

The Apprenticeship of an Executive Director: M.A. Solkin, A.J. Paull, and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada*

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Lipinsky examine la création et le développement de la Société d'Entre-Aide pour les Immigrants Juifs (S.A.I.J.) à Toronto.

Quand le parti conservateur de R. B. Bennett introduit une législation qui rendra l'immigration des Juifs quasiment impossible, le S.A.I.J. de Toronto était sur le point de disparaître. Mais, A. J. Paull, l'administrateur national du S.A.I.J. était résolu à le ressusciter. Il avait déjà réussi à rendre le bureau central de Montréal plus efficace et il engagea Maurice Solkin pour faire de même à Toronto.

Paull devint le mentor de Solkin et il surveilla ses activités de près. Bien qu'il ait eu des problèmes de temps en temps, les deux devinrent des amis intimes et Solkin utilisa les méthodes de Paull efficacement. Après avoir révivié le S.A.I.J. de Toronto, Solkin succéda à Paull dans la position de l'administrateur national du S.A.I.J. A fut dans ce poste qu'il conjuga les efforts pour aider les réfugiés de l'holocauste.

The first Canadian Jewish Congress was founded amidst Zionist euphoria over the Balfour Declaration, concern for the future of Russian and Polish Jewry, and in the belief that Jewish lobbying at the Versailles Conference would lead to the creation of a Jewish state. Many hoped that Congress would also help bring organizational leadership to Canadian Jewry and to the Jewish communities of Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. Unfortunately, these hopes came to nothing: by 1921 Palestine was under a British Mandate, the Congress was moribund, and the surge of war-inspired Canadian Jewish unity that was the basis for Congress' founding had dissipated.¹

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But the stillborn Congress left a legacy of great importance: it created the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), which was responsible for maximizing Jewish immigration to Canada and minimizing the depredations of middlemen who charged exorbitant sums and were often unable to obtain the permits they promised. Although JIAS was unable to completely drive the ticket agents, influence peddlars, and lawyers who specialized in obtaining permits out of business, by 1925 it had achieved enough market penetration in Montreal to lower permit prices considerably. JIAS began to attract more attention from Canadian Jewry after it successfully negotiated for the admission of at least 5,000 Russian and Romanian Jews in 1922-23 by guaranteeing that they would not become public charges. As a result of these negotiations, the Department of Immigration recognized JIAS as *de facto* representative of Canadian Jewry in the field of immigration. This meant that the while JIAS had no control over immigration policy, it received about 3,000 permits per year through an informal secret arrangement with the Department.²

Increased government regulation of immigration also increased JIAS' clientele. By the mid-1920s, a series of orders-in-council amending the Immigration Act of 1919 made Jewish immigration into Canada a difficult, complex, and time consuming process. The vast majority of Jewish immigrants could only be admitted by special permits which were issued by the Minister and approved by the Cabinet. Few families who wished to admit their loved ones into Canada had the expertise to deal with the Department of Immigration independently (neither could most of the ticket agents) which further increased JIAS's business.³

The head office of JIAS, like that of the then moribund Congress, was in Montreal. JIAS committees were responsible for carrying out the Society's work in Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and at the ports of Halifax and Quebec City. On paper JIAS was the only nationally organized Jewish organization, but in reality, the head office had minimal control over its local affiliates in other cities. By 1927 the Toronto branch had lost its independence and affiliated itself with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in an effort to obtain enough funds to maintain a tenuous existence.⁴

When it was founded in 1920, the Toronto branch was known as "The Emergency Jewish Immigrant Aid Committee". Its leadership was shared between prosperous Polish and Russian *ba'alei batim* who had immigrated before the War and were affiliated with the Goel Tzedec Congregation, and prominent lay and spiritual leaders of the Holy Blossom Temple. Rabbi Barnett Brickner of Holy Blossom, President of the Branch from 1923 to 1925, believed that it was Toronto JIAS' duty to find jobs for the immigrants and to help them inte-

grate into the community. Dr. Abraham Brodey, scion of a prominent Holy Blossom family, succeeded Brickner as President and held office until 1940. He believed that “the rush of immigration had subsided” and it was essential that immigrant aid be organized in a more formal and permanent manner. He therefore reorganized the office and formally affiliated the Toronto group with National JIAS.⁵

Under his administration, Toronto JIAS was kept busy trying to screen prospective sponsors for the 1,170 permits allocated to them by the Department of Immigration in 1925-26. An Educational Committee chaired by the eminent Yiddish journalist and historian Abraham Rhinewhine (who had served as the Toronto office’s first President) helped immigrants study for their citizenship papers. In January 1926, Brodey ordered that a JIAS delegation meet every train carrying Jewish immigrants, thus inaugurating a policy that would endure for over thirty years. Toronto JIAS was a beehive of activity in mid-1926; it was hardpressed to keep up with the flood of up to fifty personal interviews per day. The office seemed to be a great success.⁶

But appearances were deceiving, as Brodey and his Board discovered when they were suddenly accused of charging up to \$125 for each permit they obtained. The JIAS prided itself on charging only a nominal membership fee to those applicants who could afford to pay; its existence was based on the belief that no needy applicant be refused a permit for financial reasons. After an investigation in June 1926 they discovered that a prominent lawyer had appropriated over half JIAS’ quota of permits for himself. These permits, which were signed by JIAS Executive Director S.B. Haltrecht, were indeed being sold at the rumored prices. The Board could do nothing when presented with this *fait accompli*; any attempt to publicly refute the charges would only, as Brodey ruefully observed, “undermine our own organization” because JIAS did not want to jeopardize its flow of permits from the Department of Immigration.⁷

Thus JIAS found its reputation tarnished at a crucial time, for on 3 January 1927 PC #534 was applied to Jewish immigration. This amendment to the Immigration Act ostensibly made it easier for families to be reunited in Canada after one member had been legally admitted. But the Department of Immigration was determined to use PC #534 to reassert their control over every bureaucratic nuance of Jewish immigration; JIAS was therefore stripped of its quota of permits and the Jewish immigration business was left to attorneys, MPs, steamship agents, and political hacks who generally equated permits with votes and profits.⁸

This change in government policy combined with the rumors of expensive permits all but destroyed the Toronto JIAS office. The office was only begin-

ning to attain some sense of identity and communal recognition by 1926 and preliminary plans for a membership campaign were just getting under way. But scarcely two weeks after PD #534 was applied to Jewish immigration, some members of the Toronto Board questioned the need for the continued existence of the office. By March 1927 business had dropped alarmingly: the bulk of the immigration business was going to steamship agents and lawyers with whom JIAS found itself increasingly unable to compete. By September, JIAS was running out of money and the office was only able to survive by surrendering a good measure of its autonomy and affiliating with the Holy Blossom-dominated Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. This led to an exodus of the immigrant members from the JIAS board and left Brodey and his fellow Holy Blossomites in control of the Executive and Toronto JIAS' future. The new leadership compounded the Society's weakness by their passive attitude to immigrant aid. They waited for immigrants to come to them, did not advertise their services, nor did they attempt to compete with the Yiddish-speaking steamship agents by selling Polish and Russian remittance orders, sending parcels to Poland, or by helping with U.S. visa cases.⁹

This organizational passivity had a stultifying effect on even the most ardent of JIAS' supporters. In December 1927 the Board decided to postpone its membership drive because most of the Board believed that few Jews knew what JIAS was or what it did. Soon the Toronto JIAS office was little more than a Sunday morning "immigration clinic" presided over by Brodey. The good Doctor came into the office at 10 a.m. to help some people apply for citizenship and perhaps to answer a few "elementary questions" about the admissibility of certain family members into Canada. By 2 p.m. he was ready to close up, well satisfied that he had done his share. The administrative work of the office had dwindled to the point that a part time secretary was able to run it easily.¹⁰

In 1930 R.B. Bennett's Conservatives took power and introduced new orders in council that made it almost impossible for Jews to enter Canada. Toronto JIAS, already weak, became little more than a letterhead. No Board meetings at all were held in 1932 or 1933; and the majority of the trickle of Jews who immigrated to Canada and came to Toronto came through the efforts of steamship agents. With its patron organization, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, in serious financial difficulties because of the Depression the disappearance of Toronto JIAS seemed inevitable.¹¹

But A.J. Paull, the Executive Director of JIAS, was determined to resuscitate and revitalize the Toronto office. He certainly had the credentials to do it. This handsome and dynamic individual had been recruited from the Paris headquarters of HICEM (a union of European and American Jewish immigration

societies) in 1927 to replace S.B. Haltrecht. In addition to his considerable experience as a professional immigrant agency administrator, Paull was a superb letter writer, motivator, and organizer. He placed special emphasis, in contrast to most other Jewish organizations of the time, on systematizing and professionalizing office procedures. Nothing was too trivial for his eagle eye as it roved through the office to ensure that all was functioning at peak efficiency. His enthusiasm rejuvenated the Head Office; National JIAS President Benjamin Robinson happily observed that "it is a well known fact that the destiny of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada is in very competent hands with Mr. Paull as its Executive Director."¹²

Once the Head Office was operating efficiently, Paull turned his attention to Toronto. He hoped to revitalize the Toronto JIAS office but encountered stiff opposition from Brodey, who believed that there was no need to establish an office independent of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies that would directly compete against ticket agents unless Toronto Jewry "clamoured" for it, and even then, only if the office would "pay for itself." For two years, Paull and Robinson vainly attempted to convince Brodey that Jewish immigration required a more activist stance. Finally, in March 1935, Paull threatened to use his power as Executive Director and open the office under his own administration with or without Brodey's approval. Brodey capitulated rather grudgingly; his Executive only contributed \$200 per month for what they believed was an initial six month trial period. This left most of the burden on the already financially hardpressed JIAS Head Office, which had to absorb all expenses not covered by the Toronto subsidy.¹³

But there is good reason to suspect that Paull was pleased with this agreement despite the expense involved. He realized that the intransigence of Brodey and his Executive might well make it difficult for him to recreate the Toronto office in the image of Montreal. Yet there was a chance; Brodey had been forced to concede that the Toronto office would be run as a branch of Head Office and that "Mr. Paull is to have entire charge of it and its staff." Paull had also forced Brodey to accept the idea that JIAS was in competition with the steamship agents, and therefore it was essential that the Toronto office enter the remittance business which provided the first contact with most clients. Nonetheless, Paull realized that it would be difficult to impose his ideas on Toronto from his desk in Montreal. He needed to hire an Executive Secretary who possessed unquestioned personal and organizational loyalty, a command of English, Yiddish, Russian and Polish; a person full of zeal, energy, persistence, and tact; a person who would serve as an exemplar of the "Paull system"; a person capable of making the office a success and thus winning the confidence of the skept-

tical Brodey and his Board.¹⁴

Paull therefore placed advertisements in the Jewish press, and soon had a number of candidates. The most impressive was a 35 year old Rumanian immigrant named Maurice Solkin who was serving as Secretary of the Folks Farein. Solkin had been a ticket agent in Rumania, and worked in the same capacity for Mr. Joseph Graner in Toronto. Mr. Graner was also the President of the Folks Farein, and it was through his influence that Solkin obtained his position with that organization. His position was a good one, but Solkin was an ambitious man, and he jumped at the chance to run the Toronto JIAS office. Paull officially hired him on 4 April 1935, less than two weeks before the scheduled opening of the office.¹⁵

If Solkin was under the misapprehension that he had been hired for his experience in immigrant work, it was soon dispelled by the daily deluge of directions he received from Paull. The Executive Director believed that Solkin "has the makings of a good Secretary but lacks entirely in experience" and knew that National JIAS' reputation in Toronto depended on a successful and efficient independent office. Paull was determined to ensure that his lengthy battle to persuade Brodey to accept the idea of an aggressive Toronto office would not be in vain. This meant that Solkin would operate as Paull's agent; everything he did would reflect, and reflect on, the Executive Director. In practical terms this left Solkin with little room to manoeuvre between Paull in Montreal and Brodey in Toronto; both men viewed the success or failure of the Toronto office as a vindication of their theories.¹⁶

Paull took no chances; he sent veteran organizer Samuel Kaplan to Toronto to supervise the preparations for the new office and to remain in charge until Solkin officially took up his position on 17 April. He also minced no words in telling the former ticket agent that his new job required him "to eliminate as much as possible the profit motive from Jewish immigrant aid work, and bring by all means at our disposal our people to our Society so that we may minister to their needs." Solkin was instructed to compete directly with the agents in naturalizations, remittances, and visa cases and win back JIAS' former monopoly over permit applications.¹⁷

This was easier said than done. Brodey had never favoured open competition with the agents and his attitude was not about to change. Even before the office opened, he began to express doubts about getting involved in such a "delicate problem". But Paull was not interested in these complaints; when Kaplan left for Toronto on 10 April he was instructed to immediately begin handling remittances at the same prices that prevailed in Montreal. Kaplan also publicized the opening of the office in the *Yiddische Zhurnal* and addressed the leaders of many

landsmanschaften. Obviously his advance work was successful; the first day of business on 14 April attracted 62 people, most of who came to do business. Even Brodey was impressed.¹⁸

The steamship agents were also impressed — by the inroads that the upstart agency was making into their very profitable remittance business. On 2 May a delegation of them, which included Solkin's former employer, begged the local JIAS Executive to leave the remittance business. Most of the Executive was sympathetic, but Solkin and Brodey (whose admiration for Solkin was increasing daily) managed to convince them that "the remittance business is a logical outgrowth of our general activities." Nonetheless, the majority of the Executive decided that it was best to compromise with the agents, and voted to refrain from "aggressive competition with the agents . . . and cessation of further advertising of our remittance business"¹⁹

This brought on Solkin's first crisis, and he proved his loyalty to Paull and to JIAS' principles. Paull had already convinced Solkin of the moral superiority of JIAS' crusade against all those who profited off helpless immigrants and their families, and thus Solkin was not interested in any sort of compromise with the agents. He cautioned them by noting that while the meeting had gone on record as favoring a cessation of remittance advertising, "no final decision has been made", and the final decision was in Paull's hands. Solkin then wrote to Paull, and correctly observed that "our willingness to give in to the agents' demand may create a dangerous precedent." Paull agreed with his pupil that "any compromise at the present time with the steamship agents would be fatal to the existence of our Toronto branch" and overruled the Toronto Board.²⁰

With the agents hurt but by no means defeated, and the office clientele expanding steadily despite ferocious competition, Solkin had more time to turn to his primary task: establishing the Toronto office's reputation in the community, gaining financial support through a membership drive, and routinizing and streamlining office procedure to ensure that the agency could compete with the agents in all areas. Solkin was aware of his inexperience, and he turned to his mentor Paull for advice. Naturally, Paull was delighted to dispense this, and through a stream of correspondence he introduced Solkin to bookkeeping, public relations, fundraising, and office procedure. Nothing was too mundane for Paull if it could help Solkin run the office more efficiently. Paull was pleased with Solkin's acknowledgement of his inexperience and willingness to learn, because it allowed him to mold Solkin in his own bureaucratic image.²¹

But it would be misleading to assume that Paull's ultimate aim was to turn Solkin into an inflexible bureaucrat. Paull stressed procedure throughout his association with Solkin because he believed that the key attribute of an effective

office manager was the ability to give and comply with instructions and established procedures at all times. These ideas were certainly not novel; at this time many Jewish communal organizations were professionalizing their office structures. But Paull's methodology of instruction was brilliantly novel — he consciously set himself up as Solkin's role model! This allowed Paull to imbue his colleague with the deep sense of dedication to JIAS' principles that underlay Paull's passion for orderly administration. Solkin was trained to believe that everything he did, no matter how mundane, not only contributed to the material success of the Toronto office, but helped JIAS fulfill "our duty to the wanderer, whether he is on our shores or whether he is coming."²²

Solkin was eager to ensure the success of the Toronto office and worked tirelessly to begin a membership drive, publicize the existence of the office, and expand the remittance business. His lengthy letters to Paull were often phrased like an eager schoolboy's; Paull replied in the same vein, using a combination of praise and criticism to guide Solkin. This technique was very effective, as Paull discovered in early August 1935 when the auditors discovered that the Toronto bank accounts would not balance because Solkin had not followed instructions. When Solkin scrambled to find the reason for these difficulties, Paull bluntly informed him: "there will always be discrepancies when you don't comply with instructions" and prodded Solkin still further by noting that the audit could not be completed until the books were reconciled. A contrite Solkin abjectly admitted his guilt and, like the prize pupil who makes a foolish error, promised "that this will *NOT* happen in the future." As if this were not enough, he then blurted out: "I am really sorry to have caused you so much inconvenience, but now that I got to the root of it, the problem, it just will not occur again."²³

When a shocked Brodey read this correspondence, he indignantly demanded that Paull treat Solkin "with greater diplomacy." Brodey accused Paull of attempting to "exhort him (Solkin) to greater things by such critical methods" when he really had no "real cause for complaint". But Brodey misunderstood Paull's methodology; and Paull wasted little time and fewer words in setting him straight: "If Mr. Solkin were in the Montreal office and if he were guilty of omissions, mistakes, or somewhat lax in certain respects he would be taken to task, as he has been in the last few months through correspondence." Paull then summed up his theory of management by observing: "I am not interested at all in the glory of my position as executive director. With me it is rather a matter of having a coordinated organization with . . . trained personnel throughout the country." He strongly suggested that Brodey and his Executive confine themselves to matters of policy, and leave all other matters to "the Ex-

ecutive Director who knows what is good for the Society by virtue of the fact that he has been devoting his entire time and intelligence to the work of the Society.’²⁴

It is therefore not surprising that Paull, pleased with Solkin’s apology but still angry that the books still did not balance, shrugged off Brodey’s letter and returned to the attack. Solkin was now informed that his “manner of advising us of the disposition of monies is unsatisfactory.” Like any good teacher, Paull then provided a corrective for his chastened pupil: Solkin was given a supply of forms that had been prepared especially for him by the auditors to ensure that he did not make any more errors. In addition, he was to be taken to Montreal for a few days, presumably to see the “Paull method” at first hand and learn how to apply it to his own work.²⁵

Paull and Solkin had not seen each other since Paull had come to Toronto in late March 1935 to interview Solkin for his position. Their reunion was a great personal and professional success; Solkin stayed in Paull’s house, and Paull used this more intimate setting to establish a personal friendship with Solkin, and to persuade him to reexamine the books and eliminate all irregularities. Solkin’s visit to JIAS headquarters allowed him to personally observe his mentor’s punctiliousness and the efficiency of Head Office. This experience confirmed Solkin’s respect and admiration for Paull, who he now extolled as “the guiding power of our Organization.” He was now even more convinced that Paull’s constant demands were designed to help him make the Toronto office as efficient as Montreal’s. He therefore returned to his post full of organizational enthusiasm, and threw himself into a complete audit of all bank deposits made since the opening of the office. Within a day he had corrected all discrepancies, and the auditors were satisfied that they could proceed with their audit. Paull was very appreciative of this “extra effort”, and from this point on, his letters to Solkin grew warmer as the two men became closer both professionally and personally.²⁶

Solkin certainly required Paull’s help in developing and honing his administrative skills. But he needed no help when it came to organizational politics because of his instinctive mastery of organizational diplomacy. He had displayed this skill when the steamship agents had demanded that JIAS terminate its remittance business, and he would once again use it to convince his reluctant Executive to continue subsidizing the Toronto office

As business increased, the Toronto Executive became increasingly reluctant about paying the \$200 per month subsidy towards its operation. Brodey wanted the office to be financially self-sufficient after its six month “trial period” so that he could be more independent of Montreal. Paull refused for financial and

administrative reasons. He had no intention of relinquishing any measure of administrative control over an office that had only been revived because of Montreal's money and his expertise. Solkin was given the task of playing a "subtle and clever game" and inducing the Executive to place the Toronto office on a better financial footing.²⁷

Solkin did his best, but with immigration at a stand-still, it was difficult to build up a sustained interest in JIAS. The office's business decreased, and cutthroat competition in the remittance business was the order of the day. People were not anxious to become members of JIAS at a time when Solkin was instructed that "it may not be good policy to give the people too much hope" when they applied for the admission of a relative. The return of King's Liberals to power in October 1935 stirred optimism among Canadian Jews, but by February 1936 it was clear that the Liberals would pursue the same immigration policy as their Tory predecessors.²⁸

But Paull and JIAS President Robinson were realists: they knew that their organization faced formidable odds in attempting to coax permits out of Ottawa and in trying to waken "hibernating" Toronto Jewry to the presence of JIAS. The leaders of JIAS realized that as long as the gates to Canada remained all but closed, the majority of Canadian Jewry would regard immigration with a resigned torpor based on their feelings of helplessness in the face of growing catastrophe. In light of these conditions, and in spite of the Toronto Executive's paltry subsidy, Solkin had done well just to keep the office going. His efforts were recognized in late January 1936 by Robinson, who praised him for the "zealous and able manner" in which he conducted the office's affairs, gave him a raise, and informed Solkin that Brodey was a great admirer of his work. Solkin predictably replied that "it is Mr. Paull and Dr. Brodey to whom credit is really due" and reaffirmed his desire to emulate Paull by "raising the JIAS in Toronto to a degree of efficiency and popularity as high as that attained by our office in Montreal."²⁹

Solkin's failure to completely fulfill this pledge was certainly not due to lack of effort. Throughout 1936 he networked with American consular officials and Canadian immigration officials based in Toronto in an effort to remind them of the existence of JIAS. These efforts were well received; but as long as the Department of Immigration refused to admit Jews *en masse*, they were little more than good public relations work. Solkin was more successful in attracting more remittance clients by offering cheap rates and the opportunity to remit old clothing to relatives in Poland. This latter endeavor, for which JIAS held a monopoly, proved to be very successful in attracting clients. But JIAS, because of its philanthropic nature, made very little money through remittances. These

small successes helped the Toronto office maintain its clientele despite poor prospects for immigration, a weak economy, and poor financial backing. Solkin continued to soldier on despite the odds; by late 1936 he was once again attempting to launch a membership drive. Solkin called a General Meeting for 27 December, and made sure that those who spoke denounced the Board for its poor public relations work and demanded that the Board accept all those who volunteered their services and organize to accept new members efficiently.³⁰

Solkin spent much of 1937 trying to put the Toronto office on a more secure financial footing. His relationship with Paull was now that of trusted associate, confidante, and advisor; but Solkin always deferred to Paull and never lost his almost reverent respect for him. Both men attempted to find a reliable source of operating funds, and ultimately Solkin was instrumental in funnelling the dissent first expressed at the 1936 General Meeting into action. After a considerable amount of work, he was able to attract members of the Toronto community representing organizations as diverse as the Folks Farein, the Toronto Hebrew Burial Society, Bnai Brith, Holy Blossom and Geol Tzedec onto the Board. Many of these men such as Ben Forer, Dr. John Adkins, and Maurice Ezrin, would become the backbone of a revitalized Executive. These men made it their business to volunteer to work in the office, to process cases, to attract visits, to speak about what JIAS was doing, and so raised the image of JIAS to new heights.³¹

The effects were immediate. Though requests for permits remained at their low level, the remittance business increased, and a large market in U.S. visa and immigration cases appeared. Even more satisfying for Solkin was the fact that by the end of March 1937, 75 new members had joined the organization. It appeared as though Toronto JIAS' first membership drive since its inception would be a great success. This success occasioned the move to new quarters, which were formally dedicated in late March at the height of a very successful Passover remittance season. The much larger office, at street level at the intersection of Spadina and College in the heart of Jewish Toronto, attracted a huge chunk of the remittance business away from the agents. Not only did the amount of remittances total almost \$20,000 (double the 1936 figure), but the average remittance increased from \$13.94 in 1936 to \$18.14 in 1937, and the clientele increased by 40%.³²

The success of the Toronto office was apparent to the organizers of the United Jewish Welfare Fund (UJWF) of Toronto. This new organization was being set up in early 1937 to replace the Depression-weakened Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. The UJWF's mandate required it to organize, administer, and coordinate a fundraising campaign that would meet the needs of all par-

icipating educational, cultural, and social services in the Jewish community. They offered Toronto JIAS an allocation of \$1,000 if JIAS would agree not to run a separate financial campaign. Paull gave Solkin full power to handle the matter as he saw fit; his faith in his pupil's political savvy proved well founded — JIAS was given the allocation they desired along with one Vice-Presidency and two seats on the Executive Board.³³

But even though Solkin had proved to be an apt pupil and had become an excellent executive, Paull never relaxed his vigilance. He refused to tolerate even the slightest deviance from accepted office practice that might threaten his working relationship with his subordinate. Paull's eagle eye missed nothing: when he received a letter about a topic usually handled by Solkin that bore Brodey's signature, he correctly surmised that Solkin had taken a leave of absence without prior permission. He wasted no time in arraigning and interrogating the Toronto President, demanding to know where Solkin was and why he was absent. Hadn't Solkin learned anything yet, demanded Paull, "I thought our Toronto staff understood that they were under the direct jurisdiction of the Head Office, and the least that this office could expect is to be kept informed."³⁴

Solkin, ever eager to please Paull, was bitterly wounded by this attack and explained that he had been ill for some time and was forced to rest to avoid complete collapse. Predictably, all he received in reply was yet another lecture on professionalism in the workplace. "Moses is Moses, but business is business," replied Paull, "the fault is entirely at your end." He then preceeded to remind Solkin that "I never absented myself from the office and my duties without advising my President . . . on several occasions I had to forego a vacation at a given time because he could not spare time to watch the office." If Solkin wished to become a successful administrator then he had to accept these hardships as part "of the discipline that one must maintain if you want the organization's usefulness unimpaired."³⁵

This exchange revealed that Paull the teacher had taught his prize pupil Solkin all that he could. The final step was up to Solkin: now that he had the intellectual and administrative skills, would he accept upon himself the discipline, zeal for administrative order, and organizational loyalty that characterized his mentor?

The answer was not long in coming. In mid-October 1937 Paull suddenly tendered his resignation. He admitted privately to Solkin that "I couldn't take it any longer. Between the Jewish public and the gov't officials and consular offices, my nerves were going to pieces." Everyone connected with JIAS hoped that Paull would change his mind, but when he did not, Brodey and the

Toronto Board urged that the position go to Solkin, citing his “thorough knowledge of the work, his very successful handling of the local cases, and his ability to gain the friendship and goodwill of the local officials.” Robinson was greatly impressed by this unsolicited praise, and later admitted that the Toronto Executive’s support was the key factor in the decision to hire Solkin as Executive Director. Paull also had suggested Solkin’s name “from the very beginning.”³⁶

In his new position Solkin soon proved that his apprenticeship had ended. He remained Executive Director until 1954 and presided over JIAS’s desperate efforts to rescue as many Jews as possible from the jaws of death. After the war, he directed the vast growth of JIAS, which assumed responsibility for the thousands of Jewish refugees who entered Canada. Throughout his career, he sought to teach his subordinates through the same method that Paull had trained him, and instill in them the Paullian passion for administrative excellence and personal discipline mingled with deep reverence for the goals of JIAS.

In fact, Solkin’s relationship with Mendel Kraicer, his successor as Toronto Executive Secretary, was an exact parallel of his own relationship with Paull. Solkin’s letters to Kraicer sounded like Paull’s; especially on one occasion when Kraicer was lax in keeping Solkin informed about events in Toronto:

I am at a perfect loss to understand why not a single word has been received from you. . . . Busy as you may be, you should still be able to find a few minutes to scribble a few lines and keep me informed. . . . I have not too much time to spare on repeated reminders about things you are supposed to do.³⁷

The apprentice had become a master craftsman; JIAS was in good hands.

FOOTNOTES

The author would like to express his thanks to Mr. Gordon Kaufman, former National Executive Vice-President of JIAS, for granting him access to the JIAS Papers in Toronto and Montreal.

Abbreviations

JIAS(M) — Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada Papers, Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, Montreal.

JIAS(T) — Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada Papers, JIAS Toronto Office.

1. Stephen A. Speisman. *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), p. 268-72
2. Simon Belkin. *Through Narrow Gates*. (Montreal: Eagle, 1966), Chapter XII
3. For a discussion of immigration laws and their effect see Irving Abella and Harold Troper. *None Is Too Many* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1982), p. 5-6; for a wider perspective, Gerald Dirks. *Canada’s Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal: Queen’s-McGill University Press, 1977)
4. Speisman. *Jews of Toronto*. p. 272
5. Belkin. *Narrow Gates*. Appendix 10, p. 222; JIAS(T). *Minutes*. 24 November 1925; JIAS(T). *Report for 1926*. Members of Goel Tzedek (the synagogue of the upwardly mobile immigrants) included Rabbi Julius Siegel, Second Vice President of the Toronto Branch and Elias Pullan. On Rabbi Siegel see Speisman. *Jews of Toronto*. p. 225

6. JIAS(T). *Report of the Society*, September 1926
7. JIAS(T). *Minutes*. 7 June 1926. The secret agreement or "unwritten quota" with the Government is discussed in Belkin. *Narrow Gates*. p. 154-55
8. *ibid.*, p. 148-55 for a revealing discussion
9. JIAS(T). *Minutes*. 11 January 1927, 21 September 1927, 22 November 1927
10. JIAS(T). *Minutes*. 7 December 1927; Confidential Interview; JIAS(T). *Minutes*. 6 April 1931
11. There are no records of meetings extant, and in 1933 Robinson wrote about "reviving the Branch in Toronto." JIAS(T). File 10A. B. Robinson to A. Brodey, 21 January 1933
12. For biographical details of Paull, see Zvi Cohen. *Canadian Jewry*. (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Historical Publishing, 1933), p. 153; JIAS(T). File 10A. B. Robinson to A. Brodey, 21 January 1933
13. JIAS(T). File 10A. B. Robinson to A. Brodey, 20 February 1933; *ibid.*, A. Brodey to B. Robinson, 21 February 1933
14. JIAS(M). File 4082. "Our Mutual Responsibilities." March 1935
15. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 4 April 1935; surprisingly, Solkin did not speak Polish, Miss Tobie Taback, who served in the Toronto JIAS office for over forty years, handled Polish translations. I am indebted to Ms. Cindy Solkin, Mr. Solkin's granddaughter, for this information.
16. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 16 August 1935
17. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 4 April 1935
18. *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 8 April 1935; *ibid.*, S. Kaplan to A.J. Paull, 14 April 1935
20. *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A. Wise, 3 May 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin to A. Wise, 3 May 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 4 May 1935
21. In May 1935, business quadrupled, see JIAS(T). *Monthly Reports*. April and May 1935; Competition was still ferocious, but JIAS was winning out by undercutting the agents. JIAS(M). File 4082. M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 13 May 1935; A good example of Paull's penchant for detail being absorbed by Solkin occurred when the Toronto Secretary queried Paull about the minutiae of filing procedures. Paull answered: "I think it will be alright to keep all naturalization cases in one file, but there should be a separate file for each individual immigration case." JIAS(M). File 4082. A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin. 2 August 1935
22. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 16 August 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 8 May 1935
23. *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 13 May 1935; for examples of this student-teacher relationship see JIAS(M). File 4082, M.A. Solkin, 12 August 1935, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 15 August 1935
24. *ibid.*, A. Brodey to A.J. Paull, 15 August 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 16 August 1935
25. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 19 August 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 20 August 1935
26. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 28 March 1935; letters indicate that Solkin was in Montreal from 25-30 August, during which time Samuel Kaplan was dispatched to oversee the Toronto office because Paull was meticulous in ensuring that the office would never be left without a senior person left in charge. See JIAS(M). File 4082. A.J. Paull to S. Kaplan. 23 August 1935, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 26 August 1935, S. Kaplan to A.J. Paull, 30 August 1935. In June 1936 Solkin returned to Montreal for yet another training session. JIAS(M). File 4082. T. Taback to M.A. Solkin, 2 June 1936; *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull 6 September 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 9 September 1935; *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 28 September 1935
27. *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 12 September 1935; A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 16 September 1935
28. *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to S. Kaplan, 25 October 1935; JIAS(T). *Monthly Reports*. October, November 1935; JIAS(M), A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 16 December 1935; Abella and

- Troper. *None*. p. 14-15; Belkin. *Narrow Gates* p. 173-74, Appendix #8; JIAS(M). File 4082. M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull 19 December 1935; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 24 December 1935
29. *ibid.*, B. Robinson, 24 January 1936; *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to B. Robinson, 29 January 1936
30. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 11 November 1936; *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 16 December 1936; JIAS(T). *Minutes of the General Meeting Held at the Labour Lyceum on 27 December 1936*
31. For an example of the more equal relationship between the two, see JIAS(M). File 4082. M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 24 March 1937 and A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 26 March 1937; JIAS(T). *Minutes* 19 January 1937, 16 February 1937, 28 February 1937
32. JIAS(T). *Monthly Reports*. January, February, March 1937; JIAS(M). File 4082. A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 11 February 1937; *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 24 March 1937; JIAS(T). *Minutes*. 7 March 1937; about \$4,000 in Passover remittances were handled in 1937, *ibid.*, *Monthly Reports*. February, March 1936, February, March 1937
33. JIAS(M). File 4082. A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 1 July 1937. It is worth noting that even though Solkin was now much more independent of Paull and had a free hand in most local decisions, his attitude to Paull had not changed. In the above quoted letter, Paull had complimented Solkin's negotiating work: "I read your letter . . . and cannot add anything to what has already been said and done." Solkin replied: "I am exceedingly glad to hear you are satisfied." JIAS(M). File 4082. M.A. Solkin to A.J. Paull, 2 July 1937
34. *ibid.*, A. Brodey to A.J. Paull, 5 July 1937; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to A. Brodey, 7 July 1937
35. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 13 July 1937
36. *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 25 October 1937; *ibid.*, A. Brodey to B. Robinson, 23 October 1937; *ibid.*, B. Robinson to A. Brodey, 30 October 1937; *ibid.*, B. Robinson to A. Brodey, 11 November 1937; *ibid.*, A.J. Paull to M.A. Solkin, 12 November 1937
37. *ibid.*, M.A. Solkin to M. Kraicer, 16 September 1943