

Hermann Landau's Canadian Dream

ARTHUR A. CHIEL

Résumé

SYNTHÈSE FAITE PAR C. DADOUN

Hermann Landau qui avait émigré de Pologne en Angleterre en 1864, s'était établi comme agent de change à la force des poignets, grâce à ses efforts et son intelligence.

Il passa les plus belles années de sa vie à soulager la condition de ceux qu'ils considéraient comme ses frères et soeurs.

Hermann Landau est né à Constantinov (Pologne Russe) en mars 1844. Après avoir étudié au gymnasium de Kalish, il alla à Breslau où il étudia sous la direction du Rabbin Salomon M. Tiktin, son cousin.

A vingt ans, Hermann Landau quitta pour l'Angleterre où il enseigna l'hébreu à Douvres en 1864. Deux ans plus tard, il s'établissait à Brighton dans une étude d'avocats. Cependant, il abandonna le droit ne jouissant d'aucune aide lui permettant de percer dans ce milieu.

Il ne resta que cinq ans à Brighton, et pourtant il n'en fit pas moins un travail impressionnant pour la communauté se faisant le champion des droits et intérêts du Juif venu de l'étranger. Cependant, le temps n'était pas encore venu pour lui de mettre à exécution un rêve qu'il caressait depuis longtemps: lancer un vaste effort de colonisation vers le Canada grâce à ces milliers de Juifs d'Europe Centrale qui avaient été contraints à un exode forcé et continu depuis 1882.

Hermann Landau savait que l'objet de son rêve, le Canada, n'était pas une utopie.

Il prit comme point de comparaison le climat qui est semblable à celui que les Juifs russes et autres émigrants avaient pu connaître. D'autre part, et ce sont là ses propres paroles: "la tolérance religieuse était devenue religion d'état" (. . .). De plus, en tant qu'agent de change, il avait suivi le potentiel de développement du Canada.

Dans la conférence qu'il présenta en 1906 devant la St. John's Wood Literary Society, Hermann Landau souligna les efforts que personnellement il avait accomplis pour stimuler l'émigration vers le Canada.

Les ressources canadiennes étaient et risquaient de devenir de plus en plus importantes. Hermann Landau rencontra en 1887 le Baron de Hirsch mais ensemble ils ne purent pour des raisons indépendantes de la volonté du Baron de Hirsch donner suite au projet de développement que poursuivait Landau.

En 1897, lorsque le Premier Ministre du Canada — Sir Wilfrid Laurier — se rendit à Londres, H. Landau eut l'occasion de lui faire part de la colonisation juive au Canada. Le Premier Ministre répondit de façon favorable et ouverte et ajouta qu'il serait donné aux Juifs une occasion de préserver leur mode de vie religieux. Landau sollicita les dirigeants Juifs d'Angleterre sans résultat.

Il en donne l'explication suivante:

“(. . .) les dirigeants anglo-Juifs en vinrent à la conclusion qu'il serait, tout bien considéré, futile d'encourager des Juifs à se lancer en agriculture où que ce soit.”

Mais Landau conserva son optimisme à propos du potentiel qu'offrait le Canada tant au plan de l'industrie de la coupe du bois qu'au plan de l'exportation de la pâte à papier.

Il ne fut cependant pas suivi dans son projet, il prêchait dans le désert.

Hermann Landau décéda en septembre de l'année 1921.

Il ne s'était pas seulement arrêté à plaider la cause canadienne. Pendant plus de cinq décennies, il lutta pour que, par le biais de son assistance, des institutions anglo-juives s'établissent et améliorent le statut des immigrants.

Il contribua à lutter pour la justice en faveur du pauvre et du nécessiteux. Le nom d'Hermann Landau reluira comme une étoile inextinguible dans la mémoire du Judaïsme Anglo-Juif.

Par son combat personnel, il se mérite une place dans les annales du Judaïsme Canadien.

Almost until World War II, the Anglo-Jewish community was directed by a group of inter-related Jewish families. Chaim Bermant, a contemporary writer, has, in his book of that name, felicitously described them as “The Cousinhood.” These distinguished folk included such families as Rothschild, Montefiore, Mocatta, Goldsmid, Cohen, Franklin, Samuel, Lucas and Emanuel. It was this group which dominated the central Anglo-Jewish institutions, among them the Jewish Board of Guardians, the United Synagogue and the *Jewish Chronicle*.

The early 1870's saw the beginnings of a small stream of East European Jews. These poor foreign co-religionists", as the Cousinhood described them, settled in the East End of London. The Board of Guardians' Annual Report for 1872 stated that "the poor Jews in England are now almost exclusively recruited from Poland."¹ There was very little aid or advice offered these immigrants by the Anglo-Jewish community. The leadership feared that if they appeared too hospitable a mass immigration might develop. Thus the major charity institutions left immigrants to their own devices, and the newcomers had to resort to mutual aid. But this aloof policy was challenged by a man who was close in spirit and descent to the East European immigrants. The man was Hermann Landau, who himself had migrated from Poland to England in 1864, and had, by dint of his own effort and intelligence, established himself as a successful stockbroker. To him the steady Jewish newcomers to England were not "foreign co-religionists." He considered them as brothers and sisters and devoted the better part of his lifetime to the amelioration of their condition. Landau had a larger plan in mind, too; the establishment of Jews in large numbers as Canadian farm colonists.

Hermann Landau was born in Constantinov, Russian-Poland, in March 1844. As a youth, he was sent by his father, David Landau, to be educated in the progressive gymnasium at Kalisch. Subsequently, he went to Breslau to study under his cousin, Rabbi Solomon M. Tiktin, a leader of German orthodoxy and a bitter opponent of Abraham Geiger, the renowned Jewish religious reformer.

At the age of twenty, Landau came to England where, in 1864, he took up residence in Dover and became a teacher of Hebrew. He had not been in Dover very long when Sir Moses Montefiore returned from his mission to Roumania. On Montefiore's landing at Dover, the local Jewish congregation decided to present the great philanthropist with an address of welcome. Landau was requested to draw up a Hebrew address and present it to the honoree.

In 1866, Landau left Dover to settle in Brighton and to take up the study of law. He worked hard at his legal studies, but, concluding that in order to succeed at the Bar one needed influential friends, of which he had none at that time, he decided to abandon the profession.

While in Brighton, Landau involved himself in synagogue affairs, at the same time championing the rights of the foreign-born Jew. This was to mark the beginning of his life's interest. The foreign-born Jew in England, Landau asserted, "was at the least the social and intellectual equal of the

native English Jew, and that in any case the differentiation of Jews by Jews on account of the accident of birth was an absurd anomaly.”³

At the time of Landau’s arrival on the Brighton Jewish scene, no foreign-born Jew was allowed to “come to the table”; he was completely unwelcome in the management of communal affairs. The community was literally ruled by several English Jews. Landau boldly challenged their autocratic methods. He and his fellow members of foreign background refused to pay their synagogue obligations imposed by the authorities; they were not submitting any longer to taxation without representation. This shocked the vested leadership into the realization that Landau and company meant business. In a very short time the foreign-born were given equal franchise with the English-born congregants.

Now part of the governing body, Landau exposed and put an end to yet another abuse. The Reader-*Shochet* in those days was an underpaid religious functionary whose salary was completely dependent on the free-will offerings made at the Torah-reading. Landau protested vehemently against this *schnorrerei* method and secured its abolition. Henceforth, the Brighton functionary was assured a steady salary. The five years which Landau spent in Brighton were excellent training for his communal endeavors in the large setting of London, where he settled in 1871.

He soon entered the London Stock Exchange where he demonstrated remarkable business acumen. He was a quick success and in a short period of time became a wealthy man. His ability for bold speculation paid off handsomely. Landau found his true *metier* in the Stock Exchange. In the course of his successful career, he became very much interested in foreign developmental projects including those in Australia, South Africa and Canada.

Heavily involved as Landau was in financial enterprises, he devoted not only his wealth, but also his energy to various communal institutions with which he was associated. Landau remained staunchly supportive of those projects calculated to benefit his foreign-born brethren. As the *Jewish Chronicle* summarized it in Landau’s obituary: “To give a full account of his activities in the East End of London would be tantamount to writing a history of one foreign-born Jew in this country during the past thirty or forty years.”⁴

But aside from his indefatigable preoccupation with the many Anglo-Jewish institutions devoted to the social and economic improvement of the immigrants who remained in England, Hermann Landau had a larger plan in mind for the thousands of East European Jews who began their en-

forced exodus in 1882 and continuously thereafter. Landau dreamed of a broad colonization effort in Canada. To Landau, Canada seemed an ideal land for re-settlement. In a lecture which he delivered before the St. John's Wood Literary Society in January, 1906, titled "Canada and the Jews", Landau reported:

I had for many years, in fact since 1882, strongly advocated the concentration of all Russo-Jewish refugees and other emigrants on Canada, where the climate was similar to the one they were born under, and where religious tolerance had become the religion of the country, if I might so term it. There was no sect that had not found the same equal rights under the broad and hospitable constitution of the Dominion of Canada.⁵

Hermann Landau's advocacy of a Canadian haven for large numbers of immigrants was not a naive, utopic plan woven of gossamer. As a stockbroker-investor he had studied the Canadian developmental potential:

With the opening of Canada by means of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the natural resources of the Dominion have begun to be developed. I said *began* advisedly, for the total wheat lands now were only 5,000,000 acres. The Grand Trunk Pacific, which was now in the course of construction, would in a few years lay open no less than 300,000,000 acres of land which would grow wheat for probably twenty or thirty years in succession without artificial aid.⁶

Nor would wheat be the only marketable commodity, Landau optimistically opined, but there were also at hand the extraordinary rich mineral deposits which would be tapped. Canada would yet become a very formidable rival in the wealth of its resources even to the United States!

In his 1906 lecture to the St. John's Wood Literary Society, Landau revealed the efforts which he personally, had made to encourage Jewish immigration to Canada.

In 1887, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, whose interest in agricultural colonization was widely known, lost his only son. Landau traveled to Paris to pay the Baron and his wife a visit of condolence. On this occasion, Landau told the grieving de Hirsch couple:

that they could adopt all Israel as their children by founding colonies in Canada, and so rescue a great number of Jews from the hardships, persecution, and ill-treatment they underwent at the hands of the autocratic Government of Russia.⁷

Not long after their Paris conversation, Landau received a letter from the Baron de Hirsch asking him to recommend a reliable Jewish organization which might implement Landau's Canada enterprise. Landau replied and proposed the Anglo-Jewish Association. But before Landau could further carry forward his efforts in this direction, Murietta and Company, a banking firm in which de Hirsch held a considerable financial interest,

suffered bankruptcy, leaving the Baron with heavy holdings in Argentine lands.⁸ For the time being de Hirsch was now tied to Argentine colonization of Jews.

When Landau met with Baron de Hirsch, he had presented what he, Landau, considered a successful case-history of Jewish farm success in Canada. With pride, Landau related:

I had some experience of founding a small colony in 1885 at a place called Wapella, 278 miles west of Winnipeg. After the May Laws were enacted in 1882 a very large number of Russian Jews migrated to England, the United States and other places. The then Russo-Jewish Committee selected at the Shelter (Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter of London) twelve young men with a view to having them put upon farms at Aylesbury where, after a year, they became excellent farm hands.⁹

From among this Aylesbury group, Hermann Landau selected John Heppner to be the leader, and eight men and three women, by now familiar with farming and somewhat conversant in English, set sail for Canada on September 2, 1886. In his St. John's Wood lecture of 1906, Landau could proudly report that: "the colonists (at Wapella) were not only doing well, but were becoming prosperous men."¹⁰

Landau persisted in his advocacy of a large Canadian Jewish settlement. In 1897, when Sir Wilfred Laurier came to London to participate in Queen Victoria's Jubilee Celebration, Landau met with Laurier to discuss with him the matter of Jewish colonization in Canada. To Landau's satisfaction, the Canadian Prime Minister was wholly sympathetic to Landau's plan. Laurier assured Landau of land availability for Jewish immigrants. Moreover, fullest opportunity would be given them to preserve their religious way of life. Asserted Laurier:

If you will take this question up seriously and select any part of Manitoba which has less than 100,000 inhabitants, the Dominion will grant the Jews such a measure of self-government as will enable them to make their own by-laws substituting Saturday for Sunday.¹¹

Landau proceeded to share Laurier's very positive reaction with Anglo-Jewish leaders but to no avail. Landau offered an explanation for this lack of success:

Unfortunately, the Jewish Colonization Association had not at that time had that measure of success in the Argentine which it has since attained, and they came to the conclusion that it would be altogether futile to encourage Jews to engage in agriculture anywhere.¹²

But Landau was more optimistic than ever about the Canadian potential at the occasion of his 1906 lecture. Apart from agriculture in which Jewish settlers could engage, he foresaw a variety of trades and modes of employment in a burgeoning Canada, above all in the lumber trade which was

already then at a high point.

Not only did they (Canada) export the largest quantity of cut timber, but the great bulk of pulp for paper-making was also sent out from Canada.¹³

Landau testified to the "sobriety and steadiness" of the many Jewish immigrants with whom he had contact during their stay in the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter of London. Hardly had the men been helped with their passage to Canada when they would send ship-tickets and funds to their wives and children to join them in Canada. Landau concluded his St. John's Wood presentation by quoting the editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, J. E. Ruddock, who had said:

I think your people are making a very great mistake in sending any Jews to the Argentine. The great place for the Jews is in Canada. If you want to do your people a good service leave off sending them to the Argentine, and send them to the far west, where there is every advantage they possibly can have. There are limitless possibilities of development.¹⁴

Landau was obviously pleased with the far-sighted editor's evaluation; it coincided completely with his own. Alas, Landau's was a voice in the wilderness and a great opportunity was forfeited.

Hermann Landau, who died in September, 1921, did not limit his service to Jewry to his Canadian advocacy alone. Over five decades he helped to establish a variety of Anglo-Jewish institutions for the amelioration of the immigrants' lives, including the Provident Torah Trust, the Etz Chaim Yeshiva, the Jewish Soup Kitchen and the Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home. In the conclusion of its lengthy Landau obituary, the *London Jewish Chronicle* wrote:

Among the galaxy of great well-doers, this *rachmonus* - pervaded Polish Jew, fired with a passion for justice and fair play to the poor and the helpless will ever appear to shine in the grateful memory of Anglo-Jewry as a particularly bright star.¹⁵

Hermann Landau is deserving of honored remembrance in Canadian Jewish annals.

FOOTNOTES

1. V. D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950*, (London: Watts & Company), p.66.
2. Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914*, (London: Simon Publications, 1973), pp. 50-51.
3. *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 2, 1921, p. 19.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 19, 1906, p. 16.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*

8. Arthur A. Chiel, *The Jews In Manitoba*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 48.
9. *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 19, 1906, p. 16.
10. For a fuller treatment of the Wapella colonization project see: A. J. Arnold's articles in *The Western Jewish News*, June 5 and June 12, 1975.
11. *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 19, 1906, p. 16.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 2, 1921, p. 20.