

"The 'Bystanders' Perspective': The *Toronto Daily Star* and Its Coverage of the Persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust in Canada, 1933-1945"

Ulrich Frisse studies how the *Toronto Daily Star*, Canada's leading newspaper, reported on the Jewish persecution between 1933 and 1945.

This factsheet maps Frisse's central argument:

"In relation to Canada's role as a passive bystander to the Holocaust, the Canadian government's unwillingness to come to the aid of the Jews of Europe is not a reflection of lack of knowledge. The decision not to take action was not made because of lack of information, but in spite of information that as early as 1942 pointed towards the existence of a comprehensive plan to destroy the Jews of Europe – the Final Solution"

- Ulrich Frisse

The *Toronto Daily Star*

First Canadian newspaper to be banned by the Hitler government in 1933

"The *Daily Star's* commitment to human rights and freedoms is reflected in the paper's extensive coverage of the persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust during the years between 1933 and 1945, resulting in the *Toronto Daily Star* being the first Canadian paper to be banned by the Hitler government in 1933"

The *Toronto Daily Star* published coverage of the persecution of the Jews during the early stage of the Nazi dictatorship.

Pierre van Paassen created awareness of the persecution of the Jews among the *Star's* daily readership as early as February 1933

In his 1939 autobiography, van Paassen states the arrest and temporary internment in the Dachau concentration camp was the result of him helping a German journalist to Switzerland by lending him his passport

Joseph E. Atkinson

Toronto Daily Star editor and publisher from 1899 to 1948:

"Whose guiding influence on the paper resulted in the 'Atkinson principles,' felt committed to promoting social reform and social justice in both his personal life and the publishing of his paper"

Pierre van Paassen

Toronto Daily Star overseas correspondent in Berlin and one of the most passionate Canadian journalists of the period.

"Based on his pious upbringing, his personal belief in the Bible as a 'social gospel' and his awareness of Jewish suffering from an early age on, the Nazi persecution of the Jews was more than just a news topic for van Paassen in his capacity as the *Star's* correspondent in Berlin in 1933. It was an opportunity to live out his strong beliefs through his work as a journalists"

Due to van Paassen's passion for the Jewish cause and his outstanding critical attitude towards the Nazi regime he was arrested in 1933 by Nazi authorities, interrogated, temporarily interned, and expelled from Germany

The Deutscher Bund Canada
A membership based pro-Nazi group based in Ontario.
"In their various attempts to counteract critical descriptions of the new Germany in the Canadian media, Deutsche Bund activists, while writing under Anglophone pseudonyms, sought to discredit anti-Nazi newspaper articles by exposing the authors' alleged Jewish background"



1935

"I could go on *ad infinitum*, but I do not want to be thought of as making the great German people ridiculous. I leave that to the Fuehrer and his assistants"

- Conclusion to coverage on the main provisions of the Nuremberg Laws in the fall of 1935

- 1933 to 1939 -

The *Star* reported, with detail, the gradual segregation and alienation of the German Jewish community.

Reports included:

- The banning medical textbooks written by Jewish authors
- Boycotts of Jewish businesses
- Anti-Jewish riots and violent group out bursts local by-laws and administrative decrees banning Jews from renting or owning land
- Banned from attending municipal baths and sports events in particular communities
- Attacks against Germans in mixed Jewish and non-Jewish relationships

A number of articles discussed local antisemitic activities, the meaning of antisemitism for Canada, and its relationship with the persecution of the Jews in Germany and Europe

1941

- Summer & Fall -

"The *Toronto Star* paid no attention to the exterminations activities of the notorious Einsatzgruppen and other murder units that were operating behind the lines of the advancing Wehrmacht"

1943

"any factual basis for doubt was removed with the detailed information on the systematic character of the killings"

- September -

"Practically all Jews within reach of the Nazis are either dying or in danger of death"

Often inconsistent in the scope of its coverage, the *Star's* increasing reliance on Soviet sources made available more detailed information on the suffering of civilian populations - including the Jews - under German occupation during the years 1941 to 1943

- November -

Finally described the September 1941 German mass murder of more than 30,000 Jews of Kiev in the Babi Yar ravine

1945

- 12 April -

The *Star* attempts a numerical breakdown for the Holocaust by listing the assumed Jewish casualty numbers

1933

- April -

The publisher of the *Star* issues a public statement attesting to the truthfulness of van Paassen's writing about Nazi Germany amidst speculation of false reports

- 24 April -

Headline reads "Pierre Van Paassen Is Not A Jew"

His support for the Jewish community prompted belief he was Jewish.

The newspaper responded by publishing two images; one of Adolf Hitler and one of van Paassen with an edited moustache, mimicking Hitler, dryly addressing van Paassen's ethnicity.

- 25 March -

"Scribe Accused Of Spying, Brutally Beaten By The Nazis"

van Paassen reported that he had been arrested in a Munich beer hall while listening to a radio speech given by Herman Göring on the Nazi attacks on German Jews and their businesses.

- March -

"Toronto declared hostile toward Jews"

"With an estimated 45,500 Jews living in Toronto during the early 1930s, Toronto's Jewish community became the focal point of antisemitic activity, resulting in various attempts at social exclusion of Jews from Canadian life"

- 24 April -

The *Star* quoted speeches from **Samuel Factor**, the Jewish Member of Parliament for Toronto, and **E.F. Singer**, Toronto's Jewish member of the Provincial Parliament, on the exclusion of Jews from the boards of banks and corporations in Ontario

- 4 July -

van Paassen reports an incident in Enschede, Holland regarding clerics refusing to temporarily house Jewish refugees in their churches.

A reader responded with two letters from the supposed mayor and chief of police in Enschede.

The letters claimed van Paassen had made up the entire story.

- 1933 Summer -

"Swastika Club" in Toronto's beach district. Members exhibited swastika badges and prevented Jews from accessing the beaches.

- 16 August -

Christie Pits Riots

Resulting from the unveiling of a huge swastika flag and outcries of "Heil Hitler" at a baseball game.

The *Star's* coverage of these riots was so extensive that it pushed developments in Germany aside, as local developments were of more immediate concern than events overseas to the paper's readership

1938

- November -

Kristallnacht

"After extensive and highly detailed front-page coverage of the pogrom, the focus quickly shifted to the fallout, both domestically and diplomatically"

- Fall -

Antisemitism in Canada, Britain, and the United States were explored more deeply in the *Star*, and events in Nazi Germany and forms of latent antisemitism in North American society were discussed in relation to each other

"Polish exile government in London, which through its close links to the Polish underground as well as to the British government, played a major role in providing details on the brutalities of the German occupation of Poland to the Allied governments and the Western media"

1942

- Spring -

At the beginning of the implementation of the Final Solution the *Star* provided its readers with its first references to the genocide

- 1 April -

The *Star* used the beginning of the Passover festival to discuss the current suffering of the Jews in Europe

References to elements of the Holocaust including:

- Jewish enslavement
- Deportation of Jews from Germany, the Netherlands, and Slovakia
- The ghettoization of millions of Jews in Poland
- Mass murder
- Protection by the Dutch resistance

- 20 June -

After the extermination of the 60,000 Jews of Vilna by German-controlled Lithuanian police forces, the *Star* reports on the All-Lithuanian Congress in Montreal

- 24 Dec -

Detailed reports on the systematic murder on a mass scale
Explicit references to the murder methods of the Nazis

1944

Soviet Red Army advanced, more eye-witness accounts were made available to the readers. Extensive coverage of the conditions in the Majdanek camp near Lublin following its liberation by the Soviets in August 1944