Far West/Far East

Baron de Hirsch, The Jewish Colonization Association and Canada

BY KENNEE SWITZER-RAKOS

I

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe flooded into the West in unprecedented numbers: between 1881 and the First World War, more than two million Jews were to settle in the United States, Canada, the Argentine, and in the towns and cities along their paths of migration.[1] These decades were ones of great suffering for the four million Jews confined within the Pale of Settlement.[2] The assassination of Tsar Alexander II, on 1st March, 1881, heralded an era of repressive autocracy throughout Russia, and it was during the reign of Tsar Alexander III that antisemitism was transformed into organised violence against Jews; two hundred and fifty pogroms erupted during 1881 and the first wave of pogroms to be directed against the Jews in the Ukraine, White Russia, Besserabia, and Poland during the years before the First World War. However, the pogroms were only one manifestation of renewed government persecution; in May 1881, a campaign of harassment was instituted against all Jews living outside the Pale of Settlement. They were required to present documentation proving their right of residence and only those with the most watertight permission were allowed to remain outside the Pale. The rest were rounded up and deported. The result was an influx of destitute Jews into the already overcrowded and violence-beset Jewish communities of the Pale of Settlement. In May 1882, more restrictive legislation, known as the 'Temporary Orders concerning the Jews', or the 'May Laws', were enacted which restricted the Jewish rights of residence even within the Pale, and had the effect of creating a Pale within the Pale of Settlement. They also limited economic opportunities: Jews could no longer engage in farming, or any secondary industry or trade that resulted from agriculture, they were prohibited from the keeping of inns or taverns, and they were barred from the professions and from academia. In 1891 all Jews living in the interior of the Russian Empire were expelled to the Pale. Consequently, thousands of Jews who had resided, for decades, throughout Russia were forced into the slums of Warsaw, Lodz, Minsk, Bialystock and the Jewish sections of the other towns and cities. This, of course, created all the problems of over-congestion and ghettoisation: disease, poverty and unemployment became common features of Jewish life in Russia at the turn of the century.[3] The economic infrastructure of

[1]Howard Morley Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, London 1958, p. 309.
[2]David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*, Oxford 1975, p. 30.
[3]On this see Salo Baron, *The Russian Jews under Tsar and Soviets*, New York–London 1969.

the Jewish ghettos and *shtetlach* of the Pale of Settlement could not cope with the increased demands placed on it by edict and pogrom, and the result was that most Jews lived on the fringes of the Russian economy. During the early twentieth century, the situation continued to deteriorate: in 1903, the Jews of Kishinev and Gomel were visited by pogroms, in the aftermath of the failed 1905 Revolution, and in 1906, the Jews of Bialystock were the victims of further violence.

Jewish life in the Russian ghettos and *shtetlach* represented almost every ideology and orientation: there were Zionists, Bundists, revolutionaries, religious revisionaries and more. Yet, whether Zionist or Bundist, national cultural autonomist or Social Democrat, one message echoed throughout the writings and the thoughts of the Jewish intellectuals and activists: life in Russia had become intolerable and Eastern Jewry could no longer afford to remain passive. Hence, while Jewish economic and social life was being strangulated by the long arm of the Tsarist regime, Jewish intellectual life was in a state of great fermentation and dynamic renascence, "of extreme restlessness, feverish collective dreaming, pretentious ideological effort"[4] and intense experimentation. Some joined the forces of revolution, others went to Palestine, but the vast majority of the Jews who took action did so by packing up their few belongings and by setting out for new and free lands. Neither the promises of Socialism nor the dreams of national revival could subdue their drive for new beginnings in the New World. They emigrated to America and Canada and the Argentine, not only because life beyond the Pale was difficult, but because they desired to take their destiny in their own hands.[5] The migration of Eastern Jewry represented more than a "flight ahead of catastrophe": it reflected a spontaneous yet collective reaction to repression and, perhaps, to the foreboding of destruction by a people in search of new modes of life.[6]

As the numbers of Jewish emigrants leaving the Pale of Settlement increased, Western Jewry was confronted with the question as to what were the best solutions to the dilemma of Jewish existence in the Russian Empire? Thus, the Russo-Jewish Question was addressed in the Jewish communities of the West, as well as in those of the East, during the years before the First World War. It is difficult to summarise the prevalent attitude of so diverse a group as Western Jewry to such a complex and multi-faceted issue as the Russo-Jewish Question: certainly the Jews of the West were always concerned about the persecution of their co-religionists, anywhere. They believed it was their role, as emancipated Jews, to intervene on behalf of oppressed Jewry and to do all that was possible to improve their condition. The foundation of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (1860), and its growth, both in influence and in strength, throughout the nineteenth century attests to the seriousness of Western Jewry's commitment to this principle. But when its members gathered to discuss the flight from Russia

[4]Irving Howe, *The World of Our Fathers. The Journey of the Eastern European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*, New York 1976, p. 16.
[5]On the intellectual Jewish renascence in Russia see Vital, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[6]David Rome, 'On Anti-Semitism in Canada, 1929–1939', in *Clouds in the Thirties*, Montreal 1980, Section 8, p. 142.

and Eastern Europe at the turn of the century, they concluded that emigration was not the answer to the Russo-Jewish Question and therefore, it should be discouraged. Their decision was determined by the pressure of receiving, assisting, accommodating and settling the numerous impoverished refugees in the Jewish communities of the West. However, it was motivated by more than self-interest; it reflected the manner in which the leaders of Western Jewry understood the meaning of progress and historical evolution. The emancipation of the Jews throughout the Western world had broken down the barriers which had prevented them from participating in civil and secular society, but while they basked in the enlightened policies of their governments, their co-religionists in the East still lived in the Dark Ages. Hence, emancipation had also opened an almost unbridgeable schism in the way in which Eastern and Western Jewry viewed the world. The different social, political and economic realities in which these two Jewries resided produced divergent, and at times opposing dreams, aspirations and philosophies. For the assimilated, Western Jew, emancipation was historically determined – an inevitable by-product of industrial development – and would be bestowed upon the Jews of the East once their governments donned the cloak of modernity. However, Eastern Jewry must not sit back and passively await Russia's entry into the modern era; it must actively promote industrial and social progress because this would lead to emancipation. Therefore, the Western Jew's view of the world was premised on his own historical experience, and prevented him from understanding that the Jews of Russia lived in a hostile environment where emancipation might not be the inevitable outcome of modernisation.

II

There were Western Jews, both intellectuals and humanitarians, who could not abide the suffering of their co-religionists and who dissented from the mainstream of Western Jewish opinion. Theodor Herzl and the Zionists represented one such response – they advocated a return to statehood in Palestine – and Baron de Hirsch represented another. He was a proponent of the idea of agricultural auto-emancipation in lands where Jews could live free from oppression and discrimination. Maurice de Hirsch was born on 9th December, 1831,[7] the son of Joseph and Karoline von Hirsch auf Gereuth, banker to Kings Ludwig I, Maximilian II, and Ludwig II of Bavaria. The von Hirsches were a prosperous and cosmopolitan family who had, through their own efforts and accomplishments, attained a privileged position in society. Yet, they never forsook their Jewish origins, values or identity in order to rise in society. Thus, Maurice grew up in an atmosphere pervaded not only by a strong desire to succeed but by an equally fierce determination to acquire what was morally and socially just: recognition of Jews' rights and privileges as citizens

[7]All the material on Baron de Hirsch's family background has been taken from a private publication the Hirsch family commissioned, unless otherwise indicated. Josef Prys, *Die Familie von Hirsch auf Gereuth*, Munich 1931.

among compatriots. Perhaps their struggle for emancipation played as formative an influence on the young Maurice as did his birth into a wealthy family. Throughout his life, he upheld a sense of loyalty towards "being Jewish" despite his assimilated and non-religious life-style. At a time when many Jews renounced their origins to gain entrance into society, and at a time when this resulted in genuine acceptance, Maurice adhered to his Jewish roots with impunity. This should not be dismissed as mere lip-service by a man of wealth and status for it reflected a deep commitment to his Jewishness that would later express itself as a commitment to less fortunate Jewry. He believed he could rise to the very pinnacle of society and enjoy all its benefits without compromising his Jewish heritage, and he achieved this goal during his lifetime.

Maurice followed in his father's footsteps; he entered the banking world at seventeen years of age, an ambitious and enterprising young man eager to leave his mark. His accomplishments as a banker were many, but his greatest coup was the financing and the building of a railway from Vienna to Constantinople.[8] While supervising his project, he visited the Jewish communities along his railway lines, and was appalled at the poverty and backwardness of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire. They were not the victims of government repression, but of ignorance, and economic stagnation. From this time on, he donated considerable sums of money to the Jews of Turkey and in December 1873, he offered the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* one million francs to establish educational and vocational training programmes for them:[9] "Pouvoir à l'instruction et à l'éducation de la jeunesse, c'est le remède le plus efficace qu'on puisse apporter à ce mal."[10] Baron de Hirsch hoped that education would improve not only their standard of living, by opening up many more opportunities for economic advancement, but the quality of their lives as well. Thereafter, his ties with the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* grew steadily closer and in 1879, he was elected to its Central Committee.[11]

Baron de Hirsch disdained the traditional form of Jewish philanthropy, the giving of alms (*tsedakah*) which was practised by the prominent Jews of his day and which sustained the *Yishuv* in Palestine. He was especially wary of its effects on the recipient: it "only makes so many more beggars and I consider it the greatest problem in philanthropy to make human beings who are capable of work out of individuals who otherwise must become paupers, and in this way create useful members of society."[12] He believed it was necessary to eradicate the causes of poverty and not just to relieve their symptoms. He maintained that

[8]For a fuller discussion of Baron de Hirsch's financial accomplishments see Kurt Grunwald, *Türkenhirsch. A Study of Baron Maurice de Hirsch, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist*, Jerusalem 1966, and Kennee Switzer, *Baron de Hirsch, The Jewish Colonization Association and Canada, 1891–1914*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1982 pp. 34–41.

[9]Narcisse Leven, *Cinquante Ans d'Histoire, l'Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860–1910*, vol. 2, Paris 1920, p. 24.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 23, from a letter by Baron de Hirsch to the Central Committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

[11]S. Adler-Rudel, 'Moritz Baron Hirsch. Profile of a Great Philanthropist', in *LBI Year Book VIII* (1963), p. 15.

[12]Baron Maurice de Hirsch, 'My Views on Philanthropy', in *North American Review*, No. 416 (July 1891), p. 1.

the most debilitating aspect of Jewish discrimination was the exclusion of the Jews from the economic infrastructure and as a believer in, and beneficiary of, the Industrial Revolution, he advocated the reintegration of "ghetto" Jewry into the economic order of the nineteenth century. The only remedy for Jewish poverty, and the only means of normalising the Jewish position in society was through productive labour: the Jewish masses must be given the opportunity to become useful and independent labourers, tradesmen, artisans and agriculturalists. The existence of a self-sufficient Jewish working force would improve their standard of living and it would also demonstrate to the rest of the world that despite prejudice and restriction Jews were capable of playing a "useful" role in society. It was in this spirit that he endowed the *Baron Hirsch Kaiser Jubiläums-Stiftung* in Austria with twelve million kronen in 1888, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Franz Joseph's ascension to the throne. The money financed the establishment of vocational and agricultural schools for young Jews of Galicia and Bukovina.

Baron de Hirsch was also actively involved in efforts to aid Russo-Jewish refugees: he contributed one million francs to the Emergency Fund for Refugees of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*[13] and he sent his private almoner, Emmanuel Felix Veneziani, to the border town of Brody, where most of the refugees were fleeing, to supervise and fund relief operations.[14] From 1881 on, he turned his attention almost exclusively to the Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe whom he considered the most desperate and downtrodden of World Jewry. In 1886, he offered to organise a fund of fifty million francs to provide them with a network of educational and training programmes, along the lines of the *Baron Hirsch Kaiser Jubiläums-Stiftung*, but the Russian government would not cooperate and he abandoned this idea.[15] Nevertheless, the Jews continued to pour out of the Pale of Settlement and Baron de Hirsch concluded that the only effective means of assisting them would be to remove them from the clutches of the Tsar and to resettle them in countries whose governments were committed to freedom and equality:

> "What I (Baron de Hirsch) desire to accomplish, what . . . has come to be the object of my life and that for which I am willing to stake my wealth and my intellectual powers, is to give to a portion of my companions in faith the possibility of finding a new existence, primarily as farmers and also as handicraftsmen, in those lands where the law and religious tolerance permit them to carry on the struggle for existence as noble and responsible subjects of a humane government."[16]

Hence, he had understood that the Russian government was not just looking to bully its Jews into becoming assimilated members of society, but to eliminate them completely from Russia through expulsion, emigration, deprivation and pogroms.[17] Therefore, between 1886 and 1891, he arrived at a wholly new

[13]Hirsch read about the urgency of the situation from a pamphlet by Moriz Friedlaender, Secretary of the Hungarian *Israelitische Allianz zu Wien*. The pamphlet described the wretched conditions in the border towns.

[14]*Jewish Chronicle*, London, 24th April 1896.

[15]For a fuller discussion of the sequence of events surrounding his offer see Switzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–51.

[16]Hirsch, 'My Views on Philanthropy', *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

[17]Baron Maurice de Hirsch, 'Refuge for Russian Jews', in *Forum*, vol. 2, (August 1891), p. 627.

approach to the Russo-Jewish Question – one that differed radically from that adopted by most of the influential and prominent Jewish leaders of the day. The struggle had only begun for the man who was willing to "stake his wealth and intellectual powers"[18] on a cause that was not supported by the Jewish establishment: immigration, agricultural resettlement and auto-emancipation.

In 1887, Hirsch had sent Veneziani and a group of engineers on a tour of Palestine to investigate its potential for agricultural development and Jewish colonisation. Veneziani's report was hardly encouraging: he related the experiences of the Bilu settlers, who despite their idealism and their high degree of motivation were forced to abandon their dreams of farming in the Holy Land.[19] Veneziani concluded that the land had deteriorated beyond the point of redemption and that any agricultural effort, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, could never become successful. Consequently, Baron de Hirsch cast about for other lands in which to carry out his programme of Jewish regeneration.

What induced Baron de Hirsch to balk at the accepted and to advance a new and fundamentally different answer to the Russo-Jewish Question? Hirsch willingly accepted that the acquisition of great fortune carries with it the assumption of new responsibilities towards society and its downtrodden and he wholeheartedly embraced the duties incumbent upon his social position. One of his biographers suggests that his motivations for being generous may not have been altogether altruistic: "He felt the mere fact of being a millionaire was not sufficient to secure him the position in the world he aspired to . . . It was . . . a mixture of 'Gewissensbisse', of pangs of conscience, and social ambition which made Hirsch the outstanding philanthropist of his time."[20] This is a harsh judgement on a man who donated so much of his fortune to so many different causes. Some of his donations, such as the money he offered the London hospitals,[21] may have reflected his need to conform to the social and moral code of conduct of the upper class, but this does not explain why he focused so much attention, and so much energy, on resettling Russian Jews. To appreciate his motivations truly, one must remember the values that had been prevalent in his home: a commitment to "being Jewish", a desire to be treated equally, and a strong spirit of generosity and kindness towards the less fortunate citizens of this world. It was these influences which translated themselves into a loyalty towards disadvantaged and oppressed Jewry, be they in the Ottoman Empire or the Pale of Settlement. Furthermore, ever since the death of his only son, Lucien, in 1887,[22] he had been slowly extricating himself from the world of finance, and time may have weighed heavily on the bereaved father. He was a healthy and active man with both the time and the money to expend on "saving Russian Jews" and so he plunged into the project of removal and resettlement

[18]*Ibid.*

[19]Many of the early *Bilu* colonisers were forced to leave their colonies because of disease or lack of food.

[20]Kurt Grunwald made this accusation, in *Türkenhirsch*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

[21]He donated all the money he earned from his race horses and when their winnings were scant, he made up the difference between what they won and what he had donated the year before from his pocket.

[22]Lucien de Hirsch died of pneumonia.

with gusto and fierce determination. Although he had lost his natural heir, he could still leave a legacy to his people.[23] For whatever reason, or combination of reasons, he spent vast amounts of time and money to found an organisation that would realise his goals. He employed the most experienced legal minds to draft the *Articles and Memorandum of Association of the Jewish Colonization Association* and the most qualified social service workers and administrators to supervise and to carry out its work. He submitted the *Articles and Memorandum of Association* to the Board of Trade in England on 24th August 1891 and the Jewish Colonization Association was registered as a limited liability company with two million pounds capital on 10th September 1891. The Association's capital was divided into twenty thousand shares (of one hundred pounds each): Hirsch owned 19,993 shares, and Nathaniel (First Lord) Rothschild, Sir Julian Goldsmid, Salomon H. Goldschmidt, Benjamin L. Cohen, Frederic David Mocatta, Edouard Kohn and Eugene Pereire were each given a share.[24] Each share carried the right to one vote and hence, Hirsch remained in complete control of the Association and its direction throughout his lifetime. He appointed as executive director his long time associate and trusted friend, Dr. Sigismund Sonnenfeld.[25]

The purpose and objectives of the Association were explicitly elaborated in the *Memorandum of Association of the Jewish Colonization Association*: it was

> "to assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any part of Europe or Asia, and principally from countries in which they may for the time being be subjected to any special taxes or political or other disabilities, to any other part of the world, and to form and establish colonies in various parts of North and South America and other countries for agricultural, cultural, commercial and other purposes".[26]

To realise these goals, the Jewish Colonization Association was empowered to purchase, or to acquire, any territory outside of Europe from governments, states, municipal or local authorities, corporations or persons.[27] It was also given the power

> "to establish emigration agencies in various parts of Europe, Asia and other parts of the world, [and] to construct, hire, charter and equip steamships and other vessels for the purpose of facilitating emigration".[28]

Therefore, Hirsch imbued his foundation with extensive powers to achieve his objectives: the removal of Jews from Russia and their resettlement.

[23]In response to a letter of condolence, Baron de Hirsch stated: "My son I have lost, but not my heirs. Humanity is my heir." ICA Archives, Haim Avni, *Argentina, the Promised Land. Baron de Hirsch's Colonization Project in Argentina*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (trans. by Sydney Lightman), Jerusalem 1968[?]. For the book edn. see note 33.

[24]Switzer, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

[25]The Association underwent only one formal transformation during Hirsch's lifetime: on 26th August 1892, he donated an additional £7,000,000 specifically for Russian Jewry. This money was to remain separate from the initial £2,000,000 endowment and from then on the Jewish Colonization Association consisted of two entirely distinct funds: its original share capital which was to be expended according to the *Memorandum and Articles of Association* and the £7,000,000 trust fund which was to be spent only on Russian Jewish refugees. Switzer, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[26]*Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Jewish Colonization Association*, London 1891, p. 1.

[27]*Ibid.*, Clause 3b, p. 1.

[28]*Ibid.*, Clause 3k, p. 3.

Once the Jewish Colonization Association had been certified by the British Board of Trade, Hirsch sent a representative to the Russian government to request official recognition and the right to organise the departure of Jews. On 11th June 1892, the Jewish Colonization Association received approval from the government and permission to operate, provided a one million rouble bond be deposited in the State Bank as a guarantee that the Association would remain a law-abiding philanthropic agency. Hirsch's representative immediately set about forming a working committee, but it took almost a year to assemble the right men. In February 1893, Hirsch was informed that the Central Committee of St. Petersburg had been formed and included such men as Baron Horace Günzburg, Baron David Günzburg, Jakob Lazar Poliakoff, Abraham Zak, Alexander Passower, Isaac Krasnoselky, I. A. Valvelburg, and Dr. Raffalovitch, some of Russia's most prominent Jewish leaders.[29] The principle function of the Central Committee of St. Petersburg was to select candidates for resettlement on the Association's farms overseas and to organise their departure from the Pale of Settlement.

The Jewish Colonization Association's primary sphere of operation, while Baron de Hirsch was alive, was Argentina, but it also became involved in Jewish agriculture at the settlement that bore his name, Hirsch, Canada, in 1892. Hirsch concentrated on Argentina because his advisers had informed him that politically, economically and geologically, its pampas were ideal for Jewish agricultural development. Furthermore, a group of Russian Jews were already settled on the land in Santa Fé province (this colony would later be named Moïseville) and therefore, there was already a Jewish presence in the farming sector of the Argentine economy. However, another factor may have induced him to consider settling Jews so far from the traditional paths of immigration: Jewish leaders in Europe and in the United States of America were becoming increasingly anxious about the Jewish flight from Russia. They were discouraging their co-religionists from packing up their household goods and moving to London, Berlin, Frankfurt or New York. Hence, when presented with the Argentine alternative, Hirsch was pleased because, apart from its other attractions, his project would not impose on the resources of the established Jewish communities nor would it depend on their hospitality in any way. Therefore, his choice was motivated by practical considerations and by the continuous crystallisation of events: he believed the pampas of Argentina would provide him with an ideal location, where he could assist oppressed Jewry without antagonising emancipated Jewry.[30]

Hirsch's choice of Argentina as the site of his colonisation project may have been inspired by one other factor: his ultimate goal, and his dream for the

[29]Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) Archives, Séance du conseil d'administration du 15 juillet, 1894.

[30]There appears to be no credence to the rumour that Baron de Hirsch was financially involved with the *Banque Murietta* which went bankrupt in the early 1890s, and was said to have left him with vast tracts of land in Argentina. See Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety. The Story of Jewish Migration since 1800*, Philadelphia 1948, pp. 90–91; or Benjamin G. Sack, 'A Historical Opportunity Forfeited', in *Canadian Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1941–1942), p. 98.

Jewish future. Soon after the foundation of the Jewish Colonization Association, he wrote to Dr. Loewenthal:

> "Il en existe peut-être et bien qu'il puisse paraître fantastique à la première vue, il ne rentre pas moins aujourd'hui dans le domaine de possible. Je [Baron de Hirsch] veux parler de l'achat d'un pays tout-entier réunissant toutes les conditions désirables et dont les colons deviendraient les (propriètaires) incontestés."[31]

Hirsch envisioned the eventual establishment of "une sorte d'état plus ou moins autonome" where the Jews from beyond the Pale could be settled, and where they could enjoy a productive and prosperous life.[32] He suggested to Loewenthal that all the Jewish colonies be concentrated in one province of the Argentine Republic because he believed its laws permitted every locality populated with one thousand inhabitants the right to elect a local council, and every territory with sixty thousand inhabitants the right to become an autonomous province.[33] He had misunderstood, or perhaps Loewenthal had misrepresented, the Argentine Constitution which did not provide for the eventual secession of any province. Furthermore, although the Argentine government pursued a rather open immigration policy, it anticipated the complete absorption and assimilation of the newcomers into its native society. The law-makers had no intention of encouraging the concentration of any ethnic or national group in one area of the country, or of affording any group special autonomous status. It is even doubtful whether they would have permitted the immigration of Jews into the Republic, had they believed they would cling to their cultural, and spiritual, identity by maintaining geographic exclusivity. Nevertheless, Hirsch, under the misapprehension that it would eventually be possible to achieve autonomous status, was disappointed that Loewenthal did not locate the Association's colonies within the same province.[34]

Unfortunately, Jewish agriculture in the Argentine was problematic. The first group of three thousand colonists arrived before their colony, then called Mauricio, was ready to receive them, and it took almost two years to complete their installation. Their premature arrival proved so demoralising, and created so many complications, that it left a bitter legacy which was never truly overcome. Furthermore, the Central Committee of St. Petersburg never instituted an appropriate method of selecting candidates and this too undermined progress. More often than not, the number of unfortunates clamouring for refuge in the New World overwhelmed the emigration agents in Russia, and if there was any selection at all, it was carried out in a haphazard fashion, usually at the ports or at the Western borders and often based on the testimony of the eager emigrant rather than on careful research by caseworkers. (The orderly and discriminating resettlement of refugees would have to wait for

[31]ICA Archives, letter, Baron de Hirsch to Dr. Loewenthal, 2nd October 1891.
[32]ICA Archives, letters, Baron de Hirsch to Lousada, 19th and 27th October 1891.
[33]Haim Avni, *Argentina Ha-aretz Ha-y'udah, Mifal Ha-hityash-vut Shel Ha Baron de Hirsch b'Argentina*, Jerusalem 1973, p. 123, from a letter Baron de Hirsch wrote to the ICA administration, Buenos Aires, 12th July 1893.
[34]ICA Archives, Baron de Hirsch to Loewenthal, 2nd and 16th October 1891. Loewenthal was opposed to the idea because he believed it would antagonise the Argentine government.

the more sophisticated social service personnel of the post-1945 era.) Consequently, many colonists were not commited to the agrarian way of life and were unwilling to leave Buenos Aires, once they had tasted the riches of city life in the democratic Republic. Others were unable to adapt to the rigours of life on the frontiers and, after untold difficulties, returned to the capital. Reports of deprivation, disease and disaffection were sent to the head office of the Association, and after many attempts to remedy the situation, Hirsch opted for drastic measures. He ordered his agents in Argentina to expropriate all disorderly and unproductive colonists and to resettle them in Buenos Aires or in the United States.[35] However, the selection committees in Russia and the colonists were not the only antagonists in this disappointing story: the Association's agents and managers in Argentina must also share the responsibility for the slow progress. Hirsch could not find effective yet empathetic administrators who were willing to exchange the luxuries of city life for the starkness of life on the pampas. His first two representatives proved incompetent, and when the situation had hardly improved by 1895, after a parade of four different managers, Hirsch decided to halt all emigration to his colonies.[36] He sent Sigismund Sonnenfeld and one of his Russian agents, David Feinberg, to the Republic to investigate the problems and the potential for further growth and development. Their assessments were positive, but unfortunately Hirsch died on the 20th April 1896 before they could report their findings:

> "I (Feinberg) regretted that Baron de Hirsch was unable to see this colony (Moïseville) and to behold the metamorphosis in the mode of life in the colonies. I could not imagine that in such a brief period people previously unaccustomed to agriculture could become excellent farmers and adjust . . . to life on the farms."[37]

Hirsch, like any astute and accomplished businessman, had provided for a time when he might no longer be in control of the Association and its direction: at his death, its administration was to be assumed by its shareholders. During the last five years of his life, he had negotiated for the transfer of four thousand five hundred and ninety-five shares to the Anglo-Jewish Association and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and three thousand six hundred shares to the Jewish communities of Frankfurt a. Main, Berlin and Brussels.[38] The shareholders elected a new Council of Administration to oversee the operations of the Jewish Colonization Association: it consisted of S. H. Goldschmidt, Narcisse Leven, Salomon Reinach, Alfred L. Cohen, Herbert Lousada, Chief Rabbi Zadoc

[35]ICA Archives, lettre, Paul Barrelet (Baron de Hirsch's personal secretary), par ordre de Baron de Hirsch to the direction, ICA, 26th July 1892; and letter, Baron de Hirsch to Director, ICA, 14th October 1893.

[36]Loewenthal was the first agent and colony manager. Adolphe Roth replaced him. Then A.E.W. Goldsmid took the position for one year, to try to remedy the situation. Conditions improved under his supervision, but his successors, David Cazès [Kazis], Samuel Hirsch (no relation to the Baron) and Maxim Kagan proved unable to sustain Goldsmid's legacy. For a fuller discussion see Switzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–100.

[37]David Feinberg, 'A Survey of the Colonization of Russian Jews in Argentina', in *American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. XLIII, (September 1953), p. 62.

[38]Switzer, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

Kahn, Claude J. G. Montefiore, Leopold Schloss, Julius Plotke, Dr. Edmund Lachmann and Franz Philippson.[39] The new administrators retained Sigismund Sonnenfeld as executive director and appointed Emile Meyerson to help him with his duties. Hirsch's desire that the Association's work be carried on without any serious interruption after his death became a reality.

In their first annual report (1896), the new administrators affirmed their commitment to Jewish agriculture in Argentina, but the problems and complications, which had so disheartened Hirsch, continued to impede their development. The colonists struggled from year to year; every time there was hope for an abundant yield, nature intervened. One year the crops were devastated by drought, the next by early frost, the year after by locusts and so on. And, finally when the farmers harvested bumper crops, the over-abundance of foodstuffs throughout the region drove the prices so low that the colonists were unable to recoup their costs (1899). The slow progress of the agricultural colonies discouraged the council members and periodically, they followed the Baron's example and suspended emigration all together. Yet, unlike their predecessor, they held few illusions about the ability of the colonies to absorb large numbers of Russian Jews, or about the possibility of Argentina ever becoming a centre of Jewish immigration. They believed the colonies suffered from chronic and incurable problems and had very little potential for growth: stability and self-sufficiency would be great enough achievements. Therefore, over the next decade, they sent fewer and fewer Jews to Argentina and by 1913, only those immigrants who could pay their way across the ocean, without the aid of the Jewish Colonization Association, or of any other agency, were invited to be apprenticed as colonists.

The new administrators did not turn their backs on the Jewish farmers of Argentina, or allow the colonies to be disolved, but they did very little to encourage or to stimulate Jewish agriculture on the pampas. This reflected more than their frustration with the slow and troubled progress of the colonies: it represented their fundamentally different approach to the Russo-Jewish Question. The men who assumed leadership of the Jewish Colonization Association were influential and prominent Jewish leaders, part of the group which had been opposed to emigration out of Russia in the first place.[40] Thus, they shifted the focus and orientation of the Association from migration and resettlement to reconstruction and *in situ* assistance, and eventually to immigrant aid in the countries of reception. During the pre-war era, the Jewish Colonization Association funded the establishment of many programmes designed to rebuild and revitalise the infrastructure of the Jewish communities in Russia and Eastern Europe. It opened up trade and agricultural schools, Talmud Torah schools and model farms, it offered subsidised apprenticeship and vocational retraining programmes and it founded "caisses de prêts et d'épagne" where Jewish businessmen could borrow money. It sponsored Jewish agricultural and industrial development throughout Russia and Eastern

[39]*Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.
[40]For a fuller discussion of Baron de Hirsch's motivations and objectives see *ibid.*, pp. 122–125.

Europe, in an effort to eradicate economic marginalism, and in an attempt to fashion from the Jewish masses a productive and self-sufficient work force that could contribute to their countries of residence. Nevertheless, Russian and Eastern Jewry continued to migrate westward, in numbers that grew steadily, year after year. Their journey across the European continent and their arrival at ports in the New World – New York City, Montreal and Buenos Aires – placed a heavy burden on the Jewish communities along their paths of migration. Hence, the administrators were forced to accept their responsibility as directors of one of the richest Jewish organisations, and to assist the immigrants, and their host communities, as each struggled to accommodate the other.

III

The story of Jewish settlement in Canada before the First World War is the saga of a country nearly new – Canada only gained independence from Britain in 1867 – a native Jewish population barely large enough to call itself a community – there were only 2,443 Jews in Canada in 1881 – and then came wave after wave of Jewish immigrants – 75,681 of them between 1881 and 1914.[41] It was the interplay between these elements that determined not only the nature of Canadian Jewry but the scope and context of the Jewish Colonization Association's role during these early years of Canadian development. It was to the 2,443 Jewish "Canadians" that the task of immigrant reception and assistance fell, and, while only too willing, for they too had only recently partaken in the immigrant experience, their financial situation proscribed them from all but the merest gesture. There were no local Barons de Hirsch, Moses Montefiores or Jacob Schiffs in Canada and therefore, while London and New York "contain(ed) a large number of the wealthy Jews – some of the wealthiest in the world"[42] – and still complained about receiving too many Jewish refugees, the Jews of Canada, the majority of whom lived in Montreal, could barely support their local poor, let alone absorb the newcomers. Consequently, they turned to their wealthier neighbours to the South and overseas for financial assistance.

In 1890, L. Aronson, a member of the Board of Directors of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society,[43] suggested that the Jews of Montreal request money for immigrant aid from the Baron de Hirsch Fund of New York.[44] Their

[41]L. Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, Montreal 1939, p. 10.

[42]ICA Archives, letter, D. A. Ansell to President of the ICA, 18th September 1890.

[43]The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society was the central Jewish philanthropic organisation in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century. In March 1900, the Society was reincorporated under the name Baron de Hirsch Institute and Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montreal. The "Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montreal" was dropped and the Society has become known as the Baron de Hirsch Institute. For a fuller discussion of the foundation of this society see Switzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–138.

[44]The Baron de Hirsch Fund was founded in New York on 9th February 1891. The Baron endowed it with $2,400,000 to be used to help receive and resettle immigrants from Russia, Romania and Eastern Europe. It also offered them vocational retraining and agricultural training programmes.

request was refused because its charter prohibited it from sending money outside the United States of America and therefore, the directors of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society decided to appeal directly to its benefactor, Baron de Hirsch. On 20th May 1890, they sent a letter to Paris, explaining the purpose of their Society and its financial predicament. The Baron replied:

> ". . . as I appreciate the usefulness of your action and the object which you pursue, I am ready to contribute a sum of $20,000 which I enclose in a cheque. I shall be glad to hear from you, from time to time, about the progress of your work and may perhaps in a future time further assist you, but cannot in this respect undertake any engagements."[45]

The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society received the twenty thousand dollars in August 1890. This was to be the first time Baron de Hirsch had any contact with the Jewish community of Canada and although the letter specified the opposite, his donation marked the beginning of what was to develop into a sustained and, from the Canadian perspective, a seminal relationship with the Jewish Colonization Association.

Twenty thousand dollars may not have been a substantial amount of money for the wealthy Baron, but for the members of the financially insolvent Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, it was a windfall of good fortune, "a munificent donation",[46] and they elected him Honorary Life Member of their Society and inscribed him as their patron. Part of the donation was used to purchase a building at 7, St. Elizabeth Street (on 21st September 1891), which was converted into an immigrant shelter and school: they named it The Baron de Hirsch Institute and Free Day School. The shelter was to house all newcomers until they could establish themselves in their new community and the school was to be responsible for educating Jewish children.[47] (It was the first day school in Montreal to be free and open to students regardless of their ability to pay tuition.) The school offered courses which were designed to familiarise its students with their new homeland: its curriculum consisted of English, Canadian history, geography, customs and civics. "The (Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent) Society . . . consider(ed) that the best way of doing good was by helping the children help themselves and (by) making them understand the language, customs and institutions of their land of adoption."[48] Hence, the members of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society hoped to transform the children of the immigrants into loyal, industrious and economically successful "Canadians" by imbuing them with the proper values and education in much the same way as did the founders of the Educational Alliance in New York City. However, they realised that the Baron's donation would not last for ever, and that, if the school was to be maintained year after year, they must

---

For a fuller discussion of the Fund see Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, New York 1935.

[45]National Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), Simon Belkin, *Forty Years of ICA Work in Canada*, unpublished manuscript, 1931, p. 5.

[46]National Archives of CJC, *Minutes* of the 18th August 1890 meeting of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society.

[47]The Baron de Hirsch Institute and School were formally opened by the Mayor of Montreal on 17th June 1891.

[48]ICA Archives, letter, H. Vineberg and S. W. Jacobs to Baron de Hirsch, 23rd June 1891.

secure a more permanent source of income. In October 1891, they appealed to the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and the newly founded Jewish Colonization Association for endowment: both organisations responded positively. The *Alliance* sent one thousand francs as a one time donation and the Jewish Colonization Association agreed to underwrite the cost of running the school.[49] (It continued to sponsor Jewish education in Montreal throughout the pre-war period.) Thus, the 20,000 dollar donation not only provided the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society with a permanent home and a somewhat eased financial situation, but it created a link between the Jewish community of Canada and the Jewish Colonization Association, a link that was to prove indispensable to the Jews of Canada as they struggled to assume their responsibility towards their fellow Jews.

Throughout the pre-war era, the primary focus and concern of the Jewish agency in Montreal remained immigrant reception: its volunteers met the boats at the ports of entry – Montreal and Quebec City in the summer, and Halifax and St. Johns, New Brunswick when the St. Lawrence River was frozen over in the winter – guided them through the immigration process and escorted them to the immigrant shelter at the Baron de Hirsch Institute.

> "As soon as the immigrant family reaches Montreal, we [the volunteers of the Jewish agency] take a personal interest in them. We look after their immediate wants, we find employment for them. We watch their conduct. We try to let them feel our equals. We visit them in sorrow and poverty."[50]

Yet, while the leaders of the Jewish community of Montreal asserted that it was both their desire and their duty to receive their persecuted brethren, they feared the repercussions of large-scale immigration, just as the leaders of their sister communities in America and overseas did. Consequently, they sought to impress upon the Canadian government and the Canadian people the benefits these immigrants could bring to the young nation. They believed that the best way in which to keep the doors to Canada open and to avoid any anti-immigrant, and anti-Jewish, agitation, would be to integrate the newcomers into the Canadian economic order. Thus, their foremost goal became the dispersion of the Jewish immigrants throughout the nation: "It is absolutely necessary that congestion of immigrants in Montreal and other cities should be prevented."[51] The existence of Jewish ghettos would be interpreted by the Canadian population as a sign of the immigrants' inability, or perhaps even unwillingness, to adapt to their new conditions and to become productive citizens in their adopted homes. The directors of the successor to the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, the Baron de Hirsch Institute, established a Labour Bureau in Montreal to place Jews in productive employment throughout the Dominion, and during its first year (1905), it successfully found jobs for 3,665 immigrants.[52] They also sought to hide all signs of Jewish

[49]ICA Archives, Bigart (of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*) to D. A. Ansell, 21st January 1891.
[50]*Canadian Jewish Times*, Montreal, 28th March 1902.
[51]*Ibid.*, 24th March 1905.
[52]National Archives of CJC, *Annual Report of the Baron de Hirsch Institute*, October 1906 and ICA Archives, *Rapport de l'administration centrale au conseil d'administration, 1907–1914*. In 1907, the Labour

destitution or dissatisfaction from the rest of Canadian society and therefore, they organised a comprehensive assistance and relief programme which provided all in need, whether "native" or "newcomer", with shelter, food, fuel, clothes, an education and a Jewish funeral and cemetery plot. In 1909, a *Gemilath Chassodim* (Hebrew Free Loan Association) was founded to aid those Jews of Montreal temporarily in debt and to relieve pressure on the relief and assistance programmes of the Baron de Hirsch Institute. The Jewish Colonization Association underwrote all of the Jewish community's attempts and efforts to facilitate Jewish accommodation and adaptation to Canadian society throughout the pre-war period.[53]

However, most innovative of all the Jewish Colonization Association's programmes in Canada were those designed to stimulate Jewish agriculture on the prairies. At the turn of the century, the Canadian interior was virtually uninhabited and the government, anxious to populate it, pursued a homesteading policy. Anyone could acquire the exclusive rights to 160 acres of land for a nominal entry fee of ten dollars, and if they could erect habitable lodgings, seed 25 acres and break another 30 acres by the end of three years, they would receive the patent, or clear title, to their land. (When the homesteader qualified for his title, he was offered an adjoining quarter section or 160 acres at a very reasonable rate.)[54] In 1891, the members of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society had suggested that Baron de Hirsch take advantage of this homesteading policy and establish a "regular and properly organised scheme of colonisation" in North-western Canada.[55] This would serve the interests of the Jewish Colonization Association, which intended to found Jewish agricultural colonies; of the Jewish community of Canada, which was anxious to ensure the hasty absorption of Jewish immigrants into the Canadian economy; and the

Bureau found employment for 2,250 Jews, in 1908 for 2,390, in 1909 for 1,396, in 1910 for 3,822, in 1911 for 1,896, in 1912 for 1,271 and in 1913 for 11,275 Jews throughout Canada.

[53]

	ICA Expenditures on Local Relief	*ICA Expenditures on the Baron de Hirsch Day School*
1900	$ 9,092.46	$ 2,804.07
1901	7,426.11	3,460.40
1902	5.496.35	4,771.91
1903	7,998.83	4,941.41
1904	13,082.63	5,186.58
1905	16,988.64	9,072.69
1906	no figure available	no figure available
1907	17,110.43	4,043.08
1908	45,998.60	5,548.85
1909	33,805.24	2,666.46
1910	no figure available	no figure available
1911	32,868.86	3,901.30
1912	no figure available	no figure available
1913	12,723.37	no figure available
1914	14,123.58	no figure available

Source: National Archives of the CJC, *Baron de Hirsch Institute Annual Reports, 1900–1914.*

[54]Originally the government offered an adjoining quarter section at the price of $1.00 per acre.

[55]National Archives of CJC, *Annual Report of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society*, 1st October 1891.

Canadian government, which wanted to turn the prairies into the nation's breadbasket.

In January 1892, Baron de Hirsch and the Jewish Colonization Association agreed to spend 30,000 dollars (500 dollars per settlement of 60 families) for the establishment of a Jewish agricultural colony in the Canadian interior.[56] The members of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society petitioned the Canadian government for all the even-numbered homesteads at Township 3, Range 5, west of the second milial meridian in the extreme south of Assiniboia (Saskatchewan), near the Estevan mines. The land was reported to be fertile and the proximity of the mines would ensure the homesteaders plenty of fuel in the winter months, as well as employment, should they require supplementary income during the first few years. Furthermore, a small Jewish community had sprung up along the newly built branch line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, at Oxbow:[57] some of its members were shopkeepers and tradesmen while others were trying their hand at farming. The men in Montreal believed the presence of other Jews nearby would facilitate the adaptation of their settlers. Hence on 28th April 1892, a group of 27 brave Jewish pioneers left Montreal to found an agricultural colony: they were joined by 20 other Jewish men at Winnipeg and Regina.[58] All had signed contracts accepting their indebtedness to the Jewish Colonization Association and promising to begin repayment of their loans by the end of the first year. They named their settlement Hirsch, in honour of the man who had made it possible to realise their "impossible dreams". Their wives and children remained in Montreal, Winnipeg and Regina until the autumn when their houses had been built and their pantries stocked. By the end of 1892, the Jewish Colonization Association had sponsored, and the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society had supervised, the establishment of an agricultural settlement of 11,040 acres of land, 211 horses and 213 bulls and cows on the Canadian prairies.[59] It proved "impossible to procure a man of the Jewish persuasion who was both responsible and capable and who, combined with these two qualities, had a knowledge of agriculture sufficient to enable him to impart instruction to the colonists and (to) supervise them in their agricultural pursuits",[60] so the men in Montreal appointed as manager the man they had consulted about the location of Hirsch, Mr. McDiarmid, for a twelve-month-period.

The first years at Hirsch were not as trouble-free as the settlers, or their sponsors, had anticipated: in 1892, a drought parched the soil, in 1893 hail destroyed the crops and in 1894 grasshoppers ate their way through the Canadian Midwest. Furthermore, most of the homesteaders were inexperienced farmers who had no knowledge about the climate and conditions of the North American prairies, and their manager, McDiarmid, could not rise to the

[56]For a fuller discussion see Switzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 172–175.
[57]The branch line went from Brandon to Estevan and was built in 1888 to service the mines.
[58]ICA Archives, 'Report on the Establishment of a Jewish Colony in Northwestern Canada', H. Vineberg to Sonnenfeld, 5th May 1892.
[59]ICA Archives, Séance du Conseil d'administration du 22 février 1905, vol. 3, p. 188.
[60]ICA Archives, letter, L. A. Hart to the Chairman of the ICA, 15th January 1893.

difficult task of managing their colony while teaching them how to become accomplished farmers. However, the greatest problem which plagued the young colony and impeded its development was undercapitalisation: 500 dollars per family was an insufficient amount of money to install a homesteader on virgin prairie land and consequently, the pioneers were always short of working capital. During the first three years, McDiarmid was to be dismissed, many of the original homesteaders to abandon their farms and the Jewish Colonization Association to increase its investment to 222,500 francs. However, in 1895, the farmers reported a large harvest of high quality grain which they could sell at reasonable prices. "The colony was now an established success."[61] In 1897, the Association approved funds for the construction of a community centre and a schoolhouse and appointed a teacher for the children of the settlers and therefore, by the turn of the century Hirsch had established itself firmly as an agricultural settlement. Nevertheless, the homesteaders continued to rely on the Jewish Colonization Association to subsidise their needs and to underwrite their costs, and although the financial position of the colony continued to improve year after year, it never became self-sufficient and free of debt.

The Jewish Colonization Association was directly involved in only one other agricultural experiment on the Canadian prairies: the establishment of a Jewish colony at Qu'Appelle, Assiniboia (which was later renamed Lipton and Cupar). In 1899, Jews began to flood out of Romania, by boat, train and foot, taxing the reception committees, immigrant aid societies and shelters along their paths of migration. In an effort to regulate and organise this exodus, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* convened a special conference in June 1900. Delegates from all the major Jewish communities in the West attended and agreed that the Jewish Colonization Association be placed in charge of controlling "l'émigration roumaine".[62] Quotas were placed on the numbers of Romanian Jews to be "let out" each month and the Jewish Colonization Association was to ensure that these were observed. Not surprisingly, it was unable to stem the tide: between 1900 and 1903 approximately 100,000 Jews left Romania each year and their numbers rose slightly thereafter.[63] In response to this tidal wave, the Jewish Colonization Association was forced to find new homes at least for some of the refugees. Its administrators approached the Canadian emigration agent in London, W.R.T. Preston, on 10th July 1900 to sound out his government's reaction to receiving Romanian Jews. Preston indicated that Canada would be

> "desirous of welcoming able bodied and physically and morally suitable immigrants into the Dominion whatever their creed. What he (and his government) wished to avoid was that the immigrants, as certain of them have done, should infiltrate into the towns and swell the already overgrown population of the Canadian cities. A suitable immigration would be welcomed, would be afforded help and would be aided by government agents."[64]

[61]National Archives of CJC, Report by the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, 19th October 1896.

[62]YIVO Archives, HKM 15 (15.166–15.169), letter, secrétaire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle to Director, ICA, 27th November 1900.

[63]Wischnitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

[64]ICA Archives, Précis of Consultation on the Influx of Roumanian Jews, 10th July 1900.

Consequently, a second Jewish colony was founded in the Canadian interior to be settled by Jews from Romania. The Jewish Colonization Association provided the funds for the transport and installation of the colonists and Thomas Smart, the Deputy Minister of the Interior for the Canadian government was supposed to organise the selection of suitable candidates and the administration of their colony. Smart appointed Wolfsberg, a Hamburg Jew, recruitment officer and D. H. MacDonald of Fort Qu'Appelle, Assiniboia, a local businessman and banker, administrator of the settlement. Unfortunately, MacDonald proved to be an incompetent, unscrupulous and dishonest man who chose a tract of land far from the nearest railway station (it was twenty-five miles away), and notoriously difficult to farm. Smart, perhaps out of ignorance, filed for the homesteads with the Land Commissioner of the Canadian government at what came to be known as Qu'Appelle. Thus, from early on, the Deputy Minister displayed only the most scant interest in the project and left MacDonald free to manage the colony as he saw fit.

The first group of forty-nine Romanian Jews arrived in Winnipeg in the spring of 1901. Preston was waiting to escort them to their settlement, but unfortunately several members had contracted diphtheria and their installation was delayed for several weeks. When they finally travelled up to Qu'Appelle, their enthusiasm turned to despair: all they saw was barren prairie. MacDonald had neglected to have shelters erected to receive the travel-weary pioneers. He had appointed two men, Barnes and Morrison, as managers of the settlement, but these men were suspicious of foreigners and resented their presence in the Canadian hinterland. They were also resentful of the special treatment and consideration Jews seemed to be receiving from the Canadian government. They regarded the project as a joke, doomed to failure, and instead of helping the newcomers and teaching them how to cultivate the prairies, they undermined all its chances for success. They made no effort to install the Romanian Jews: instead of buying implements and chattels for farming, they spent all the Jewish Colonization Association funds on food and clothing which they doled out only when the necessity arose. The settlers turned to the equally ill-treated Indians from the nearby reservation for guidance. Complaints began to filter back to Europe but the administrators of the Association received reassurances from Thomas Smart that all was well in the colony. A second group of Romanian Jews were sent to Qu'Appelle in August 1901 and a third group in the spring of 1902.

The colonists were unable to support themselves or provide for their families and by the winter of 1903, 193 of the original 365 homesteaders had abandoned their land. Those who remained were facing starvation and deprivation.[65] A few of the homesteaders found their way to Milwaukee where they related their tales of woe to its Jewish community leaders. These stories were reported to the administrators of the Jewish Colonization Association who immediately ordered their own inspection. Louis Kahn of the Jewish Agricultural and

[65]ICA Archives, *Rapport de l'administration centrale pour l'année 1903.*

Industrial Aid Society of New York[66] was sent to Qu'Appelle, and when he confirmed the stories of the Milwaukee settlers, he was asked to stay on and to reorganise the colony. By the end of 1904, he had resuscitated the settlement: eleven vacant plots had been occupied, 13,480 acres of field had been cultivated and a *schochet* and a teacher had come to live in the settlement.

Qu'Appelle was the second agricultural settlement in Canada to be founded directly by the Jewish Colonization Association; it was also the last. The early years at Qu'Appelle had been no less problematic or disappointing than the early years at Hirsch, despite the promise of help from the Canadian government. If the men in Paris had been doubtful about the potential for Jewish agricultural development after their experience at Hirsch, they held no illusions after the painful experience at Qu'Appelle. However, this did not spell the end of the Association's involvement in Jewish farming on the Canadian prairies, even if it did herald the end of direct sponsorship. Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, young, idealistic and enterprising Jewish pioneers, anxious to try their luck in agriculture, took advantage of the government's homesteading policy and travelled into the interior, usually in groups of twenty or so men. They would discover an uninhabited corner of land and file their claim with the Land Commissioner of the Canadian government thereby giving birth to their own settlement. In 1886, Hermann Landau, a British representative of the Canadian Pacific Railway and a Jewish philanthropist, deposited 12,000 dollars with the railway company to settle John Heppner and four of his companions on land near Wapella, Assiniboia. By 1892 twenty Jewish families were farming the land around Wapella, the oldest independent Jewish agricultural community in Western Canada. In 1888 a Jewish farming settlement was founded at Oxbow, Assiniboia, and in 1903 Jacob Bender organised Bender Hamlet, 72 miles north of Winnipeg, Manitoba (later renamed Narcisse in honour of Narcisse Leven), the only Jewish agricultural colony to be modelled after an Eastern European village. In 1906 Edenbridge and Sonnenfeld were pioneered in Saskatchewan as were Rumsey and Trochu Valley in Alberta. Between 1905 and the outbreak of the First World War, a number of smaller Jewish farming establishments sprang up throughout Eastern and Western Canada: Sainte Sophie, New Glasgow, La Macaza, Saint Lin and Saint Vincent de Paul in Quebec, Ezra (South Alsask), Camper (New Hirsch), Pineridge, Springfield, Bird's Hill, Lorette, Transcoma and Kildonan in Manitoba, Rosetown and South Morse in Saskatchewan and

[66]Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Jacob H. Schiff suggested the establishment of a credit institution which would sponsor the Jewish immigrant in agricultural and industrial homesteads. He approached the ICA and negotiated an agreement for its foundation. The ICA accepted an arrangement whereby it would contribute $80,000 annually and the Baron de Hirsch Fund would advance $30,000 annually over a ten-year-period. The new credit agency was founded in February 1900, under the name The Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society. In 1922 its name was changed to The Jewish Agricultural Society because its labour placement bureau was dissolved. The agency funded agricultural projects and development, lent money to Jewish tradesmen, encouraged and facilitated the relocation of Jewish industry to the countryside and generally offered incentives for Jews willing to experiment with a rural lifestyle. For a fuller discussion see Joseph, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–183.

Montefiore in Alberta. Jews also cultivated garden farms near the larger Canadian cities of Montreal in Quebec, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Ottawa and Krugerdorf in Ontario, Winnipeg in Manitoba and Regina and Saskatoon in Saskatchewan.[67]

These venturesome Jewish pioneers, who took up agriculture in the Canadian interior, soon discovered what the men in Paris and Montreal had found at Hirsch and Qu'Appelle: ploughing virgin prairie and planting the first crops was a backbreaking task which required an endless source of income, energy and commitment. In most cases, their funds were exhausted long before they had achieved self-sufficiency and in some cases, even before they had harvested their first crops. The administrators of the Jewish Colonization Association empowered its agents in Canada to travel throughout the provinces, seeking out the independent Jewish farmers and farming communities and offering those with potential for development financial assistance and technological advice. If these inspectors believed the pioneers showed promise, the Association would provide them with loans at advantageous rates (four percent instead of the Canadian rate which was eight percent and over a longer period of time than traditional lending institutions.)[68] In 1912 the Jewish Colonization Association subsidised the establishment of a permanent office in Winnipeg to oversee the disbursement and collection of loans and the advancement of Jewish agriculture in Western Canada. "The primary object in opening up this office was in order that those of our people who desire to take up land might be in a position to obtain reliable information about their future possessions."[69] H. Rosenblatt was appointed manager of the Winnipeg office and was also placed in charge of settling people he believed could become successful farmers on the vacant plots of Hirsch and Qu'Appelle.

During the years before the First World War, the Jewish Colonization Association also financed the construction of synagogues and community centres throughout the colonies and independent settlements, and underwrote the cost of educating the farmers' children, in an effort to render life on the frontiers as comfortable and familiar as possible. (When the provincial governments legislated universal free education, the Association continued to sponsor Hebrew and religious instruction.)[70]

Nevertheless, the Jewish settlers fell prey to the many hazards of pioneering the Canadian hinterland – the hard climate, an unsuitable location far from a railway, a water supply, or a supplemental source of income, and under-capitalisation – and most were forced to abandon their dreams. Even the few Jewish farmers who survived the difficult pre-war years and who prospered from the war-time demand for foodstuff, suffered serious setbacks during the

[67]For more on this see Switzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–222 and pp. 272–273.

[68]It should be noted that the mortgages did stipulate that the farmer pay 8% interest, but there was a clause in the agreement that reduced the interest rate to 4% if the farmer made regular repayments.

[69]National Archives of CJC, Report of the Canadian Committee for year ending 1912, p. 18.

[70]National Archives of CJC, Letterbook of the Canadian Committee, 1911–1914, vol. II, letter, M. B. Davis and L. Cohen to Director, ICA, 3rd August 1911.

agricultural slump of the early 1920s and the economic depression of the 1930s. During the inter-war years, Eyre, Montefiore, Narcisse and New Hirsch disappeared completely while the other settlements saw their populations greatly diminished, and by the end of the Second World War, almost all of the Jewish colonies on the Canadian prairies had been dissolved. Therefore, the colonisation policy pursued by the Jewish Colonization Association in Canada proved to be of little enduring consequence.

The failure of Jewish agriculture in Canada can be attributed in part to the Jewish Colonization Association, in part to its representatives in Canada (the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society and later the Canadian Committee of the Jewish Colonization Association), and in part to the settlers and their expectations. However, it is important to remember that Jews were not the only ethnic group unable to transform themselves into prairie farmers: immigrants whose families had been farmers in Europe for generations were also unable to adapt and prosper in the untamed North American interior.[71] The pioneer's destiny was determined as much by the harsh weather – a spring that arrived too late, a summer that was too wet or too dry, an autumn that lingered too long, or departed too abruptly, forcing the farmer to leave his unharvested crop in the field, covered in snow – as by any other factor. The stark and isolated nature of life on the prairies at the turn of the century, without any of the amenities or conveniences of city life, undermined the courage and conviction of many homesteaders. Moreover, throughout most of the twentieth century, Canada was undergoing a period of industrialisation and accelerated urbanisation and consequently, the pioneers who ventured into agriculture were going against the trend of economic development. Therefore, the utopian notions about agriculture and its regenerative powers, harboured by Baron de Hirsch and by the many Russian and Eastern European Jews, were simply not applicable to the Canadian context: it would not be possible to normalise the position of Jews in Canada by having them take up agriculture on the prairies in the twentieth century. Three other factors served to tip the balance still further against the Jewish colonists and their chances of transforming themselves into self-sufficient agriculturalists: the Jewish Colonization Association never formulated a systematic and rational method of settling Jewish people on farms in Canada (it only instituted "direct colonisation" in 1925), its agents in Canada were never able to provide the fragile communities with effective management and guidance, and the rigours of life on the frontiers of civilisation did not fulfil even the most independent Jew's need for contact with his culture and community. However, if agricultural colonisation was not the channel through which Eastern and Russian Jewry became absorbed into Canadian society, it must not be written off as a complete and utter failure. Its real significance must not be measured by traditional standards of success – productivity and profit – but by the motivations, aspirations and goals of the idealistic pioneers. At a certain level, their ideals and objectives resembled those

[71]The Norwegian community in North Dakota is one example of an immigrant group, which was familiar with farming, struggling to adapt. The Ukrainian immigrants in Canada also had adjustment problems.

of the *halutzim* in Palestine during the closing decades of Ottoman rule, and testify to the strength, and energy, of the quest for normalisation and renascence that fired the imagination of more than a few of the Tsar's persecuted subjects. Therefore, the Jewish experience with pioneer farming in Canada must be considered part of one of the most significant dynamics of twentieth-century Jewish life: the active and energetic search for a new and "normalised" Jewish presence in the modern world.

Baron de Hirsch arrived at his own conclusions about the shape and form of the Jewish future and he founded the Jewish Colonization Association to oversee the realisation of his vision. When he died, the Association was handed over to the Jewish communities of Europe, and their leaders broadened its purpose and redefined its objectives and goals. By the time the First World War broke out, it had become a very different agency from the one founded by Baron de Hirsch: it was no longer dedicated solely to the removal of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe and to their resettlement in agricultural colonies, primarily in the Argentine, where they would undergo a process of auto-emancipation. The new administrators sponsored programmes they believed would make Jewish life thrive in the East and in the New World. They may have been unable to transcend their own historical experience and world view, or to throw their support wholeheartedly behind Jewish emigration to the West, but they were able to ensure that the Jewish Colonization Association played an increasingly active and influential role in the Jewish world. It was under their leadership that the Association dispensed aid to those in need beyond the Pale of Settlement, and it was under their direction that it assisted the fledgling Jewish communities in the New World as they struggled with the pressures of receiving, accommodating and absorbing the thousands, and hundreds of thousands, of Jewish immigrants searching for new lives in new lands. Canada housed just such a Jewish community at the turn of the century, and it was due to the guidance and tutelage of the administrators and personnel of the Jewish Colonization Association that its members could accept their role, and the role Canada would play, in the story of Jewish survival and renascence.