyne of the *Montreal Star* wrote:

[Holocaust] survivors do not want equivocation, they want righteousness. They do not want ambiguity, they want certainty. They want condemnation and retribution, and the play does not provide that kind of resolution, nor is there any reason why it should. . . .

Although the play was chosen for production in August 1971, it was not until early February 1972, after rehearsals had commenced, that the Survivors' Association became concerned about *The Man in the Glass Booth* and its message. An association devoted to protecting its members from "insults," "parody," and "mockery" has the obligation to anticipate possible problems and crises. The script of the play as well as reviews of the London, New York, and Tel Aviv productions were readily available in the six months between the announcement of the production and opening night. The Survivors' Associ-

ation failed to use that time in a positive or constructive way.

If the survivors had protested against Shaw's play earlier in the proceedings, the 'Y' and the Bronfman Center would have been alerted to the potential confrontation. They may have cancelled the production before an intensive ticket campaign began, and before a large financial commitment was made. It can, of course, be argued that the 'Y' would never have cancelled *The Man in the Glass Booth* without the immediate pressure that was mounted just prior to the scheduled opening. No one will ever know because the Survivors' Association did not attempt any other strategy.

As for the 'Y' and the SBC leadership, they found themselves caught in the perennial tension between "universalism and particularism." Some members of the Montreal Jewish community believed that the two institutions had moved too far away from Jewish roots and Jewish commitment, while others felt the Center especially should be the cutting edge of universal values, art, and culture. 'Y' leaders became trapped in that dialectic, finally yielding to Jewish particularism. The YM-YWHA was in direct conflict with other Jewish community groups. The 'Y,' which serves and affects so many people, cannot afford many such confrontations without undermining its own effectiveness and credibility.

Although the AJCS and some CJC officials believed the Montreal Jewish community behaved in a "democratic" way in resolving the crisis, the evidence points to a different conclusion. The Survivors' Association legitimately sought organizational support in its campaign to cancel the play, but intimidation, threats, abuse, and the naked use of power were also used to prevent *The Man in the Glass Booth* from opening. A better and more civilized way is desperately needed.

The Saidye Bronfman Center playbill that was printed for opening night was, of course, never used, and today it is one of the curiosity pieces of the entire affair. In it are the "Director's Notes" in the

form of a poem signed by "Marion Andre Czerniecki." The last verse reads:

Born far away, son of
Jewish people who are
dead, survivor of the
Holocaust, I am adrift
on the volcanic sea of
my memories, enclosed
in the echo chamber of
my pain.

In a larger sense, the experience of the Montreal Jewish community brought out the residual "echo chamber of pain" in both those who were touched by the raging fires of the Holocaust's experience and those who weren't.

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FORTHCOMING:

The January MIDSTREAM will contain comprehensive, analytical coverage of the UN Palestine debate, by Murray Gordon, author of "Indian-Israeli Relations: Perspective and Promise," which appeared in our November issue.
