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'Illegal' Corvettes: Canadian Blockade Runners to Palestine, 1946-1949

DAVID J. BERCUSON

Le 19 juin 1946, en matinée, le navire à vapeur *Beauharnois* largua les amarres du petit port italien de Vado, dans le Golfe de Gênes, et mit cap vers le Sud-Est. 1259 Juifs réfugiés en grande partie de Grèce, de Yougoslavie, de Tchécoslovaquie et de Pologne, se trouvaient à bord. Le navire prit le large en dépit des ordres du Gouvernement italien et fila à une vitesse constante de 17 noeuds afin de semer ses poursuivants. Le propriétaire du navire en était l'Agence Juive pour la Palestine qui avait rebaptisé celui-ci du nom de *Josiah Wedgewood* en l'honneur d'un membre du Parlement Britannique qui avait appuyé la cause sioniste dans les années 1930.

En quelques jours, le *Wedgewood* contourna la pointe sud de la Sicile et mit le cap vers l'Est en direction de la Palestine. Il fut intercepté par un destroyer britannique à 150 milles de son objectif.

La côte palestinienne fut perçue le 26 juin et au cours de la nuit, la plupart des membres de l'équipage en escalada le flanc afin d'éviter l'arrestation. Ils furent malgré tout interceptés. Le *Wedgewood* jeta l'ancre dans le port de Haïfa et les réfugiés furent conduits et parqués dans un camp de détention à Athlit qui se trouve à 19 milles au Sud de Haïfa.

Le *Wedgewood* était un bateau que l'Agence Juive et le Mossad possédaient. Le *Wedgewood* ainsi que ses navires soeurs: le *Haganah* le *Gadio* et le *Joséphine Barbara*, furent des corvettes construites au Canada à partir d'un plan standard utilisé par la Marine Canadienne Royale au cours de la Seconde Guerre pour fins de patrouille anti-sous-marine dans l'Atlantique Nord. Ces navires avaient été obtenus de la Corporation des Biens de Guerre du Canada par des agents de la Haganah dans la ville de New York. La marine Canadienne s'était agrandie à partir pratiquement de rien en 1939 pour atteindre le 4ème rang dans le monde à la fin de la guerre.

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En mai 1946, le Cabinet approuva des principes directeurs tracés par Norman A. Robertson, Sous-Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires Extérieures, afin de traiter du problème de la vente des navires et d'autres armes aux pays étrangers. Il recommanda que le Canada se refuse de vendre des armes à tous les pays excepté "ceux tels le Royaume-Uni et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique avec lesquels nous entretenons des relations politiques exceptionnellement étroites ainsi qu'une communauté de défense d'intérêts clairement établis". Le Gouvernement fut dans une gêne politique potentielle pouvant survenir si les armes canadiennes étaient utilisées à des fins non populaires auprès de la nation canadienne. Un mémoire, rédigé par Escott Reid, Sous-Secrétaire d'Etat Adjoint aux Affaires Extérieures en mars 1947, fit mention de plusieurs sortes de conflits qui étaient "répugnants à un grand nombre de Canadiens". Reid mit en garde également contre la vente d'armes à tout pays qui pourrait devenir hostile envers le monde occidental ou dominé par l'Union Soviétique.

La politique canadienne visait à restreindre les exportations d'armes. Cependant, les ventes et exportations des vaisseaux démilitarisés de la marine n'étaient pas touchées par cette politique attendu que de tels navires n'étaient pas considérés comme armes.

En 1945, David Ben Gourion envoya Danny Shind à New York afin qu'il travaille de concert avec Yaacov Dostrofsky, Chef du personnel de la Haganah, responsable de l'opération de New York. Shind et Dostrofsky créèrent un bon nombre de corporations factices qui achetaient des navires. Les navires mettaient cap vers l'Europe, habituellement la France, où ils étaient équipés afin de pouvoir transporter bien plus de personnes que ceux pour quoi ils avaient été conçus. Puis, ils se rendaient dans de petits ports sur la côte française ou italienne où des réfugiés Juifs étaient embarqués. Les réfugiés, restant du Judaïsme européen, avaient survécu au camp d'extermination d'Hitler. Les Britanniques avaient institué une politique en 1939 afin de restreindre l'immigration juive en Palestine à 1.500 personnes par mois au plus. La Marine Royale était responsable de l'interception des navires d'immigrants et les escortait jusqu'en Palestine. Fin 1946, la politique fut changée et des immigrants furent dirigés vers Chypre et placés dans des camps de détention.

La première préoccupation de la Chambre des Communes du Canada fut l'impact potentiel que les navires pouvaient avoir sur les rapports entre le Royaume Uni et le Canada attendu que les sentiments anti-sionistes allaient de plus en plus croissants en ce jour en Grande Bretagne.

À Ottawa, Escott Reid et Hudd considérèrent que l'utilisation de ces navires était plutôt "politiquement gênante" et espéraient que cette situation "ne se ré-

péterait point encore”. Hume Wrong, Adjoint au Sous-Secrétaire d’Etat aux Affaires Extérieures, se demandait quel type d’action pouvait bien être pris sinon demander à la Corporation des Biens de Guerre d’être plus prudente à l’avenir.

Le 25 septembre, un représentant du Haut Commissariat du Royaume-Uni à Ottawa, demanda à Hume Wrong de présenter un aide mémoire sur la question des corvettes canadiennes. Dans ce mémoire, le Gouvernement du Royaume-Uni souligna que le Gouvernement Canadien pouvait aider la Grande Bretagne à traiter d’un “difficile problème Palestinien”. M. Garner, représentant du Royaume-Uni, déclara à Wrong que l’Amirauté avait fourni des informations au bureau des Dominions après que John Holmes du Haut Commissariat Canadien à Londres se soit enquis des rapports du journal. Ce fut donc le Haut Commissariat à Londres qui déclencha l’action et non le Gouvernement de Grande Bretagne. La Chambre des Communes semblait plus préoccupée par le problème des corvettes que ne le fut le Gouvernement du Royaume-Uni.

Etant donné qu’il n’y avait rien que le Ministère des Affaires Extérieures pouvait faire à propos de l’affaire des corvettes déjà en possession de l’Agence Juive, cette affaire mourut de se belle mort quelques mois après. En mars 1947 toutefois, la question ressortit lorsque le Consul Général Canadien à Lisbonne reçut un télégramme énigmatique.

Le Portugal constituait une importante base pour les opérations sionistes en Europe. C’était un terrain de bataille pour les guerres clandestines entre les agents de la Haganah et les Britanniques. Fin février 1947, un groupe de sionistes locaux, dirigé par un certain Phillip Spitzer, négocièrent l’acquisition d’un vieux destroyer américain: l’*Arnprior*, ancré dans un port britannique. Dans la nuit du 16 mars 1947, le Capitaine McLellan, attaché maritime Britannique à Lisbonne et chargé de contrecarrer les agents de la Haganah à propos de l’acquisition du destroyer, reçut plusieurs balles dans le corps. McLellan rescapa de l’attentat et ses assaillants évitèrent l’arrestation. L’affaire de la corvette *Arnprior* fut passablement mystérieuse.

Le Département des Affaires Extérieures passa à l’action. Lorsque la question fut portée à l’attention du Ministère des Affaires Extérieures neuf mois plus tard, le bateau *Arnprior* se trouvait toujours à Halifax. De l’avis de H. O. Moran de la Division Economique du Ministère des Affaires Extérieures, il y avait très peu de choses à faire en la matière.

L’espoir que le navire pourrait être détenu en refusant d’émettre un permis d’exportation, fut perdu lorsque W. F. Bull, Directeur de Département de l’exportation du Ministère du Commerce et de l’Industrie, rappela à Moran que les

navires démilitarisés ne tombaient pas sous la coupe du contrôle de l'export. L'*Arnprior* ne pouvait être détenu en retardant l'émission du permis d'exportation. Cependant, lorsque Moran approcha le Ministère des Transports, il lui fut dit que l'*Arnprior* n'avait jamais été enregistré comme vaisseau canadien.

Reid suggéra que Moran approche la Division Légale des Affaires Extérieures afin d'y chercher conseil de la part du Ministère de la Justice sur la question de savoir si oui ou non le gouvernement Canadien avait le pouvoir d'empêcher un certain Levine de vendre l'*Arnprior*. Moran approcha la Division Légale. Deux éventualités furent examinées: le contrôle par restriction d'enregistrement et, l'invocation de certains principes de droit international qui pourraient empêcher l'emploi illégal d'un vaisseau à la suite d'une vente finale.

Le Sous-Ministre F.P. Varcoe écrivit à Lester Pearson qu'il ne connaissait point de "méthode aux termes du droit du Canada par laquelle un vaisseau (pourrait) être vendu afin qu'il (ne puisse pas) être légalement utilisé pour un dessein certain."

La corvette *Arnprior* ne fut jamais un navire d'immigrants. Pour des raisons qui ne sont pas encore connues, certains avaient perdu tout intérêt envers l'*Arnprior* vers la fin de l'année 1946 ou vers le début de l'année 1947. L'Agence Juive s'orienta vers l'acquisition de navires bien plus grands tel que le *Président Warfield* connu historiquement comme l'*Exodus 1947*.

Quelle que soit la raison, il est clair que ce fut l'Agence Juive et non le Gouvernement Canadien qui laissa l'*Arnprior* à quai à Halifax, attendant d'être utilisé.

L'immigration juive vers la Palestine était "illégal" en ce qu'elle violait les règlements du Gouvernement Mandataire mais elle n'était pas "illégal" quel que soit le sens accepté sur la scène internationale, que ce soit par convention ou en vertu du droit international.

Le Canada n'avait aucune stratégie directe et peu d'intérêts commerciaux dans la région, et, de plus, il n'avait qu'un contact diplomatique des plus minime au Moyen-Orient à cette époque (1947).

A Ottawa, le public Canadien appuyait la Grande Bretagne et fut hostile ou indifférent au sionisme. Il y eut un tollé public énorme contre les sionistes. A cet effet, il fut établi une politique canadienne visant à assurer que l'équipement canadien n'était pas utilisé pour des causes qui répugnaient aux Canadiens.

L'épisode des corvettes "illégal" fut un des quelques épisodes au cours desquels le Canada appliqua une décision de politique substantielle sur la question de la Palestine avant d'accepter d'être membre de la Commission Spéciale des Nations-unies sur la Palestine en mai 1947. Cette décision de tenter — autant

que faire se peut au sein de la loi et du règlement — de rayer l'accès de sionistes à des navires canadiens fut définitivement anti-sioniste dans ses implications. En matière de problèmes concernant la Palestine, la neutralité du Canada manifestait une certaine inclinaison pour la Grande Bretagne.

On the morning of June 19, 1946, the 1,039 ton steamer *Beauharnois* slipped her cable in the small Italian port of Vado on the Gulf of Genoa and headed southeast. Aboard were 1,259 Jewish refugees, most from Greece, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and a mixed crew of Palestinian Jews and American volunteers. The vessel sailed in defiance of the orders of the Italian government and made a steady 17 knots as she tried to elude pursuers. The ship flew the Panamanian flag but the ultimate owner was the Jewish Agency for Palestine which had renamed her the *Josiah Wedgewood*, after a British Member of Parliament who had supported the Zionist cause in the 1930s. In a few days the *Wedgewood* turned the southern tip of Sicily and headed east towards Palestine. Six days out of port she was intercepted by a British destroyer 150 miles from her objective. There was little resistance from the unarmed immigrant ship although the crew dropped anchor several miles from the coast causing a short delay. The Palestine coast was sighted on June 26 and in the night most of the crew climbed over the side to escape arrest. They were intercepted. The next morning the *Wedgewood* docked in the Port of Maifa and the refugees were taken off and trucked to a detention camp at Atlit, 19 miles south of Haifa on the Mediterranean coast.¹

The *Wedgewood* was one ship of a larger fleet owned by the Jewish Agency and by the *Mossad*, the immigration branch of the Haganah, the underground army of the Jewish community in Palestine. The ships were a mixed bag of decrepit coastal steamers, ancient and rusty excursion ships and modern, war surplus, warships. The *Wedgewood* and her sister ships *Haganah*, *Gadio* and *Josephine Barbara* were the fastest and most up to date of the lot. They were corvettes, built in Canada from a standard design and used by the Royal Canadian Navy in World War Two for anti-submarine patrol duty in the North Atlantic. These ships, originally commissioned as the *Beauharnois*, the *Norsid*, the *Owen Sound* and the *Guelph*,² had been obtained from the Canadian War Assets Corporation by Haganah agents in New York City and registered under the Panamanian flag. Their voyages caused acute embarrassment to the Canadian government.

By the end of World War Two, Canada had built more than one hundred thirty corvettes,³ small sub-chasers. The Canadian navy, in fact, had expanded

from almost nothing in 1939 to fourth largest in the world by war's end. Now Canada had little use for this armada and surplus vessels were handed over to the War Assets Corporation for disposal. It was clear to the government that some general policy was needed to guide the sale of ships and other arms to foreign countries, and in May 1946, the cabinet approved guidelines drawn up by Norman A. Robertson, the Under Secretary of State of External Affairs, to deal with the issue. He had recommended that Canada refuse to sell arms to all countries except "those such as the United Kingdom and the United States with which we have exceptionally close political relations and a clearly established community of defence interests."⁴ The government was particularly sensitive to potential political embarrassment that could occur if Canadian weapons were used in a cause unpopular to the Canadian people. A memorandum to the cabinet drawn up by Assistant Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, Escott Reid, in March 1947 noted several types of conflicts thought to be "repugnant to a large number of Canadians" including pacification of "rebellious colonial peoples," a civil war in China and civil disputes in Latin America. Reid also warned against sale of weapons to any country which, by change of policy or government, might become unfriendly to the western world or dominated by the Soviet Union.⁵

Canadian policy was designed to restrict arms exports, but sales and exports of demilitarized naval vessels were not covered since such ships were not considered weapons. This allowed the Haganah to acquire the four former RCN ships relatively easily. The purchase was directed from Haganah headquarters in New York which operated from the Hotel Fourteen in Manhattan. In 1945, after the end of World War Two, David Ben Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine, sent Danny Shind, a young Palestinian, to New York to work with Yaacov Dostrovsky, Chief of the Haganah Staff, who was in charge of the New York operation. Shind and Dostrovsky, using money donated to the Jewish Agency primarily by American Jews, established a number of dummy corporations which purchased ships. To avoid suspicion⁶, each company would acquire only a few ships — the Canadian corvettes were bought by the United Ship Corporation.⁷ The vessels were then registered under foreign flags of convenience, manned by Palestinians and volunteers from the United States and Canada and sailed to Europe, usually to France, where they were outfitted and equipped to carry far more people than they had ever been designed to hold. The ships then proceeded to small ports on the French or Italian coast where Jewish refugees were loaded aboard. The refugees came from the displaced persons camps in Europe which held much of

the remnant of European Jewry which had survived Hitler's extermination camps. The British, responsible for the Palestine mandate, had instituted a policy in 1939 to restrict Jewish immigration into Palestine to no more than 1,500 each month. The Royal Navy was charged with the task of intercepting the immigrant ships and escorting them to Palestine. At first immigrants were simply let free and their numbers discounted from the monthly quota. In late 1946 the policy was changed and immigrants were shipped to Cypress and placed in detention camps.

On July 30, 1946, the London *Times* carried a story which detailed the exploits of the immigrant ship *Haganah*. She sailed from a French port with about 2,600 displaced persons and had been intercepted off the Palestine coast the day before. The ship was rather well known in Royal Navy circles. On a previous occasion it had rendezvoused at sea, outside Palestine territorial waters, with a battered Turkish tramp steamer, the *Akbel*, and had transferred its entire load of immigrants to the older vessel. The *Akbel* made for the Palestine coast and was seized; the *Haganah* escaped scot free.⁸ The *Times* story noted that the fleet of immigrant ships in the Mediterranean outnumbered the Royal Navy in the area and added that the collection included "corvettes purchased in Canada."⁹

Five words buried on page 4 of the *Times* spurred the Canadian High Commission in London to action. The Commission sent a note of inquiry to the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa, which in turn, approached the War Assets Corporation for information. War Assets confirmed that a number of ships had been sold to "Jewish dealers in New York" and were currently operating under the Panamanian flag.¹⁰ The Department passed this information to the High Commission and noted that the Canadian government had "no control over [the] resale of these vessels."¹¹

The Canadian High Commission in London had interested itself in this case even though the newspaper reports of the Canadian ships were brief and there had been no editorial comment. Indeed, there had been no representations of any kind made to the High Commission about the corvettes by United Kingdom authorities. The prime concern at Canada House was over the potential impact the ships might have on Canadian-UK relations since anti-Zionist feeling was growing stronger by the day in Britain. Acting High Commissioner Frederic Hudd was, therefore, not satisfied with the disclaimer that Canada had no control over the resale of the corvettes. He thought the Canadian government had "a responsibility to look a little farther."¹²

In Ottawa, Escott Reid, then of the Political Division, agreed with Hudd. He

considered the use of these ships “politically embarrassing” and hoped that War Assets would do “all in their power” to see that this situation “did not happen again.”¹³ Hume Wrong, Assistant Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, wondered what action could be taken except to ask that War Assets be more careful in future.¹⁴ He approached War Assets, pointed out the sensitivity of these sales and asked the Corporation to “watch the sale of corvettes and frigates and do anything [possible] to lessen the likelihood of Canadian ships being resold for use in the smuggling of immigrants into Palestine.” He also asked the corporation to advise External Affairs when sales were made to allow the Department to better prepare for incidents of this kind in the future.¹⁵ J. H. Berry, president of the Corporation, agreed.¹⁶ On September 25, a representative of the United Kingdom High Commission in Ottawa called on Hume Wrong at the Department of External Affairs to present an *aide memoir* on the subject of the Canadian corvettes. In the memorandum the UK government passed along information obtained from the Admiralty on the four Canadian ships and noted that the Canadian government could help Britain deal with the “difficult Palestine problem” if it would “take any steps open . . . to ensure that [Canadian] ships are sold to purchasers who intend to use them themselves for legitimate traffic. . . .” Mr. Garner, the UK representative, told Wrong that the Admiralty had provided the information to the Dominions Office after John Holmes, at the Canadian High Commission in London, had asked about the newspaper reports.¹⁷ It was, therefore, the Canadian High Commission in London which had initiated action, not the British government. Canada House seemed more concerned about the corvettes than the UK government was. This perhaps explains why the corvette issue was never formally discussed between Frederic Hudd and the UK government and also why Canada House inquiries at the Dominions and Foreign Offices had discovered no excitement over the matter.¹⁸ Canada House had shown itself more Catholic than the Pope in leaping at an opportunity to insert itself into the matter of Palestine immigration.

Since there was nothing External Affairs could do about corvettes already in the hands of the Jewish Agency, concern over the issue died down completely over the next few months. It was revived in March 1947, with the receipt of a cryptic telegram from the Canadian Consulate General in Lisbon:

Information has been received that negotiations are proceeding for the sale of corvette “Arnprior” to buyers in Portugal . . . through Block of Montreal. If this is so an investigation is suggested. . . .¹⁹

The Consulate General had received its information from the British Embassy in Lisbon which kept a close watch on Zionist activities in Portugal. The Em-

bassy had dug up the news from what they believed to be an absolutely reliable source at the end of “a luxurious dinner attended by freeflowing drinks.”²⁰ Portugal was an important base for Zionist operations in Europe. It was a battleground for clandestine warfare between the British and Haganah agents that only needed a ‘Third Man’ theme to qualify as the subject for a Hollywood thriller. In late February 1947, for example, a group of local Zionists headed by one Phillip Spitzer, a Rumanian Jew, negotiated the purchase of an obsolete American destroyer anchored in a British harbour. The British embassy in Lisbon uncovered the transaction and blocked the sailing even though the ship was, or had been, American property. On the night of March 16, 1947, Commander McLellan, British naval attaché in Lisbon, and responsible for foiling the Haganah on the destroyer deal, was driving towards Lisbon when two cars pulled alongside and several shots were fired at him. McLellan escaped injury; his assailants escaped arrest.²¹

The Canadian connection came through two Rumanian Jews, Moses Frades and Stefan Aldianu, “both well known Zionists and Communists” in the words of Lester S. Glass, Acting Canadian Consul General in Lisbon, who were negotiating for the purchase of the Castle Class corvette *Arnprior* for \$100,000 through Lewis Levine of Montreal. The ship was berthed in Halifax and Levine was using a Montrealer named Block as his sales agent. Glass reported that Frades owned 90% of a small local watch importing company that did about \$50,000 a year in business, while Aldianu’s method of living was “rather a mystery.” Glass concluded from the nature of Frades’ business and Aldianu’s lack of funds that they were “merely cover for Zionist interests.”²²

Alerted, the Department of External Affairs swung into action. Inquiries to the Department of Transport elicited the information that Levine had approached the War Assets Corporation in January 1946 seeking information about sales conditions for war surplus corvettes. He had told War Assets that he intended to operate his purchase “in the Mediterranean area” and wanted to be allowed to register his ship where he pleased.²³ In early February War Assets offered Levine, acting on behalf of Diesel & Precision Works Limited of Montreal, a Castle Class corvette for \$80,000 subject to the stipulation that proper conversion for civilian use be carried out in Canada. (The ship was already demilitarized but was still not suitable for civilian traffic.) Levine could either carry out the work in Canada at a cost of about \$80,000 or pay War Assets an additional \$15,000 for permission to re-sell the ship abroad. Levine put down a deposit of \$8,000 and accepted the conditions of purchase with the understanding that he would have “freedom in the use of the flag”. The balance of

\$72,000 was paid on April 12 and Levine took delivery of the ship,²⁴ tied up on the north side of Pier 4 in Halifax, on June 11, 1946.²⁵ Nine months later, when the matter was brought to the attention of External Affairs, the ship was still berthed in Halifax; the conversion work had not yet been carried out and the additional \$15,000 for permission to sell overseas had not been paid.²⁶

External had caught the horse just this side of the barn door. The sale had been completed but all of the provisions attached to it had not been carried out. In the opinion of H. O. Moran, of the Economic Division of External, there was little anyone could do if Levine chose to complete the work or pay the extra money to sell abroad. However, the ship still lay in a Canadian port and that offered some hope Ottawa could do something, perhaps in the way of "administrative delays,"²⁷ to prevent it from leaving Canada.

Hope that the ship could be detained by refusing to issue an export permit was dashed when W. F. Bull, Chief of the Export Branch of the Department of Trade and Commerce, reminded Moran that demilitarized ships were not under export control.²⁸ Thus, the *Arnprior* could not be detained by holding up an export permit. Bull suggested that the Department of Transport might have some power to act through their control over the transfer of ship registrations, but when Moran approached Transport he was told the *Arnprior* had never been registered as a Canadian vessel.²⁹ This meant that no registration transfer would be necessary and that the Department of Transport could not stop the *Arnprior* from sailing by blocking such a transfer. Moran was running out of options.

If Moran was not already aware of his own troubles, Escott Reid reminded him further in a memorandum drawn up April 29. He noted the British request of September 1946, that the Canadian government help prevent the use of Canadian ships in the immigrant traffic. "It would clearly be most regrettable" Reid wrote, "if another corvette were to be purchased by Zionist interests for the same illegal use." Reid suggested that Moran approach the Legal Division of External to seek advice from the Department of Justice on the question of whether or not the Canadian government had the power to stop Levine from selling the *Arnprior* for use "in the illegal carriage of immigrants to Palestine." If the answer was no, then the only thing left was to ask War Assets and any other government departments concerned to apply a policy of "administrative delays".³⁰

Moran approached the legal division. Two courses were examined; control by restricting registration and the invocation of some principle of international law which might prevent illegal use of a vessel following completion of sale. Neither offered any promise. There was little law on the matter and few prece-

dents. The legal division thought the problem was “practically insoluble” and could only suggest that the ship be delayed as long as possible, thus making “the proposition completely unprofitable to the party concerned.”³¹ This was a reference to the daily berthing charges that had already piled up on the *Arnprior* and which could only increase as long as the ship was tied up at Pier 4.³² The Department of Justice confirmed the Legal Division’s view. Deputy Minister F. P. Varcoe wrote Lester Pearson that he knew of “no method under the law of Canada whereby a vessel [could] be sold so that it [could not] be legally used for a certain purpose.”³³

Even though there was little or nothing the Canadian government could do about the *Arnprior*, the *Arnprior* did not sail. Levine did not complete the conditions of the transaction and was therefore not in possession of a valid Bill of Sale. Until he had such a Bill of Sale he could not register the ship in his name. Further, by late May 1947, he had not paid the \$15,000 to War Assets that would allow him to sell the ship abroad.³⁴ By then considerable wharfage charges had built up on the corvette. J. H. Berry, War Assets president, instructed officers in the Ship Sales Division in Montreal to hold Levine’s \$15,000 payment, should it be made, until his office or Moran had been notified.³⁵ Pearson wrote Canada House in London that they would be told if Levine showed up with the money.³⁶ Eut Levine did not show. Although the *Arnprior* was towed from Halifax to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, on December 8, 1947,³⁷ nothing further was heard about the ship until late 1949 when Levine approached the Department of Transport with a request for information on any liens, leases or mortgages held against it.³⁸ Transport referred the matter to War Assets which contacted External. External replied that they were no longer interested in the matter.³⁹

The corvette *Arnprior* never became an immigrant ship. The cause lay not with the Canadian government. It tried to do all it could to prevent the *Arnprior* from sailing but it was, in fact, powerless to do anything. The reason lay with Levine and those he represented. For some reason still unknown, they had lost interest in the *Arnprior* sometime in late 1946 or early 1947. Perhaps other, more important, matters diverted their attention. The Jewish Agency was turning from small blockade runners, with limited passenger carrying capacities, to larger ships such as the Chesapeake Bay excursion steamer *President Warfield*, known to history as the *Exodus 1947*, which attempted to land more than four thousand refugees in Palestine in the summer of 1947. Later that year the *Pan Crescent* and *Pan York* sailed from Black Sea ports carrying approximately fifteen thousand refugees, most from Rumania. Perhaps also the money necessary

to free the *Arnprior* and pay the wharfage fees was more needed elsewhere. Whatever the cause it is clear that it was the Jewish Agency, and not the Canadian government, which left the *Arnprior* sitting idly alongside a Halifax dock.

It was not that External Affairs, supported by other branches of the Canadian government, did not try. From the moment news reached Canada House that former Canadian ships were being used to smuggle immigrants into Palestine, there seems to have been an automatic and unspoken assumption that it was Canada's duty to take action in support of British policies. Not once in the entire affair did anyone in External publicly take issue with Britain's determination to keep all but a handful of European Jewish refugees out of Palestine. No one questioned Britain's right to impose such a policy under the terms of the Palestine mandate originally granted by the League of Nations. Jewish immigration to Palestine was 'illegal' in any accepted international sense either by convention or international statute.

Canada's reaction reveals much about Canada's Palestine policy in the immediate post-war period. Canada had no direct strategic and few commercial interests in the region. Canada's total trade with the middle east was a small fraction of Canada's international trade and Canada did not import a single drop of middle east oil up to the end of 1947.⁴⁰ Canada had only minimal diplomatic contact in the middle east in this period. The sole Canadian diplomatic representative there was the Canadian Trade Commissioner in Cairo. (Canada opened an embassy in Turkey in 1948). With few interests in the region, and fewer contacts, Canada was content to follow the British lead.

Canadian diplomats in London were close to the centre of the controversy and well acquainted with the men who made Britain's Palestine policy. There was definite sympathy for Britain at Canada House and understanding of the British predicament. The Canadians were reluctant to pass judgement on Britain. Robertson, in the opinion of John Holmes, believed there was no right or wrong in the situation. Britain's immigrant blockade was a tough and difficult policy that Canada should not subvert without good reason. The diplomats in Canada House were also somewhat put off by what they viewed as the virulence of American Zionism.⁴¹

In Ottawa there was another factor to consider. The Canadian public supported Britain and was hostile or indifferent to Zionism.⁴² There was a tremendous public outcry against the Zionists, some of it unabashedly anti-semitic, whenever news of the latest Irgun action hit the newspapers. Hanging unarmed British sergeants or blowing up the King David Hotel may have been effective in driving the British out of Palestine but created thousands of enemies

in a Canada still overflowing with anglophilic solidarity from the war. In this connection it was established Canadian policy to ensure that Canadian equipment was not used in causes repugnant to Canadians.⁴³

The episode of the 'illegal' corvettes was one of the few instances wherein Canada made a substantive policy decision on a Palestine matter prior to accepting membership on the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine in May 1947. That decision, to attempt as far as possible within existing law and regulation to bar Zionist access to Canadian ships, was definitely anti-Zionist in its implications. On Palestine matters, Canada's neutrality had a pro-British tilt.

NOTES

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4. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Privy Council Records, RG 2/18/Vol. 86, File M.30.2. "Export of Armaments (including Ammunition and Implements of War) to Foreign Governments." March 7, 1947.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Leonard Slater, *The Pledge* (New York, 1972), pp. 78-79.
7. Department of External Affairs Files (DEA), File 8903-C-40C, Pearson to Robertson, October 19, 1946.
8. *The Times*, July 30, 1946; Ehud Avriel, *Open the Gates! The Dramatic Personal Story of 'Illegal' Immigration to Israel* (London, 1975). pp. 293-298.
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11. PAC, Department of External Affairs Records, RG 25 A12, Vol. 2093, Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs to Acting High Commissioner, August 10, 1946.
12. DEA, File 8903-C-40C, Hudd to Wrong, August 13, 1946.
13. *IBID.*, "Memorandum to Mr. Wrong", August 15, 1946.
14. *Ibid.* (Pencilled notation on memo.)
15. *Ibid.*, Wrong to Berry, August 17, 1946.
16. *Ibid.*, Berry to Wrong, September 3, 1946.
17. *Ibid.*, Pearson to Robertson, October 19, 1946.
18. *Ibid.*, Robertson to Pearson, October 17, 1946.
19. *Ibid.*, Glass to St. Laurent, March 18, 1947.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, McCourt to Nicholson, April 16, 1947.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, Birchard to Berry, April 16, 1947.
26. *Ibid.*, Moran to Reid, April 26, 1947.

27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, Bull to Moran, April 3, 1947.
29. *Ibid.*, Moran to Berry, April 15, 1947.
30. *Ibid.*, "Memorandum to Economic Division," April 19, 1947.
31. *Ibid.*, "Memorandum to Mr. Hopkins Re: Canadian corvette 'Arnprior'," May 19, 1947.
32. *Ibid.*, Moran to Reid, April 26, 1947.
33. *Ibid.*, Varcoe to Pearson, June 17, 1947.
34. *Ibid.*, Whitehead to Roger, May 20, 1947.
35. *Ibid.*, Berry to Birchard, Saunders, Cruickshank, July 9, 1947.
36. *Ibid.*, Pearson to Wilgress, July 2, 1947.
37. *Ibid.*, Whitehead to Pearson, December 18, 1947.
38. *Ibid.*, Levine to Superintendent of Marine Services, October 20, 1949.
39. *Ibid.*, Heenev to Coughlin, October 31, 1949.
40. PAC, Department of Trade and Commerce Records, RG 20, Vol. 957, file 7:990; for oil imports see Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Publication 65-007 *Imports By Commodities*, December 1947, pp. 88-89.
41. Interview with John W. Holmes, November 21, 1980.
42. Zachariah Kay, *Canada & Palestine: The Politics of Non-Commitment* (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 93-111.
43. PAC, RG 2/18/Vol. 86, File M.30.2 "Export of Armaments (including Ammunition and Implements of War) to Foreign Governments," March 7, 1947.

Stories of and about
Goldbloom, Goldblatt, Greenspon and Gross,
“The Four G’s” of the Class of
The McGill Medicine Class of 1916
As Told by Harold N. Segall of the Class of 1920

Au cours de l’année 1750, The American College Fraternity fut fondé. Il le fut apparemment sur émulation des Burschenschaft Societies des universités allemandes. L’atmosphère générale était à l’élitisme. En Amérique, la première société fut un club littéraire mais plus tard ces centres de rassemblement étaient des “foyers hors du foyer” pour ses membres. Il y eut un début fait dans ce domaine par des étudiants Juifs en 1898. L’auteur et le stimulateur autant que l’inspirateur en fut le rabbin Gustav Gotheil, dont le fils fut professeur de langues sémitiques à l’Université Columbia. 14 étudiants composèrent le groupe fondateur et étaient des étudiants en licence du Séminaire Théologique Juif de New York. Herman Abramovitz qui vint quelques années plus tard à Montréal occuper le poste de Rabbin de la Synagogue Shaar Hashomayim, était au nombre de ces 14. Le Rabbin Abramovitz devint l’un des premiers membres honoraires du chapitre “Upsilon” de l’Université McGill, ce qui mène à penser peut être correctement, qu’il ait pu inspirer les cinq grands de McGill à faire une demande de charte. Le nom de ces personnes est: Nathaniel S. Fineberg (loi 13), Harry Goldblatt (médecine 16), Alton Goldbloom (médecine 16), A. W. Muhlstock (loi 13) et Edgar C. Levine (médecine 13).

* * * * *

Goldbloom: Le fondateur de cette dynastie canadienne fut Samuel Goldbloom qui vint au Canada de Lithuanie à l’âge de 17 ans. Les trois enfants qui naquirent avant Alton moururent tous de maladie infectieuse. Les croyants diraient que le 4ème enfant survécut car à sa naissance il fut nommé Alter, prénom qu’il rendit un peu plus drôle en le changeant pour celui de Alton. Alton Goldbloom avait hérité de son père la jovialité un esprit vif et aiguisé ainsi qu’un grand tal-

* Address delivered at the meeting of the Montreal Jewish Historical Society on Thursday, March 8, 1979 at The Jewish Public Library.

ent cabotin. A l'âge de 9 ans, Alton fréquenta le Cheder et acquit une plus intense connaissance de l'hébreu que celle acquise d'habitude après les leçons d'hébreu à l'école de Montréal.

Après avoir longuement voyagé et retraversé l'Atlantique, la famille s'établit à Worcester, Massachusetts, où Alton fit son secondaire et noua une camaraderie à vie avec Samuel Behrman qui devint l'essayiste et dramaturge distingué. La famille déménagea à nouveau à Winnipeg et de là Alton Goldbloom alla fréquenter l'Université McGill en 1909 à l'âge de 19 ans et suivit des cours en Arts et médecine. Il fut le premier rédacteur dramatique du McGill Daily. Au cours de ses années, il obtint son B.A., son M.D.C.M., compléta son internat, de même que les études post-universitaires finales à l'Hôpital pour bébés de New York. Alton Goldbloom fut un pionnier en pédiatrie moderne dans cette partie du Canada. Il avait des talents exceptionnels de médecin, de professeur et de chercheur. Il réalisa ses principaux objectifs. Sa carrière créatrice fut couronnée par de nombreux honneurs ainsi qu'une chaire de professeur qui lui fut conférée par ses pairs.

Je pense que l'immortalité est assurée à des personnes qui ont un grand talent de conteur. Alton Goldbloom en fut un. L'auteur dans cette étude cite deux à trois historiettes qui sont récitées de mémoire d'homme.

Dans son autobiographie, Alton Goldbloom fait de brèves références à Goldblatt et Gross. Gross eut une influence importante en guidant Alton vers sa spécialité de pédiatrie. "Louis Gross avait disparu au cours de l'été 1914. Il avait ressenti le besoin d'en savoir plus en pédiatrie que ce que McGill pouvait lui en apprendre à cette époque. Il avait entendu parler de l'Hôpital Flottant de Boston qui acceptait des étudiants internes pendant la période d'été, fit une application et fut convoqué. A son retour, il fut si enthousiaste à propos de cet hôpital que je fis à mon tour une demande d'emploi et fut nommé étudiant interne pour l'été 1915". (extrait d'une histoire entre Louis Gross et Alton Goldbloom). Au cours des années suivantes, Louis me relata un autre des aspects de cet été de 1914 à bord de l'Hôpital Flottant de Boston.

Un peu plus tard, Alton écrivit à propos de sa dernière année à McGill ce qui suit: "Mes brillants camarades de classe Gross et Goldblatt, montraient déjà leurs dons de recherche qui germèrent et s'épanouirent complètement en des réalisations scientifiques et en une réputation mondiale que chacun obtint dans son domaine.

Harry Goldblatt: Parler de Harry Goldblatt pose des obstacles insurmontables. Un grand dossier de documents se rapportant à la carrière de Harry Goldblatt me fut gracieusement prêté et je dois mentionner aussi que sa soeur

Alta Kahn fit un don gracieux de ces documents à la Bibliothèque Osler de McGill. Dans l'un de ces documents, Adelaid Curtiss publia une silhouette seulement intitulée: "Portrait d'un homme". Je me contenterai seulement de vous en offrir deux extraits. "Si je me devais de résumer Harry en un mot, je dirai qu'il est la bonté. Bonté envers sa femme, ses deux enfants, ses collègues, ses aides, ses étudiants etc. . . S'il m'était permis de le caractériser encore par un autre mot, je dirais qu'il était tolérance. Il apprit très tôt la signification du mot intolérance et ne s'est jamais permis de fauter par intolérance." Harry eut un talent d'homme de science superbe, un talent en matière de camaraderie, un talent en matière de services à rendre à l'humanité, et il possédait tous ces talents à un degré plus élevé que toute personne que j'aie jamais connue en littérature ou côtoyée dans la vie. Il doit bien y avoir d'autres personnes à propos desquels on a écrit de la même manière. Elles sont si nombreuses et si rares.

En 1908, Harry s'inscrivit à McGill pour suivre les cours en Arts puis les cours en médecine.

En 1912, les "quatre G" se rencontrèrent pour la première fois alors qu'Alton et Harry accédaient à la classe de 1916 qui avait commencé en 1911 car le cours était d'une durée de 5 ans. Alton et Harry obtinrent des crédits pour leur première année parce qu'ils avaient pris des cours de biologie dans leur formation littéraire. Louis Gross et Sy Greenspon avaient commencé en 1911. C'est par le biais de la famille que Greenspon fut connu. La mère de Harry et la mère de Sy maintinrent une étroite camaraderie lorsque les Goldblatt vécurent à Montréal. Lorsque Sy décida de venir à McGill, sa mère demanda à Mme Goldblatt d'héberger Sy chez elle. Ainsi Harry et Sy développèrent un sentiment fraternel, le sentiment d'être des frères. Les rapports entre Harry et Louis Gross furent de nature différente. J'ai en l'occasion de rencontrer les "quatre G" très tôt et ils m'adoptèrent comme leur mascotte. Je suivis leurs activités de très près et l'obtention de leurs diplômes fut un grand événement pour moi.

Il est hors de tout doute qu'Harry fut le plus amical et le plus populaire des étudiants de sa classe tant parmi ses pairs que parmi les professeurs. Il avait remporté le premier prix accordé par la Société Médicale des Etudiants en rédigeant un essai sur *Polyposis of the Intestinal Tract*. Alton Goldbloom remporta le second prix en rédigeant l'essai sur *Diarrheal Diseases*. Quant à Louis Gross, il remporta le plus prestigieux des prix: la Médaille d'Or Holmes. Depuis 1916, très peu de Juifs avaient remporté cette médaille. Deux membres du personnel actuel de l'Hôpital Général Juif, le Dr. Harold Rosen et le Dr. Nat Sheiner, la détiennent.

Harry fit un plaidoyer à l'effet que la réputation de McGill devrait être

sauvée. L'Institut Carnegie de New York était sur le point de classer McGill au second rang plutôt qu'au premier. Le professeur R. F. Ruttan, professeur de chimie, passa par toutes les couleurs devant les propos tenus par Harry alors que le professeur Blackadder l'appuya. En fait, plus tard, ce fut Charlie Martin devenu premier Doyen de Médecine à temps plein qui donna une brillante direction à l'école de médecine en lui trouvant les fonds et les hommes pour renforcer l'école de médecine. La carrière d'Harry Goldblatt, depuis qu'il obtint son diplôme, est très bien résumée dans son *curriculum vitae officiel*. Sa principale réalisation a rapport avec la recherche qu'il a menée à propos de la haute tension. Il réussit également à inventer des méthodes de diminution de flux sanguin dans l'un ou l'autre des reins. L'oeuvre de Harry fut des plus appréciées.

En 1962, à l'âge de 71 ans, les Instituts Nationaux de la Santé du Gouvernement des Etats-Unis lui remirent un don de \$1,065,000 affectés au Laboratoire Beaumont sous sa direction en matière de recherche sur la haute tension et sur le cancer.

E. A. Greenspon: Sy Greenspon et Harry Goldblatt furent élevés comme des frères en dépit du fait que Harry le dépassait de quelques années. Sy Greenspon ouvrit son cabinet dans le Medical Arts Building. Il avait manifesté un intérêt particulier dans le domaine de l'anémie et oeuvra de façon diligente sur ces études, d'un point de vue clinique et dans le laboratoire de pharmacologie à McGill. Son ami Sanford Rosenthal avait été nommé au poste du Département de Pharmacologie comme professeur adjoint. Sy Greenspon fut au nombre des dirigeants qui encouragèrent la formation de la construction de l'Hôpital Juif. Cette promotion culmina en 1934, année de l'inauguration de l'Hôpital.

Greenspon continua de faire de la recherche et d'être interne jusque vers la fin des années 50 lorsqu'il alla à l'étranger. Toutefois, il ne revint jamais à Montréal. La dernière fois où nous nous rencontrâmes, ce fut à Edinburg. Je sais qu'il correspondait avec H. Goldblatt qui agit envers lui comme un frère.

Louis Gross: Louis Gross s'écrasa dans un avion le "Mainliner" en route de Chicago vers Los Angeles. Il était sur le point de faire de la recherche clinique venant s'ajouter à ses études de médecine expérimentale et avait été nommé au sein du personnel de l'Université de Californie. Avant de quitter Chicago, L. Gross se rendit à Montréal. Une réception en son nom se tint chez Alton Goldbloom et dans la mienne.

En 1938, la première Conférence Commémorative Annuelle Louis Gross fut prononcée par Harry Goldblatt portant sur l'hypertension. Depuis lors, cette conférence devint un événement annuel. Elle est tenue sous les auspices de The Montreal Clinical Society à L'Hôpital Général Juif.

Quelques semaines auparavant, j'avais discuté avec le Dr. Nathan Freedman à propos de L. Gross car N. Freedman fut un compagnon de classe de Louis à l'Ecole Aberdeen. Il se souvint que Louis Gross fut le garçon le plus brillant de la classe. Toutefois, Louis Gross n'obtint pas de bourse, ce fut Nat qui la décrocha.

Louis Gross n'était pas aussi populaire que Harry Goldblatt. Harry et Louis savaient ce qu'ils disaient lorsqu'ils parlaient d'un besoin en recherche plus intense à l'Université McGill.

Pendant 11 ans après 1926, il créa un très grand département de Laboratoires très progressif. Il engagea des hommes qui y passèrent le reste de leur vie et y réalisa lui-même de très importants travaux.

L'écrasement du "Mainliner" interrompit une carrière brillante à l'âge de 42 ans.

In the year 1750, The American College Fraternity came into existence, apparently in emulation of the Burschenschaft Societies of German universities. The general tone was that of elitism. The Germans competed in swordsmanship; a scar on the cheek gave the man great prestige. And of course there were beer drinking parties. In America the first society was a literary club, but later fraternity houses were "homes away from home" for its members. A start was made in this field by Jewish students in 1898. The inspiring stimulus came from Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, whose son, Professor Richard Gottheil, was professor of Semitic Languages at Columbia University, and whose wife, Emma, was an Assyrian and an enthusiastic Zionist from the very beginning of the movement. The fourteen students who composed the founding group were undergraduates of The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Herman Abramovitz, who a few years later came to Montreal to occupy the post of rabbi at Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, was one of the fourteen. Although the official names adhered to the fashion of Greek letters the initials ZBT actually represented the three Hebrew words *Zion Bemishpot Tipoda*, Zion through justice shall be redeemed.

From the acorn a mighty oak did grow and one of the early branches of the tree was a chapter at McGill named "Upsilon" which sprouted in March of 1913. Knowing that Rabbi Abramovitz became its first honorary member leads one to assume, perhaps correctly, that he may have inspired the five senior McGill men to apply for a charter. They were Nathaniel S. Fineberg (law 13), Harry Goldblatt (med. 16), Alton Goldbloom (med. 16), A. W. Muhlstock (law 13) and Edgar C. Levine (med. 13).

“Goldbloom” — who in our midst does not know this name? The founder of this Canadian dynasty was Samuel Goldbloom, who came to Canada from Lithuania when he was about 17 years old. In 1880, some time after his arrival, he married a girl who had also immigrated from Lithuania. We read in Alton’s book *Small Patients* “my mother was captivated by my father’s incurable joviality and humour.” The three children who were born before Alton all died of infectious diseases in infancy. Believers would say that the fourth child survived because at its birth it was named Alter which he made a little fancy later on when he changed it to Alton. Anyone who spent more than a few minutes in the company of Alton Goldbloom would readily declare that he inherited from his father the joviality spiced with sharp wit and fine histrionic talent. The family moved about from Montreal to Winnipeg, back to Montreal, then for about a year to Kovna in Lithuania. His mother travelled with her three children, Alton the eldest, to visit her father. During that year Alton, then 9 years old, attended Cheder and acquired a more extensive knowledge of Hebrew than the usual after school Hebrew lessons in Montreal would have afforded him. Reminiscing about this time he related that, one day, resenting the prohibitions of a very strict orthodoxy, he asked himself what would happen if on the Sabbath he would walk a longer distance than was allowed and if he not only carried a piece of paper in his pocket but that at a certain moment when nobody could see he would actually take it out of his pocket and tear it. Well, he performed the experiment, the heavens did not thunder and the earth did not swallow him up.

After re-crossing the Atlantic the family settled in Worcester, Massachusetts where he attended high school and initiated a lifelong friendship with Samuel Behrman, who became the distinguished playwright and essayist. The family again moved to Winnipeg; from there he came to McGill in 1909 at the age of 19 to enter the course of Arts and Medicine at McGill. He became the first dramatic editor of the McGill Daily. The first girl he met was Annie Ballon and 9 years later in May 1918, they were married. I can boast that I was one of the four young fellows who held up the *Chupa*. During these years he earned his B.A. and his M.D.C.M., and completed internship and the final postgraduate studies at The Babies Hospital in New York. Thus, in 1920 Annie and Alton returned to Montreal. They lived in the Ballon home on Bishop Street for about two years and then moved into their home on Crescent Street, where he had his office. Alton Goldbloom pioneered modern pediatrics in this part of Canada, not, however, without overcoming great obstacles. His talents as a physician, as a teacher and a researcher and, richly endowed as he was with personal charm and a rare quality of maintaining firm and lasting friendships, he

achieved his principal goals. A creative career was crowned with a professorship and many honors bestowed by his peers. Of equal significance were a close, warm, family circle in a charming home, as well as children and grandchildren who were all good achievers.

Immortality, I think, is sometimes assured when a person tells a very good story; one which catches the attention of the listeners so that it comes to be repeated again and again for generations; and if the name of the first raconteur is mentioned often enough as the source, his immortality would be achieved. Alton Goldbloom was a superb raconteur. Let me tell you some of his stories. In the Bronx there lived a young family, the father Jewish and the mother Italian. They had one son who frequently asked what his nationality was and he never obtained a clear cut unambiguous answer. One day when he was about 12 he demanded a very precise answer saying, "My friend Joe is Italian, Mike is Irish, Moe is Jewish, George is Greek, what am I?" His father, startled by the firm demand asked why the urgency and the boy said, "I want to get a new bicycle. I don't know whether to buy it wholesale or to steal it."

Guests at the usual Sunday dinner would be told stories of his personal experience. Annie, the children, Victor and Dick, and certain guests who came frequently were not bored by hearing some of these stories again and again because they were so well told. Here is a favourite one: One night early in his career when he was making about 25 house calls a day the phone rang at 2 a.m., wakened him from a deep sleep and he heard a sobbing mother complain that her baby was crying and would not sleep. He had seen the child in the morning; it had a cold. He prescribed something that he was sure would be effective and then he fell asleep again. About an hour later the phone rang again; the same mother, "Oy, Doctor, I know you would want to know the medicine was so good. Thank God, the baby is asleep."

He relished stories about theatrical people. Here is one which provided scope for speaking Yiddish. Felix Adler, the great Yiddish actor performed regularly in the theatre on Second Avenue in New York. Among his fans was a rather attractive widow who at long last, after many months of planning, mustered up the courage to go backstage, introduce herself, and congratulate him. She found the great actor more friendly than she anticipated and so she dared to invite him for a late supper after the show on Friday night. He accepted. The supper progressed into an all night party. During breakfast she harboured some bold ideas; maybe he would like to leave a few dollars in appreciation. They would be useful to buy some new clothes for the children. She approached the subject gently whereupon he brought out his wallet and presented her with a

ticket for the next week's show. Surprised and frustrated she exclaimed, "Theatre darf ich haben broit is mier noitig." To this he calmly replied, "Nu gefint zich a becker."

In his autobiography Alton makes some brief references to Goldblatt and Gross. If he did mention Greenspon I missed the reference. Gross had an important influence in guiding Alton to the specialty of pediatrics. These few sentences tell this very important part of the story. "Louis Gross had disappeared during the summer of 1914. He had, like all of us, who were interested, felt the need for more pediatric instruction than McGill was giving at that time. He had heard of the Boston Floating Hospital which accepted student interns during the summer season, applied and got an appointment. On his return he was so fired with enthusiasm about the hospital that I in turn applied and was appointed a student intern in the summer of 1915." In later years Louis told me about another aspect of that summer of 1914 on the Floating Hospital. There was a very attractive, friendly, student nurse who contributed some calories to that firey enthusiasm. A little further on Alton wrote of his final year at McGill as follows: "My brilliant classmates, Gross and Goldblatt, were already demonstrating those investigative gifts which were later to germinate and flower into the full bloom of scientific achievement and world fame each in his field."

HARRY GOLDBLATT

Preparing what I have told you about Alton Goldbloom, aided by his autobiography and by my vivid reminiscences has been an easy task. But to tell of Harry Goldblatt poses insurmountable obstacles for which I will need and will use much help. Fortunately his precious sister Alta Kahn collected a nice package of documents related to Harry's career and has graciously loaned the whole collection to me. I might add that she has graciously donated these unique documents to The McGill Osler Library, the library devoted to the history of medicine.

In one of these documents, Volume 25, 1961 of *The Western Reserve University Medical School Alumni Bulletin*, the managing editor Adilaid Curtiss published a profile of Harry entitled, "Portrait of a Man". I have had to resist the temptation of reading it to you, in its entirety and I must content myself with offering only two brief excerpts. One colleague of Harry's, whom she interviewed said, "If I were to sum up Harry in one word I would say gentleness. Gentleness towards his wife, his two boys, his colleagues, his aids, his students and to the animals who play such an important role in his research. If I were allowed another word I would say tolerance. He learned early the meaning of intolerance and has never allowed himself to be guilty of it."

Harry had the talent of a superb scientist, the talent for friendship, the talent for service to mankind, the talent for family life including those roles of devoted son, brother, husband, father, all of these talents he possessed to a greater degree than any man I have ever known in literature or in life. There must be others like him described in literature; there may be some alive and active at present. They are few and far between.

Alta Kahn kindly granted me a long interview one Saturday morning in the course of which I learned pertinent things which do not appear in any of the documents. Their father, Philip Goldblatt, was born in Laskowa, Lithuania in 1861 and their mother, Jennie Spitz, in Telzin, Lithuania in 1865. They married in 1885 and six months later immigrated to North America accompanied by her mother and sister. Between 1885 and September 4, 1896, when they settled for the longest period in Montreal, they lived briefly in Montreal, then Hamilton, Ontario, then Muscatoon, Iowa where Alta was born on August 21, 1889 and Harry on March 14, 1891. The family moved to Omaha, Nebraska and from there to Chicago and back to Montreal on September 4, 1896. In Canada also they moved about and spent about a year in each of the following: Hull, Valleyfield, Lachine, then returned to Montreal where they remained from 1899 to 1918. During these years, the two children attended Dufferin School where they won scholarships to The Montreal High School. Alta went on to McDonald College for a diploma as a teacher. She was the first Jewish girl to have her training at McDonald. There were four others who had their training in the normal school in Montreal. She graduated in 1908 and taught until she was married in 1912. She then had to stop teaching because married ladies were not allowed to teach. In this same year, 1908, Harry entered McGill to take the Arts course followed by the Medical course. He came under the influence of Professor Carrie Derrick, the biologist and botanist who took a special interest in him. During each summer holiday of about five months he worked at a variety of jobs to earn his university expenses. In the summer of 1909 he sold rat poison. In the summer of 1910 he peddled advertisements for The Windsor Hotel throughout the New England states. In 1911 he opened a moving picture theatre in Chicoutimi. In the presence of the parish priest he showed The Passion Play and just passed the censor. A month or so later the priest visited the theatre again but this time did not like what he saw. He preached a sermon condemning the theatre and Harry had to close shop. Alta does not know the name of the picture he was showing at the time. In 1912 he worked as a ticket collector on the famous Canada Steamship boat which sailed between Montreal and Tadoussac. Then for several summers, during his course of medicine, he

worked in the CPR Hotel in Lake Louise.

In 1912 the four G's met for the first time as Alton and Harry joined the class of 1916 which had started in 1911 because the course was a five year course. Alton and Harry got credits for their first year because they took Biology in the Arts course. Louis Gross and Sy Greenspon had started in 1911. Sy Greenspon entered the picture through the family. Harry's mother and Sy's mother were *landsleute* and maintained a close friendship when the Goldblatt's lived in Montreal. The Greenspons had a thriving business in Hawksbury. When Sy decided to come to McGill his mother prevailed on Mrs. Goldblatt to have Sy board in her house. Thus Harry and Sy developed a fraternal feeling, a feeling of being brothers. The relationship between Harry and Louis Gross was of a different kind. Louis was a good intellectual challenge and stimulus to Harry. Sy needed an older brother and that is what Harry was for him.

At this point it seem appropriate that I should tell you how it came about that I was the only freshman to attend the graduation convocation on that day in May, 1916 at The Royal Victoria College assembly hall. Louis Gross's father, Mr. Berrill Gross, had a kosher butcher shop and he delivered meat to our house, in spite of the fact that we lived about four miles away from his shop. About every few weeks he would call to collect his bills. Many years later I learnt from Louis and my father that during autumn, when Louis Gross had to pay fees at McGill, Mr. Gross would occasionally borrow money from my father to assist in meeting the expense. It was quite usual for immigrants at that time to help each other in this way with friendly interest-free loans. When I decided to enter medicine in 1915 the two fathers arranged for me to call on Louis and perhaps buy some books and materials that would be of use to a freshman. On the day I visited Louis he was sick with acute tonsillitis. I recall spending 15.00 on books and some materials. That of course was of much less importance than the fact that Louis became interested in me and took me under his wing. This led me to meet the four G's very soon afterwards and they adopted me as a sort of mascot. They were the seniors and I the freshman. I followed their activities very closely. Their graduation was a great event for me. I went alone on that beautiful spring day. The entire Faculty of Medicine in academic dress sat on the raised platform. Sir William Peterson, a distinguished, white haired gentleman officiated. In the audience, which numbered perhaps 200 people, were the friends and families of the graduating class. Alta Kahn was one of the happiest because her brother Harry not only won the prize for leading the final year but had been chosen as the valedictorian of the class. Harry was unquestionably the friendliest, and most popular student of the class both

among his peers and among the teachers. In addition, he had also won the first prize awarded by The Undergraduate Medical Society with an essay on *Polyposis of the Intestinal Tract*. Alton Goldbloom took the second prize with an essay on *Diarrheal Diseases*, a subject related to pediatrics. Louis Gross, the youngest member of the class, who had his 21st birthday only a few days before, won the most prestigious prize, The Holmes Gold Medal. A graduate of 1884, Dr. Hiram Vineberg, was the first Jew to win this prize and Louis was the second. Since 1916 quite a few Jewish boys have won it. Two members of the present Jewish General Hospital staff, Dr. Harold Rosen and Dr. Nat Sheiner are among them.

After the prizes had been awarded and the new graduates had been capped Harry came up to the podium to deliver the valedictory address. All went smoothly; he spoke as was expected of him in a gentlemanly fashion about the great men of McGill's past who had created its reputation as one of the leading medical schools in the world. Then he calmly proceeded to explode a bomb. He pleaded that the reputation of McGill should be saved. It was already in grave danger. The Carnegie Institution of New York was about to classify McGill as a second-rate school instead of a first-rate school. He enumerated McGill's deficiencies, especially the lack of facilities and support for research. Among the professors sitting on the platform there was Professor R. F. Ruttan, the professor of Chemistry. He was a very handsome man in his fifties, tall, white-haired with long white side whiskers which framed a lovely face with a pinkish complexion. I saw his face become red and redder and redder to bluish-red with fury and embarrassment. Alta Kahn remembers that Sir William Peterson took issue with Harry's remarks and Professor Blackadder supported Harry. I remember only that Charlie Martin, my favorite teacher, rose and spoke so as to pour oil on troubled waters. In 1972 at the request of Andrew Collard, who was gathering reminiscences about McGill, I wrote the story of these events. Naturally I tried to get a copy of the valedictory manuscript from Harry. In reply to my request he told me that not only did he not have a copy of the manuscript but that he did not remember having been the valedictorian. Of course, all that Harry said was true and it was indeed Charlie Martin who, a few years later, became the first full-time Dean of Medicine and gave superb leadership in bringing money and men to strengthen the medical school. Harry's career since graduation is summarized in his official *curriculum vitae* which he himself composed. After graduation he became a resident in surgery at The Royal Victoria Hospital and assisted in The Department of Pathology until 1917 when he was inducted in The United States Army and served as a lieutenant for two years. He served

in The United States, in England, France and Germany. In 1919-1921 he was Assistant Pathologist at The Lakeside Hospital in Cleveland. In 1921 he became a Beit Memorial Fellow and went to England where he spent three years in research dividing his time between the Lister Institute in the first two years and The Department of Physiology at University College in the year 1923-1924. He then became assistant professor of Pathology at Western Reserve University from 1924-1927, associate professor from 1927-1935 and professor of Experimental Pathology from 1935-1946. In that year, he went to Los Angeles as professor of Pathology in the University of Southern California and Director of Laboratories of The Department of Medical Research at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. In 1953 he returned to Cleveland and took on the task of pathologist to The Mount Sinai Hospital and Director of Laboratories. He remained professor of Pathology at the medical school until 1961 when he became Emeritus professor. He was of course a member of many medical societies and was honored on many occasions.

His chief accomplishment is related to the research that he has carried out on high blood pressure. In an article entitled, "Reflections" which he wrote in 1975 Harry summarized the evolution of his special interest in high blood pressure. He relates that as a student he was taught that high blood pressure was produced by some unknown mechanism in the body; this led to changes in the blood vessels which narrowed the arteries and so impaired the blood flow to the tissues, especially to the kidneys. In some cases the kidney function was greatly impaired and might be totally abolished. This would lead to uraemia; a condition in which substances which the kidney pours out of the body remain in the blood and because of their poisonous nature lead to death. Uraemia always was associated with high blood pressure. Doubts were triggered in his mind by the following experience: In 1917 at the Royal Victoria Hospital he had occasion to observe a woman who had her kidney removed. The surgeon who removed it did not know that it was her only kidney; she was born with only one kidney. After the operation she immediately became uraemic and lived for six days. But the exception feature was that she had a normal blood pressure during these six days. In the course of the next few years as he reflected on this experience he decided that it would be worthwhile investigating whether the reverse of what he was taught is really true; namely that first there is impairment in blood supply to the kidney and that this triggers the development of high blood pressure. In 1928 he devised ingenious experiments. He succeeded in inventing methods of impairing the blood flow to one or both kidneys, measuring the blood pressure in the animals. He thus proved that at least one type of mechanism which

causes high blood pressure is that which is initiated by reducing the blood flow to the kidneys. This of course led to studies by others all over the world, using the technique devised by Harry Goldblatt. Studies revealed that a substance called renin was produced in excessive quantities under these conditions. Measurement of renin has become very important in the study of both animals and human high blood pressure. In appreciation of Harry's work, the World Health Organization has decreed that the unit of measurement of this substance, renin, should be called a Goldblatt; very much as the unit of measurement for radiation is called a Curie and for X-ray a Roentgen. As you know, nowadays barometric pressure is measured in terms of a Pascal, in honor of Blaise Pascal who in the 16th century invented the mercury manometer. Thus the name of Goldblatt for Harry Goldblatt is assured immortality for as long as we can imagine. In an editorial of The American Medical Association for October 24, 1977 Dr. Leonard B. Berman wrote as follows: "Goldblatt's original experiment might influence us to alter the Churchillian phrase to this, 'Seldom has so much been owed by so many to a single experiment by a single investigator.' " Harry's work was well appreciated. In 1962 when he was 71 years old The National Institutes of Health of The United States Government presented a grant of \$1,065,000 to The Beaumont Laboratories for research on high blood pressure and cancer under Harry's direction.

E. A. GREENSPON

Sy Greenspon and Harry Goldblatt were as close as brothers, although Harry was older by a few years. Sy had an internship at The Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and an externship at The Johns Hopkin's Hospital, where I visited him in 1922. He returned to practice internal medicine in Montreal in about 1924. He established his office in The Medical Arts Building. He had developed a special interest in anaemias and worked diligently at these studies, clinically and in the pharmacology lab at McGill with his friend Sanford Rosenthal who had come from Johns Hopkins to hold a post in the Department of Pharmacology as assistant professor. Sy Greenspon was among the leading activists promoting the building of The Jewish Hospital. This culminated in 1929 by the campaign for funds and in 1934 by the opening of the hospital. I have no knowledge whatever about why Sy Greenspon was not made an important member of the staff of The Jewish Hospital. The powers in charge of the institution chose an older man with more experience in university life, Dr. Joseph Kauffman, and gave him the task of organizing the medical staff.

Greenspon continued the practice of internal medicine and research until the late fifties, when he went abroad, ostensibly for a sabatical year. However he

did not return to Montreal. I last saw him at the Edinburgh Infirmary when I was on a special visit with Professor Gilchrist in 1959. When I walked into the lecture theatre and looked up I saw Sy sitting in the audience. Later we met briefly. He did not speak of returning to Montreal. I know he died about ten years later and was interred at the Shaar Hashomayim Cemetery but we were not in correspondence. I do know that he corresponded with Harry, who gave him brotherly support.

LOUIS GROSS

On the 17th of October 1937 newspapers all over the globe headlined the tragic news of a disastrous accident when the airplane "Mainliner" en route from Chicago to Los Angeles crashed against Hayden's Peak. All occupants on the plane perished. Louis Gross was on that plane. He had boarded it in high spirits on his way to a new job and a new development in his career. He was to add clinical research to his studies in experimental medicine and had been appointed to the staff of The University of California. In preparation for this, he had spent two months with Paul Dudley White in the autumn of 1937. Before leaving for Chicago he visited Montreal. There was a party for him at Alton Goldbloom's house and at mine. He spoke glowingly of the prospect of flying. Alton Goldbloom was not convinced. He had in mind the fact that at that time flying was still a rather dangerous way of travelling. This proved to be the case, and a very promising career was interrupted at the age of 42. The funeral took place on the 24th of October 1937; Rabbi Abramovitz officiated, and Dr. Emanuel Libman of New York pronounced the eulogy. The community was well represented by hundreds of people who crowded into St. Urbain Street between Pine Avenue and Duluth Avenue. There were various estimates of the numbers. I was there and it was my impression that many thousands were present. The police estimated about 3,000. In December of 1937 a memorial service was held at The Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue. Rabbi Abramovitz again officiated. The presentations were made by Harry Goldblatt, Dr. Paul Dudley White, Dr. Charles F. Martin, Dean of the Medical Faculty and Arthur Mirsky, one of the younger men who came under Louis Gross' influence. Harry Goldblatt was unable to come himself and Alton Goldbloom read his address. Each one dealt with a different fact of Louis Gross's life. In 1938 the first annual Louis Gross Memorial Lecture was delivered by Harry Goldblatt, dealing with hypertension. Since then, the lecture has been an annual event. It is given under the auspices of The Montreal Clinical Society at The Jewish General Hospital.

A few weeks ago I spoke with Dr. Nathan Freedman about Louis Gross be-

cause Nathan was a classmate of Louis' at Aberdeen School. He remembers that Louis Gross was the brightest boy in the class. However, to everybody's surprise, and Nat Freedman's no less than all others, Louis Gross did not get the scholarship. It was Nat who got it. After Louis Gross's death I spoke with his sister Mrs. Toba Berkovitz. She told me that Louis was always the brightest boy in school even though he did not study much. Apparently, Louis did not prepare himself adequately for the exams at Aberdeen School. This was a lesson for him which seems to have had good effect because at the university he won many prizes. However he was not as popular as Harry Goldblatt. Some of the older men may have resented the fact that he was indeed the brightest and the youngest member of the class. He was also a little conceited in his behaviour.

An event which I witnessed may serve as an example. One evening in the autumn of 1915 at a monthly meeting of The Medical Undergraduate Society Louis Gross led a discussion in the diagnosis of an interesting case. On such occasions, after all the discussions were over the man who prepared the case announced what the diagnosis was as proven at the hospital. In the course of the evening one of the men, a Mr. Oliver, disagreed acutely with Louis and cited a new book as his principal authority. Louis then took the floor, citing the very same authority in support of his own diagnosis. After the meeting I joined the four G's as we walked along Pine Avenue to Park Avenue; there at the corner there was the Pine's Ice Cream Parlor. We sat at the counter for awhile; there was much talk going on still about the evening's case. Then during the lull I quietly said to Louis, "Could you tell me how both you and Oliver could cite the same authority in support of opposite conclusions?" He promptly answered, "Oliver never read that book and neither did I."

Harry and Louis meant what they said when they talked about the need for more research at McGill University. Immediately after graduation Louis was appointed a Douglas Memorial Fellow. This provided him with a modest income during his research activities. He principally studied aspects of circulation and in particular the blood supply to the heart, that is, the coronary arteries and veins. This work led to the publication of a monograph on the subject which has become a classic. It was published in 1921, the year in which he married Gertie Gittleson and the year in which he was appointed a Bert Memorial Fellow. They sailed together for England. There she studied Music; she was a very talented pianist and a scholarly musicologist. Louis spent the three years working in anthropology with Sir Arthur Keith, biochemistry and also in physiology under Starling at University College in London. After a tour of the continent

Louis and Gertie returned to North America but not to Montreal. They went to New York. Their patron there, Dr. Emmanuel Libman, was organizing matters so that Louis would obtain an important appointment at Mount Sinai Hospital. This was consummated in 1926 when he became the assistant and shortly afterwards the director of the Department of Laboratories, the most prestigious appointment in the Jewish medical world. The Mount Sinai Hospital was the most important in North America. During the next eleven years he created a very progressive and large Department of Laboratories. He engaged men who remained in the department for the remainder of their careers, and produced very important work himself. He completed an important study in rheumatic fever and began to work on the coronary circulation. In was in this direction that his work was due to progress when conditions made it wise for him to extend his interests to clinical cardiology and to go to California to initiate a new career. The crash of the ‘‘Mainliner’’ against Hayden’s Peak interrupted a brilliant life at the age of 42.

Sonnenfeld — Elements of
Survival and Success of a
Jewish Farming Community
on the Prairies
1905-1939*

ANNA FELDMAN

A) Naissance et Nom d'une Colonie de Fermiers Juifs:

Les Juifs furent parmi les premiers à établir des colonies agricoles dans la partie Ouest du Canada. La plupart, telle que Sonnenfeld (connue premièrement sous le nom de New Herman) et se trouvant dans la partie Sud-Est de la Saskatchewan, furent créées par des Juifs qui luttèrent pour survivre de leur profession de fermier.

La plus répandue des versions veut que quatre jeunes diplômés du collège agricole de Slobodka Lesna (Philip Berger, Majer Feldman, Max Feuer et Israel Hoffer) prirent la décision à propos du site de la communauté. Les premières sources révèlent une divergence dans ce récit des origines de la colonie.

Berger, Feldman et Hoffer ne furent pas seulement les premiers Juifs à s'installer dans le district, mais furent aussi parmi les premiers à recevoir les lettres patentes pour leurs fermes.

Il n'y a nulle trace du motif du choix de "New Herman". Le changement de nom (i.e. New Herman puis Sonnenfeld) ne s'est pas fait du jour au lendemain. On appelle encore Sonnenfeld New Herman.

B) Les tous débuts: 1905-1911:

Face aux persécutions religieuses et l'injustice sociale qui prévalurent en Europe, Berger, Feldman et Hoffer, de même que d'autres Juifs émigrèrent vers le Canada, désireux de peupler l'Ouest. Les nouveaux venus voulaient de la terre. Les non-Juifs s'établirent également dans le Triangle Palliser. C'était

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des gens venus de Scandinavie qui avaient effectué une migration des Etats-Unis au Canada.

La lutte contre les éléments naturels fut dure pour tous. Il n'y avait point de chemins de fer et lorsqu'il était question de se réapprovisionner, il était nécessaire de faire un parcours de 100 milles (aller-retour) à pied pour se rendre au lieu dit (Estevan). Les quelques colons, au tout début, ne purent se permettre d'encourir la dépense pour accéder aux puits. Outre ce fait, les marécages constituaient un autre problème: à part la horde de moustiques, ils hébergeaient des milliers de canards sauvages.

Le manque d'expérience ébranla sérieusement les Juifs. Les premiers Juifs n'avaient ni équipement (machines etc.) ni bétail et ils étaient essentiellement jeunes, sans sou vaillant et sans formation spéciale. Toutefois, les jeunes gens luttèrent afin de s'acquitter des exigences de la propriété et commencèrent à labourer leurs terres au printemps 1907. Les colons firent tous leurs efforts afin d'obtenir une terre cultivable. L'espoir d'un revenu à l'automne, était fourni par la semence du lin. A l'automne, les fermiers, afin de soulager leurs fardeaux financiers, travaillaient à l'assemblage des batteuses pendant la moisson. Mais même ainsi, il y eut insuffisance de fonds pour financer les opérations.

En 1909, il y avait 58 personnes sur vingt cinq fermes. Ils possédaient alors 6.400 hectares de terre.

En 1910, l'actif était de \$87,599 et le passif de \$13,662.

Un bureau de poste vint s'ajouter à quelques milles de là vers le Nord-Est de la colonie. La première réunion du conseil de la Municipalité No 7 de Souris Valley où se trouvait Sonnenfeld se tint le 3 janvier 1910. Cela constituait un précédent historique.

Des plans furent conçus afin de bâtir une synagogue. Moses Hoffer (Hoffer Sr) qui écrivit au J.A.C. fut informé que l'Association ne pourrait contribuer à de tels desseins et qu'il devrait obtenir des fonds de sources locales.

Une "kehilla"* fut mise sur pied et structurée afin de traiter des affaires de la Communauté Juive et Hoffer Sr. y oeuvra de son vivant.

Six années sont passées depuis l'Europe. Les premiers pionniers de Sonnenfeld avaient une ligne de chemin de fer sur à peine plus de 20 milles et des institutions communautaires en développement. Les pionniers savaient désormais qu'il était possible de survivre en tant que fermiers à Sonnenfeld.

*Kehilla: terme hébreu désignant la Communauté Juive (N.d.T.)

C) *Période de consolidation: 1913-1925:*

Au cours de sa période de consolidation, Sonnenfeld n'a pas toujours suivi les mêmes modèles de développement.

L'expansion de l'époque de la guerre fut accompagnée d'une augmentation des prix. L'apogée de cette prospérité survécut pendant la première moitié de 1920. Dans les Prairies, les pressions économiques du début des années 1920 furent plus aiguës en raison de la sécheresse prolongée. La moisson de 1916 à Sonnenfeld fut endommagée par la rouille et sa qualité baissa du même coup. Les difficultés avaient déjà débuté dans les années vingt. Les registres du recensement nous montre la diminution de la population et une croissance de l'abandon de la ferme.

Le cycle sans fin d'établissement sur une ferme puis d'abandon de celle-ci, aspect typique du développement de l'agriculture dans le Triangle Palliser, constituait sans aucun doute un phénomène propre à la période allant de 1912 à 1925.

En 1920, la population de Sonnenfeld semble avoir été plus stable que celle du reste du Triangle. Le tronçon de voie ferrée du CPR parachevé en 1913, les colons pouvaient alors faire l'aller retour en une même et seule journée. La vie familiale par ailleurs prit un essor important à Sonnenfeld. La vie communautaire progressa avec les nombreux mariages et sur l'impulsion des mères de famille.

Les institutions qui contribuèrent à la stabilité et à l'essor fructueux de Sonnenfeld furent organisées. Il en fut ainsi d'un édifice qui abritait la synagogue, l'école d'hébreu et le logement de la personne qui assumait une double tâche: professeur d'hébreu et shochet. La construction de cet édifice prit fin en 1912. La synagogue jouait également le rôle de centre communautaire. Grâce au concours du J.C.A., les pionniers mirent sur pied une autre institution importante: La Coopérative du Syndicat de Crédit des Fermiers Juifs de Sonnenfeld en 1917.

Cependant, et bien que des signes indiquaient que la civilisation imprimait sa marque lentement mais certainement, le piètre état des routes et des systèmes de facilités adéquats représentaient d'innombrables problèmes.

La Compagnie de Téléphone Tribune fut mise sur pied en 1916.

Avec l'essor des institutions de la communauté et de la vie de famille, le mode de vie des fermiers changea lentement.

La vie à Sonnenfeld vers la fin de 1925, bien que dure si on la compare aux centres culturels contemporains, n'était plus la vie ancienne des avants-postes de pionniers qu'elle fut vingt ans plus tôt. Ce furent les colons eux-mêmes qui

réussirent à bâtir des fermes et à accroître leurs biens. Le J.C.A. soutint certaines institutions et fermiers personnellement. Après 1925, le J.C.A. joua un rôle bien plus significatif à Sonnenfeld.

D) 1926-1939 — *Ere du J.C.A.* :

Deux des aspects qui dominèrent l'histoire de Sonnenfeld de 1926 à 1939 furent: "L'époque de la dépression" et le J.C.A. En 1925 le J.C.A. décida d'agrandir les principales colonies juives de Saskatchewan.

Le seul engagement de l'Association dans les transactions des terres à Sonnenfeld jusqu'en 1922 survinrent lorsqu'elle joua un rôle d'intermédiaire.

La confiance du J.C.A. dans le potentiel terrien fut renforcé par l'évaluation encourageante que fit en 1927 A. H. Joel, ancien Professeur en Sols à l'Université de Saskatchewan.

La catastrophe frappa après la moisson de 1926 alors que les éléments de la nature contribuèrent à la destruction des câbles téléphoniques isolant de ce fait les gens de Sonnenfeld. En 1928, une averse de grêle nettoya une récolte qui avait promis d'être bonne.

Des silos à céréales, des magasins et autres services virent le jour à Ratcliffe, Hoffer et Oungre, les trois hameaux qui se développèrent à Sonnenfeld le long de la voie ferrée du C.P.R. achevée en 1927. Le site d'"Oungre" reçut ce nom officiellement en l'honneur du Directeur Général du J.C.A., Dr. Louis Oungre.

Conformément au plan du J.C.A., trente et une familles venues de l'Europe de l'Est furent établies dans la communauté entre 1926 et 1928. Le gouvernement garda un oeil vigilant sur Sonnenfeld et la colonisation juive.

Les résidents de Sonnenfeld se divisaient en deux groupes: les anciens et les nouveaux venus. Bien que les premiers colons eurent, au fil des ans, à endurer un nombre incalculables de problèmes, ils avaient également obtenu une satisfaction suffisante de leurs efforts de pionniers et de leur labourage pour être attaché non seulement à la communauté juive et à l'ensemble de la société comme telle où ils vivaient, mais également à la terre.

Il y eut à un moment donné le stress de la dépression, la sécheresse et des tensions accrues entre les colons et le J.C.A.

La situation en devint à ce point insupportable et désespérée pour qu'un groupe câble au Ministre de l'Immigration et de la Colonisation un appel à l'aide. Ce qui eut pour résultat d'ouvrir une enquête.

G. Todd signala que le mécontentement et les troubles dans la colonie couvraient plusieurs secteurs. Todd souligna que bien qu'il aurait pu être possible pour le C.J.A. de réfuter certaines des déclarations des colons, il aurait été dif-

ficile pour l'Association de prouver comment ils assistaient les derniers arrivés qui, au moment de l'enquête, étaient lourdement endettés envers le J.C.A.

Le J.C.A. persévéra dans ses tentatives de sauver les Juifs d'Europe et de les faire venir en Saskatchewan. Il y eut résistance de la part d'Ottawa. F. C. Blair, alors Directeur de l'Immigration, fit état de plusieurs raisons pour lesquelles les familles juives ne pouvaient se qualifier pour accéder au Canada dans un aide-mémoire qu'il soumit au Gouvernement. Ce n'est pas un mystère que de dire que Blair ne fut jamais un ami des Juifs. C'est entré dans la légende.

L'abandon de la terre à Sonnenfeld ne fut pas aussi dramatique que dans le reste de la province. A l'exception d'une famille qui vint en 1939, il n'y eut point de colonisation à Sonnenfeld pendant les années 30.

Tout comme les autres, les colons devaient avoir recours auprès du Gouvernement pour aide et assistance. Les registres de la Municipalité Rurale de Souris Valley indiquent qu'en 1931, 1934 et 1936, de 99% à 100% des colons avaient besoin d'aide.

En 6 ans, conséquence de la sécheresse et de la dépression, une colonie ostensiblement indépendante était devenue totalement dépendante du J.C.A., de prêteurs sur gages privés et du bien-être du gouvernement pour survivre.

La synagogue devint trop petite pour les besoins de Sonnenfeld et avec l'aide financière du J.C.A., l'édifice doubla de grandeur.

En dépit du découragement, de nombreux résidents de Sonnenfeld ne partirent pas. En 1939, seul quatre des 26 fermiers avaient vécu moins de 9 ans dans la communauté. Cette colonie suivit le modèle semblable aux autres colonies juives de Saskatchewan.

Il est en fait remarquable de constater que les colons de Sonnenfeld s'accrochèrent de façon tenace à leurs fermes, survécurent et, si l'on s'en tient aux normes du Triangle Palliser, réussirent dans leur vie.

BIRTH AND NAMING OF A JEWISH FARM COLONY

Jews, who for many years were not allowed the privilege of farming in Europe, were among the first people to establish agricultural colonies in the Canadian west.¹ While some of these communities were founded and supervised by the JCA, most, such as Sonnenfeld (first known as New Herman), situated in southeastern Saskatchewan, were created in a new and strange land by individual Jews who struggled to survive in farming, an unfamiliar profession to all but the very few.

There have been several differing accounts on the founding of Sonnenfeld. The version which gained the widest acceptance described how four young

graduates of the Slobodka Lesna agricultural college,² Philip Berger, Majer Feldman, Max Feuer and Israel Hoffer, after some exploration made the decision respecting the community's site "because the land was pretty well vacant, the closest neighbours being twenty miles east, so that we could establish a Jewish settlement without difficulty."³ Primary sources reveal, however, a discrepancy in this account of the colony's origin: Feuer did not arrive in Canada until almost two years after Hoffer filed for his homestead in November, 1905.⁴ Berger made his application for entry on March 4, 1906⁵ and Feldman filed his on April 9, 1906.⁶ There were 16 Jewish farmers in the settlement at the end of 1906⁷ and Feuer was not among this group. He came to Canada in 1907.⁸

The community's nucleus is indicated by its first patents.

Name	Date of Patent	Land Description
Majer Feldman	July 7, 1909	N.E. 4-2-15-W2nd
Sussman Kostatzkof	August 20, 1909	N.E. 10-2-15-W2nd
Max Feldman (not related to Majer Feldman)	September 2, 1909	N.E. 14-2-14-W2nd
Samuel Braunstein	November 24, 1909	N.E. 16-2-15-W2nd
Israel Hoffer	December 27, 1909	N.E. 12-2-15-W2nd
Philip Berger	June 17, 1909	S.E. 10-2-15-W2nd ⁹

Berger, Feldman and Hoffer were not only the first Jews to settle in the district but were also among the first to receive letters patent for their farms. Feuer received his patent for S.W. 34-2-15-W2nd on July 19, 1914.¹⁰

Until conclusive evidence is found, it is, at the present time, only a matter of speculation as to whether Sonnenfeld evolved naturally, the result of chain migration, or as a consequence of a plan to organize another Jewish colony.

No record of the reason for the choice of "New Herman" has been found. The only mention of "Herman" was made in a note which told how, after completing the 1906 harvest in Hirsch, the JCA colony in southern Saskatchewan, some of the homesteaders, including Israel Hoffer, his brother Meyer, Sam Braunstein, a Mr. Herman and his little boy, went to the new location (70 miles to the west of Hirsch). There they remained until the early part of winter, when, running short of supplies, they decided to return to Hirsch. Herman and his little boy became lost in a storm. Although they eventually found shelter, both of the father's legs were frozen. The boy was unharmed. It is possible that the colonists wished to memorialize this event and did so by naming the community

“New Herman”’.¹¹

Included in the same note is the following statement concerning the name “Sonnenfeld”’:

The colony was first named New Herman but when the old Moses Hoffer (father of Israel and Meyer) arrived (about 1907), he advised them to name the colony Sonnenfeld¹² as Herman did not do anything to deserve the honor of having the colony named after him.¹³

The change in name did not occur abruptly. A report of the Canadian Committee on the colony’s progress for the year ending December 31, 1912, makes no mention of the new name. It is still called New Herman.¹⁴

THE EARLY YEARS 1905-1911

Faced with religious persecution and social injustice in Europe and inspired with an enthusiasm for agriculture, not only as a means of survival but as an idealistic occupation, Berger, Feldman and Hoffer along with other Jews emigrated to Canada. Their arrival coincided with a period of active immigration. Canada wanted to populate the west and the newcomers wanted land. Under the Dominion Lands Act, a homestead applicant, on payment of a \$10 entry fee could receive title to 160 acres of land, on condition that certain requirements had meanwhile been fulfilled. The Act also provided for a privilege of preempting an adjoining quarter section.

While the agricultural college supported, educated and even assisted their students in the financing of their trip, Berger, Feldman and Hoffer, were nevertheless, responsible for themselves and their future life in Canada. Hoffer went directly to Hirsch where he laboured as a hired man. Berger and Feldman worked where they could as they made their way from Quebec to Manitoba and finally Saskatchewan where they also worked on farms. Eventually they each went to the Land Office to choose sites of their own within the Palliser Triangle.¹⁵

Non-Jews also settled in the area. They were, for the most part, people of Scandinavian origin, who had migrated to Canada from the United States.

Gentiles and Jews alike endured many hardships and battled the elements. The rigorous climate of very cold winters and blisteringly hot summers were not the only ordeals which the colonists had to face. There was no railway nearby. A walk to Estevan, 50 miles each way, was necessary, when supplies were needed. While there were few trees in the area, and none that had to be cleared, tons of rocks had to be removed from the land. Breaking the prairie and planting crops were arduous tasks. Drinking water proved to be a formidable problem for some of the homesteaders. Although wells several hundred feet deep were usually capable of yielding adequate supplies, few settlers, in the early days,

could afford the expense. Instead, it was the sloughs that furnished this need: a shallow hole dug near the edge collected water which seeped through the soil.¹⁶ The sloughs, in spite of encouraging the propagation of hungry mosquitoes in immense hordes, also harboured thousands of wild ducks. They and their eggs, along with prairie chickens, supplemented the food staples of flour, oatmeal, cornmeal, dried peas, sugar, syrup, tea and coffee which could be obtained in Estevan. Buffalo chips and bones were collected for fuel.¹⁷

Inexperience also took its toll of the Jews. Their neighbours, who had been established farmers in the United States, not only brought their families with them, but also machinery, livestock and experience. The Jewish farmers, on the other hand, started with neither machinery nor livestock and, although some were trained agriculturalists, they were basically young, penniless and unskilled. However, in spite of all their difficulties, the young men struggled to fulfil their homestead requirements and began to farm their own land in the spring of 1907.

Once established on their homesteads, the settlers expended their maximum effort into getting some land under cultivation. If prairie could be broken up early enough in the spring, hope for some revenue in the fall was provided by the seeding of flax. Land broken later would remain until the following spring for the planting of wheat. In the fall, the farmers, to help ease their financial burdens, would work on threshing outfits during the harvest. But even with this, there were insufficient funds to finance their operations.

Yet the colony continued and by 1909 the population had grown to 58 people on twenty-five farms. They owned 6,400 acres of land, 376 acres of which had been broken up. 187 acres were in crop that year and produced the following:

Acres	Bushels	Grain
39	510	oats
89	800	wheat
59	590	flax

In 1910 when there were 66 inhabitants living on 27 farms, the colony had 50 horses, 16 milk cows and 33 head of cattle. Assets totalled \$87,599 and liabilities totalled \$13,662.¹⁸

There were, in addition, other indications of progress. A post office was established a few miles to the northeast of the colony.¹⁹ The first council meeting of Souris Valley Municipality No. 7, in which Sonnenfeld was located, was held on January 3, 1910.²⁰

Plans, meanwhile were afoot to build a synagogue. Moses Hoffer (Hoffer

Sr.) who wrote the JCA requesting a grant towards the expenses, was informed that the Association could not contribute for such purposes and that he should secure money from local sources.²¹ Although primary sources, which would indicate a change of heart have not been found, secondary sources generally assume that the JCA eventually gave the necessary funds. A "kehillah" was organized to deal with Jewish community affairs and Hoffer Sr. served as "rosh" throughout his lifetime.

Thus six years after having left Europe, Sonnenfeld's original settlers had a railway line slightly over 20 miles away and developing community institutions. They had their own homesteads, each with over 30 acres of land under cultivation, and although this was not enough on which to support a family, the pioneers now knew it was possible to survive as farmers in Sonnenfeld.

PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION 1912-1925

During its period of consolidation, Sonnenfeld, although subject to many of the same forces as the remainder of agricultural southern Saskatchewan, did not always follow similar patterns in its development.

The wartime boom, following the excellent crops of 1912²² and 1913,²³ was accompanied by a rise in the price of wheat and other farm commodities in the months succeeding the armistice of 1918. The peak of the boom came during the first half of 1920 and a sharp recession thereafter carried price indices downward. From 1920 to 1923 the amount the farmers received for their products fell by one half and the price of wheat dropped by almost three-fifths. On the prairies, the economic pressures of the early 1920's were rendered more acute by the prolonged drought. Climatic conditions had been irregular for a number of years after the bountiful crop of 1915. Rust impaired the quality of Sonnenfeld's 1916 harvest. Moisture conditions were uneven in 1917, varying greatly from region to region. For a substantial portion of the semi-arid plains there were five crop failures in a row from 1917 to 1921.²⁴ The difficulties which faced the farmers in the "dirty thirties" had already begun in the twenties. Census records for the period offer striking evidence of its effect, the depletion in population and an increase in farm abandonment.²⁵

However, the endless cycle of settlement and then farm abandonment, a characteristic of agricultural development within the Palliser Triangle, was by no means a phenomenon of 1912-1925. It had been going on, without interruption, since the arrival of the first immigrants. With 70% of its farmers still remaining by 1920,²⁶ Sonnenfeld's population appears to have been more stable than that of the remainder of the Triangle.

The following statistics indicate that the number of farms and their acreage in

Sonnenfeld peaked in 1916 and then declined, a development which did not follow the rest of agricultural southern Saskatchewan, where the number of farms increased rapidly in the years from 1911 to 1921.²⁷

FARMS AND HUMAN POPULATION IN SONNENFELD COLONY

Year	Population	Farms	Total Acreage
1912	98	34	8,320
1913	117	43	9,660
1914	118	39	9,600 or 9,600
1915	134	42	10,880
1916	147	45	11,040
1917	N.A.	36	10,160
1920	111	35	10,691
1922	125	33	N.A.
1923	108	31	9,900
1924	96	28	N.A.
1925	99	28	9,600 ²⁸

As was typical in the prairies, by 1925, the average farms size in Sonnenfeld had increased.

In spite of poor climatic conditions, some grain was harvested in Sonnenfeld each of the years from 1912 to 1925 and with the completion of the C.P.R. branch line through Tribune in 1913, the colonists could make the return trip to deliver grain and bring back supplies in one day.

Throughout the ebb and flow of the prairie's agricultural and economic conditions, family life in Sonnenfeld developed. The young men were anxious to find wives. Berger married Feldman's sister and Feldman married Berger's sister. Some of the pioneers went to other colonies in search of mates. Hoffer's wife, for example, came from the Jewish farm settlement of Lipton. Thus, although the colony started with essentially no women, the imbalance between the sexes corrected itself, as may be seen from the following figures:

Year	Men	Women
1913	43	34
1923	31	30 ²⁹

With the advent of wives and children, community life progressed and the institutions which contributed much to the colony's stability and success were organized. A building which housed the synagogue, Hebrew school and accommodation for the person who acted both as Hebrew teacher and shochet was completed in 1912. The children were given regular instruction in Hebrew, Jewish history and religion. Sonnenfeld's synagogue was also its community centre. It was there that charitable functions raised money; ladies held their afternoon teas, young people met for their box socials and meetings for the Young People's Cultural Club were convened. Everyone went to the dances. At this event, babies were put to sleep in their baskets and older children were placed on tables, chairs or on the floor.

While Sonnenfeld had the capacity to provide only a limited amount of monetary assistance to its needy farmers, the pioneers organized another important institution, a credit union. In 1917, with a modest capital fund of \$2,000 and the aid of the JCA, the Jewish Farmer's Co-operative Credit Union of Sonnenfeld was founded. On November 17 of the same year, Hoffer Sr., president of the credit union, wrote the JCA inviting Dr. Sonnenfeld to a proposed tenth anniversary celebration on Saturday, January 26, 1918. In the same letter he also mentioned that plans were afoot to construct a "mikveh" [ritual bath] and steam bath at the approximate cost of \$2,000. The anticipated expense for the water alone was at least \$1,000. Such a building was deemed necessary, not only for the orthodox colonists, but also for the shochet who was not content to remain where he could not carry out the ritual necessary for his religious life.³⁰ A report concerning the arrival of this letter stated that, while no outright request for financial assistance had been made, it was no doubt implied.³¹ What transpired as a result of this correspondence has not been discovered; however, neither the ritual bath nor the steam bath were built and no evidence has been found to determine whether or not the anniversary celebration was held.

While the amenities of civilization slowly made their appearance and neighbours co-operated with one another, poor roads and inadequate facilities still presented innumerable problems. Although a doctor established himself in Bromhead, some 30 miles away, tragic deaths still occurred.³² School districts were formed. Summit school opened in 1912 and Dravland in 1913.³³ The Tribune Telephone Company was organized in 1916.³⁴ Sonnenfeld residents, like other settlers in the region, participated as directors of the telephone company and trustees on the school boards.

With the growth of community institutions and family living, the lifestyle of the farmers slowly changed. When they first arrived and prairie had to be bro-

ken, oxen were used. As time went on, horses became more common. The colonists expanded into mixed farming and much effort was put into their home gardens. One-room shacks gradually disappeared and families now had houses. Water remained an ever-present problem.³⁵ Plumbing was non-existent and no electric power was available. Barns were changed from sod to wood. Each farm had one or two grainaries for storage. Many farmers began to have hired men to assist with the work in the summer and some of the colonists had children who could help with the chores. The Jewish farmers, who had been in the community for many years, were basically established.³⁶

Life in Sonnenfeld by the end of 1925, although harsh compared to contemporary cultural centres and primitive by modern standards, was no longer the remote pioneering outpost it had been twenty years earlier. While cultural tradition and strong family ties provided much of the strength needed to persevere and triumph over adversity, it was the settlers themselves, mainly through their own efforts who succeeded in building farms and increasing their assets.³⁷ The JCA, although instrumental in neither the founding nor the detailed management of the community, did assist some of the institutions as well as individual farmers. The representative's periodic visits also gave the settlers a feeling of unity and, to those who had graduated from the agricultural college, a sense of continuity. After 1925 the JCA played an even more significant role in Sonnenfeld.

THE JCA YEARS 1926-1939

Two of the features which dominated Sonnenfeld's history from 1926 to 1939 were the "dirty thirties" and the JCA. In 1925, after an unsuccessful attempt to find a suitable block of land in western Canada on which to settle some Russo-Roumanian refugees, the JCA decided to enlarge the principal Jewish colonies in Saskatchewan.³⁸ It is probable that the most significant reasons for their interest in these settlements were both the worsening European situation for the Jews and Canada's stringent immigration laws. These latter, however, led the JCA to encourage rural settlements since it was believed that some people could be brought onto farms in Sonnenfeld, as well as the other colonies, who would not otherwise be allowed into the country. Despite more than a decade of natural disasters, the JCA's philosophy appears to have had some measure of success.

The Association's only involvement in Sonnenfeld land transactions up to 1922 occurred when acting as an intermediary in the transfer of a pre-emption quarter section.³⁹ The purchase of 48 quarter sections radically changed the situation.⁴⁰

The JCA's confidence in the land's capacity to successfully yield crops was reinforced not only by the excellent wheat harvest of 1926, but also the encouraging assessment prepared in 1927 by A. H. Joel, a former Professor of Soils at the University of Saskatchewan.⁴¹

While there is no doubt that, under ordinary circumstances the report by Joel would have been correct, the year that preceded and those that followed its publication unleashed conditions that were far from normal. Catastrophe struck after the 1926 harvest when wet, heavy snow and sleet contributed to the destruction of the telephone poles and wires. For many years the people continued to pay off the debentures which had been issued to finance the system and there was no money to rebuild it. Isolation was again intensified by the lack of telephone service.

In 1928 a hailstorm wiped out a crop which had promised to be exceptionally bountiful. Trees in the shelterbelts, which some farmers had by that time planted around their yards, were stripped of leaves and small branches.⁴²

In spite of the reverses, this was an era of great optimism and activity in the community. Portents were good for the success of JCA's policy of vigorous intervention into Sonnenfeld's affairs. It coincided with a prosperous stage of Canada's wheat economy.⁴³ High prices and work on the long-awaited railway through the colony each contributed to the feeling of well-being.

Grain elevators, stores and other services appeared in Ratcliffe, Hoffer and Oungre, the three hamlets which rose in Sonnenfeld along the C.P.R. branch line completed in 1927.⁴⁴ The site of "Oungre" was officially given its name when, on August 6, 1928, the municipality accepted the JCA's offer of land for the new school, a community hall and \$500 for the hall's building fund in return for the favour of naming the new town in honour of the JCA General Manager, Dr. Louis Oungre.⁴⁵

In accordance with the JCA plan of gradually increasing Sonnenfeld's population, thirty-one east European families, none of whom had before encountered Canadian farming methods, were settled in the community between 1926 and 1928.⁴⁶ To provide accommodation and experience for the new farmers, the Oungre Farm Labourers' Hamlet was constructed on S.W. 27-2-15-W2nd. Each of the six 25-acre lots had a house, barn and chicken house. An instructor was engaged to guide the beginners in their operations as well as teach them how to use modern machinery.⁴⁷

The government, meanwhile through its Field Supervisors, maintained a watchful eye over Sonnenfeld and Jewish colonization. N. A. Craddock, in his report of August 5, 1928, found that all family members, having no desire to

drift into the cities, engaged in agricultural work. With the exception of some children, no one spoke English. He also said that the scheme appeared to be making good

headway and perhaps settling up the land that would otherwise go unfarmed, as from the conditions and texture of the soil it is very evident that it would stand very little dry weather.

Soon after Craddock's assessment desert-like conditions, which had earlier attacked the United States, threatened the entire Palliser Triangle, including Sonnenfeld. In 1929 only the summerfallow produced wheat. The crops of 1931 and 1934 were complete failures while in 1930, 1932 and 1933 the income was frequently insufficient to pay for harvesting costs. Within the Triangle, crops that started to grow were soon cut off by the drifting soil which also turned day into night, buried fences and filled houses, eyes and lungs with dust. The devastation spread and had its effect on each member of the community.

Sonnenfeld residents at this time could be divided into two distinct groups: the originals and the newcomers. Of the latter, some had for many years lived in the JCA's Anatolian colonies.⁴⁹ They arrived, with no capital, in 1926 and were barely established before the onset of the "dirty thirties". To help get started, they had taken loans from the Association.⁵⁰ The second group came a few years later when hard times were already upon the community and others in the Palliser Triangle were leaving.

Unlike the original settlers, who for the most part had been young men entering an unoccupied land, the farmers who came towards the end of the twenties brought their families with them, along with all the concerns that such responsibilities entail, to a country that was settled. They were also heavily in debt to the JCA.⁵¹ Although the early colonists had, over the years, endured countless hardships, they had also achieved sufficient satisfaction from their pioneering efforts and their farming to form attachments not only to the Jewish and larger community in which they lived, but also their land. The newcomers were "greenhorns", probationers, who were immediately faced with a despairing set of conditions: poor weather, drought, unfamiliar scenes, a spartan lifestyle, isolation and no money.

The need for money made it necessary for the colonist to borrow, not only from the JCA, but any institution who would accommodate him. With the worsening situation the JCA became more involved, and in many instances, in spite of itself. On the other hand, their representatives had little or no understanding of the western farmers' hatred of banks and distrust of "city slickers".

Stress of depression, drought and pioneering increased tensions between the

colonists and the JCA, resulting in many serious disputes, some of which went to court. Though they were eventually dismissed, the grievances were indicative of a general feeling of dissatisfaction, frustration and disappointment. The situation became sufficiently desperate for a group calling themselves the Jewish Farmers' Association, Ratcliffe, Saskatchewan, to wire the Minister of Immigration and Colonization on May 9, 1939, in an appeal for help.⁵² In response, an investigation was launched.

G. Todd, who had previously visited the families, reported that unrest and dissatisfaction in the colony covered several areas. The later arrivals were compelled to rent land after having been promised long-term purchase agreements. Rental terms, in most cases, were much too high and the local unofficial representative was able to exert influences on the western officers of the JCA. Todd pointed out that while it might have been possible for the JCA to refute certain of the colonists' statements, it would be difficult for the Association to demonstrate how they assisted the later arrivals, all of whom had come to Canada with sufficient money to establish themselves, but by the time of the investigation were heavily indebted to the JCA.⁵³ Disputes of colonists and JCA, government investigations and problems resulting from a series of articles critical of its colonies' management notwithstanding, the JCA persevered in its efforts to rescue European Jews and place them in Saskatchewan.

However, there was resistance from Ottawa. In a memorandum discussing the Association's request for a quota of 30 Jewish families from Germany, F. C. Blair, Director, Immigration Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, listed various reasons by which they could not qualify for entry into Canada. They were not

strictly speaking agriculturalists but cattle-traders; [they will not] be able to bring out of Germany more than \$400 and probably not that much [and] the record of Jewish [farm] colonization in Canada is largely a record of failure.⁵⁴

He noted that the basis of the request is "the desire to get some more German Jewish families out from Under Hitler's yoke". Blair concluded the memorandum with

Sometimes our Jewish friends are inclined to criticize us for being too careful about the admission of Jews as farmers. Our carefulness is based on long experience in dealing with these people . . . these people generally leave the farms and they have themselves established the reputation they now enjoy in this regard.⁵⁵

That the Director of the Immigration, Department of Mines and Resources, was never a friend of any Jew is well documented.

Blair gave vent to his anti-Semitism by placing every possible bureaucratic encumbrance in the path of refugees.⁵⁶

Relevant to the statement that Jewish farm colonization in Canada “is largely a record of failure”, it is interesting to note that for the period from 1911 to 1931 approximately 6 out of every 10 homesteaders in Saskatchewan abandoned their claim before securing title to homesteads.⁵⁷ Compared with the aforementioned statistics, the abandonment of land in Sonnenfeld by fourteen of its original colonists and their families by 1936 (just over 50% of those 27 families who had been present in the founding years, specifically 1910) indicates a degree of success above the average for the remainder of the providence. Nevertheless, prejudice, drought and depression brought Jewish migration into Canada to a virtual halt in 1930. It was not resumed for the period under consideration. With the exception of one family which arrived in 1939, there was no colonization in Sonnenfeld during the thirties.

An insight into the extent of the natural disaster in Sonnenfeld is provided by an October 1931 inspection trip report of the JCA’s western representative.

An examination of all government records shows that such a complete [crop] failure has never previously occurred in Western Canada.

The Sonnenfeld Colony falls within “Relief Area A” designated by the government as a district which is in the direst need having suffered from three successive crop failures.⁵⁹

The colonists, like many others, had to resort to government relief.

To protect the soil surfaces from erosion, the farmers were advised to leave trash covers and strips of stubble, but they became incubation beds for new insect threats. Types of sawflies, caterpillars and cutworms never before seen in Canada were borne by the wind into the province and multiplied prodigiously. The ubiquitous gopher moved into abandoned fields by the thousands and into whatever crops were growing. By far the worst pest, however, was the grasshopper. Damage done to the crops in the Palliser Triangle in 1933 amounted to more than \$30,000,000.⁶⁰

With the depression, came the calamitous collapse of farm prices. Between 1930 and 1933, farm purchasing power was reduced to near zero. Livestock shipped to Winnipeg stockyards returned barely enough to pay freight charges. One of the measures the government took in 1937 was to pay the freight charges so that the farmer would have two or three cents a pound net for their animals.⁶¹ The government also placed a limit of animals any farmer on relief would be allowed to keep over the winter. For example, a family of five could keep 4 cows and 9 horses and larger families could keep an extra animal.⁶²

By 1937, in the ever-worsening situation the average net assets per farmer in Sonnenfeld, excluding Hoffer Brothers, was \$491.09.⁶³ Only two parcels of land in the settlement were not indebted to the JCA and it is probably reasonable to assume that the two parcels were also mortgaged to a bank or other institu-

tion. Records of the Rural Municipality of Souris Valley show that in 1931, 1934 and 1936 either 99% or 100% of all settlers were on relief; only in 1932 and 1933 was the number of families receiving relief as low as 50%.⁶⁴ What would have been Sonnenfeld's excellent crop of 1938 was ravaged by rust. Within 6 years, as a result of drought and depression, an ostensibly independent colony had become completely dependent on the JCA, private lenders and government welfare for its survival.

But despite all the circumstances, the JCA still persisted in its efforts to convince the Canadian government to allow, at least a small number of refugees into its colonies, and in a letter dated October 31, 1936 to Blair, the Chairman of the Canadian Committee, JCA argued that:

even during the depression years we paid our taxes regularly and in this way helped the municipality to maintain their services and in the Rural Municipality of Souris Valley we paid our taxes in advance thus helping to maintain medical facilities for the entire population of the district.⁶⁵

This continued pressure was, no doubt, at least partly responsible for another inspection on behalf of the Department of Immigration. In the opinion expressed by Harry Allam, the colony did not appear to be thriving. However,

The drought in the south at Sonnenfeld . . . has caused a situation which makes it difficult to criticize too severely . . .⁶⁶

He also observed that

One of the outstanding things noticed was the desire of the families to give their children the best education possible . . . [The children] are clean-cut and intelligent and can discuss various kinds of sports etc., the same as Canadian children. They do well at school, the only difference being that after 4:00 p.m. on certain days each week the Jewish people receive Hebrew instruction. The religious services are carried out in their own synagogue . . .

Within the colony, the synagogue became too small for Sonnenfeld's needs and with the JCA's financial assistance, the building was approximately doubled in size.⁶⁸ A strong sense of belonging and the continuation of ancient traditions helped to overcome the residents' feeling of impotence in the face of misfortune. While in the remainder of the Palliser Triangle there were many suicides and:

the mounties . . . were busier gathering up people who had been driven insane by the depression than by chasing crooks.⁶⁹

Only one of the colonists broke under the strain. He had to be hospitalized for a time after discovering that his "magnificent" crop of wheat was worthless due to rust.

Yet in spite of the discouragement, many of the Sonnenfeld residents did not flee. In 1939, only four of the 26 farmers (two of whom were widows) had lived

in the community less than nine years, while in 1936, 58.53% of the sons were still on the farms.⁷⁰ This settlement followed the patterns similar to other Jewish colonies in Saskatchewan. A 1938 newspaper article stated that:

One of the remarkable facts about Jewish farm life in Saskatchewan is that 62% of the present holders of land have retained it for 25 years without moving. In the same areas, only 16% of the total population have done the same thing. Only 40.4% of the Jewish farmers' sons have left the soil, while the figure for the total population is 43.7%.⁷¹

These figures must be viewed in the context of Sonnenfeld's history. The prosperous economy of 1926, the new railway, the high hopes and the JCA dream of expanding the colony to 150 families were suddenly followed by disaster after disaster. Hail, drought, grasshoppers, army-worms, cutworms, sawflies, dust storms, gophers were accompanied by economic depression, difficulties with the JCA and anti-Semitic prejudices of the Immigration Department. It is indeed remarkable that the colonists of Sonnenfeld tenaciously clung to their farms, survived and, by Palliser Triangle standards, at least, succeeded.

NOTES

1. Jewish farm colonization in the west, begun in 1882, pre-dates Ukrainian, Doukhobor, Russian, German and Hungarian settlement. Only the Mennonites and the people of Britain and Iceland came to farm before the Jews.
2. Sponsored by the Baron de Hirsch, the college in Slobodka Lesna, near the city of Kolomyia, Galicia, gave its students a four-year course in agriculture. Classroom studies took up one half of each day and the other half was spent working on the college's farms. This labour provided not only practical experience, but also paid for tuition, room and board.
3. *The Western Jewish News*, November 27, 1975, p. 12, col. 4.
4. *Ibid*, p. 13, col. 1
5. Souris Valley Historical Club, *The Saga of Souris Valley R.M. No. 7*, Oungre, Saskatchewan, 1976, p. 258.
6. *Ibid*, p. 259.
7. March 8, 1937. Unsigned memorandum. JCA file. Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
8. April 4, 1908. *Report on Agricultural School Graduates sent during years 1905-6-7* prepared for the JCA by M. Heppner, Winnipeg. (PAC, Box 374, Microfilm Reel A 938).
9. *Souris Valley*, pp. 258-259.
10. *Ibid*, p. 259.
11. Updated memorandum *Re: History of JCA, Sonnenfeld Colony* by S. Belkin. JCA file, Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
12. Dr. Sigmund Sonnenfeld was one of the original directors and later manager of the JCA.
13. Undated memorandum *Re: History of JCA* by S. Belkin.
14. *Report of the Canadian Committee for the Year Ending Dec. 31, 1912*. from Winnipeg to Chairman and members "Canadian Committee, Montreal." JCA file, Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
15. As a result of a study carried out in the 1850's, Captain Palliser concluded that the area now referred to as the "Palliser Triangle" was unsuitable for settlement. The base of the triangle lies roughly between Cartwright, Manitoba and Caraway, Alberta. The peak of the triangle is lo-

cated in the vicinity of Saskatoon.

16. *The Western Jewish News*, November 27, 1975. p. 15, col. 1.
17. *Ibid.* p. 13, col. 2.
18. October, 1909, *Report on New Herman*, (PAC, Box 374, Microfilm Reel A 938)
19. Souris Valley Historical Club, *The Saga of Souris Valley R. M. No. 7*, Oungre, Saskatchewan, 1976, p. 2.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
21. February 4, 1910. Letter from JCA, Paris to M. Heppner, Winnipeg. (PAC, Box 374, Microfilm Reel A 938).
22. The JCA annual report for the year ending December 31, 1912, confirms that Sonnenfeld, like the remainder of agricultural southern Saskatchewan, had an excellent harvest: Once more a splendid crop has been harvested in this colony, and the farmers are progressing very favourably. The total value of their crop this year being \$14, 120 as compared with \$9,907 last year.
23. The JCA review for the year ending December 31, 1913 observes that:
A great deal of progress has been made during the past 12 months on the individual farms and their condition has been materially improved. The crop was a large one being an increase of more than 50% over that of last year and is valued at \$21,056.
24. The rust which Sonnenfeld suffered in 1916 was followed by dry years and some grasshopper infestation.
25. Vernon G. Fowke, *National Policy and the Wheat Economy*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1957, p. 78.
26. Maureen Fox, "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan with Special Reference to the Colonies of Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge", Master of Arts Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1979, p. 120.
27. Marc-Adelard Tremblay and W. J. Anderson, editors, *Rural Canada in Transition*, Agricultural Economics Council of Canada, 1968, p. 267.
28. The table is a compilation of some statistical material Louis Rosenberg gathered during the years, 1919 to 1934, when he was the JCA western representative. JCA file. Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Letter, November 1, 1917, from Moses Hoffer, President, Jewish Farmers' Co-operative Credit Union of Sonnenfeld to the JCA. (PAC Microfilm A 938).
31. JCA report in French, single page, no date and unsigned. (PAC Microfilm A 938).
32. Feldman's father, who had in 1914 only recently arrived in Sonnenfeld to take up a homestead, was one of the victims. Although precise details are not known, it was felt that his appendix burst while bumping along the rough prairie (in a wagon box) en route to the doctor. He died when complications set in after the operation.
33. The first teachers were young university students who taught during their summer vacations. The students could not speak English and the teachers could not speak Yiddish.
34. *The Saga of Souris Valley*, p. 3.
35. The following, a free translation from the French 1923 JCA annual report, states that:
in order to encourage the Sonnenfeld colonists who were once again suffering from a prolonged drought, the JCA had authorized the drilling of six wells. They have been so situated as to make their benefit available to everyone.
36. The 1921 JCA annual report described:
a model farm which is an example to the rest of the colonists. The Hoffer Brothers own 1,600 acres of land, 39 horses, 57 cows, 1 stallion and agricultural machinery valued, perhaps, at \$72,800/
37. Sonnenfeld's total assets and total liabilities for the years 1915, 1920 and 1925 were as follows:

	<u>1915</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1925</u>
Total Assets	\$193,292	\$302,700	\$244,500
Total Liabilities	<u>49,855</u>	<u>105,310</u>	<u>84,000</u>
	<u>\$143,437</u>	<u>\$197,390</u>	<u>\$160,500</u>

38. Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, Montreal, The Eagle Publishing Co., Limited, 1966, p. 163.
39. Maureen Fox, "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Saskatchewan with Special Reference to the Colonies of Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge", Master of Arts Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1979, p. 114.
40. *Ibid*, p. 125.
41. December 28, 1936. Memorandum initialled SB/RF, JCA file, Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal. Memorandum includes the following quotation from the assessment prepared in 1927 by A. H. Joel, a former Professor of Soils at the University of Saskatchewan:
. . . the greater portion of lands examined are well suited to most crops adapted to the climate. . . The appearance of crops at the time of inspection would indicate a store of fertility productive of high yields and good quality of grain. My opinion is that by following farming methods already proven adapted to the district that farmers on these lands have better than average change for profitable farming in Saskatchewan . . . these lands are above average of Saskatchewan in drought resistance a very important factor in our sub-humid climate.
42. Reminiscences of Keiva Feldman. Personal communication. August 24, 1981.
43. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, p. 162.
44. Souris Valley Historical Club, *The Saga of Souris Valley, R. M. No. 7*, Oungre, Saskatchewan, 1976, p. 366.
45. *Ibid*.
46. Undated, unsigned memorandum entitled, Excerpts "History of Jewish Colonization Ass'n., Canada", p. 2. JCA file. Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
47. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, p. 165.
48. August 5, 1928. Field Supervisor's Investigation Report. (PAC, RG 76, Vol. 82, File 8520, Microfilm Reel C 4749).
49. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, p. 165.
50. JCA correspondence. (PAC Devlin Papers, RG 30, Vol. 5631).
51. Unsigned summary of Sonnenfeld statistics, 1936. JCA file. Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
52. May 9, 1930. Copy of a telegram from Jewish Farmers' Association, Ratcliffe, Saskatchewan to Minister of Immigration and Colonization. (PAC RG 76, Vol. 82, File 8520).
53. June 23, 1930. Report by G. Todd, Travelling Investigating Officer, Department of Immigration and Colonization. (PAC RG 76, Vol. 82, File 8530, Microfilm Reel C 4749).
54. Memorandum. F. C. Blair, Director, Immigration Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, November 1936. (PAC RG 76, Vol. 82, File 8530, Microfilm Reel C 4749).
55. *Ibid*.
56. Irving Abella and Harold Troper, "The line must be drawn somewhere: Canada and Jewish Refugees 1933-9", *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. LX, No. 2, June, 1979, p. 204.
57. Vernon G. Fowke, *National Policy and the Wheat Economy*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1957, p. 285.
58. Fox, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies*, p. 158.
59. November 6, 1931, Regina Letter #13,800. Report on Hirsch and Sonnenfeld Colonies. Inspection trip Oct. 14-23. JCA file, Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.

60. James Gray, *Men Against the Desert*, Saskatoon, Western Producer Book Service, 1967, p. 41.
61. *Ibid*, p. 3.
62. *Ibid*, p. 146.
63. Unsigned summary of Sonnenfeld statistics, 1936. JCA files, Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
64. Fox, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies*, p. 158.
65. October 21, 1936, letter from Lyon Cohen, Jewish Colonization Association to F. C. Blair, Department of Colonization and Immigration. (PAC, File 8520, Microfilm Reel C 4749).
66. Fox, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies*, Appendix.
67. *Ibid*.
68. JCA Annual Report for 1931. Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
69. Gray, *Men Against the Desert*, p. 167.
70. Unsigned summary of Sonnenfeld statistics for the years 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1936. JCA files, Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal.
71. *Montreal Standard*, December 3, 1938.

To The Editor

Dear Sir:

I was most interested in the contribution of Dr. Herb Sohn in the recent edition of your journal dealing with the Jewish contribution to Human Rights laws in Ontario. It revived many memories of battles fought, some lost, some won, many years ago — though it still seems like yesterday that it all happened.

I would like to take the liberty of supplementing the story with one episode that stands out in my memory quite distinctly.

Dr. Sohn writes on p. 114:

“On still another front, the J.P.R.C. arranged for U.S. Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon to be a guest speaker on January 11, 1951 before the prestigious Empire Club of Canada. Senator Morse, a respected leader of the progressive wing of the Republican Party, was a sponsor of anti-discrimination legislation in the United States.”

That is quite true, but the further details of this episode are worth reporting.

The initiative of bringing Wayne Morris came from a Ben Brith named Norman Cowan who had set up a small action committee on the promotion of fair employment laws. We picked up the Senator in Buffalo and drove him to Toronto where he addressed the Empire Club. The following day, with Frank Garber at the wheel, we drove out to Guelph where Senator Morse addressed a joint luncheon of the Rotarians and Kiwanians. Then the CBC asked him to give a five minute talk on its “Speaker of the Week” slot which came right after the ten o’clock National News on Saturday night (it was January 1951, before the television era was to hit Canada). Senator Morse consulted with the writer (who was then as now executive director of the Joint Community Relations Committee, or Joint Public Relations Committee as it was still called) and he proposed that in a foreshortened address as he was asked to deliver on radio, he would concentrate on the matter of anti-discrimination legislation as it had worked in his own state of Oregon (in his address to the Empire Club and the others he had interlarded his remarks with comments on other aspects of U.S.A. political questions).

This he did. The remarks were taped on Friday afternoon at the CBC building on Jarvis Street and the Senator took leave of us.

I wondered, as I said *au revoir*, whether this “shot in the dark” would repair the investment. The speaker’s fee was \$700 — by no means exorbitant but a substantial sum for our limited budget. The investment, in fact could more properly be called a gamble since we could have no assured knowledge of what

effect it would have, other than a vaguely educational one, on those who were directly exposed to it.

We, i.e. the JPRC, had had an appointment on the following Wednesday with Premier Frost to discuss with him our then very active subject — an anti-discrimination law in employment.

Coming to the office that Monday morning January 15th, I received a telephone call shortly after nine a.m. from the Premier's office. His message: he wanted the appointment advanced to that same day — to Monday afternoon. Needless to say, we were most willing to accommodate him. I phoned around to our delegation of officers: J. I. Oelbaum, Ontario president of the Congress; Prof. Jacob Finkelman, national JPRC Chairman and Fred Catzman, Ontario JPRC Chairman. All three quickly made whatever changes were needed to meet Mr. Frost's request and we were ushered into his presence in the midafternoon of that same day. I recall Fred Catzman arming himself against over-confidence with a passage from the Psalms: "Al tivtechu bin'divim: Put not your faith in princes. . ."

Mr. Frost was cordial but slow in unwinding and getting to his subject matter. But we were willing to wait. He told us of his Jewish friends in Lindsay, Ontario (he had always prided himself on being a small town lawyer) and how he had once been dubbed the "Jewish" lawyer because of his many clients of that religious persuasion.

We waited patiently. Eventually, in his leisurely but sure-footed way, he came round to the matter at hand.

He indicated his initial skepticism about the anti-discrimination law, then his gradual acceptance of the concept. He knew that George McCullagh, publisher of the *Globe and Mail* did not approve but this wasn't the only issue on which he and McCullagh differed, he assured us. Ontario, he expected, would be a focus for many immigrants from all parts of the globe in the years to come and he did not want a single one of these to feel himself a second-class citizen in this province. The writer has had many occasions to recall these words of Leslie Frost in the intervening years and he has admired and respected the far-sightedness and advanced thinking of this statesman who paraded as a "small town lawyer".

Then came the bombshell which took me quite by surprise. Only the night before, he said, listening to the radio he had heard a short commentary by Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon who had explained how such legislation had been found effective and acceptable in his home state. "And he's a Republican," Frost underlined, "a Republican who's got the courage to disagree with his

senior leader Senator Taft!’’ Clearly the fact that Morse was a Republican, albeit a liberal Republican and that *he* had endorsed the legislation made an impact on this Ontario Tory. (Within a year, incidentally, Morse was to switch to the Democrats).

We did not assume that the words of Senator Morse had by themselves converted the Ontario Premier. But they constituted the last link in a chain of events and of reasoning which led him to the conclusive determination to approve of the idea and concretize it into law. It was Senator Morse’s words heard on the radio which had impelled him to alter the Wednesday date and shift it to the preceding Monday, so eager was he to report his feelings.

I don’t know whether my face betrayed my feeling of gratified astonishment. Never before — and never since — did I experience such a total and positive response to a legislative campaign tactic. Mr. Frost told us then and there he would introduce the bill when the legislature opened and, as Dr. Sohn writes, he did. He asked us to keep the information to ourselves. Within a day or so he was to see a Civil Liberties Association deputation but would rather not make the announcement prematurely.

While we were with Mr. Frost he received a note several times from his aides. At one point he said, “He’ll have to wait till I’m ready”.

On walking out in a state of suspended elation, we saw Sydney Smith, then president of the University of Toronto who had been cooling his heels in the foreroom for more than an hour — by now it was after 6 p.m. Prof. Finkelman was particularly embarrassed as Dr. Smith was his boss at the university.

As I write, it is just over 30 years since this event and I feel I can now safely disclose the confidential “leak” we then received from Leslie Frost.

Yours,

B. G. Kayfetz, Executive Director,
Joint Community Relations Committee of
Canadian Jewish Congress & Bnai Brith

CONTRIBUTORS

DR. DAVID J. BERCUSON is Professor of History at the University of Calgary. He is also the co-editor of the *Canadian Historical Review*.

ANNA FELDMAN has obtained the Toronto Conservatory of Music Performance Diploma in singing, as well as her MusBac degree from Carleton University, where she currently teaches. Under the aegis of Carleton University's Institute of Canadian Studies, she is now preparing her M.A. thesis on Yiddish songs in the Jewish Farm Colonies of Saskatchewan 1917-1939, for which she did the research culminating in this paper.

DR. HAROLD N. SEGALL, a cardiologist in Montreal from 1926-1981, was Assistant Professor of Medicine at McGill University until his retirement. He is on the executive of the Montreal Jewish Historical Society.

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