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The Plan And Efforts Of The Jews Of Winnipeg To Purchase Land And To Establish An Agricultural Settlement In Palestine Before World War One

YOSSI KATZ

Résumé

Dans ce document, l'auteur de l'article se propose de faire une étude d'un système spécial de colonies agricoles qui se développèrent entre 1908 et 1914 au coeur du monde juif. Ce système porte le nom de "Achoozo", terme hébreu qui signifie "possession d'une terre privée". Il était basé sur le capital privé et son objectif visait à permettre aux Juifs de classe moyenne à travers le monde de s'établir en Palestine. Le principe de l'Achoozo reposait sur la formation à travers le monde de compagnies.

L'auteur retrace les activités de la compagnie de Winnipeg, ce qui constitue la centralité de son étude. Cependant, auparavant, il donne quelques informations sur la compagnie de Toronto et celle de Montréal.

Malgré le grand nombre de compagnies Achoozo, seules 5 colonies Achoozo furent établies en Palestine.

Ainsi l'auteur de l'article, Yossi Katz, qui s'est spécialisé dans l'étude des Achoozo après une introduction qui nous promène à travers le monde et aux U.S.A. s'arrête sur une compagnie Achoozo en particulier: la compagnie de Winnipeg sur laquelle il a fait une étude approfondie qu'il nous soumet.

Between the years 1908-1914 a special system for agricultural settlement in Palestine was developed in the Jewish world. Its name was "Achoozo",¹ a Hebrew word which means 'ownership of private land' and it was unlike other settlement systems which were already established in Palestine and which were based on either a national capital ("Jewish National Fund") or philanthropic capital (Baron Rothschild). The Achoozo system was based on private capital and its aim was to enable Jewish people of the middle class all over the world to settle in Palestine.²

The principle was to organize Jewish groups from towns all over the world in "Achoozo Companies." They were supposed to immigrate to Palestine and to settle in the "Achoozo settlements" only after the products of these settlements would bear fruit. Until then those Jews would remain in their home towns and carry on with their businesses.

On this basis 70 Achoozo companies were established all over the world between the years 1908-1914.³ Three among the 70 were established in Canada: the first was the Achoozo Company of Winnipeg (1912), and two others were the Achoozo Company of Toronto (1914) and the Achoozo Company of Montreal (1914).⁴

An extensive correspondence between the Achoozo Company of Winnipeg and Arthur Ruppin, who was the representative of the Zionist Organization in Palestine, and who took care of everything concerning the settlements, is kept in the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem. This enables us to reconstruct the plans and activities of the company from Winnipeg.⁵ However, there are very few details about the companies from Toronto and Montreal, apparently because they were established only a few weeks before the war and were discontinued shortly thereafter.⁶

Before we discuss the activities of Achoozo Company of Winnipeg, we would like to speak about the settlements system of the Achoozo itself, the reasons for its appearance in this period and its aims. During the 1890's and the first decade of the 20th century, many Jewish people of the middle class whose aim was to buy land and to establish agricultural settlements in Palestine immigrated there. When they arrived they met some difficult problems which prevented them from achieving their goals. The problems were mostly in two areas: 1. The purchase of land. 2. The agricultural work itself.

Several factors prevented most of these immigrants from possessing land. First of all, they lacked knowledge concerning the Turkish land laws. Secondly, only Turkish citizens could purchase the land. Thirdly, those people selling the land were often speculators whose manipulations greatly increased prices.

Those who succeeded in purchasing land and began to work agriculturally, soon discovered problems that they could not solve, especially before the bearing of the fruit. Since these people had no agricultural experience, or even any educational background on the subject, this in itself was a problem.

These two main problems led most of these immigrants to return to

their native land, or to move to the cities, e.g. Jerusalem, Jaffa and Tiberias. This discouraged other middle class Jews from immigrating to Israel to do agricultural work.⁷

The aim of the "Achoozo" was to solve these problems in order to enable the middle class Jews to come to do agricultural work. The idea was that the Achoozo Companies were to be comprised of Jews whose income exceeded what was needed for them to live on, and whose intention was to live in Israel and to build "Achoozo settlements." The plan was for the members of the companies to put money into the membership bank, in installments over a 10 year period. While these members continued working in their native countries, the land was purchased for them and native Palestinian Jews worked the land until it prospered. Since olives and almonds were the products most often planted, the members had to wait 6-10 years until these bore fruit, and enabled them to come and settle on the Achoozo settlements, which would then offer them a livelihood.⁸ The members of each individual Achoozo company were from the same city, so that they would know one another before settling in Palestine, and so as not to have anyone in their company who was unfit.⁹ The buying and working of the land, before the settlement was set up by the owners, was done co-operatively by the representatives of the company and the "Palestine Land Development Company" a company that was established in 1908 by the Zionist Organization to buy and work land, whose leader was Arthur Ruppin. The parcelling of the land to individual owners was not done until the immigrants were on the settlements.¹⁰

In addition to the fact that the intention of the Achoozo was to spare the owner all the problems of buying the land, to help him remain abroad until the land in Palestine started producing profits, to prevent him from having to prepare the land, and from losing money and having to find other means of support during this period, the Achoozo had other advantages.

1. Not every Jew who wanted to settle in Palestine could immediately break off all his material and emotional connections with his native town. The Achoozo enabled him to break off gradually.¹¹
2. The plantation work, while working cooperatively, was much cheaper for the individual. For the Achoozo, as a company, it was easier to deal with everything that was concerned with settlements, and to be in contact with the settlement organizations in Israel. For a company, more than for an individual, it was easier to get credit on a cooperative basis.¹²
3. The system of payment by installments enabled people who did not

have much money to join the company and finally settle in Palestine.¹³

4. From the social point of view, the Achoozo settlement had a better chance to succeed because its members had known each other for a long time in their native place and were similar to each other in their ways of life.¹⁴

5. A strong connection would be formed between the Diaspora and Palestine by the Achoozo companies, and through Achoozo settlements the private capital was used to enlarge the settlement of Palestine.¹⁵

According to these principles 70 Achoozo companies were established between the years 1908-1914. A few days before the outbreak of World War I there were 49 companies in Russia and Eastern Europe, 14 companies in the U.S.A., 3 companies in Canada, 2 companies in England, 1 company in France, and 1 company in Argentina.¹⁶

It seems that the many advantages of this system led to the establishment of so many Achoozo companies all over the world.

In spite of the large number of Achoozo companies, only 5 Achoozo settlements were established: Poriyya (1910), by the Jews of St. Louis; Ruhama (1912), by Jews from Moscow; Sharana (1912), by Jews from Chicago; Kefar-Uriyya (1913), by Jews from Bialystock (Russia) and Karkus (1914), by Jews from London.^{17*}

The first Achoozo company was established in October of 1908 in St. Louis, U.S.A. by Shimon Goldman.¹⁸ The idea spread very quickly to other places in the U.S.A. Two Achoozo companies were established in New York in 1909,¹⁹ one was established in Chicago in 1911²⁰ and a second Achoozo company began in St. Louis in 1912.²¹ In that year also another Achoozo company was established in New York.²² The support of the concept by the Federation of American Zionists, and the success of the Achoozo companies from St. Louis and Chicago in buying the land in Palestine led to the spread of Achoozo to areas other than the U.S.A., including Canada. At the end of November, 1912, the first Achoozo company was established in Winnipeg under the name of "Ho'achoozo — The Palestine Land Company of Winnipeg." The company was headed by the following: S. Frankel, President; E. Cherniack, Vice President; L. Goldin, Treasurer; and, H. Vilder, Secretary.

On December 23rd, 1912 the Winnipeg company sent the first letter to Arthur Ruppin, who, as was already mentioned, was the head of the Zionist organization buying land in Palestine — The Palestine Land

*For location of Achoozo settlements see the attached map.

Development Company (PLDC). This letter was written in Hebrew, as were most of the letters.

"Last month we established an association in our city called "Achusat Winnipeg" whose aim is to buy a settlement in the land of Israel similar to the plan of the Achoozo of St. Louis. We already have 35 members, the majority of which are rich people and the rest are people who are able to save 2.50 dollars every week for this purpose. Almost all of the members are ready to immigrate themselves to Palestine, and to settle on their settlements after they pay the entire sum. Each member bought 7 shares at 200 dollars a share (a total of 1400 dollars) to pay out over a 10 year period. The first payment which was 35 dollars for a quarter of a year, was paid by everyone enthusiastically and with much excitement. There is no doubt that within a short time period we will increase the number of members to 50. If it were possible for some institution in our land to help us possess the land immediately, we should increase our membership to 75, or maybe even 100. We want to appoint the PLDC to manage our settlement and our Bank {Anglo-Palestine Company — APC — the bank of the Zionist Organization — Y.K.} to act as our treasurer. The first payment we are sending to you."

In the second letter, sent to Ruppin on January 13, 1913, they added:

"We now have 50 members who are likely to purchase 7 shares at 200 dollars each share. Only 35 members have paid the first installment, however, there is no doubt that the rest will pay very soon. These people are all of fine character, both materialistically and spiritually. All these people are good Zionists and idealists, they are all ready to immigrate to Palestine to settle there. We would like to receive the license for our settlement from the local government and slowly we will prepare the laws and amendments that will affect our settlement."

A short time after this membership laws were set up. The laws determined the following: In order to be a member of the settlement, which meant that one would settle in Palestine in the future, one must buy 7 shares which added up to 1400 dollars. This amount had to be paid in installments of 140 dollars during a 10 year period. After paying for these 7 shares, on the condition that 10 years had lapsed after first entering into the company, he then became an owner of an area of 70 dunam, of which on 64 dunam were planted olives and almonds, leaving 6 dunam for the building of a house, garden and for the agricultural machinery. With the money from the 7 shares of each member, the company was able to buy the land and plant it, to build houses for the workers, to buy inventory, to dig trenches for irrigation and to buy an engine for pumping water. It was estimated that this amount of land could produce a 4000 dollar profit, which was a nice salary for a middle class family in Palestine.

It was determined that as soon as the treasury had 500 dollars, it would be sent to the bank APC in Palestine, under the account of the company. This money would not be touched until there were sufficient funds to buy land. The buying of the land would be done only by PLDC. After

the company had all the money that was needed, it would then tell the PLDC where to buy and how much, and only then would the PLDC begin the process of purchasing. After they had the land, the preparing, improving, and planting of the plantation would be done by Jews from Palestine skilled in this type of work, with a manager overseeing them. All this would be done under the supervision of the PLDC, who would appoint the workers with the permission of the Winnipeg company. The PLDC would have to report to the Winnipeg company concerning the work on the settlements. All the work would be done co-operatively and the parcelling of land would be done after the immigration to the settlement. The payments of the first three years would be for the purchasing of the land; the money they received after that would be for the preparing, improving and planting of the settlement. After 10 years the entire settlement would be covered with olives and almond trees that were already bearing fruit. Then the members could immigrate, build houses and settle on their property which would be chosen by lot. Before parcelling the land among all the settlers, 4% of the entire settlement would be taken for public buildings.²⁵

At the end of January 1913, the company sent a letter to Ruppin asking him to report on the possibilities of buying land in Palestine. At the same time the company sent the first 1000 dollars to the bank A.P.C.

After reading these enthusiastic reports from Winnipeg in February 1913, Ruppin advised the company to buy a parcel of the land which was already owned by the PLDC in the Arab village of Karkur (see the attached map for its location), and he specified the good conditions of the place: “. . . a fertile plain good for planting where the water is only 7-8 meters deep . . .” He also added that they must send 2,300 dollars immediately. The Winnipegers replied that they could not come up with that amount; the most they could send at that point would be 700 dollars.

Meanwhile, in May 1913, a representative, Mr. Harris, came to Palestine and explained to the PLDC that “the wish of the Winnipeg Achoozo is that their settlement be in the region of a big city like Jaffa, where there will be established schools for their children and markets for their products.” The PLDC answered Harris and told him he had two choices: 1. to buy an area 5,000-6,000 dunam from the land of the Arab village Sheikh-Muneis which was near Jaffa (see the attached map: the area of Sheikh-Muneis is now the area of the Tel-Aviv University) and which the PLDC was going to buy for itself at the same time, or 2. Buying a similar land from the Arab village Ard-El-Chai which was north-

east of Jaffa in the direction of the settlement Kefar-Save. This land had already been bought by the PLDC in conjunction with a Zionist company "Geulah", which was established in Russia in 1902 to buy land in Palestine. The PLDC asked for 16,000 dollars for each piece of land and they stressed that neither tract could be purchased in installments.

In June 1913 Mr. Harris returned to Winnipeg and in a special meeting of all the members of the Achoozo company they decided to purchase Sheikh-Muneis. After many members undertook to pay for their shares earlier, they notified the PLDC that they were interested in purchasing at least 8,000 dunam from the land of Sheik-Muneis.

One month later, Ruppin notified the company in Winnipeg that they could not purchase the 8,000 dunam in Sheikh-Muneis, because the "Geulah Company" had notified the PLDC first and already negotiated with the Arabs of Sheikh-Muneis and bought most of the land for themselves. Before the negotiations were even completed "Geulah" sold the land to companies and individuals from Palestine and abroad. Therefore, there were only 3,500 dunam left open in Sheikh-Muneis. Ruppin added that as far as he knew the further purchasing of land in Sheikh-Muneis would be postponed for a long time, because there were a lot of Arabs living in Sheikh-Muneis whose claims had to be satisfied after lengthy negotiation with each Arab to determine the price. He advised them to give up the idea of purchasing the land of Sheikh-Muneis and to become interested in other lands that the PLDC was ready to purchase at this time, such as land in Emek Yizre'el. In the meantime, the number of members of the Winnipeg Company reached 100, and the account of the company in the APC bank in Jaffa was credited at 10,000 dollars.

Between the months of August until November 1913, there was frequent correspondence between Ruppin and the Winnipeg company. Ruppin wrote about the impossibility of buying land in Sheikh-Muneis and advised them to consider land in other places. The Achoozo company kept insisting that they were interested *only* in Sheikh-Muneis, even if they could only purchase 3,500 dunams. The company blamed Ruppin for promising the land of Sheikh-Muneis to them, and causing enthusiasm among the members to the point of their advancing the installments, and now Ruppin was not standing up to his promises. They added that not being able to purchase the land of Sheikh-Muneis would cause some members to leave and eventually cause the company to disperse.

The attachment of the Achoozo Company of Winnipeg to Sheikh-Muneis was due to the advantages of the geographic location, which was

near Tel Aviv and Jaffa. This was clearly explained in the prospectus that was distributed by the Achoozo Company in 1914, along with a schematic map, in order to show the closeness of Sheikh-Muneis to Tel Aviv and Jaffa (see appendix No. 2). Here are a few paragraphs from this prospectus (translated from Yiddish): “. . . As you can see from the attached map, our lands are right in the middle of the Jewish population, near the sea, not far from the seaport, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour's ride from Jaffa on the Jaffa-Haifa Road, $\frac{1}{2}$ hour from the large community of Petah-Tiqva, ten minutes from Kefar-Sava . . . We are located near Jaffa, the center of education in Palestine at this time. Our children can study at the famous high schools of the place and in the other excellent schools. The view is beautiful and the climate very healthy . . . At the edge of our land flows a beautiful river full of rich water [The Yarkon River]. The land gives good fruit easily, and is good for cultivation: plantations that do not need water, i.e. almonds, olives and grapes, also plantations that do need water like oranges, lemons and bananas . . . Because of the closeness, the place is also good for vegetables, dairy products, and a chicken-coop (because of the easy access to the produce markets of Jaffa and Tel Aviv). The best thing is that it is worth while to enter all these various branches, and a little of each one. After all these virtues that were mentioned, our land is comparatively cheap — 50 francs per dunam — a real bargain!”

At the beginning of 1914, S. Frankel, the president of the Winnipeg Company, was sent to Palestine in order to finally make a choice for the group to purchase and settle. The PLDC advised him to purchase land in Karkus — land which the PLDC already purchased at the end of 1913. However, Frankel was not authorized to finalize this purchase. On his return to Winnipeg, he was told that many members had left the company because they heard that even the purchase of the smaller Sheikh-Muneis tract had not been implemented, and that the entire company might dissolve. Frankel reported this to Ruppin, and the latter promised to do all he could to purchase the remaining 3,500 dunams of Sheikh-Muneis. On the basis of this, Frankel conducted intensive propaganda in Winnipeg, and distributed prospectuses on the Achoozo company and the virtues of Sheikh-Muneis. New members joined, and the company was brought out of this crisis.

In April 1914, the account of the Achoozo company in the A.P.C. bank in Jaffa was credited with 13,000 dollars.

In September 1914, a short time after the beginning of World War I, a letter from Ruppin arrived in Winnipeg saying that the purchasing of

Sheikh-Muneis was going very slowly, as the PLDC was entering into negotiation with each one of the owners (and as Ruppin wrote "they are many"), and that he would do all he could to finalize the sale. This letter planted hope in the members of the Achoozo Company of Winnipeg and they continued with the installments to the Achoozo company even during the time of World War I and the company itself operated as if nothing was wrong. This, in comparison to the other Achoozo companies in the United States, which stopped with their installments. They felt that because of the war the situation in Palestine was not clear, and they did not want to invest in a place whose future was unstable.²⁶

Because of the war, the PLDC stopped all their negotiations with the Arabs in reference to buying land, including those in Sheikh-Muneis. This situation continued for the duration. During this time also the connection between the PLDC and the Achoozo company of Winnipeg was broken, because Palestine was cut off from Europe and America.²⁷ Only in May 1918 was the connection between Winnipeg and PLDC restarted. The PLDC explained to the Achoozo company that during the war it had stopped handling the buying of land of Sheikh-Muneis as it had stopped purchasing other land, but it promised to begin again.²⁸

By the end of 1921 the purchasing of land was not finished even after all the negotiations with the Arabs of Sheikh-Muneis, including the area which Geulah was attempting to buy. In October of the same year, the Winnipeg company decided to send a representative by the name of Vaifel to find out what was happening with the purchasing of Sheikh-Muneis. Vaifel found out that the purchasing was still delayed and would take time to finish. Without being authorized by the Achoozo company in Winnipeg, he decided to withdraw the company's money from the APC bank in Jaffa, which was 13,000 dollars. Vaifel returned to Winnipeg at the beginning of 1922, and in a general meeting of the members of the Achoozo, it was decided to dissolve the company and to divide the money among the members.²⁹

It seems that in spite of the fact that the Winnipeg Achoozo company was one of 70 Achoozo companies that were established in the same time period, in cities all over the world, which were similar in their aims and economic and social structure, the Winnipeg company was exceptional in two respects.

First of all, the company had the needed money to purchase land in

Palestine and to establish Achoozo settlements. This was contrary to a lot of the other Achoozo companies (especially Eastern Europe), which could not collect the money needed to purchase land, and had to dissolve after finding out that they could not pay for the land in installments. The members of the Achoozo Company of Winnipeg advanced the installments to the company treasurer, even though according to the laws of the company they did not have to do it this way. Secondly the members continued sending the installments to the company treasurer during World War I, though the situation in Palestine was not clear. This was in contrast to *all* the Achoozo Companies of the United States who, although seeing that the Zionistic activities of that project were important, looked upon it as an economical investment, paying the installments to the company during World War I because of the unstable condition of Palestine.

It is clear that we cannot blame the members of the Winnipeg Achoozo Company for their attachment to Sheikh-Muneis, since Ruppin promised it to them at the beginning. In one of his first letters to Winnipeg, it was made to appear as if the PLDC *already owned* the land of Sheikh-Muneis, and was not ready to sell it. In fact they did not as yet own it, and were attempting to ensure that they would have the necessary money to accomplish the purchase prior to entering into negotiations. As we have seen, the "Geulah Company" did the same.

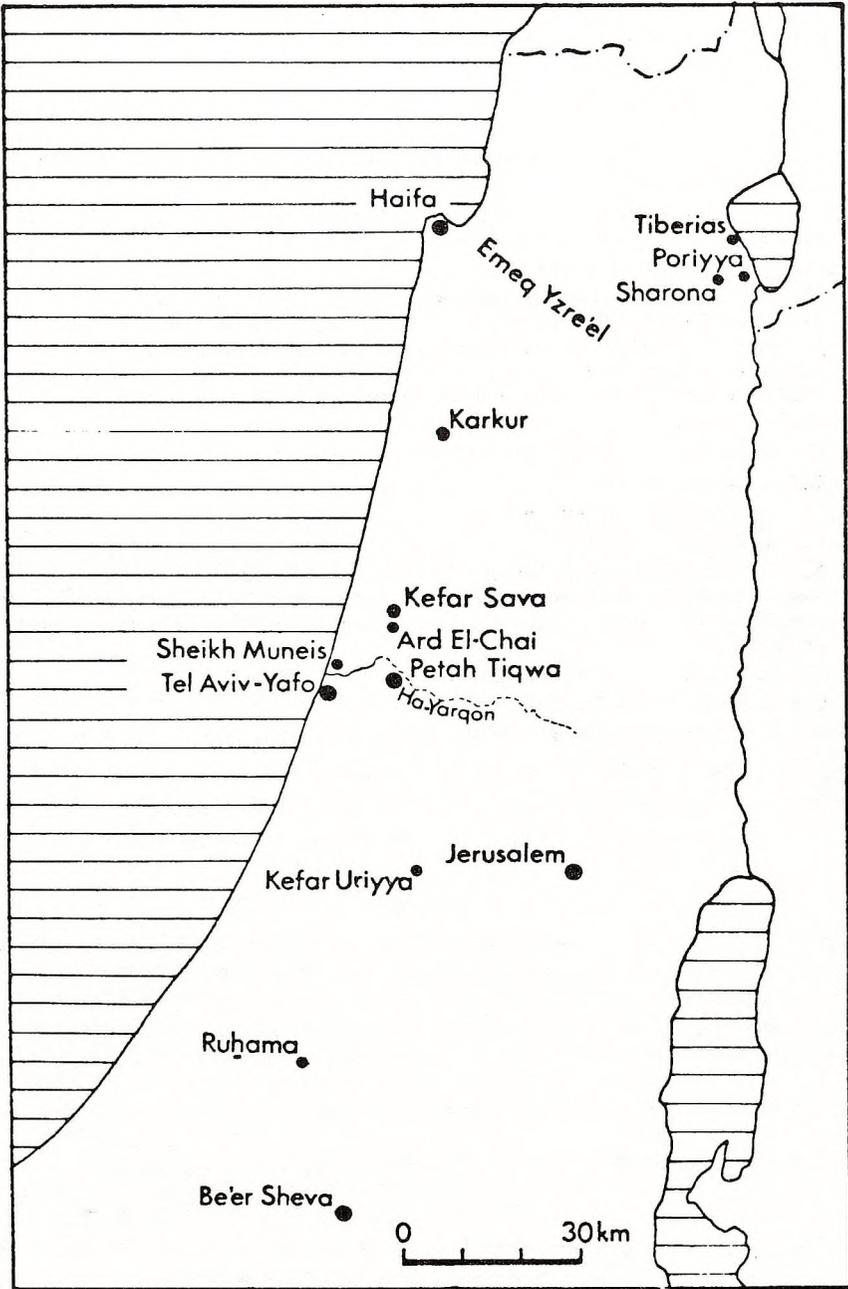
From here we can learn that if *from the beginning* the Winnipeg Company had been offered land which was already owned, the company would probably have bought the land, and set up an Achoozo colony of Winnipeg Jews. The fact that the Winnipeg Company did not buy the land in Palestine was first and foremost the fault of the PLDC.

NOTES

1. The name "Achoozo" is taken from the Bible, "Ba'midbar", 32,22.
2. About that period and the different forms of settlement see: Dr. Alex Bein: "*History of the Jewish Settlement in Israel*," Ramat-Gan, 1971, pp 20-96. (In Hebrew).
3. About the project of the "Achoozo" in general see Y. Katz, "*The Project of the 'Achoozo' in Palestine between the Years 1908-1917*." Jerusalem, 1979. (In Hebrew).
4. The Central Zionist Archive (C.Z.A.) File no. L 18/252.
5. The material is concentrated in the files of the C.Z.A. No. L 18/252, L 18/120, L 18/94/2.
6. The material about the Achoozo Companies of Toronto and Montreal is in the C.Z.A. files No. L/18/120/2, L 18/287, L 18/259.
7. C.Z.A. file No. A 208/1.
8. Ruppin, A.: *Der aufbau des Landes Israel*, Berlin, 1919, p.28.
9. "*Ha'Olam*" (a newspaper) 19.2.14, p.16 (in Hebrew).

10. Ettinger, A. J.: *Jewish Colonization in Palestine, Methods Plans and Capital*. Jerusalem, 1916, pp. 56-57.
Ruppin, A.: *The Agricultural Settlement of the Zionist Organization in Palestine, 1908-1924*, Tel Aviv, 1925 (In Hebrew).
11. C.Z.A. file No. S 15/36.
12. C.Z.A. file No. Z 3/1525.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Ettinger, A. J.: *Companies for Settling Palestine*, Jerusalem, 1920, p. 61 (In Hebrew).
15. C.Z.A. file No. 23/1525.
16. Katz, Y.: *The Project of the Achoozo in Palestine between the Years 1908-1917*. Jerusalem, 1979 p. 1 (In Hebrew).
17. *Ibid.* pp. 45-63, 101-124, 133-139.
18. *The Maccabaeen* (a newspaper) December 1908, pp. 250-251. Goldman was a Zionist Jew who was born in Russia and immigrated to England in the 1890's. In England he was a member of a local Zionist Organization and was sent by them in 1898 to help a settlement in Palestine by the name of "Bnei-Yehuda" in the Golan. After it failed in 1902 Goldman returned to England, and from there he immigrated to St. Louis.
19. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/120/8.
20. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/120/2, 3/1525.
21. C.Z.A. file No. 24/729.
22. "Jewish Chronicle", 10.9.09, p. 12.
23. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/252.
24. Most of the correspondence between the company of Winipeg and the Zionist settlements organizations in Palestine is in the C.Z.A. files No. L 18/252, L 18/256. The first two letters that were sent from the Achoozo Company of Winnipeg to Arthur Ruppin see in appendix No. 1.
25. C.Z.A. files No. 73/1525, L 18/253, L 18/250/3, L 18/2429/3.
26. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/250/2.
27. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/120/4.
28. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/120/4.
29. C.Z.A. file No. L 18/94/2.

LOCATION MAP



"האחוזה"

א פלאן פיר קאלאניזירען זיך אין ארץ ישראל
פיר ניט-רייכע לייטע.

זי פערברייטונג און פערטעפונג פונם ציוניסטישען אידעאל און פון דער צייטס-
טראַגער וועלט-אנטראפונג ביי אלע סטראמען פון פאקט - פון איין זייט און דער
בעדייטנדער פאָרטריט, הן מאַטעריעל הן נייטיג פונם נייטעם ייטוב אין ארץ ישראל -
פון דער צווייטער זייט, האבען ארויסגערופען אַנערנסטען וואונדער ביי זעהר פיעלע
אידען, בעזאנדערס ביי וועניג-בעמיטעלטע, זיך צו ערווערבען א נחלה אין ארץ ישראל
און זיך צו בעוועגען אויף איהר, אויף דעזען וועג ווילען זיי עררייכען א דרייפאכטע
ציעל: ערשטענס, צו שאפען פיר זיך א נעווערע, אונאבהענגיגע עקאנאמישע עקזיס-
טענץ; צווייטענס, צו העלפען אין דער אויסלייזונג און אויפגעבונג פון ארץ ישראל
ניט בלויז מיט קליינע נדבות פון צייט צו צייט, נור מיט זייער נאנצער קראפט און
ענערגיע, פערבינדענדיג זייער אייגענע צוקונפט מיט דער צוקונפט פון ארץ ישראל; און
דריטענס, צופרעדען צושטעלען זייער פערזענליכע בענקעניש נאך א אידישע סביבה
און אריינצובריינגען זייערע קינדער אין יענע אטמאספערע און וועלכער עס פאָרטריט
זיך יעצט דער טיפ פון דעם נייטעם אידען, אין וועלכער דאס אידישע און דאס מעניש
ליבע ווערען צוזאמענגענאסען אין איין הארמאנישעם נאנצעם, און וועלכער עס פער-
שווינדען, ביסליכוריא אבער זיכער, די צווייטענקייט פון נלות און די געפאלענקייט
פון נלות.

צו ווייזען אזעלכע אידען א וועג ווי צו עררייכען זייער יטעהענס ציעל און צופיעל
אנטשטרענגונג - איז דער צוועק פון דעזען בלעטעל.

דער פלאן

פעראייניגטע כחות
די גרונד-אידעע אויף וועלכער דער פלאן איז געבויט איז
די פעראייניגונג פון פיעלע קליינע כחות אין איין גרויסען כח,
קולטיווירטעם לאנד, וועלכע קען באלד מפרנס זיין דעם אייגענדי-
טהימער, געפינט זיך נור אין א פארטיגען ייטוב, אזעלכע לאנד
איז צו טייער פיר דעם ניט-רייכען מאַן, צו קויפען אונקולטיווירטעם לאנד און
בילדען א נייטעם ייטוב איז אונגעענליך פאר א יחיד, דאס קען אויספיהרען נור
א גאנצע גרופע.

אויף אויס-צאוועלען
אבער זאנאר א נאנצע גרופע, ווען זי וויל זיך (זאפארט
איינשאפען) לאנד און באלד זיך בעוועגען דארין, מוז האבען
א גרויסען קאפיטאל, אונזער פלאן בעוועקט אבער צו העלפען
ניט בלויז מענישען מיט פערטיגע קאפיטאלען, נור אויף, און הויפט
זעכליך, מענישען און קאפיטאלען וועלכע קענען אבער אנטשאפען פון זייערע פער-
דיגעסטען א געוויסע סוכמע וועבענטליך אלס א אינוועסטמענט פיר די צוקונפט.

אין אזא פאלל מח עם נעהמען א לענגערע צייט ביז די מיטגלידער פון דער גרופע קענען זיך בעזעצען אויף זייער בארען.

3 דאללער וועכענטליך פיר 10 יאהר

אונזער פלאן איז בערעכענט פיר לייטע וועלכע קענען איינע צאהלען ווייניגסטענס 3 דאללער וועכענטליך, אדער \$140 פער יאהר, און זיינען צופרידען צו מאכען דיעזע איינצאהלונגען פיר צעהן יאהר נאכאנאנד. פון די איינצאהלונגען פיר די ערשטע דריי יאהר וועט אריינקומען נענט נעלד צו קויפען לאנד וועלכע איז נוס פיר אליווען און באנדעלבויער. די ווייטערע איינצאהלונגען וועלען געברויכט ווערען אויף פלאנצען און ערציהען די בויער, וועלכע בריינגען זייערע ערשטע ציר טינע פרוכטען ווען זיי ווערען 6 אדער 7 יאהר אלט. דאן איז די ריכטיגע צייט פאר די מיטגלידער זיך צו בעזעצען אויף זייער בארען.

א זיכערע קולטור

די קולטור פון אליווען און מאנדלען ווערט געראטהען פיר אזעלכע גרופען, ווייל די הכנסה פון דיעזע פראדוקטען איז א זיכערע. זיי האבען א נוטען אבנאנג צו טסע פרייען; און אויף ווייל צו א קולטור פון דיעזע סאָרס קענען זיך לייבט צושאפען אויף טערמיטע מענישען. וועלכע האבען קיינמאל ניט געהאט צו טהאן מיטן דארף און פארמער.

די הכנסה

צו יעצטיגער צייט ווערט געשאצט די הכנסה פון א דונאס (1/4 אקער) לאנד בעפלאנצט מיט פרוכט-בריינגערע אליווען און מאנדלען בויער, אויף דורכשניטליך 30 פראנט יעהרליך. די 14 הונדערט דאללער לויט דעם גרופען פלאן, וועלען געבען דעם מעכטער צו ענדע פון די 10 יאהר, א נחלה פון 70 דונאס, פון וועלכע 64 דונאס וועלען זיין בעפלאנצט מיט די אריבענגענאנטע בויער, איבערלאזענדיג 6 דונאס פיר א הויז, שטאל, א.ו.וו. די הכנסה פון אזא נחלה וועט אלוא ערייכען די סוממע פון אונגעפער 2000 פראנט, וועלכעס איז געד נוג צום לעבען פיר א ארבייטער פאמיליע און ארום יטראל. דיעזע הכנסה ווערט געד וועהנליך געזעכער זאָס מעהר עלמער עם ווערען די בויער.

די קאסטען פון בעזעצען

אין די גענאנטע סוממע פון 1400 דאללער זיינען ניט אריינגעדיינעט די קאסטען פון א אייגענע הויז, בהמות, שטאל, א.ו.וו. עם איז דארום ראטהואם אז יעדער סעמלער זאל צו דער צייט פון בעזעצען זיך האבען וועניגסטענס נאך טרוענד דאללער פיר די גענאנטע איינריכטיגען, אויב ער האָט דאס ניט, וועט ער מוזען אבלייגען זיין בעזעצען זיך אויף דער נחלה אויף נאך דריי יאהר, אונטער דיעזע צייט וועט ער קריגען די הכנסה פון זיין נחלה, 2000 פראנט א יאהר, וועלכעס, צוואמען מיט זיינע געוועהנליכע אבישפארטען, וועט איהם מענליך מאכען צו בעזעצען זיך אויף זיין נחלה אויף א בעקומען אריפן.

נוט געהייסען פון פאלעסטינא-אמט

דיעזער פלאן איז אויסגעארבייטעט געווארען פון כר. שמועל נאלדמאן פון סט. לואיס, וועלכער האט געגרינדעט אין זיין שטאדט די ערשטע אמעריקאנער גרופע אונטערן נאמען „האחחה“ אין 1907. דיעזע גרופע האט זיך געקויפט א שטרעקע לאנד ביים ים נגרת, וועלכע טראגט דעם נאמען „פוריה“ און ווערט יעצט קולטיווירט אונטער דער אויפזיכט פון יפור פאלעסטינא-אמט פון ציוניסטישען אקציאנס-קאמיטעט דר. א. רופין. דער עקספערט לייטער פון פאלעסטינא-אמט, רעקאמענדירט זעהר דיעזען פלאן, און זייט דאן זיינען געגרינדעט געווארען א צווייטע „האחחה“ אין סט. לואיס, א דריטע אין טיקאנא און א פערטע אין ניוארק. זיי פיהרען אלע דעם נאמען „האחחה“ און ארבייטען רעזעלמעסיג.

The Value Of Canadian Jewish History To The American Jewish Historian And Vice Versa*

JONATHAN D. SARNA

Résumé

Dans un essai important écrit par Seymour Martin Lipset pour un public américain, l'auteur de l'essai prétend que "nul ne devrait traiter de l'histoire des Etats-Unis sans traiter également de celle du Canada".

En fait, l'inverse est également vrai et nul ne peut prétendre se lancer dans l'histoire du Canada en ignorant l'histoire des Etats-Unis d'Amérique.

Nous en arrivons ainsi à une situation d'étude des données sur une base de comparaison et de rapports ayant prévalu dans le passé ou à l'heure actuelle. La question en est une d'élargissement de l'horizon que nous nous sommes imposé et il nous faut à tout prix rattraper cette forme de retard.

Dans ce texte qui nous est présenté, l'auteur nous soumet une liste de dix sujets qui se prêtent selon lui à une analyse comparative dont:

— L'exceptionnalisme — Le Leadership — La tolérance des minorités — La démographie, répartition géographique et pouvoir — Les emplois — Langue et fidélité envers l'état qui les reçoit — La structure sous-ethnique — Le Judaïsme Réformateur et le Sionisme — Les mariages mixtes et enfin: l'éducation.

En somme, la méthode comparative en est une fort remarquable. Cependant on doit d'après l'auteur de l'article en faire un usage prudent, compte tenu des nombreux abus qu'il serait facile de démultiplier.

Seymour Martin Lipset, in an important essay written for a United States audience, argued that "no one should work in United States history

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without also dealing with Canada.” Robin Winks, speaking to Canadians, insisted that the reverse also holds true: “one cannot study the history of Canada without knowing United States history.”¹ Both scholars were actually calling for comparative history.² Realizing that there are many questions which historians cannot ask, let alone answer, unless their frames of reference extend beyond the narrow confines of just one country, both urged that Canadian historians and United States historians begin to learn from one another.

Canadian and United States Jewish historians should also begin to learn from one another. We too should be interested in analyzing the unique and common features in the Jewish experience of our respective countries. We too should be determining both what shaped the Jewish communities on either side of our common border, and why they differed. We too should be broadening our horizons, asking new questions, and answering old questions based on fresh comparative data.

What follows is a list of ten subjects which seem to me to lend themselves to comparative analysis. This is a tentative agenda; once begun, the process of comparison should take off in directions of its own. Indeed, one virtue of comparative history lies in the new and fruitful lines of inquiry which, by its very nature, it helps to generate.

1. Exceptionalism. United States Jewish historians generally buttress claims of uniqueness (“America is different”) by pointing to the Revolutionary Heritage and The Bill of Rights. The one divided the United States from Europe, the other made religious liberty a matter of fundamental Constitutional law. Neither factor applies to Canada. Its development has proceeded along an evolutionary path, and it knows of no “wall of separation” between church and state, at least not in the First Amendment sense of the term.³ This opens up a host of tantalizing questions. How have different national experiences influenced United States and Canadian Jewish history? Has church-state separation affected United States Jews in a way that Canadian Jews have not been affected? What has been the impact of a revolutionary tradition upon Jews as against an evolutionary one? What factors nevertheless account for differences between the North American Jewish experience and the European one?

2. Leadership. The Canadian Jewish Congress has been far more influential and important than any United States Jewish organization. Likewise, Canadian Jewish leaders seem both to wield more power and to command

more respect than their United States counterparts.⁴ This phenomenon cries out for explanation. Perhaps Canadian politics shows greater tolerance for "elite accomodation" (compromises made behind-the-scenes at the highest level) than is found in the United States.⁵ Perhaps Canadian Jewish society, like Canadian society itself, retains remnants of hierarchical traditions left over from days past. Differences might also stem from immigration and settlement patterns. As discussed below (#7), Canadian Jewry was, until recent times, more homogeneous than its United States counterpart. The consequences of this would seem to be momentous, extending far beyond the realm of leadership. As yet, however, these consequences have scarcely been studied.

3. Tolerance of Minorities. Once, one might have said that the United States' melting pot ideology stifled Jewish culture, while Canada's social mosaic permitted it to thrive. Recently, however, John Porter has argued that these metaphors are largely hollow, and that both countries pursued similar policies on matters of assimilation.⁶ A comparison of the United States and Canadian Jewish immigrant experiences should be able to shed light on this significant question. We do not know, for example, whether immigrants and natives interacted in similar ways in both countries or not. Did differences in colonization and census policies prove important? How did United States and Canadian Jews react to other national minority groups: are French-Canadian/Jewish relations comparable to Black/Jewish ones?

4. Demography, Geographical Distribution and Power. Canada's Jews have always formed a far smaller percentage of their country's population than United States Jews have of theirs. The density ratio is now about 1:2; in the past it approached 1:5.⁷ Still to be determined is how this difference in density has affected history. Have Jews in both countries used similar strategies to overcome their numerical weakness or different ones? Have United States Jews been able to exert more power than their Canadian brethren? Has communal size had any impact on anti-Semitism? The distribution of Canada's Jewish population also differs somewhat from that found in the United States: has this made any difference? A good comparative study tracing the relationship between community size, distribution, and power in North America might answer these questions, yielding insights of far reaching significance.

5. Occupations. United States Jews entered manufacturing and the professions to a somewhat larger degree than Canadian Jews, who took more jobs, relatively speaking, in the sectors of transportation and trade.⁸

How do we account for this? What does it teach us about Jewish economic habits and values? A rigorous comparative study could teach us much about the factors which influence Jewish occupational choices, driving Jews toward some lines of work and away from others.

6. Language Loyalty. Canadian Jews have remained somewhat more attached to Yiddish and Yiddish culture than have American Jews. Does this merely reflect their later immigration, or are broader cultural factors at work? It is curious that the “ivrit b’ivrit” ideology — teaching Hebrew in Hebrew — took hold in the United States more firmly than in Canada. How can this be explained? Has Hebrew played a different symbolic role in the Jewish culture of Canada than in that of the United States.⁹

7. Subethnic Composition. Canadian Jewry never experienced a “great German period” in the sense in which this term is used in the United States. For this reason, the community is, as we have seen, both more homogeneous and more heavily East European than the United States Jewish community.¹⁰ What impact has this had? What are the benefits of homogeneity as against a more heterogeneous admixture? Did German Jewry affect United States Jewish history in a way that Canadian Jewish history has not been affected? Some believe that the absence of German-Jewish leadership explains *all* major differences between Jews in Canada and the United States. Only through detailed comparison can this theory even begin to be evaluated.

8. Reform Judaism and Zionism. In Canada, Reform Judaism has been weaker and Zionism stronger than in the United States.¹¹ This may again just reflect the absence of German-Jewish influence, but one wonders if other factors too were involved. Have Canadian Jews been more influenced by Great Britain than by the United States in these matters? Has the United States demanded a greater degree of accommodation and outward patriotism from Jews than has Canada? Have the different religious traditions of Canada and the United States affected views on these issues? Many more of these kinds of questions need to be asked. Enlarging the comparative framework to encompass other diaspora lands — particularly Australia and South Africa — would also prove valuable.

9. Inter-marriage. Morton Weinfeld has discovered that Jewish inter-marriage rates are only about half as great in Canada as in the United States.¹² Possibly this proves that the Jewish community is internally stronger than that of the United States, but might it not also suggest that Canadian Jews are less acculturated, more distant from non-Jews? Additional research is warranted. In this regard, it would be interesting to

know if Jewish and non-Jewish attitudes toward intermarriage differ on either side of the border. Is there some relationship between Jewish intermarriage rates in both countries and the intermarriage rates of Catholics and Protestants?

10. Education. Most United States Jews have obtained their elementary and high school education in non-sectarian public schools, where even before the outlawing of school prayer, displays of any form of religion were kept to a minimum. By contrast, Canadian public schools have been far more religiously oriented, particularly in Quebec. Partly for this reason, comparatively large numbers of Canadian Jews have long sent their children to Jewish day schools, something which until recent times was rarely done in the United States.¹³ Has this difference in upbringing had any impact on Jewish-Christian relations and Jewish self-identity in Canada and the United States? Does Jewish education help account for the above-mentioned differences in intermarriage rates? Do community priorities differ North and South of the border? These queries are of more than just historical significance. With the rising number of Jewish day schools in the United States, they have become important to policy makers as well.

In education, as in the other nine categories enumerated, the questions are better than the answers. Hours of research lie ahead; dozens of new hypotheses wait to be born; numerous old ones must still be tested. The phenomena discussed here are only some of the many that merit comparative study.

We need a conference on North American Jewish history: a forum where comparisons and contrasts could be discussed. Such a conference would alert people to the comparative method's enormous potential benefits. If successful, it would demonstrate both to United States Jewish historians and to Canadian ones that they have much to learn from one another. As I have tried to show in preliminary fashion, comparative North American history can yield new lines of inquiry where none previously existed. It can subject old lines of inquiry to more rigorous examination based on new data. It can generate and test theories of development. It can help scholars rid themselves of parochialism and tunnel vision.

In sum, the comparative method is a remarkable method, what Marc Bloch called "a powerful magic wand."¹⁴ It must be used cautiously, with due regard for its many potential abuses. When properly employed, however, it can work wonders. I hope we can put it to work in the service

of North American Jewish history.

NOTES

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2. For recent work in comparative history, see *American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), pp. 763-857; 1055-1166; and C. Vann Woodward (ed.) *The Comparative Approach to American History* (New York, 1968). Examples in Jewish history include Moshe Davis, "Centres of Jewry in the Western Hemisphere: A Comparative Approach," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 5 (June 1963), pp. 4-26; and Morton Weinfeld, "A Note on Comparing Canadian and American Jewry," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 5 (Spring 1977), pp. 95-103.
3. Preston, *Perspectives on Revolution and Evolution*, esp. pp. 268-87; S. M. Lipset, *Revolution and Counterrevolution* (New York, 1968).
4. Harold M. Waller, *The Governance of the Jewish Community of Montreal* (Center for Jewish Community Studies #5, Jerusalem, 1974); Davis, "Centres of Jewry," pp. 7-9.
5. Robert Presthus, *Elite Accommodation in Canadian Politics* (New York, 1973).
6. John Porter, "Melting Pot or Mosaic: Revolution or Reversion," in Preston (ed.) *Perspectives on Revolution and Evolution*, pp. 152-79; H. Palmer, "Mosaic versus Melting Pot? Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States," *International Journal* 31 (1975-6), pp. 488-528; Leo Driedger (ed.) *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic* (Montreal, 1978).
7. Joseph Yam, "The Size and Geographic Distribution of Canada's Jewish Population: Preliminary Observations," *Canadian Jewish Population Studies*, III (January 1974); Sidney Goldstein, "American Jewry, 1970: A Demographic Profile," in M. Sklare (ed.) *The Jew in American Society* (New York, 1974), p. 101.
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9. Joshua A. Fishman, "Language Maintenance and Language Shift: Yiddish and Other Immigrant Languages in the United States," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, 14 (1969), pp. 12-26; Nathan H. Winter, *Jewish Education in a Pluralist Society* (New York, 1966).
10. Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jewish Immigration to North America: The Canadian Expertise (1870-1900)," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 18 (June 1976), pp. 31-41; Lloyd P. Gartner, "North American Jewry," *Migration and Settlement; Proceedings of the Anglo-American Jewish Historical Conference* (London, 1971), pp. 114-27.
11. Albert Rose (ed.) *A People and Its Faith* (Toronto, 1959); Michael Brown, "The Beginnings of Reform Judaism in Canada," *Jewish Social Studies*, 34 (1972), pp. 322-42; Samuel B. Hurwich, "Zionism (Canada)," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 16 (1971), pp. 109-11; Stuart Schoenfeld, "The Jewish Religion in North America: Canadian and American Comparisons," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 3 (1978), pp. 209-31.
12. Morton Weinfeld cited by Schoenfeld, "Jewish Religion in North America," p. 224; Moshe Davis, "Mixed Marriage in Western Jewry: Historical Background to the Jewish Response," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 10 (1968), pp. 177-220.
13. Schoenfeld, "Jewish Religion in North America," pp. 221-23.
14. Marc Bloch, "Toward a Comparative History of European Societies," in Frederick C. Lane and J. C. Riemersma, *Enterprise and Secular Change* (Homewood, Ill., 1953), pp. 494-521.

The Brantford Jewish Community, 1881-1911

SADIE STREN

Résumé

Le propos de l'auteur de l'article est de vouloir dans celui-ci mettre l'accent sur la Congrégation Juive de Brantford, son influence en matière de vie juive ainsi que la résurgence de cette communauté.

Dans une introduction qui rappelle l'histoire des Juifs de Pologne et de Lithuanie, l'auteur n'oublie pas de souligner à quel point les Juifs en étaient réduits. Pendant l'époque allant de 1880 au début 1900, il y eut tant de répressions comme le mentionne l'auteur:

- forcer les jeunes juifs de 10-12 ans à faire l'armée ou
- l'immigration. (choix de plusieurs).

La plupart des Juifs qui vinrent s'installer à Brantford arrivèrent désargentés, sans connaissance de l'anglais et peu d'aptitudes leur permettant de gagner leur vie dans une société industrielle. Mais ils avaient une richesse: la tradition. Une volonté de vivre dans l'adversité et la sécurité: le noyau familial. Plusieurs d'entre eux furent instruits en hébreu, certains avaient une éducation séculière également en dépit des restrictions qui leur étaient faites. Le choix qu'ils firent fut motivé en ce que la région ressemblait de beaucoup à celle qu'ils avaient laissée derrière eux.

Au plan social, des témoignages de lettres, des documents démontrent de quelle manière ils furent si bien traités — Brantford le Pays Doré — représentant un lieu de liberté, de paix et de chances d'avenir.

Puis l'auteur de l'article fait une énumération de citations venant étayer les propos qu'il a auparavant avancés. En ce qui concerne les premières familles juives venues habiter Brantford l'auteur de cet article nous fait une énumération succincte mais cependant il couvre la période allant de 1881 à 1913. Puis, dans une seconde phase distincte de ce qui précède, l'auteur se penche sur la congrégation de Brantford, sa vie son évolution et les tracasseries multiples qu'il y eut. Ceci n'empêcha pas les membres de la congrégation d'acquiescer un édifice communautaire et religieux le 1^{er} juillet 1915, la synagogue actuelle fut érigée en 1948.

Les problèmes cependant furent nombreux surtout en ce qui eut trait à

l'observance religieuse, aux décès, aux bar-mitzvah et pour la cacheroute.

Vers la fin 1940 la communauté juive de Brantford fit parti de façon totale, à la vie sociale, politique et économique de la ville. La congrégation juive de Brantford connut ses débuts au cours de la période allant de 1881 à 1911. Cette communauté dût tout acquérir à la force de ses poignets et assumer les services nécessaires permettant à la communauté de prendre forme et d'être viable: services religieux, synagogue, cimetière, éducation en hébreu pour les enfants etc. . . . Brantford fut en ce sens la "Golden Medina" ce "Pays Doré" ce "Pays de Rêves" où la liberté de choix furent des notions que purent acquérir ces Juifs venus de pays où régnaient les pogroms.

THE SOURCE OF IMMIGRATION

In discussing the Brantford Jewish community from 1881-1911, my main purpose is to set the scene for the emergence of the most important influence on Jewish life in our city — The Brantford Jewish Congregation.

The Jews who came to Brantford were a minute segment of the largest exodus of Jews since the time of Moses. They came by the hundreds of thousands from the 1880's through 1914. They came predominantly from eastern Europe, and their goal was America.

Why did they come, from that area, at that time, and in such large numbers?

None came from Western Europe because the French Revolution, which began in 1789, caused France to lead Europe in granting dignity and human rights to the Jewish people. "Wherever the liberating French army went, it singled out the Jewish community for a symbolic demonstration of the concrete meaning of the revolution's ideals."¹

Unfortunately, for our people, Napoleon's army was stopped by the Russian winter from bringing its influence of equality to eastern Europe. Eastern Europe, at that time, was under the domination of Russia, and included Poland and Lithuania. The Czars, under the guise of piety, capitalized on medieval superstition, ignorance, and fear of the Jews, as a means of inciting *their* people against the Jews — as scapegoats — to divert their downtrodden, poverty-stricken people from their *own* plight.

Bad as this had been, conditions for the Jews in Russia during the 1880's and through the early 1900's were such as could have meant their total annihilation. It was a period of repression, oppression and periodic pogroms. "Pogrom" is a Russian word whose literal meaning is destruc-

tion and devastation: in practice, it meant systematic, government-instigated local massacres directed against Jews.

Had they been willing to give up their religion, the Jews could have continued to live in the only homeland they knew. "And while life in Russia was a trial, 'to a worm in horseradish, the horseradish is sweet.'"²² But that "sweet" land offered only the alternatives of death or conversion. The most heartless form of conversion practiced by the Czars was that of forcing Jewish boys into the army as early as 10 or 12 years of age. The final alternative was the one many chose — emigration.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PIONEERS WHO CAME TO BRANTFORD

These, then, were the Jewish people who arrived eventually in Brantford — the same people who had trembled at the sound of the screaming, looting, raping, burning Cossacks; the same people restricted in education and choice of livelihood; the same people prohibited from free choice of movement and place of residence; and the same people who were permitted merely to exist, or were even massacred *because* they were Jews.

Most arrived with little or no money, speaking no English, and with few talents for earning a living in an industrialized society. But they brought with them a wealth of tradition, a will to live under adversity, the security of the family, the life-sustaining strength of the co-operative character of the Jewish people, and their religion. It is true too, that while many were well educated in Hebrew, some had a secular education also, in spite of the restrictions placed on Jews desiring an education.

WHY BRANTFORD?

The physical environment in the Brantford area was similar to that of the land from which they had come. But the social and political environment! What a welcome difference! Here they were accepted and respected, and allowed the opportunity to fulfill their basic needs and their highest aspirations. Brantford was certainly the *Goldena Medina* (The Golden Country) about which they had dreamed — a country of freedom, peace and opportunity.

A granddaughter of Isaac Simon (Mrs. Leah Jacobs Notkin) wrote to me: "I believe my grandparents were one of the first Jewish families in the area and greatly respected as 'people of the Old Testament' . . . my mother told me of friendships with the Massey, Cockshutt, Minore and Beatty Families . . . their doctor was Dr. Digby who was a particularly kind and wonderful friend."

Esther Nusbaum Paisner (daughter of Meyer Nusbaum), wrote: "Our relationship with Brantford as a whole was beautiful. My everyday friends were all gentile. No problems. My father and mother were highly respected . . . didn't know what antisemitic problems were until I moved to Toronto."

THE EARLY FAMILIES

From my research, it appears that the first Jews in Brantford were Hiram Simon and his family, and his brother Isaac and his family.⁴ From 1881 [c], when the Simon family arrived, until the end of the century, more Jewish families may have come to Brantford, but I can find no records of these early pioneers. There may have been a Myers family because a Jacob Myers lived on Balfour in the 1883-1886 city directory, and because a young man, Abe Myers, married Lena Simon, a daughter of Isaac, in 1895.⁵ That was the first Jewish wedding in Brantford. By 1899, the Simons had left.

Jewish families came to Brantford in the greatest numbers from the turn of the century until 1914, when the outbreak of World War II stopped the flow of European immigration. From records and interviews it appears that these early families had come to Brantford by 1914.

By 1907: Simon, Abraham Rosenfeld, Louis and Sam Henkle,⁶ the Allens, Rabbi Backer, Isaac Lunenfeld, S. Moldaver, Meyers (was Tainsky), Fred Strenkovsky, Max White, Wm. Gazer, Shears, Smoklers and others. Isaac Lunenfeld's daughter, Eva, born October 18, 1904, was the first Jewish child born in Brantford.

By 1911, these families are recorded: Corsonskys, Max Harris, Leon Lazarus, Marks, Morrisons, Nadels, Nobles, Sam Nyman, Paruchnik, Louis Rapaport, Stemeroff, Smucklers, Louis Shalit, Nussbaums, Benjamin Zipper, Joseph Lipovitch, Jacob Lutvak, David Katz, Rabbi Gringorten, Losevs, Louis, Shalit. There must have been others.⁸

By 1913, we find: Sam Fox, Kassirers, Sborovsky (later changed to Sky), and Ben Hoffman.⁹

THE CONGREGATION

There is no record of the number of Jewish people in Brantford by 1907, but, religious services already had been held for a number of years. These early services were held in the homes of the Jewish families. But by 1907, the number of congregants attending services had grown to a number too large to be accomodated in individual homes, so it was decided to use an upper hall on George St. between Dalhousie and Colborne, opposite the

market square. This was the first public Jewish religious service, and marked the official date of the founding of the Brantford Jewish Congregation.¹⁰

The 50th anniversary issue of the "Brantford Expositor", published July 1, 1927, mentions as leaders in Jewish religious activities in 1907 S. Moldaver, M. Rosenfeldt, Louis Henkle, F. Strenkovsky, Isaac Lunenfeld, and Rabbi Backer, who was in charge of services.

By 1911, religious services were held in the old Conservative Hall on the south corner of Dalhousie St. and west of King St.¹⁰

The next significant date was October 13, 1911, when the Congregation was incorporated as the Brantford Hebrew Association. On July 1, 1915, a building was purchased at 33 Palace St. which was remodeled to become the first synagogue in Brantford. And on February 13, 1947, property was purchased on which the present synagogue was built by 1948.

At no time, then or since, did we have a Jewish population over 300.

THE EARLY BRANTFORD JEWISH COMMUNITY: ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY

Economically, it wasn't easy at first, as is true of any immigrant group seeking refuge in a new land. It was essential that they first earn a living. Many of the men were peddlers, either on foot or with a horse and wagon. A few opened stores selling furniture and clothing, some peddlers eventually also opened stores. A number of these early business establishments became the nucleus of some of the finest in Brantford, like Nyman's,¹⁴ Hendles,¹⁵ and Dominion House Furnishings (Whites).¹⁶ Some peddlers and junk dealers went into secondary materials on a larger scale and their businesses flourished as Brantford flourished (Gazers, Strenkovskys, Rapport).

The Allen family theaters are an important part of Brantford history itself, as well as an aspect of Jewish enterprise in Brantford. The Allens came from Bradford, Pennsylvania, and opened a movie theater in Brantford, The Theatorium, in 1906, which was the third built in Canada (the others were in Montreal and Toronto), and eventually built a chain of theaters across Canada and in parts of the U.S.¹⁷

Socially, the Jews were a close-knit group (most of the time), working together (in fairly close harmony), to provide for their common needs: religious,¹⁸ social,¹⁹ and humanitarian. This aspect was important to newcomers who needed assistance either financially or in becoming successfully integrated into the community. Families who were already es-

tablished here often gave shelter, advice, financial assistance, and other help, until the newcomers were able to find a home of their own and become gainfully employed.²⁰

THE EARLY BRANTFORD JEWISH COMMUNITY: PROBLEMS

Earlier, I called Brantford, the “Goldena Medina”, but I didn’t say it was perfect. There definitely were problems related to religious observance.

Weddings, apparently, were no problem. The wedding of Sarah Rosenfeld to Jules Allen, in June, 1910, as reported in the *Brantford Expositor*, must have been an outstanding social event. Two hundred guests attended the wedding in the Conservatory of Music, the Dufferin Rifles Orchestra played for the dancing and crowds gathered outside to watch the guests arrive in their luxurious gowns. But Rabbi Jacobs of Holy Blossom Synagogue in Toronto had to be brought in to officiate, and the food was catered — I imagine it was kosher.²¹

Bar Mitzvahs must have presented problems at first. Dr. Norman Simon, grandson of Isaac, said that his father lived in Hamilton for the year preceding his Bar Mitzvah, for religious instruction. Later, rabbis who lived in Brantford provided religious education.

Deaths, besides being a loss to the family and the small Jewish community, must have created difficulties, because it wasn’t until June 8, 1912 that a plot of land was purchased to be used as a Jewish cemetery. From records in the cemetery office, the first Jewish burial was in 1912 for Jack Salvansky; and the next, in 1914, for Sadie Sborovsky. Later, the family changed its name to Sky.

Kashruth must have been a serious problem as all kosher supplies had to be brought in from Toronto. Leah (Simon) Notkin wrote: “At one time the meat arriving during the summer from Toronto was tainted and the whole family fell ill. Dr. Digby insisted either they eat *traif*, or have serious health problems, so grandfather began to slaughter. He brought in a *Shoichet*, Mr. Ripstern from Detroit and learned the magic skill of “Kosher Killing”. Esther (Nusbaum) Paisner wrote that later: “Once a week meat came into the Harris Grocery Store where there was always a mad scramble — never enough liver to go around.” As my own husband ruefully remarked about those early days, “they ate chicken a lot.” The *Shoichet* left in 1923.

Of the women who wrote to me who were youngsters during the early years, none mentioned anti-semitic sentiments in the city.

The men, however, remember being called “Kikes” in derision and in friendship by their classmates and playmates. One person everyone remembers in this respect, is Abie Feldman, a youngster who lived on Richmond St. “He was an athlete and a ‘scraper’. No one ever called the kids ‘Kikes’ when he was around, or they’d wind up on the sidewalk.” (Quote, Jack Stren.)²²

Mostly, however, I was told that “the Jews stayed away from everything, so they had no problems.” This was the trend, I gather, until the late 1940’s, from which time the Jewish community became an integral, active, and important part of the social and political, as well as the economic, life of the city as a whole.²³

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from the scene I have set, we can see that the story of the Brantford Jewish Congregation had its beginning during the years between 1881-1911. It is evident that while the early pioneers concentrated first on earning a living, they also maintained unity for mutual assistance and pleasure; planned for or established Jewish institutions such as religious services, a synagogue, a cemetery, Hebrew education for the children, etc.; made provisions for Kosher foods; and gave modest aid to Palestine.

Saul Bellow, the Pulitzer prize winner, wrote in his recent book, *To Jerusalem And Back*: “The Jews because they are Jews, have never been able to take the right to live as a natural right.”

In this respect, too, I feel that Brantford was in truth the “Goldena Medina”. Here our people found freedom of speech, freedom to worship God in their own way, freedom from want, freedom from fear, and one more freedom — the freedom to live.

In the unfolding of the story of the Brantford Jewish Congregation, some of the players were “stars”, some were “bit” players, and some were merely the audience — critics.

NOTES

1. Nathan Ausabel, *Pictorial History of the Jewish People*, Crown Publishers, Inc., N.Y., 1961.
2. Ands, Manners, *Poor Cousins*, Fawcett Publications, Ltd., Greenwich, Conn., 1972.
3. *Brantford Expositor*, Oct. 11, 1913.
4. Letters from Leah Jacobs Notkin, granddaughter of Isaac Simon.
5. Oral history: Sam Nyman.
6. *Brantford Expositor*, July 1, 1927.
- 7 Brantford City Hall Records.

8. *Brantford Expositor*, Oct. 11, 1913, Oral History.
9. *Brantford Expositor*, July 1, 1927.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Articles of Incorporation.
12. Deed to the property at 33 Palace St.
13. Legal document to property at 50 Waterloo St.
14. "Brantford Expositor Souvenir Number," July 1, 1927.
15. Brantford, Ont. City Directory, 1914.
16. *Ibid.*, 1914.
17. *Brantford Expositor*, July 1, 1927, Oct. 11, 1952, Letter from Mrs. Gurston Allen, daughter-in-law of Barney Allen.
18. *Brantford Expositor* articles re: appeal for funds for a synagogue, Oct. 11, 1913.
19. *Hadassah Minute Book*, Oral History.
20. *Brantford Expositor* article re: appeal for funds for a synagogue, Oct. 11, 1913. Oral History.
21. *Brantford Expositor*, June 22, 1910.
22. In my research, I had found slight evidence of anti-semitism. Besides, in all the reminiscences by my father-in-law (Fred Strenkovsky) about his life in Brantford from his arrival in 1906, he never mentioned any anti-semitic problems.
 You can imagine my shock when I read in the microfilmed April 7, 1914 issue of the *Brantford Expositor* that on April 6, 1914, a by-law was introduced by Ald. Pitcher to the Brantford City Council providing for the setting apart of William St. as a residential district. After questioning by Alderman G. A. Ward, the true purpose of the by-law was revealed — to block the erection of a synagogue.
 As reported by the *Brantford Expositor* on April 7 and 21, 1914, Ald. Ward and Ald. W. Sutch argued valiantly on behalf of the Jewish Congregation; but Ald. Pitcher and a number of other aldermen opposed the building of a synagogue on William St. with blatantly prejudiced anti-foreign, anti-Jewish statements.
 The problem was apparently resolved diplomatically by the leaders of the Jewish community at the time when they must have withdrawn their decision to build a synagogue on William St. because we find that on July 1, 1915 a building was purchased at 33 Palace St. on the corner of Albion St. which is but one block away and parallel to William St. This building was used as a synagogue until 1948 when the Jewish community began holding services at the present synagogue at 50 Waterloo St.
23. Minutes of the Sharon Chapter of Hadassah from its inception on Jan. 2, 1918.

A Canadian Footnote To The Holocaust

A Review Essay of “DEEMED SUSPECT — A Wartime Blunder”

ERICH KOCH

Methuen, Toronto 1980

Reviewed By: Rabbi Erwin Schild

Résumé

Nous sommes à Londres en Angleterre le 16 mai 1940. L'invasion allemande bat son plein. Lorsque la rafle à l'échelle mondiale fut complétée 30,000 réfugiés de l'Europe Nazie se trouvèrent derrière les barbelés des camps d'internés de Grande Bretagne.

Très peu de Canadiens, sont conscients de l'histoire de presque mille ex-internés qui se sont établis au Canada et qui firent des contributions étonnamment riches envers leur nouveau pays. La présence de ce groupe alors méprisé, laissa un impact remarquable sur la vie économique, religieuse, académique et culturelle du Canada.

L'auteur montre comment en temps et lieu les autorités canadiennes perplexes furent contraintes à prendre conscience d'une triste réalité.

L'avantage toutefois de l'auteur Erich Koch sur l'étude de Paula Draper est que l'auteur du livre a eu recours à des souvenirs personnels et à des enregistrements sur bandes magnétiques ainsi qu'à des documents de l'époque.

L'explication fondamentale de la raison motivant le pourquoi d'une situation aussi absurde qu'obscène et qui dura si longtemps constitua l'échec de l'entendement public et de celui des Gentils en général: Echec à comprendre le Juif.

A propos de “The story of internment is a footnote to the Holocaust”, l'auteur de l'article fait une brève comparaison entre sa position et celle qu'adopte Erich Koch. Puis suit un long développement.

London, England, May 16th, 1940. The German invasion of the Low Countries and France was in full swing. Deeply worried by the catastrophic news, I had just eaten the usual frugal breakfast in the dining room of the Yeshivah Torath Emeth and was about to return to the Beth Hamidrash, the Study Hall, a few blocks away, when two police officers called for me. After scrutinizing my Alien Registration documents to establish my identity and status, they put me under arrest.

Within hours, all Yeshivah students who like me had German or Austrian citizenship were similarly rounded up, leaving behind only a depleted remnant, students of East European origin. When the nationwide round-up was over, 30,000 refugees from Nazi Europe were behind the barbed wire of British internment camps.

Thus began for me a bizarre chain of events. It altered decisively the course of my life and determined my personal geography. That Canada became my home and the native land of my children and grandchildren turned out to be the direct result of my being interned as an “enemy alien” in war-time Britain.

The strange story of the internment of refugees and of the role Canada played in unwittingly assuming custody of some of them has remained one of the best-kept secrets of the Second World War. Very few Canadians, Jewish or Gentile, are aware of the background of the nearly one thousand ex-internees who eventually settled in Canada and made an amazingly rich contribution to their new country. The presence of this group, once despised as “the scum of Europe”¹ by its warders, left a remarkable impact on the academic, religious, cultural and economic life of Canada.

At long last, after nearly 40 years of obscurity, the story is out. In 1978, this journal published an excellent two-part study of the subject by a young Toronto historian, Paula Jean Draper.² In 1980, there appeared the book we are reviewing: “DEEMED SUSPECT — a wartime blunder”. The author, Eric Koch, a former internee himself, is a distinguished writer and producer whose long and creative career with the CBC might serve as a fine example of the contribution which members of this group have made. As the result of the publication of this full-length book, Toronto film-maker Harry Rasky has started work on a documentary devoted to the same subject.

Koch’s book concentrates on the fortunes of the 2,290 civilian internees who were shipped by Britain to Canada for safe-keeping. Koch is brilliant and perceptive when he describes the round-up of the refugees against the

background of the fear which swept Britain in anticipation of an imminent German invasion. He convincingly documents his thesis that the presence in a threatened British island of so many thousands of German and Austrian refugees created a virtual paranoia among a panicky British public habitually predisposed to xenophobia. He examines in detail how Canada was persuaded after some hesitation to relieve the British of the burden of guarding and feeding "dangerous" enemy civilians and prisoners-of-war and how in due course perplexed Canadian authorities were forced to the realization that they had been misled. Try as they might to preserve the convenient fiction, they could not forever insist that the ear-locked Hassidim and downy-cheeked Yeshivah students were dangerous Nazis.

In the prefatory section of the book,³ the author acknowledges his debt of gratitude to Paula Draper who "excavated much useful material". This is quite correct and proper, but not adequate. The catch-all prefatory acknowledgment does not dispense with the need to indicate in the text or by way of footnotes the many particular instances in which Koch appears to cite or utilize the documentary material unearthed by Draper's diligent research in governmental archives and military files. A comparison of Draper's study and Koch's book reveals a definite dependence of the latter on the former as far as documentary background and historical outline is concerned.

Both Draper and Koch made extensive use of a second type of source material: the personal recollection, diaries, notes, and correspondence of ex-internees. Both writers conducted scores of personal interviews and tape-recorded their subjects.

Of course, the advantage which Eric Koch enjoyed and which makes his book unique is his ability to dip into the pool of his own memory. His reactions to the mental and physical hardships of internment, his introspective insights into his emotional experiences, are his most valuable and distinctive source. While it is to be hoped that Draper's sensitive study will be made available eventually to a larger audience, we must applaud Eric Koch for being first to share his story with the wider Canadian public and beyond.

The autobiographical advantage, however, also exacts its price. It is difficult, under the best of circumstances, to combine a first-person eyewitness account with the balanced detachment of objective scholarly research. In this instance there is an additional complication: the history of internment moves on multiple tracks. The internees were shipped to

Canada in the early summer of 1940 on board several ships and kept separately in different camps whose population was moved about, merged, and separated as the requirements of the Canadian authorities mandated. The flow of the story, therefore, divides into several parallel streams so that the narrative sequence is a little difficult to follow. Thus, while Eric Koch and I were both interned at the same time and victims of the same misfortunes, our paths never crossed until we met in Toronto many years later. Koch attempts to present in similar fashion and detail both the part of the story he witnessed and the part he did not. However, his account remains uneven and choppy and the narrative flow is impeded by apparent redundancies. Koch the historian inhibits Koch the eyewitness. He could have created a book of far more gripping literary power if he had given free rein to his dramatic instincts and concentrated on writing a first-person account of the events in which he participated. With his literary and dramatic skill, Koch could have fashioned his pain and his joy, his frustrations and victories, his quest for freedom culminating in his creative career, into a fascinating autobiographical account. The general reader — and the student of history — would have relished it.

All the same, there is much in the book to enjoy.

Eric Koch paints a colourful canvas of life in internment camp. He depicts physical conditions which varied from camp to camp ranging from unacceptable squalor in makeshift accommodation to austere comfort in proper army huts. The trauma of internment did not stem from physical hardship as much as from psychological anguish. To be deprived of freedom produces terrible anxieties, but it was absurdity of the situation which inflicted the most cruel hurt and produced frustration, despair, and rage. We shall return to this theme.

The picture of camp life includes many positive elements. A sense of community emerged among the internees and made life not merely bearable but even meaningful and rewarding. The author relates the creation of a highly creditable educational system, an impressive achievement under the circumstances. The wealth of talent present in the camps facilitated cultural and recreational activities of a high order.

Eric Koch seems to find the non-Jewish internees especially fascinating. Among these were some intriguing characters, such as Count von Lingen who was a grandson of the German Kaiser, Hans Kahle, who fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War, and “Putzi” Hanfstaengl, once an intimate of Hitler’s and very much a mystery man. The book contains

a noteworthy and moving account of the ordination of an interned theology student as a Catholic priest. The non-Jewish camp population was composed of political exiles and fugitives from Germany, as well as a number of German civilians with outspoken Nazi sympathies who were confident of a German victory in the war. Among the anti-Nazis were many Communists, and there were also Communists among the Jewish internees. This mixture made for lively camp politics and for a bitter conflict among some factions. The ramifications of this struggle soon involved the camp authorities and the directorate of internment operations.

Eric Koch follows these political machinations with strong interest and in vivid detail. In my judgment, his coverage of these matters is disproportionate to his coverage of Jewish life in the camps. Jews certainly were a large majority in the total camp population.

The author may be handicapped by the selectivity of his personal experience. The proportion of non-Jews was higher among the internees who came over on the ship *Ettrick* than in my group, which sailed on the *Sobieski*. Koch was more familiar, therefore, with the political strife, which he may have witnessed himself, while his knowledge of our vibrant Jewish camp community is second-hand. I, on the other hand, was unaware of political tension in the camps where I was confined, but remember with great fondness the true Jewish life which we developed. It would be untrue to say that Koch did not research the religious camp community or that he ignores the "Jewish" material he found. But it is fair to say that he does not know, and certainly did not experience, the inside story.

Koch often refers to the "kosher group". That was a convenient label to identify a wide range of observant Jews. In due course, because of the refusal of these men to eat non-kosher food, the camp authorities found it convenient to recognize this group as a distinct entity, and to keep them housed together through all the moves and changes to which the internee population was subjected. Within this kosher group was another identifiable entity which Koch occasionally mentions: the Yeshivah students, of which I was one. Koch points out the political importance of the kosher group: they helped convince the Canadians that these people were not German spies after all, though initially some officers thought that black hats, beards and earlocks were a really clever German espionage disguise.

The group of Jews observing strange customs and rituals, and demanding all kinds of crazy privileges, did not only create confusion and bewilderment in the Canadian military mind of the time but also uncorked

the evil genie of anti-Jewish prejudice. They were stereotyped as “dirty” (they were not!) and “undisciplined” (true!) and had to endure a great deal of humiliating and offensive comment.

To me, the greatest positive aspect of the internment history was the creation of a valid, functioning and meaningful Jewish community within the camp. The Yeshivah students did not only continue their own studies but set up study opportunities for others. There was religious worship daily, and joyous celebration of the festivals. Some students and also non-students studied, taught and followed the high standards of Jewish interpersonal ethics, and elevated what could have been a rough prison life style by means of their gentle and unselfish deportment. While striving to refine their own conduct and hone the edge of their moral character through the quiet practice of a religious discipline, they set a high tone for the entire observant community.

“Deemed Suspect” is silent on this score. Koch does document the difficult bitter struggle for Shabbat observance against the adamant insistence of the camp commandant that only Sunday was to be free from work, but he examines mainly the political aspect. There is no sense in his account of the Kiddush Hashem, the self-sacrifice of those who defied the military authority not as a political statement but out of a spiritual commitment.⁴ Similar fortitude was needed in the matter of kosher food which eventually was generously provided thanks to the assistance of Rabbi Kraus in Fredericton and the Jewish community on the outside. The reader of “Deemed Suspect” must wonder how kosher food was obtained. And how did they get the books necessary to carry on a high-level Yeshivah program?

It may be too much to ask that a book, written for the general public, concern itself with some of the lighter aspects of the religious life which relieved the over-all seriousness of internment and its many frustrations. We certainly had fun, Jewish religious fun. Our community included fervent Hassidim and coldly intellectual Mitnagdim; modern Westernized orthodox Jews rubbed shoulders — and sensitivities — with “Ostjuden”, mutually suspicious and quaint; the “Yekkes” with their stiffly formal, punctillious style of Jewish observance clashed in a good-natured way with the informality of the Yeshivah spirit; there were Jews praying in Ashkenazi and in Sefardi rites; there was the “official” minyan, with its carefully guarded German-style cantorial tradition and duly elected officials, competing with the “underground minyan” which lacked “official sanction” but was popular and faster. The various overlapping factions

dispensed and endured a lot of good-natured ribbing which added a note of precious humour and gaiety. Surpassing all the divisions, there was a real sense of unity and community, and the all-embracing joy of Jewish life.

Don't try to find in Koch's book the ordeal of Tish'a B'Av 1940. After a two-day train ride from Camp T in Three Rivers we arrived on this fast-day at Camp B in the New Brunswick bush. We walked long miles from the railway track in the broiling sun, carrying our belongings. Famished and thirsty we arrived at the camp, which was in a state of unfinished primitivity. One water tap had to suffice to slake the thirst, and to tempt many fasters to break their fast at least with a few gulps of water.

Our stay at Camp B ended on a similar unfortunate note: over our vigorous protests, we were transported from New Brunswick to Camp I in Quebec on Shabbat.

Nevertheless, many positive experiences are associated with Camp B. A picture that is deeply engraved in my memory is that of the beautiful huge Sukkah we built in the fall when the camp was already well established and organized. I can still see it covered with a few inches of fresh snow which for a few frosty days decorated uniquely the fir branches of the roof.

Alas, Koch never knew "Yankel der Chapper" (ch as in chutzpah), "-Jack the Catcher" in English! He was the sergeant in charge of the work detail. By that time, Yeshivah students were exempt from outside work so as to give them the opportunity to continue their studies, but whenever there was a shortage of workers, Yankel der Chapper would ignore the agreement and scour the barracks to "chap" some Yeshivah students. Of course, we had received the alarm by then and would be hiding, with varying degrees of success. However, I rather enjoyed the occasional tour of duty in the wintry New Brunswick forest! O mother dear, if you could only see your precious sheltered boy swinging a double-edge Canadian lumberjack's axe, or balancing a sizeable tree on his shoulder to carry it to the clearing! Koch includes a beautiful short story, entitled "The Rabbi and the Axe", in his description of camp life.

How funny it was when pungent fumes of mysterious origin began to permeate the atmosphere of the barrack! The inspection officer and sergeant-major sniffed the air with suspicion and puzzlement. We were making wine for Passover and had hidden the fermenting raisin brew between the ceiling and the roof, where it was never discovered.

One passionate hope possessed the minds of the interned refugees: freedom. To be released from the bizarre confinement — that was the

consuming desire. The quest for freedom, agonizingly slow, deferred, and frustrated again and again, is therefore the dominant dramatic theme of Koch's book. First, to rid themselves of the stigma of enemy aliens, and to be recognized as refugees, innocent victims of a horrible mistake! Koch and Draper record the painful struggle against prejudice, anti-Semitism, bureaucratic obfuscation, political and military obduracy, which all blended into an inflexible insistence on treating the internees as the dangerous men of Nazi sympathies the Canadian authorities had expected and undertaken to guard. It took all the persistence of the camp spokesmen, their friends on the outside and embarrassed British authorities, to obtain after more than a year official "refugee status" for the internees. While that was only a first step toward freedom, it meant the amelioration of some of the most humiliating and obnoxious conditions of internment.

The recognition of internees' refugee status made their continued confinement all the more incongruous and frustrating. The British authorities offered release from internment to those who agreed to return to Britain and to volunteer for the non-combatant Pioneer Corps in the British Forces. A rather small number accepted the offer. Others preferred to wait for the success of the efforts of relatives abroad to arrange for their emigration to the United States or other havens. However, these efforts failed completely, primarily because no way could be found to make prisoners eligible for visas.

The majority of the refugees clung to the hope that eventually there would be freedom for them in Canada, a hope as stubbornly cherished by the internees as it was negated by the Canadian authorities. The resolution of this clash of wills — or was it the clash between the irresistible force of destiny and the immovable structure of an old order? — is the climax of the events in Koch's book.

During one of the last days of our internment in Britain, as we were being readied for transfer overseas, our camp commander on the Isle of Man gave us a pep talk. He suggested that once we reached our as yet secret destination overseas, we might soon be released and allowed to settle in a new home. How wrong he was! I remember very clearly the devastating reply of one of our first camp commanders in Canada of whom we inquired as to our chances of being allowed to remain in Canada. Koch records his unforgettable words. "There is only one way you will be allowed to stay in Canada," he said cheerfully. "Six feet under the ground!"

That remark was indeed one of the most forthright formulations of the official attitude. The well-documented record of the anti-Semitism so prevalent in Canadian officialdom makes painful reading both in Draper's study and Koch's book. The military as well as the immigration authorities had no desire to circumvent the obstacles which Canadian policy had placed in the path of Jewish refugees seeking admission. It took many months of persistent pressure to erode this stone-wall of prejudice. Fortunately the compassionate benevolence of Canadian friends, Jewish and Gentile, provides a warm and comforting contrast to the callous malevolence of the officials. Today, when the acceptance and equality Jews enjoy in Canada is taken for granted, it remains a frightening and sobering experience to read how only a few short decades ago official communications between military and civilian authorities abounded with instances of unabashed anti-Semitism.

Eric Koch does not come to a definitive conclusion in discussing the British government's moral responsibility for the injustice of internment. After all, Britain saved the lives of these refugees by opening her doors to them when no one else would. So what, if in a moment of fright and confusion she turned on her wards and treated them as potential collaborators with the very enemies from whom she had rescued them? The subtitle of the book, "a wartime blunder", exculpates the British.

The reader, and certainly the victim, is left to wonder whether the internment of the refugees was not something much more sinister. Was it really an unavoidable inconvenience imposed on a few thousand innocent individuals when the British panicked at the spectre of a fifth column supporting an expected invasion? Was it a reasonable military precaution which regrettably caused some minor hardships for people who had been saved from major ones? Or was it a cynical attempt to hide the bungling incompetence of a defeated military establishment behind the display of zeal in removing an alleged source of treachery? Was it indeed a pardonable blunder of the military bureaucracy, or had anti-Semitism something to do with it?

The answer is: all of the above! The truth is compounded of many different elements. However, the basic explanation of the reason why an absurd and obscene situation could last so long, and an ironic blunder could be perpetuated for over two years, was the failure of the official mind, and of the Gentile mind in general, to understand the Jew.

Out of this conviction of mine grows my most serious criticism of Eric Koch's book.

Koch's personal perspective differs from mine. He came to Britain after only two years in Nazi Germany. At the time of his internment, he had spent five years — a good portion of his young life — in England. While I was experiencing the worst of my seven years under the Nazis, Koch was a student at an English Public School and at Cambridge University. I arrived in London just one year before internment, with fresh memories of the persecutions and the trauma of a month in Dachau Concentration Camp. Is it surprising that I must interpret my internment differently?

The internment of refugees from the Nazis must be treated as an event in Jewish history. That sense is missing in "Deemed Suspect". Koch describes "a wartime blunder", a sideshow curiosity playing during the Great War. He misses the meaning. Our internment was a minor event, dwarfed by the Holocaust — but it is a paradigm of Jewish experience! The Holocaust is unique, *sui generis*; but internment is typical: Jews suffer because the world does not bother to understand them. British authorities and Canadian officials are confounded because Jews cannot be defined by the same rubrics as "normal" people: nationality, citizenship, religion, ethnic origin.

The chronicles of internment speak of events which befell Jews, nebbich! Look at them, just barely escaped from the hunter only to be caught in a Kafkaesque trap! Compared to the catastrophe from which they had escaped, their sufferings are light, but their plight reveals the depth of Jewish anomaly and existential absurdity. Into this depth, Koch would not descend. The happy ending — release in Canada — is also a typical Jewish salvational pattern, as old as the story of Purim. It is a Jewish story, and that is its fascination.

This perception is not just a subjective interpretation of the facts. It is borne out by rational analysis, as we shall see.

The internment of enemy civilians under decent conditions is an accepted humane procedure. It was practiced in the First World War. In the Second War, Canada also interned its German and Italian nationals,⁵ exempting refugees, however. Inevitably, interning civilians of enemy nationality is conducive to bureaucratic blunders and "mistakes", especially if carried out in haste. The extreme to which it leads is effectively illustrated by Koch through the example of the Rev. Somerville.⁶ This venerable gentleman had been arrested while preaching in his church, despite the fact that his three sons were officers in the R.A.F. and he

himself a veteran of the First War. Unknowingly, born to his parents on a vacation in Germany, he had by a legal fluke remained a German national!

Aside from these obvious extremes, which I am certain were speedily corrected, the internment of non-Jewish German nationals, at least as a temporary safety measure, was quite defensible. Could one be certain that an individual was a genuine anti-Nazi and not a potential collaborator? And could not even an anti-Nazi remain a German patriot, hoping for a German victory? After all, the famous Pastor Niemoeller, World War I U-boat commander, who was arrested by the Nazis for defying their regime, volunteered for submarine service while in concentration camp! Had he been able to flee to Britain, as other anti-Nazis did, could the British have been sure of his loyalty to their side? Only the Jews had no choice. They could not possibly be German sympathizers, nor have any residual loyalty to the German cause or hope for a German victory. The British would have survived their own defeat. If they had made peace with Hitler in 1940 or even if they had surrendered, their nation would still go on. Only for the Jews there was no possible accommodation short of an Allied victory. For them, a German victory meant death; all their hopes for survival were pinned to the Allied flags. They were anti-Nazi and anti-German existentially.

Koch fails to make that distinction. Yes, the internment of genuine non-Jewish anti-Nazis who had fled to Britain was a wartime blunder; the internment of Eric Koch and Erwin Schild and the Hassidic Talmud scholars was a sad Jewish absurdity akin to the Shlemiel joke.

That is the reason why it rubs me wrong to see so much attention given to Von Lingen and Hanfstaengl. That is why it saddens me to find the specifically Jewish dimension largely ignored in the book.

The pain, too, was uniquely Jewish pain, different from any other anguish in the catalogue of emotional torments. To be a Jew locked up as a suspected Nazi has a different quality of anguish from being locked up because of a bureaucratic bungle or asinine law, as was the Rev. Somerville. It is a more horrible nightmare than an ordinary instance of arrest on a false suspicion because of its ego-shattering absurdity. It is different essentially from the anguish of a Jew in a German extermination camp where you know you are in the power of your enemy. It is radically different from the painful shock of the would-be illegal immigrant to Palestine who is apprehended and interned in consequence of a lost encounter with his declared adversary. For all these terrors there are prece-

dents and rubrics in your experience or in your imagination, but not for the infuriating absurdity of our internment.

Another typical Jewish hurt is documented by Eric Koch: Canadian officers in charge of internment camps would have vastly preferred Nazis or patriotic Germans. They deemed them superior in terms of human value to Jewish rabble, and they would have known better how to deal with them. That attitude which was clearly communicated to us hurt our feelings deeply: we wanted the Canadian officers to be our friends; they were fighting our war! What a painful rebuff! But the ultimate insult, and the ultimate failure of the Gentile mind to comprehend the Jew, was the remark of the camp commandant to the effect that these despicable Jews in his charge did not even possess the human decency to love and defend their own native country, Germany, but were treacherously supporting the Allied cause, or at least pretended to! That hurts even when you read it nearly 40 years later. All but one of the camp commandants are now dead, and I can only pray their punishment in Gehinnom is that every day they must read a roster of their former prisoners indicating what happened to them and what contribution they have made to Canada or to another country. A roster like this, painstakingly assembled, is appended to Koch's book as an interesting and remarkable index.

In conclusion, a few general observations.

Why did it take so long for an ex-internee to tell the story?

It may be related to the ambivalence, the many contradictions, in the whole experience. How could you speak of suffering when you had escaped from the Nazi continent, when you knew only too well what your brothers and sisters were experiencing? And how could you help feeling guilty when your contemporaries were undergoing the agonies of a horrible war and the bombs were dropping on London, while you were enjoying the security and the abundance of Canada, even though confined? And yet you bridled at the injustice and wanted to be out there, fighting, too. How could you deplore internment as a terrible waste of two precious years of one's youth when it ultimately meant a new life in Canada? And the very camp experience was a melange of bitter and sweet which still remains difficult to communicate.

Why did I not return to England but prolonged my internment waiting for release in Canada?

Somehow, I had never considered Britain as my ultimate migratory destination. Only the New World, North America, could satisfy my need to shake the dust of Europe off my feet. Even in internment, I was cap-

tivated by Canada, its grandeur, and its lure of freedom. I shall never forget sailing into the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, entranced by the eerie bleakness of Anticosta, the widest rivermouth I had ever seen, so un-European in its vast size. The lonely farms along the endless railway tracks haunted my imagination for many a sleepless night behind the barbed wire. The stillness of the New Brunswick forest suffocated with snow. The plentiful cornucopia of Canadian food even in internment when half a world was starving. The beauty of the Richelieu River and the enchantment of the Fort Lennox — or Camp I — on the Ile-aux-Noix, swimming the river in the summer of 1941 (we were refugees already) and skating on the moat in winter. Even the gruff earthiness of the Veteran Guards who guarded the camps hinted at the kind of a country that appealed to a young man whom Europe with all its “Kultur” had rejected and cast out.

When I was suffering the cruelties of Dachau Concentration Camp in November and December 1939, I made a vow: If I should get out alive, as did not appear very likely, I would never allow any further adversity to depress or defeat me. No matter how difficult a life I might yet experience, it could never bring me so low. I remained true to that vow. It helped me tolerate the insignificant physical discomforts of internment and even the chafing deprivation of freedom. It helped me bear the much more difficult mental anguish, impatience and frustration. On the whole, therefore, internment was a positive experience for me. Above all, it brought me to Canada, all expenses paid! As for the British, nothing they did or could have done to me could have erased my gratitude for saving me from Hitler when the doors to every other potential refuge remained locked.

Canada has more than compensated me for her initial rejection and her hostile indifference to my overtures. The opportunities she eventually offered to this accidental immigrant, to use Draper’s fortuitous phrase, have moved me to yield myself to a true patriot’s love for this precious country. For this privilege, for this country, to keep it glorious and free, I gladly stand on guard!

NOTES

All page numbers refer to “DEEMED SUSPECT”.

1. p. 71.

2. *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. II, no. 1 and 2 (Spring and Fall 1978).

3. p. vii "Acknowledgments".
4. "I will show you Hitler" was the threat of the furious camp commandant.
5. p. 27. The internment of Canadian citizens of Japanese extraction is another matter.
6. p. 20.

Jews: An Account Of Their Experience In Canada

ERNA PARIS

Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980;
203 pp., includes bibliography, notes, index

Reviewed By: Stuart Schoenfeld

Résumé

Ce volume fait l'histoire de ce que fut l'expérience des Juifs d'Europe Centrale venus au Canada depuis 1880. Il envisage trois volets: la signification de l'être Juif canadien, le lieu où ils s'établirent et l'expérience retirée en tant que Juif Canadien.

L'auteur du volume qui remonte depuis la colonisation et l'établissement des Juifs jusqu'en 1970 englobe trois foyers principaux: Québec, Toronto et l'Ouest du Canada. Ces trois principaux domaines ont frappé l'imagination de l'auteur qui se concentre sur certains sujets d'actualité. Dans un premier temps l'auteur fait l'analyse de "The Jews, Quebec and Parliament Hill": Des Harts à la fondation de la communauté juive de Montréal, le tournant de l'immigration du siècle, et, le problème de l'école.

Dans une seconde phase intitulée: "Toronto: the Jewish Left", l'auteur se penche sur les aspects communistes.

La troisième phase: "The Jewish Farmers in the West", est une chronique du bien fondé des colonies de fermiers établies au tournant du siècle.

En épilogue Erna Paris établit les conclusions à propos de ce que fut l'identité juive au Canada au cours des trois générations depuis le tournant du siècle.

At first glance, *Jews: An Account of Their Experience in Canada* appears to promise what academic historians have not yet produced — a social history of the Jews in Canada. A promotional leaflet distributed at York University supports this impression. The leaflet reads, in part,

Jews is a compassionate exploration of the lives of Jewish immigrants, their children and the grandchildren from the eighteenth century right up to the present. What hap-

pened to the thousands of Jewish immigrants who came from Eastern Europe to Canada back in the 1880's? Where did they settle? What was their experience of becoming Jewish Canadians? What does it mean to be a Jew in Canada today? It is a colourful and significant story, but one that is generally little known.

The text, itself, however, readily disclaims any intention of being "a comprehensive social history of the Jews in Canada" (13). While the book moves from the beginning of Jewish settlement to the late 1970's and covers the population centers of Quebec, Toronto and the west, its focus is partial, selective and subjective. Paris writes, "I have concentrated on those periods and events that struck me as most vital and significant" (14).

The first part, "The Jews, Quebec and Parliament Hill", begins with the Harts, the founding of the Montreal Jewish community, the turn of the century immigration, and the school question. It then concentrates on the Canadian response to Jewish refugees before World War II. The Depression, a small but noisy Quebec fascist movement, duplicitous politicians, hostile bureaucrats and betrayed and helpless Jewish politicians and community officials are all presented as part of the story. The first part concludes with a brief chapter carrying the Montreal community from 1945 through 1979.

In the second part, "Toronto: the Jewish Left", the Communist aspect is the centre of attention. The struggle of its Jewish members to remain true to their idealism and to the Soviet Union provides the main issue around which the narrative develops. A subsidiary theme, only partly developed, is the failure of the left to pass on to their children the desire to join and be active in socialist organizations.

The third and shortest section, "The Jewish Farmers in the West", chronicles the handful of farming colonies established at the turn of the century. The radical difference in experiences of different generations provides a theme — the immigrants who arrived from Eastern Europe were full of ideas, without money and ignorant of agriculture; their children grew up isolated in an almost totally Jewish environment; their grandchildren completed the move to the city started by the second generation and live as members of an affluent minority in a relatively tolerant society.

An epilogue contains Paris's conclusions about what has happened to Jewish identity in Canada over the three generations since the turn of the century.

Paris does not present the reader with a rationale for choosing the refugee issues, the Communist Party in Toronto and the Jewish farm

colonies in the West as the “most vital and significant” aspects of the Canadian Jewish experience. To some extent, as a journalist, she was dependent — especially in the first section — on the historical research of others. However, she chose to pursue certain leads and not others, to work with some documentary collections and not others.

In doing so, she was guided, implicitly or explicitly, by a perspective on what Canadian Jewish history should be about. One element of this perspective is the preference for discontinuities rather than continuities. The worlds of the Jewish communists and farmers are all but entirely gone. The worlds created around religious, Zionist and social welfare activities have histories which go back three generations in Canada. They are still very much with us, but they are hardly present in this book. A second element of Paris’ perspective is a reaction of ambivalence and uncertainty about Jewish identity. This reaction forms the basis of the introduction and the epilogue. As well, the individual of Paris’ generation who is given most attention is presented as “confused”, “embarrassed” and having a “growing void” which “an impressive list of personal services to the causes of the Jewish community” has not filled (272). Generalizing, Paris writes of “my generation of assimilated Jews” (15), begging the question of how many Canadian Jews of her generation actually do consider themselves assimilated. A third element of her perspective is a disparaging attitude towards Jewish history. She writes of “moments of triumph that blink light into the darkness of Jewish history like an occasional firefly in the night” (268). This judgement is, at best, *weltschmerz*.

Taken together, these elements fit a clichéd perspective on Canadian multiculturalism. This perspective, as much mythological as descriptively factual, uses a standardized framework in which non-English, non-French immigrant groups are presented as having parallel experiences. When each group comes to Canada, it leaves one hard life for another, suffers as immigrants, agonizes over the worse suffering of those left behind, fights its way to respectability by finding its economic niche, gradually acculturates to mass cultural standards, and yet retains bittersweet memories of suffering and community.

Paris writes from this clichéd-ridden assimilationist perspective. It is her theme, and it shapes the periods and events with which she chooses to deal. Consequently, the subject matter of her book reflects not the subculture of which she writes, but what was fashionable in popular culture in the 1970’s — the search for ethnic “roots”, back-to-the-land romanticism about farmers, and radical chic.

There are, needless to say, other ways of writing about the Canadian Jewish experience. Speisman (1979),¹ for example, proceeds from a completely contrary set of assumptions about what issues are significant. His themes are not acculturation and assimilation but the transmission of a deeply felt cultural heritage and the building of community institutions.

The Canadian Jewish population is small compared to that of the U.S., but among the nations of the world, Canada ranks seventh in the size of its Jewish population. Canada's Jews are growing in number, having a vigorous community life and are significantly involved in world Jewish affairs. They deserve a readable history, placing Canadian Jews in the contexts of both the Canadian experience and Jewish experience — a history sensitive to the pull of assimilation into mass culture as well as to the preservation and modification of tradition. They are still waiting.

NOTES

1. Speisman, Stephen, 1979, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

CONTRIBUTORS

YOSSI KATZ — a graduate student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is pursuing doctoral research into the Achoozo movement.

DR. JONATHAN SARNA — is Bernard and Audre Rapoport Fellow in American Jewish History of the American Jewish Archives and Visiting Lecturer at Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion.

RABBI ERWIN SCHILD — received his M.A. at the University of Toronto, and his rabbinic ordination at Yeshivah Torath Chaim in Toronto, as well as an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. He has been Rabbi of Adath Israel Congregation, Toronto, since 1947.

DR. STUART SCHOENFELD — is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Glendon College, York University, Toronto.

SADIE STREN — is the historian/archivist of the Brantford, Ontario Jewish community. She established the Brantford Jewish community archives.

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