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The Public Advocacy of the American Jewish Committee, 1906-1929

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
in History

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The Public Advocacy of the American Jewish Committee, 1906-1929

Monograph

by

Joshua Perell

Graduate Program in History

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was founded in 1906 by a group of elite Jewish communal leaders. In the historiography on the organization, the Committee's earliest activities are described as limited to "quiet diplomacy," involving the discreet lobbying of public officials. This dissertation challenges this account of the AJC's early activism, arguing that, from its founding, the Committee was involved in more overt forms of public advocacy and was building the infrastructure to carry out the public advocacy work of modern special interest groups. While the AJC's leaders continued to practice quiet diplomacy, they also released public statements, sponsored research, subsidized the publication of books, became involved in public interest litigation, and widely distributed pamphlets in an effort to influence public opinion. Using documents from the AJC's archives, this dissertation presents a series of case studies of the organization's earliest public advocacy work and describes its leaders' deliberations about how to expand the Committee's research and advocacy infrastructure and avert an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. The advocacy tactics the AJC employed were adaptations of techniques used by older European Jewish leadership organizations. The Committee's leaders tailored these approaches according to their understanding of the threats the American Jewish community faced during the early-twentieth century. The activities of the Committee's founders and early leaders shaped the AJC's later, more conspicuous public advocacy on behalf of American Jewry and other minority communities in the United States.

Key Words: American Jewish Committee, twentieth-century Jewish communal leadership, American Jewry, public advocacy, public interest litigation, anti-Semitism, Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, Mayer Sulzberger

Acknowledgments

For Anne and Beth

For Mom and Dad

For Eli and Laura

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Public Advocacy and the American Jewish Committee

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was established in New York City in 1906 as a public advocacy and communal defense organization. The AJC was not the first Jewish communal organization to claim a national mandate in the United States; however, in comparison to earlier American Jewish interest groups and ethnic minority leadership organizations, the Committee has consistently pursued a broader social and political agenda.¹ The organization has been described as “one of American Jewry’s most influential institutions.”² This study focuses on the origins and evolution of the AJC’s public advocacy work and on its efforts to shape American public opinion, including influencing the attitudes and beliefs of Jewish immigrants to the United States, American political leaders, white patrician elites, and the broader American public. This dissertation provides an account of what the AJC accomplished during the first twenty-five years of its history by employing public advocacy, journalism, media and public relations, propaganda, mass media campaigns, philanthropy, the American judicial system, and the sponsorship of academic research and argues that the breadth and significance of the Committee’s earliest public advocacy efforts have not been recognized in the historiography on the organization.

¹The Board of Delegates of American Israelites (“the Board”), which was founded in 1859, was the first Jewish organization in the United States to claim a national mandate. The Board was organized in the wake of the “Mortara Affair,” the kidnapping of an Italian Jewish child by Papal authorities who believed he had been secretly baptized by his au pair. The incident garnered significant attention in European and American newspapers and European Jewish leadership organizations became involved to try and secure the child’s release. The Board was established to unify, represent, and advocate for the social and political interests of American Jewry. The organization lasted less than twenty years. In 1878, the Board merged with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. For a further discussion of the formation of the Board, its activities, its fiscal challenges, and the circumstances which led to its merger with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, see: Allan Tarshish, “The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, 1859-1878,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 49 (1959): 16-32.

² Morten Rosenstock, “Review of Cohen, Naomi W., *Not Free to Desist: A History of the American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966*,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 62 (1972): 88.

Measuring the extent of an advocacy organization's influence is difficult.³ Although a number of scholars and studies have attempted to objectively assess "interest group influence," the complexity of the issues, the length of time over which policy debates occur, and the potential (and uncertain) impact of other factors and actors are among the complications that weaken their conclusions.⁴ It is not, however, the intention of this study to attempt to quantify the extent of the AJC's influence. The study will describe some of the Committee's successes and failures, but the purpose is to analyze how and why the AJC tried to influence public opinion and to provide case studies of the AJC's diverse public advocacy work.⁵

The AJC was founded as an elite political organization with broad goals. One of the intentions of the Committee's founders was to attain a leadership position and to assert power (and social control) over the American Jewish community, which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was a rapidly growing and heterogeneous community, deeply divided by denomination, national origin, language, class, education, and, perhaps most importantly, political ideologies.⁶ The AJC became a very high profile advocacy organization and interest

³ For a survey of some of the empirical models that have been developed to assess the influence of interest groups, and for critiques of these approaches and their conclusions, see: Jan Potters and Randolph Sloof, "Interest groups: A survey of empirical models that try to assess their influence," *European Journal of Political Economy* 12 (1996): 403-442.

⁴ For a more recent discussion of the methodological problems that continue to complicate efforts to objectively assess the influence of interest groups, see: Silke Friedrich, "Measuring Interest Group Activity," *DICE Report* 8 (2010): 37 and 45.

⁵ This dissertation describes the internal deliberations of the American Jewish Committee's leadership in formulating and developing the organization's earliest approaches to public advocacy. The findings, arguments, and evidence discussed in this study are substantiated by research undertaken at the AJC's archives and library. I made two research trips to the AJC's headquarters in New York City to gather materials from the organization's archives. Charlotte Bonelli, the AJC's librarian and Chief Archivist, allowed me complete access to all the organization's files from 1906 to 1932. Additionally, as part of the celebration of the organization's centenary, in 2006 the AJC uploaded tens of thousands of historical documents onto their archives' website, including minutes of Executive Committee meetings, Annual Reports, memorandums, correspondence, and internal policy papers and these primary sources are cited extensively throughout this study.

⁶ The AJC became a very high profile advocacy organization and interest group. Until the founding of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in 1963, and the rise of that organization to political prominence, the AJC, along with the later founded American Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League, were the most high profile and politically engaged American Jewish organizations.

group. Notwithstanding that the AJC was composed of a small group of elites and that the organization was not a denominational body, a charity, a lodge, nor an arm of the Zionist movement, the organization assumed a prominent leadership role within the American Jewish community. At the heart of this dissertation is an examination of why the founders of the AJC sought to claim this leadership role over the American Jewish community, and how they exercised this role by trying to shape how the broader American public viewed the American Jewish community.⁷

The AJC was established as an interest group dedicated to protecting Jewish communities, in both the United States and abroad, from discrimination and persecution. Interest groups have been defined as “any association of individuals or organizations...that, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence public policy.”⁸ Gregory M. Randolph and Michael T. Tasto argue that these organizations “play an extremely important role in the

⁷ In his essay *Politics as a Vocation*, Max Weber defined politics as “striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within the state.” The work of the American Jewish Committee can be encompassed by this definition. Weber’s emphasis on “striving to influence” is also applicable to the efforts of the AJC. In *Politics as a Vocation*, Weber argues that “When a question is said to be a ‘political’ question...what is always meant is that interests in the distribution, maintenance, or transfer of power are decisive for answering the questions and determining the decision...He who is active in politics strives for power either as a means in serving other aims, ideal or egotistic, or as ‘power for power’s sake,’ that is, in order to enjoy the prestige-feeling that power gives.” Weber’s definition of “political” is a fitting characterization of the motivations of the AJC’s founders. The Committee’s leaders had specific aims, including encouraging social harmony and religious tolerance in the United States, but they were also interested in power. They sought this power because of ego but they also adhered to specific social and political ideals which emphasized acculturation and integration into American society and the American economy over religious or ethnic particularism and radical political and economic change. For Weber’s definition of “politics” and “political” see: Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 78.

⁸ Anne Rasmussen, Brendan J. Carroll, and David Lowery, “Representatives of the public? Public opinion and interest group activity,” *European Journal of Political Research* 53 (2014): 253. In the substantial and diverse literature on interest groups, different terms are used, often interchangeably, to describe non-governmental organizations that are trying to influence public policy and public opinion, including interest groups, special interests groups, advocacy organizations, lobby groups, pressure groups, and activist groups. These terms are often used or cited without reference to specific definition. All these terms refer to organizations that are engaged in forms of political and social advocacy. According to Jonathan A. Obar, Paul Zube, and Clifford Lampe, “The concept of ‘advocacy’ goes well beyond the notion of advocating for, championing, or supporting a specific viewpoint or cause. Often applied in the political context, the terms suggest a systematic effort by specific actors who aim to further or achieve specific policy goals.” See: Jonathan A. Obar, Paul Zube, and Clifford Lampe, “Advocacy 2.0: An Analysis of How Advocacy Groups in the United States Perceive and Use Social Media as Tools for Facilitating Civic Engagement and Collective Action,” *Journal of Information Policy* 2 (2012): 4

democratic process. They complement the electoral process by providing a means through which citizens and interested parties can communicate with elected officials and influence policy with more frequency and specificity.”⁹ The American Jewish Committee sought to influence those in positions of power in the United States. As part of the organization’s efforts to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States and maintain liberal immigration policies, a prominent aspect of their advocacy work were efforts to influence the views of American lawmakers, white Protestant patricians, and the broader, gentile American public.

The founders of the AJC’s claim to leadership over American Jewry was grounded in the argument that American Jewry should speak with one voice, and that, because the founders were prominent men within the hierarchies of American society, economics, and politics, they believed that they were in the best position to exert the most influence on American political leaders and on the American people in general. As will be discussed further below, the founding of the AJC and the elite composition of the organization was consistent with both Jewish communal leadership traditions and the leadership positions assumed by wealthy elites and professionals during the Progressive Era.

The founders of the AJC emphasized acculturation into American society, and they had strong ties to Reform movement Judaism, but their organization had to compete with others seeking to assume a leadership role within, or over, the American Jewish community. At the time of the founding of the AJC, what can be described as the Americanism of AJC’s founders, with its emphasis on acculturation and Reform Judaism, was in competition for the hearts and minds of the growing American Jewish community with Jewish cultural and religious particularism, and social and political ideologies including socialism, communism, and Zionism. In contrast to

⁹ Gregory M. Randolph and Michael T. Tasto, “Special Interest Group Formation in the United States: Do Special Interest Groups Mirror the Success of their Spatial Neighbors?,” *Economics & Politics* 24 (2012): 119.

these more populist movements, the AJC was a small and elite organization that was created to support the founders' efforts to encourage the acculturation of new Jewish immigrants, to arrest the growth of radical political ideologies among Jewish immigrants, and to forestall the entrenchment of a belief among the broader American public that Jews were political radicals, and thus untrustworthy and underserving of American citizenship.

In pursuing leadership and in setting a social and political agenda, the elite leaders of the AJC were not purely altruistic; they were also concerned that their own prominent place or patrician status in American society not be tarnished by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of new and impoverished Jewish immigrants in the United States. As will be discussed further below, the dynamics of race and racial difference in early-twentieth century America animated their concerns about their social status. The founders of the AJC were wealthy and acculturated Jews of German descent. The newly arrived and substantially larger community of Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants were Caucasian in terms of skin tone but, in common with Southern European and Irish Catholic immigrants, they were perceived by the white Protestant establishment in the United States as racially different and inferior. The founders of the AJC were concerned that the conspicuous growth of the population of new Jewish immigrants would undermine their standing among the community of Protestant patricians. That said, this study will also illustrate that the AJC was determined to protect the civil and human rights of the larger American Jewish community, and will describe how the Committee gradually became more involved in debates over domestic issues that did not specifically concern Jews, including efforts to end discrimination against other religious and ethnic minority communities in the United States.

The AJC, which continues to operate today, has always openly stated that it is an organization with the mission of protecting the civil and religious rights of Jews, both in the United States and internationally. In 1906, when the AJC's founders published the Committee's constitution, they defined the organization's mission as follows:

The purpose of this Committee is to prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews, and to alleviate the consequences of persecution. In the event of a threatened or actual denial or invasion of such rights, or when conditions calling for relief from calamities affecting Jews exist anywhere, correspondence may be entered into with those familiar with the situation, and if the persons on the spot feel themselves able to cope with the situation, no action need be taken; if, on the other hand, they request aid, steps shall be taken to furnish it.¹⁰

The leaders of the AJC, from the very beginning, interpreted this mission in the broadest possible terms. While philanthropy, fundraising, and the coordination of relief efforts were significant features of the Committee's work, the organization also engaged in a wide range of public relations activities and forms of political activism. As this study will show, their advocacy on behalf of both American Jews and world Jewry was not limited to political lobbying, and often took the form of efforts to influence American public opinion, and included short term and long term approaches to mass persuasion, public education initiatives, public relations work, and propaganda.

The social and political issues that the AJC regarded as important, and the techniques the organization employed in its efforts to influence American public opinion are the main subjects of this study.¹¹ The Committee's activities are unique in American Jewish history because the

¹⁰ Letter from Joseph Jacobs to David Wolffsohn, President of the Zionistische Central Bureau, December 27, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 11.

¹¹ This study does not apply any of the quantitative methods that have been developed to assess interest group influence because quantitatively measuring the successes or failures of the AJC's efforts to influence public opinion

organization was the first American Jewish communal body to engage in public relations activities that were directed at both Jewish and gentile audiences, and that aimed to broadly shape American public opinion. The AJC's innovative public relations activities sought to influence the social, religious, and political attitudes of the American Jewish community, and to shape how this minority community was viewed by the majority of Americans.

As already noted, the AJC claimed to speak for American Jewry, but it had rivals. Other Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Congress, which was established in 1918, twelve years after the AJC, would also claim to speak on behalf of a unified American Jewry; however, the AJC is exceptional in the history of American Jewish politics because, unlike its rivals, until the 1940s, the Committee publically opposed the Zionist movement.¹² As will be discussed further below, it can be argued (and has been argued) that the AJC was founded, at least in part, as an anti-Zionist or non-Zionist response to the growing popularity of Zionism among Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants in the United States.¹³

This study will reveal that, from the perspective of Jewish cultural and political history, the AJC's attempts to engage public opinion and the power of constitutional courts to protect the safety and advance the political and social interests of the American Jewish community were a dramatic departure from Jewish political traditions and from the public advocacy and communal

is not the purpose of this study. Instead, this study provides an account of the AJC's early public advocacy activities and the deliberations of the organization's founders.

¹² In the context of the history of American Jewish politics, the AJC is also unique because of the association of many of its leaders and early members with the Republican Party. This is significant because the historiography on the political views of American Jews emphasises their liberal attitudes on social and economic issues, and the community's staunch support of the Democratic Party. The early leaders of the AJC, such as Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall, however, had strong ties to prominent Republicans and the Republican Party. See: David G. Dalin, "Louis Marshall, the Jewish Vote, and the Republican Party," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 4 (1992): 55-84. See also: Jonathan D. Sarna, "American Jewish Political Conservatism in Historical Perspective," *American Jewish History* 87 (1999): 113-122.

¹³ Moses Rischin, "The Early Attitude of the American Jewish Committee to Zionism (1906-1922)," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 49 (1959): 188-201.

defense techniques employed by previous generations of Jewish communal leaders around the world. The methods of the AJC were notable for the resources that were devoted to influencing American public opinion, the scope of the Committee's ambitions, and the various means employed, some of which were original and innovative. As will be argued below, the public advocacy work of the AJC, including the organization's successes and failures, has been neglected in the existing historiography on the organization, which has focused on the Committee's lobbying of American politicians, its status as an communal leadership organization that was led or controlled by a small group of elites, and its conflicts with other American Jewish organizations, including the Zionists and the American Jewish Congress movement. The AJC's public advocacy work and its efforts to influence public opinion were historically significant and innovative, and contributed to the remarkable and rapid integration of over a million Jewish immigrants into the society and culture of twentieth-century America.

The work of the AJC is also historically significant because of the prominent people who were involved in the establishment, implementation, and evolution of the Committee's mission and approaches to public relations and public advocacy. The men who founded the AJC had ambitious goals, immense wealth, and extensive political connections, but, despite their claim to be the spokespersons of the American Jewish community, they did not have a broad base of support within American Jewry. Although the founders of the AJC claimed to speak for and on behalf of American Jewry, the truth was that the AJC was an elite institution, founded by and composed of wealthy and successful men who were at a distance from the community they purported to represent. The Committee's founders and its first generation of leaders were prominent members of a small group of acculturated Jews who have often been described in the

historiography on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American Jewry as the American Jewish establishment.¹⁴

This so-called establishment community composed of predominantly German-born Jews who had immigrated to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, or their American-born children, had achieved unprecedented commercial and professional success. The founders included Cyrus Sulzberger, an extraordinarily successful textile merchant, investment banker Jacob H. Schiff, prominent commercial and constitutional lawyer Louis B. Marshall, Judge Julian Mack of the Circuit Court of Illinois, Judge Mayer Sulzberger of the Pennsylvania Courts of Common Pleas, and Justices Nathan Bijur and Samuel Greenbaum of the New York State Supreme Court. The AJC's first generation of leaders included members of the some of the wealthiest Jewish families in the United States, including the Warburg, Guggenheim, Loeb, Lehman, Rosenwald, and Seligman families.

Even before he assumed the role of President of the AJC in 1912, Louis Marshall was the organization's leading figure. Marshall was the "guiding force"¹⁵ of the organization in terms of both developing strategy and coordinating the Committee's activities. He was a very prominent public figure during the early-twentieth century and when the Committee did release public statements, Marshall was the author of the message.¹⁶ His influence in early-twentieth century

¹⁴ See, for example: Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy At Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 30-33.

¹⁵ Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee 1906-1966* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), 28.

¹⁶ Naomi W. Cohen provides the following description of Marshall and his leadership qualities: "He was a short, stocky man of stern appearance, always confident in his opinions and impatient with those who differed with him, whose forthrightness permitted no public display of humor or sentiment. However, none could gainsay his abilities. A forceful and convincing speaker who courageously fought for his beliefs regardless of their popularity, he earned the respect of his community and the tremendous esteem of his colleagues." See: Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 28.

American Jewish communal affairs has been well-documented and, to both the general public and the American Jewish community, Marshall became synonymous with the AJC.¹⁷

Many of the Committee's founders and members were prominent lawyers or judges, and they recognized that, because of the doctrine of the rule of law and the oversight power of the judicial branch of government, courts could be an effective means of protecting the civil and religious rights of Jews and of minority groups generally.¹⁸ This study will describe how the Committee used the American legal system, including seeking judicial review of administrative action and the filing of *amicus curiae* ("friend of the court") briefs, to advance its social and political agenda. In common with the organization's application of political lobbying and public advocacy techniques, the AJC's use of juridical means illustrates the substantial and innovative approaches it used to advance its mission during the early history of the organization. Although the Committee's most significant *amicus curiae* interventions occurred after the Second World War, the AJC's practice of using the legal system as a mechanism to effect social and political change emerged during the leadership tenures of Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall, which is the period under consideration in this study.¹⁹

¹⁷ See: Cohen, *Not Free to Desists*, 29.

¹⁸ In common law legal systems, constitutional courts have the power to strike down or invalidate legislation that impinges on constitutionally protected rights. Constitutional courts were (and remain) a particularly appealing alternative means of furthering the AJC's agenda (and for safeguarding minority rights) because success in this arena does not require securing public support or overcoming public opposition. This strategy relies on the adjudication of so-called "test cases." If the legitimacy of a law, administrative policy, or government program can be framed as a question of determining or defining the scope or limits of a constitutionally protected right, then its legal validity can be determined by the judiciary.

¹⁹ By the 1950s, the AJC was one of the most active and high profile interveners in constitutional litigation. The organization submitted dozens of *amicus curiae* briefs to the Supreme Court of the United States and to lower State and Federal Courts. These briefs were cited in landmark decisions, including *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925), which protected the right of parents to send their children to parochial schools, *Shelley v. Kramer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), which declared that it was unconstitutional to enforce racist restrictive covenants on the sale of land, and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), the landmark ruling which declared school segregation to be unconstitutional.

The AJC was established during a dynamic and tumultuous period in the history of American capitalism, American social and political thought, and American journalism. The organization was founded during the so-called “Era of the Trusts” and during the Progressive Era of social and political reform. The founders of the AJC and its first generation of leaders were active in the economic developments in the public and private sector, in fund raising, in philanthropic projects, and in the changes to the media that defined the “Era of the Trusts” and the Progressive Era.

In their efforts to both attain a leadership position within the American Jewish community and to influence how this community was perceived by the majority of Americans, the elite leaders of the AJC manifested the tendencies that were prevalent among other wealthy philanthropists and middle class social reform activists of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The historical context for the activities of these reformers and philanthropists was an era of unprecedented social and economic change in the United States. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was a period of dramatic economic growth in the American industrial sector that saw the consolidation of huge corporate monopolies. The growth of American industry was accompanied by an extraordinary migration of Americans from their rural birthplaces into cities looking for employment. Economic growth was also fed by the arrival in the United States of millions of immigrants, including hundreds of thousands of Russian and Eastern European Jews. The concentration of mostly poor and unskilled workers in urban centers, along with the absence of public health and social service institutions and rapid population growth, were further aggravated by the social and political context that accompanied the mass industrialization of the economy, including unrestrained greed, labor force exploitation, and, in New York City, the political corruption of the Tammany Hall machine. The state of

affairs in poor and immigrant neighborhoods spurred social reformers to investigate ways to improve the living conditions of the poor and fostered the development of social work as a profession.²⁰

The reformers of the Progressive Era were realistic and pragmatic; they believed that solutions could be found, and they were motivated by *noblesse oblige*, religious faith, and confidence in the scientific method.²¹ The Progressive Era was a golden age for philanthropy by the reform-minded in American society, but some of their altruism was also animated by self-interest. It must be noted that some of the social reformers of this era, including members of the AJC, recognized that dramatic economic inequality and the concentration of poor, unskilled, and under-educated masses in cities was a potential threat to their own security and the political stability of the nation.

Further, the reformers recognized that philanthropy and large charitable donations, including the creation of philanthropic foundations, offered them an opportunity to exercise

²⁰ See: Alfreda P. Iglehart and Rosina M. Becerra, *Social Services and the Ethnic Community*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2011), 219. Iglehart and Becerra argue that social work as a profession was shaped by the ideologies and methodologies that defined the Progressive Era: “Social work is the product of the era in which it was born—an era that incorporated the ideologies of Social Gospel and Social Darwinism. This was the era that defined some groups as White and other as not White... Social work can be considered as the outgrowth of a country that was suffering from growing pains. From this seemingly chaotic world, charity organization societies and settlement houses emerged to assist White ethnics with the process of assimilation. These workers were inspired by the hope that foreign immigrants would one day melt into the pot of Americanism... As products of their environment, the profession’s founders acquiesced to what was happening to the country’s minority populations. These leaders had been socialized by American values and beliefs about these groups. They were not immune to all the negative and pervasive messages about the place of minority groups in [American] society. As the profession matured, its members continued to be socialized in the norms of the larger society. Socialization is, after all, one of the major functions of society.” See: Iglehart and Becerra, 219-220.

²¹ The use of the scientific method to establish the efficacy, or improve the efficiency, of social reform and philanthropy was consistent with the pragmatism of the Progressives; they wanted to be able to assess or measure their efforts. According to Peter Levine, “Some reformers hoped to make government more efficient and effective by introducing both scientific methods and professional credentials into public management. Such ideas were not the Progressive’s alone; they also inspired American robber barons, French socialists, Prussian aristocrats, and British imperial administrators... As Leonard White wrote in 1927, ‘What the whole world is witnessing is the emergence of government by experts, by men and women who are trained technicians highly specialized to perform some service by scientific methods.’” See: Peter Levine, *The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 27.

greater political influence. Historian Judith Sealander argues that the wealthy philanthropists of the Progressive Era “intended the money distributed through their institutions to serve public-policy-making purposes. In effect, their organized charitable giving would grant them access to influence in the arenas of government at local, state, and federal levels and a role in the public decision-making process.”²² In the historiography on the Progressive Era, the wealthy philanthropists and middle-class social reformers of this period have been praised for their desire to help the poor, and for their application of business administration innovations to increase the effectiveness of aid programs; however, they have also been criticized for their elitism and for using philanthropy to both gain greater political influence and to mask attempts to exercise social control over a steadily growing, poor, undereducated, and immigrant population.²³

The philanthropy of the American Jewish establishment during this period has been similarly criticized. The acculturated and wealthy Jews of German descent gave generously to help their Yiddish-speaking coreligionists; however, the Jewish establishment used philanthropy to encourage the new immigrants to acculturate into the American way of life. “Spurred by their own status insecurity, the German Jews sponsored a series of programs to remake their coreligionists as quickly as possible.”²⁴ As will be discussed further below, these efforts created significant intra-communal tension between the acculturated Jews of German descent, who were prominent members and leaders of the AJC, and the new Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe, who now constituted the majority of the population of Jews in the United States.

²² Judith Sealander, *Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 2.

²³ For a brief discussion of the historiography on Progressive Era philanthropy and social control see: Daniel Eli Burnstein, *Next to G-dliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 120.

²⁴ Gerald Sorin, “Mutual Contempt, Mutual Benefit: The Strained Encounter Between German and Eastern European Jews in America, 1880-1920,” *American Jewish History* 81 (1993): 45.

At the same time as the American economy was undergoing significant changes, there were also important developments in the academic disciplines of political science, philosophy, psychology, and sociology that would strongly influence modern democratic theory and the work of non-governmental advocacy groups in civil society, including the AJC.²⁵ The advent of new communication technologies and the increasing political consciousness of the broader American public would fundamentally change the means of mass persuasion (publicity, advertising, and propaganda) and its effects on American politics. As will be seen, the AJC employed propaganda and these new means of mass persuasion to further the Committee's social and political agenda.²⁶

The American Jewish Committee was also established during the highpoint of “muckraking” investigative journalism, which followed the publication, in 1906, of Upton

²⁵ It was during the period of the developmental years of the AJC that social psychology emerged as a separate academic discipline. Between 1880 and 1920, a number of significant studies were published that sought to analyze group behavior, including works by Gustave Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, and Gabriel Tarde. Their ideas and findings, in addition to the historical context described above and discussed in detail below, were some of the inspiration for later landmark works of American democratic theory such as Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* and John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*. See: Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922); John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927).

²⁶ Walter Lippmann and John Dewey were two of the most prominent American public intellectuals of the twentieth century. The so-called “Lippmann-Dewey debate” is an important concept in the historiography on the influence of public opinion. This debate has been described as “a battle of ideas fought...between these two intellectual giants about the proper role of the public in a large complex, modern democracy.” See: David Greenberg, “Lippmann vs. Mencken: Debating Democracy,” *Raritan* 32(2012): 120. It has been argued that the extent of the disagreements between Lippmann and Dewey has been exaggerated in the historiography on American political thought. It has also been argued that using the concept of a debate to describe their relationship is a misnomer. According to David Greenberg, “Although certain differences clearly divided the two men, both in their views of newspaper journalism and in their prescriptions for fixing American democracy, Dewey and Lippmann were in accord on most aspects of the central question, including the need for professional, objective expertise. They did not regard themselves as in a debate, with the adversarial postures that the term implies...In truth, it makes more sense to speak of a Lippmann-[Henry Louis] Mencken debate.” See: Greenberg, 121. According to Greenberg, Mencken is a more fitting antagonist to Lippmann because Mencken's critiques of the general public's role in a modern democracy was more anti-democratic than Dewey's. Additionally, by reviewing each other's books, Lippmann and Mencken actually did engage in a form of a public debate on democratic theory and the role of technocrats in public policy decisions. For more on the extent of the differences between Lippmann, Dewey, and Mencken's views on the roles of the general public and technocrats in modern democracies, and for an assessment of the recent scholarship that calls into question the validity of the “Lippmann-Dewey debate,” see: Greenberg, 121-123.

Sinclair's *The Jungle*.²⁷ Some of the most influential members of the AJC had substantial experience in print journalism.²⁸ As this study will reveal, these dynamic historical forces in journalism and the development of public relations as a business practice also animated the motivations and methods of the elite group that founded the AJC.

The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was a period of dramatic growth for the American media. "Magazines and newspapers were entering an entirely new phase. Many of them," according to historian Eric F. Goldman, "were becoming in fact what they had long liked to call themselves—the people's press."²⁹ At the forefront of the Progressive reform movement were a new generation of journalists and writers who did not shy away from exposing political

²⁷ Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Chicago: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1906).

²⁸ Adolph S. Ochs, the publisher of *The New York Times*, was also connected to the AJC. Ochs, like many of the AJC's founders and first generation of leaders, was of German-Jewish descent, and was active in philanthropy. During the early conferences which led to establishment of the AJC, Ochs' name was put forward for election to "The Committee of Fifty" that was being assembled to build the organization. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee Meeting of Committee of Fifteen, July 1, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16440>. He was not elected to that committee and he never formally joined the AJC. Ochs was, however, the First Vice-President of the Jewish Publication Society of America (JPSA). The JPSA collaborated with the AJC on many projects, including the publication of the *American Jewish Yearbook*. In 1911, Ochs met with members of the AJC's executive committee to advise them on the creation of the AJC's "Publicity Bureau." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>. Ochs was present at the AJC executive committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, "upon the invitation of the President, to confer with the Committee on the matter of a publicity bureau." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>. Ochs' role in the discussions about the AJC's publicity bureau is discussed further in Chapter 6 of this study. It is also noteworthy that Ochs had family ties to the AJC. Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Ochs' son-in-law who ultimately succeeded him as the publisher of *The New York Times* in 1935, was the son of Cyrus Sulzberger, one of the founders of the AJC. While Ochs had strong connections to important members of the AJC, Ochs himself did not join the organization and did not want his newspaper to gain a reputation as a Jewish newspaper. Ochs opposed some of the work of the AJC because he believed in the Reform movement's definition of Judaism, which emphasized that the Jews were followers of a particular religion not members of a separate people or nation. According to historian Laurel Leff, Ochs opposed Jewish organizations whose mandates were not exclusively religious. Ochs opposed the AJC's lobbying and public relations work because he believed that it created false and potentially harmful distinctions between Jews and other Americans. For more on Ochs' concerns about his newspaper's reputation and his opposition to the work of the AJC, see: Laurel Leff, "A Tragic 'Fight in the Family': The New York Times, Reform Judaism and the Holocaust," *American Jewish History* 88 (2000): 3-12.

²⁹ Eric F. Goldman, "Public Relations and the Progressive Surge: 1898-1917," *Public Relations Review* 4 (1978): 55.

corruption, appalling living conditions, and dangerous manufacturing processes. The new media was an important forum for debates about the limits of *laissez-faire* economic liberalism and the potential role of government in regulating the economy and protecting workers and consumers. These debates also focused on the importance of civic instruction for workers and new immigrants, and the role of professionals and technocrats in managing an increasingly complicated economy and regulatory state.

Underlying these debates was an inquiry into the role of public opinion in a new age of higher literacy rates, mass communication, rapid population growth, ethnic and religious diversity, and economic, technological, and social change.³⁰ All of these matters were of intense interest and importance to the members of the AJC, and influenced the development of the Committee's public relations and public advocacy work on behalf of American Jewry.

The media growth that occurred during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century included the creation of hundreds of specialized or niche newspapers that were produced for specific audiences, including workers in a particular industry and adherents of particular political ideologies. Specialized newspapers were also produced for specific faith groups, and some of the leaders of the AJC published, edited, or contributed to newspapers intended for Jewish readers. For example, Cyrus Adler, Cyrus Sulzberger, Samuel Greenbaum, and Joseph Jacobs were all members of the editorial board of *The American Hebrew*, which, until the 1930s, was arguably the most important English-language Jewish newspaper in the United States. The newspaper's readership was principally the acculturated Jews of the American Jewish establishment;

³⁰ In the late-nineteenth century, literacy rates in the United States varied substantially among ethnic groups. By the American Civil War, more than eighty percent of Caucasian American men and women could read and write. See: Paul Gutjahr, "Literacy and the Mass Media: Higher literacy rates contribute to growth and success of media forms," in *History of the Mass Media in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret A. Blanchard (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998), 314-315.

however, *The American Hebrew*'s editors wanted their newspaper "to be sought by the best classes of non-Jews."³¹ At a time when the Jewish population of the United States was growing at an unprecedented rate, *The American Hebrew* was only one of a series of efforts sponsored by the American Jewish establishment that attempted to shape the attitudes of gentile patricians and the broader American public towards American Jews. "The stated aim of *The American Hebrew* was to promote pride in Judaism, fight its enemies and welcome its friends... The main ideal, according to the publisher, Philip Cowen, was an adequate representation of the Jewish community to the outside world."³² Throughout its history, the AJC continued, and expanded upon these public relations efforts.

The American Jewish establishment also endeavored to use print journalism to influence the political beliefs and social behaviors of the growing population of Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants. In 1902, Louis Marshall, with the financial backing of members of the Schiff, Warburg, Guggenheim, Lehman, and Seligman families, established *The Jewish World* (*Di yidish velt*). The newspaper "was intended to be an Americanizing and stabilizing force, intellectually, morally, religiously, and politically, among the east-European immigrants who crowded the East Side" of Manhattan.³³

It is significant that the founding of the AJC coincided with the professionalization of the modern field of public relations and the earliest attempts of "the trusts" and large corporations to garner public support and counter negative coverage in the press. As journalists began exposing some of the more disreputable business practices of American monopolies, including labor force

³¹ Yehezkel Wyszowski, "The American Hebrew: An Exercise in Ambivalence," *American Jewish History* 76 (1987): 341.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "Louis Marshall's Yiddish Newspaper, 'The Jewish World': A Study in Contrasts," *Jewish Social Studies* 25(1963): 102. *The Jewish World* was founded to compete with the myriad of other Yiddish-language publications, including Zionist, socialist, communists, and other radical newspapers, which had large circulations among new Jewish immigrants to the United States.

exploitation, price fixing, price gouging, and tying, public relations became an important consideration for the men who controlled these monopolies and the men who organized the public trading of stock in these companies. Further, some of the founders of the AJC, in their professional work outside the Committee as investment bankers and financiers, had extensive exposure to the impact of public relations.³⁴

The AJC was a pioneer in the political uses of mass media including radio, television, movies, cartoons, and comics. The organization created public relations and media campaigns to discredit or marginalize prominent anti-Semites, including Father Charles Edward Coughlin, and employed all available forms of media to promote racial and religious tolerance.³⁵ The means that the Committee employed to further the organization's social and political agenda have evolved considerably over the course of the AJC's history, but many of the tactics the organization employed, and the strategies underlying these approaches, were developed during the period covered by this study.

In addition to employing philanthropy, fundraising, journalism, mass media campaigns, constitutional court challenges, public relations work, propaganda, and public advocacy, the AJC also sponsored high profile academic research. For example, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Committee funded the Berkeley "Studies in Prejudice," a historically significant sociological and scientific research project which examined the causes and impact of racial and

³⁴ For example, Jacob Schiff was a board member of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the first corporation to employ a full-time, in house public relations executive. That executive was Ivy Lee, who is considered the father of modern public relations. In the historiography on the development and professionalization of public relations, Ivy Lee's 1906 "Declaration of Principles" is considered one of the foundational documents of the field. For more on Ivy Lee's role in the development of public relations, see: Karen Miller Russell and Carl O Bishop, "Understanding Ivy Lee's Declaration of Principles: U.S. newspaper and magazine coverage of publicity and press agency, 1865-1904," *Public Relations Review* 35(2009) 91-101. See also: Shirley Harrison and Kevin Moloney, "Comparing Two Public Relations Pioneers: American Ivy Lee and British John Elliot," *Public Relations Review* 30(2004) 205-215.

³⁵ In 1945, the AJC founded *Commentary Magazine*, a political, social, and cultural monthly magazine that became an important forum for Jewish intellectuals and, later, for the development and dissemination of neo-conservatism.

religious prejudice. In particular, the Berkeley study focused on identifying personality traits that predisposed a person to tolerate authoritarianism and anti-Semitism.³⁶ The AJC's sponsorship of this and other research was an extension of the organization's early commitment to the gathering of information and sponsoring research. During the period covered by this study, the AJC devoted considerable resources, often the majority of its operational budget, to the gathering and collating of information, including statistics and detailed information about the congregational affiliation, crime rate, philanthropic activity, vocations, professions, and military service of American Jews.

The AJC's social and political agenda has evolved considerably over the course of its history. In the AJC's early years, from 1906 to roughly 1930, which is the period covered by this study,³⁷ the Committee's agenda included goals such as protecting vulnerable Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and Russia from systematic violence, averting an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States, maintaining liberal or open immigration policies, expanding the scope of civil rights laws, and promoting a vision of the United States as a harmonious and heterogeneous ethnic and religious melting pot.³⁸

³⁶ The study was conducted by Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford. Contextually, it is important to note that their work at the University of California, Berkeley was done in the aftermath of the rise of fascism, the Second World War, and the Holocaust. The Berkeley study has been the subject of considerable debate among social scientists, including intense criticism for methodological defects in the way the research was conducted and the study's conclusions. For a brief discussion of the study, its impact, and its critics see: Alan Wolfe, "'The Authoritarian Personality' Revisited," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 52 (2005): B12-B13. The fifth and final volume of this series, *The Authoritarian Personality*, was one of the most important, influential, and debated works of sociology and psychology of the twentieth century. For an account of the intellectual influence of *The Authoritarian Personality*, see: Martin Roiser and Carla Willig, "The strange death of the authoritarian personality: 50 years of psychological and political debate," *History of the Human Sciences* 15(2002):71-96. Between 1950 and 1989, more than one thousand additional studies used or applied the "authoritarianism scale" outlined in *The Authoritarian Personality*. See, Roiser and Willig, 89.

³⁷ Outside the period that is the focus of this study, the AJC experienced significant shifts in its political orientation, and in its positions on important domestic and international issues, including its stance on the aspirations of the Zionist movement.

³⁸ According to historian Gerald Sorin, the "uptown" Jews of the American Jewish establishment "were very taken with Israel Zangwill's play *The Melting Pot*, because they thought they saw in it a reinforcement of their own

In some of the case studies and examples discussed in this dissertation, the AJC made efforts to minimize the appearance of their involvement by financing or contributing to the work of other advocacy organizations that were not Jewish interest groups. In other case studies, the AJC's name and official seal were prominently displayed, and their involvement advertised. The AJC's leaders privileged discretion and were conscious of what today would be described as the "optics" of their efforts, that is, how their activities and advocacy campaigns would appear to the broader public and how their work could potentially intensify or mitigate anti-Semitism among Christian Americans.

The AJC was not a secret organization. The Committee publically announced its founding; the names of its members were a matter of public record; its leaders were prominent public figures; its annual meetings and activities were covered by the media; and it published Annual Reports which summarized its activities during the previous year and described its future intentions.

While the AJC certainly pursued a broad and sometimes controversial political and social agenda, there was nothing unpatriotic about the Committee's efforts. In a narrow sense, the AJC wanted to ensure that the United States would be a safe home for the nation's Jewish citizens. More broadly, the Committee worked to entrench religious, cultural, and ethnic pluralism in

proposed solution for the problems [of the] downtown [East Side]: the sooner the immigrants from Eastern Europe would give up their cultural distinctiveness and 'melt' into the homogenized mass, the sooner anti-Semitism would also melt." See: Sorin, 45. Other scholars, however, disagree with this assessment of the American Jewish establishment's embrace of the social visions described in Zangwill's *The Melting Pot*. According to Matthew Mark Silver, for example, despite the fact that Louis Marshall and Zangwill "maintained a warm personal relationship...there was little chance that Marshall would have sympathy for Zangwill's gospel of intermarriage in *The Melting Pot*." See: Matthew Mark Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 150. Do to the unique social circumstances of early-twentieth century America, where race-based distinctions between black and white entailed profound social consequences for both individuals and entire minority communities, American Jewish leaders continually struggled with how to encourage the rapid acculturation of new Jewish immigrants and maintain their community's unique religious and cultural heritage while simultaneously trying instill the perception among the white gentile population that Jews were ordinary, white Americans, and were entitled to the standing and privileges that accompanied that status in the United States.

American political culture and American law as a means of protecting the rights of minority communities such as American Jews, and ensuring social harmony and social cohesion. The Committee privileged the rapid acculturation of new Jewish immigrants over complete assimilation in American society and the total abandonment of Judaism. They wanted Jews to be able to practice their faith and preserve elements of their religious heritage, but they also wanted Jews to adopt the American way of life and be viewed by the broader American public as ordinary, white Americans.³⁹

This is not to say that the AJC and all of the organization's actions and public relations work are above criticism or disapproval. Its work was intended to influence American society to be more accepting of religious, ethnic, and cultural difference, but the organization made mistakes, and some of its policy choices were of debatable social merit and political value. Its leaders were successful men, and they could be arrogant, domineering, and dismissive of opposing views and opinions, including those of their less wealthy and less acculturated Russian and Eastern European coreligionists. They were elitist, and, because of the popularity of radical political ideas among new Jewish immigrants, the AJC's leaders opposed establishing a democratic or genuinely representative political body for Jewish communal leadership in the United States.

In general, the leaders of the AJC were motivated by concerns about how the American public viewed the American Jewish community, and thus the Committee's leaders opposed any action they believed would foster the impression that the loyalty of American Jews was divided between their country and their religion ("dual loyalty"), and they opposed any action they

³⁹ As the examination will reveal, the AJC's agenda and the goals of the projects that the organization financed did not include the conspiratorial accusations leveled against Jewish interest and advocacy groups regarding the securing of Jewish hegemony over the United States or the co-opting of American commercial and military power to serve the cause of Jewish nationalism.

believed would lend credibility to long-standing anti-Semitic tropes. These overarching concerns inspired some of the AJC's most successful lobbying and public advocacy, but also contributed to some of the organization's most substantial failures.⁴⁰ The leaders of the Committee overreacted to provocations, failed to respond to real threats, and, at times, declined to work with and opposed or undermined the work of other Jewish groups. Both the organization and the men who led it made serious mistakes that would have far reaching consequences for both the American Jewish community and world Jewry.

Public Advocacy and the “Cult of Synthesis”

In the historiography on American Jewry, and in particular in the historiography on Jewish interest groups, a neglected aspect of the effects of Jewish communal leadership is the impact of the public advocacy work of these organizations in fostering the so-called “cult of synthesis.” The “cult of synthesis” is a prevalent theme in American Jewish historiography, and, arguably, one of the central tenets of American Jewish culture and identity. As an analytical approach, the “cult of synthesis” focuses on identifying instances when American Jews, whether deliberately or unconsciously, sought to integrate their own history and beliefs into the dominant historical narratives and civic traditions of the United States. This category of historical analysis also seeks to explain why these efforts were made, focussing on the status insecurity of Jews as a minority population with a long and well-known history of persecution. As a component of American Jewish culture, the “cult of synthesis” describes the results of over one hundred years

⁴⁰ The events surrounding the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany and its persecution of German Jews is outside the time period covered by this study. How the AJC tried to coordinate American Jewish activism regarding the persecution of German Jewry, including the alleged passivity or timidity of the organization's public advocacy during this unprecedented crisis, are among the most controversial topics in the historiography on the Committee. See, Frederick A. Lazin, “The Response of the American Jewish Committee to the Crisis of German Jewry, 1933-1939,” *American Jewish History* 68 (1979): 283-304.

of endeavours by American Jews to fully integrate into the American way of life by developing a unique ethnic and religious identity that preserved important elements of their cultural and religious heritage while simultaneously emphasising acculturation. As both an analytical approach and as an aspect of American Jewish identity, the “cult of synthesis” is used to substantiate the argument that the two traditions, Americanism and Judaism, are fundamentally compatible.⁴¹

In his article “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture,” Jonathan Sarna describes numerous examples when Jewish leaders in the United States sought either to highlight congruencies between Jewish history and American history or to graft or adapt elements of Jewish history into significant American historical narratives. According to Sarna, “for some American Jews, the cult of synthesis represented more than just a familiar exercise in group loyalty and patriotism. For some, at least, it also represented a bold attempt to redefine America itself.”⁴² Sarna cites the efforts of prominent nineteenth-century American Jewish leaders, including Mordecai Noah, to link or “insert” Jews and Jewish history into important events in American history. In his article, Sarna specifically mentions attempts to popularize the notion that the aboriginal peoples of the United States were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, that Christopher Columbus was Jewish, and that the Puritan settlers adhered to Mosaic Law.⁴³

Historian John Bodnar argues that these efforts are common among ethnic and religious minorities and immigrant groups in the United States, and, importantly, often originate from

⁴¹ According to Jonathan Sarna: “[T]he belief that Judaism and Americanism reinforce one another, the two traditions converging in a common path—encapsulates a central theme in American Jewish culture that may be termed ‘the cult of synthesis.’ Dating back well over a century, it reflects an ongoing effort on the part of American Jews to interweave their ‘Judaism’ with their ‘Americanism’ in an attempt to fashion for themselves some unified, ‘synthetic’ whole. Anyone even remotely connected with American Jewish life is familiar with this theme, which has elsewhere been described as a central tenet of American Jewish ‘civil religion.’” See: Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture,” *Jewish Social Studies* 5 (1998-1999): 52.

⁴² Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture,” *Jewish Social Studies* 5 (1998-1999): 53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 54.

within the elite and leadership groups of minority communities.⁴⁴ “Most cultural leaders in the United States,” Bodnar argues, “come from a broad group of middle-class professionals—government officials, editors, lawyers, clerics, teachers, military officers, and small businessmen. They are ‘self-conscious purveyors’ of loyalty to larger political structures and existing institutions.”⁴⁵ Bodnar’s description of the aims and activities of elite communal leaders of minority communities in the United States captures the ambitions of the founders of the AJC and the organization’s first generation of leaders. Like their Catholic, Irish, Italian, Chinese, Latino, and African American counterparts, they sought to instill the perception among both Protestant patricians, and the broader American public, that their minority community were loyal citizens who belonged in the United States and would contribute to the wealth and progress of the nation. As will be discussed further in Chapter 3 of this study, the racialized nature of how white Protestant elites conceived of the United States’ national identity, and the entrenched racial hierarchy that divided white and black and characterized American society, were barriers to the social integration of minority communities that the American Jewish Committee had to reckon with when developing its approaches to public advocacy during the early-twentieth century.

While the efforts of the leaders of the American Jewish community may not be unique in American history, the intensity and scope of their efforts is noteworthy. “Of all the many ethnic and religious groups that have demanded shares in America’s founding myths, Jews are apparently unique,” Sarna argues, “in attempting to insert themselves into so many. This

⁴⁴ Other large immigrants groups, including Italian Americans and Irish Americans, have made similar conscious efforts to insert or link their own history with American narratives and highlight prominent members of their communities who played important roles in building the country. See, John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). In particular, see Chapter Three “The Construction of Ethnic Memory,” 41-78.

⁴⁵ Bodnar, 15.

bespeaks their eagerness for acceptance, to be sure, but also their deep-seated insecurity.”⁴⁶

Sarna identifies evidence of the movement towards, and emphasis on, synthesis in developments or changes in a number of areas of Jewish life and Jewish culture in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America, including the names given to American-born Jewish children.⁴⁷ For example, the German-born Jewish investment banker, Joseph Seligman and his wife Babet Steinhart named their first son David, traditionally a very common name in Jewish families, but their second son was given the name George Washington Seligman.⁴⁸ Among other examples, Sarna cites a passage from the *Reform Passover Haggadah*, which was first published in 1903, as further evidence of the efforts by American Jews to join their own history and religion with the history and civic traditions of the United States. The *Reform Passover Haggadah* is organized as a “call and response” dialogue. Before the third cup of wine, a “child” is prompted to ask “Where do we find civil, political, and religious liberty united today?” The scripted response, which begins with the phrase “Here in America,” integrates Jewish history with American history and values. In comparison to traditional Seder services, which include descriptions of Jewish slavery in Egypt, an account of the liberation of the Jews, and rituals to mark and celebrate this event, the content of the *Reform Passover Haggadah* is explicitly political, and includes rhetoric that openly draws connections between Jewish beliefs and American history and political ideals.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Sarna, 54.

⁴⁷ Early manifestations of the drive for synthesis can also be observed in the addition of American flags to the art displayed on traditional Jewish marriages contracts (Ketubbah), the placement of American flags in synagogues, and the appearance of the bald eagle in American Jewish folk and ceremonial art such as papercuts, Torah binders, and book covers.

⁴⁸ Joseph Seligman and Babet Steinhart had three other sons. All three were given names that could be described as non-traditional for Jewish families: Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman, Isaac Newton Seligman, and Alfred Lincoln Seligman.

⁴⁹ In response to the question “Where do we find civil, political, and religious liberty united today?,” the “Reader” or leader of the Seder replies: “Here in America. The fathers of this country fought against oppression that here all men

As will be seen, the AJC used similar techniques and similar rhetoric in its own efforts to use published works to effect cultural change and to foster the impression of a fundamental compatibility between American and Jewish culture. The impetus to craft at least the appearance of synthesis can be discerned in American Jewish cultural production, historiography, and, most importantly for this study, public advocacy. The case studies included in this study will illustrate the AJC's role in crafting and propagating the so-called "cult of synthesis" during the early-twentieth century.

The tendency to highlight or insert elements of Jewish history into significant American historical narratives, and thus into the nation's historical memory, can also be found in both the popular and academic historiography on American Jewry. Historical writing in this genre emphasizes the continuity of Jewish presence in the United States. Numerous volumes have been written that provide accounts of Jewish contributions to the economic, military, and political achievements of the United States.⁵⁰ This tendency is also present in the historiography on the

should be free and equal before the law; free to worship G-d as their conscience dictated. To us the United States of America stands as the foremost among nations granting the greatest liberty to all who dwell here. Therefore we grace our table with the national flag.... America is the child of the Old Testament. It is the 'Moses and Prophets' of modern times. The Pilgrim Fathers landed here inspired by Israel's wondering to go out even to the wilderness and worship G-d. The immortal Declaration of Independence is the Great Charter announced before Pharaoh by Moses. The Abolitionists are the product of the Bible, and the love of civil liberty that moved Channing and Parker, Whittier and Lloyd Garrison was nourished by it. The Old Testament first taught men that Government must be a government by law equally applicable to all and this is the controlling idea of Mosaic and American legislation. The Fourth of July is the American Passover. Thanksgiving is the American Feast of Tabernacles. It is therefore quite in keeping with the service this evening to pledge our country. In raising this third glass of wine to our lips let us pray that G-d will ever protect our land, that here liberty may forever dwell, that peace may abide within her borders and prosperity within her homes." See: Sarna, 63.

⁵⁰ One example in this category of historical writing is Seymour Brody's *Jewish Heroes and Heroines of America: 151 True Stories of American Jewish Heroism* (Hollywood, Florida: Frederick Fell Publishers, Inc., 2004). In his introduction, Brody explicitly acknowledges that his book was written with the purpose of highlighting Jewish contributions to America and his hope that the work will be useful in enhancing the reputation of American Jewry: "This book documents the many notable contributions and sacrifices made by Jewish men and women, in war and in peace. This book refutes the lies and distortions of truth regarding the Jew in America. It is hoped that the readers of this book will use it to combat any lies about Jews and that it will arouse your curiosity to investigate further about these and other Jews who have so notably given of themselves to our country." See: Brody, 12. American Jews are not unique among major American immigrant groups in producing historiography that highlights their contributions to the nation. See, for example: John Mariano, *The Italian Contribution to American Democracy* (Boston:

AJC. The introduction of Nathan Schachner's account of the history of the AJC, which was commissioned by the Committee in 1948, includes the following description of the historical role of Jews in the discovery of America: "The Jews were no newcomers in this land across the sea. They might indeed be said to have a proprietary interest in the western hemisphere. For without the encouragement, financial and otherwise, of the Marranos of Spain Columbus might never have been able to sail. And it was a Jew who first set foot on the virgin soil of the New World. From the earliest times the Colonies had Jews in their midst."⁵¹

To understand the role played by the "cult of synthesis" on the agenda and methods of the AJC, it is also helpful to see how the emphasis on synthesis manifested itself in other contemporaneous Jewish organizations. In terms of public advocacy, Sarna argues that furthering the development and the popularization of a synthesis between Judaism and Americanism was the crucial impetus for the founding of the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) in 1892, fourteen years before the founding of the AJC. Sarna notes that the AJHS "privileged the goal of synthesis above all others."⁵² The emphasis on synthesis was explicitly set out in the society's founding document.⁵³

From a public relations perspective, it is significant that efforts to foster this synthesis were part of a conscious process, that is, that Jewish leaders, including the leaders of the AJC,

Christopher Publishing House, 1921). See also, Thomas Hobbs Maginniss, Jr., *The Irish Contribution to America's Independence* (Philadelphia: The Doire Publishing Company, 1913).

⁵¹ Nathan Schachner, *The Price of Liberty: A History of the American Jewish Committee* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1948), 3.

⁵² Sarna, 55.

⁵³ The founding document of the American Jewish Historical Society defines the organization's mission as follows: "The object of this Society is to collect and publish material bearing upon the history of our country. It is known that Jews in Spain and Portugal participated in some degree in the voyages which led to the discovery of America, and that there were Jews from Holland, Great Britain, Jamaica, and other countries among the earliest settlers of several of the colonies. There were also a number of Jews in the Continental army, and others contributed liberally to defray the expenses of the Revolutionary war. Since the foundation of our government a number of Jews have held important public positions. The genealogy of these men and the record of their achievements will, when gathered together, be of value and interest to the historian and perchance contribute materially to the history of our country." See: Sarna, 55.

had agency in these efforts, and had specific goals. According to historian Beth Wenger, the “invention of these narratives both eased Jewish adjustment to American life and created a distinct ethnic history compatible with American ideals.”⁵⁴ The building of the “cult of synthesis” served to both encourage the acculturation of Jews into the American majority while simultaneously preparing the majority to accept Jews as equal citizens. Synthesis, according to Sarna, “was not just whipped up for internal consumption. Jews also looked outward and attempted to transform America's vision of itself. By undercutting the claims of ‘Christian America’ and promoting pluralism as a national ideal, they attempted to forge a new America—one where they might finally be accepted as insiders.”⁵⁵ As already noted above, these were important goals for the founders of the AJC.

The emphasis on synthesis can also be tied to arguments about American exceptionalism, another important concept in the historiography on American Jewry. As will be discussed below, the unique historical conditions of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America as an ethnically heterogeneous nation experiencing tremendous economic and population growth, which espoused a deeply rooted reverence for constitutionally protected rights and which simultaneously lacked a state religion and a formal aristocracy, created unique conditions for the growing population of American Jews. American Jewish leaders recognized a historically unprecedented opportunity to establish in America social conditions and legal protections that Diaspora Jewry had never experienced. The United States “was a nation in process, engaged in defining what being an American actually meant. Jews played a disproportionately important role in this process, and unsurprisingly they propounded a definition of America that warmly

⁵⁴ Beth S. Wenger, *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

⁵⁵ Sarna, 57.

embraced them as insiders...Here, Jews could help to shape a pluralistic national identity that won them insider status; almost everywhere else that seem patently impossible.”⁵⁶ It can be argued that the pursuit of synthesis was, at least in part, a public relations campaign to further the goal of establishing and then protecting these favorable social and political conditions. Nurturing and reinforcing this synthesis was part of the public relations mission of the AJC.⁵⁷

While Sarna emphasises that the “efforts to merge Jewish and American identities proceeded at the popular and folk levels,”⁵⁸ it is one of the arguments of this dissertation that the pursuit of both a genuine synthesis and the appearance of synthesis between Judaism and Americanism also proceeded at the political level. It was advanced through diverse means of political engagement and public advocacy, including the various public advocacy and public relations techniques developed and applied by the AJC to further the organization’s social and political agenda. This dissertation will show the extent to which the AJC and its leaders were at the forefront of these efforts.

In fostering the “cult of synthesis,” one of the goals of American Jewish leaders was to encourage the broader American public to see Jews as white people and accept Jews as full participants in American social and political life without compelling American Jews to convert or abandon their religious identity. In common with other immigrant groups and minority communities, “American Jews searched relentlessly for the threads within existing historical

⁵⁶ Sarna, 72-73.

⁵⁷ Sarna argues that “Over the course of American Jewish history, the cult of synthesis has...provided American Jews with the optimistic hope that, in the United States, they could accomplish what Jews had not successfully achieved elsewhere in the Diaspora. Instead of having to choose between competing allegiances—the great enlightenment dilemma—here they could be both American and Jewish. Their dual identities, they ardently believed, were complementary and mutually enhancing. This served both an apologetic and a subversive purpose: it provided a powerful response to Christian triumphalists and conversionists, who looked upon Jews as second-class citizens, and it tacitly functioned to de-Christianize America's cultural boundaries so as to render Jews more welcome. In short, the cult served as the medium through which Jews defined both for themselves and for others ‘the promise of American life’—a projection of the world as they wished it to be.” See: Sarna, 72.

⁵⁸ Sarna, 60.

narratives that emphasized their belonging in America, their contributions to the nation, and their right to maintain distinct religious and cultural traditions.”⁵⁹ This pursuit was done to secure their belonging in America and their social status as citizens of a minority faith. This work was also done self-consciously, that is, with the intent to establish a culture, social structure, and legal system that would offer greater protections to American Jews than any other historical Diaspora Jewish community had ever enjoyed.

The effort to synthesize elements of American and Jewish history can be described as an attempt to interpret (or pejoratively, to manipulate) history in order to profoundly shape the future. The work of the AJC during the early-twentieth century is significant because the organization was working not just to mould the past, but to shape the future.⁶⁰

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the efforts of American Jews to create the perception of a synthesis between Judaism and Americanism have been very successful. “The regularity with which American Jews continue to articulate the convergence and compatibility of Jewish and American ideals,” Wenger argues, “reveals just how thoroughly this maxim has penetrated American Jewish culture. Indeed, in American Jewish history, no theme resounds as loudly or as consistently as the perceived symbiosis between Judaism and American democracy.”⁶¹

Arguably, the successes of the efforts to establish the synthesis has obscured the agency of Jewish leaders, including the leaders of the AJC, who employed a number of public relations and advocacy strategies to both construct and popularize this synthesis. Consequently, a number

⁵⁹ Wenger, 6.

⁶⁰ According to the historian Beth Wenger, “The creation of a shared, usable Jewish past on American soil has been largely ignored by both American Jewish historians and scholars of Jewish memory, who often consider the United States a country too young to have built a Jewish collective past beyond the memories of Europe and the legacies of migration.” See: Wenger, 7.

⁶¹ Wenger, 2-3.

of significant questions about why and how the synthesis was constructed have been neglected in the historiography on American Jewry and, in particular, in the historiography on American Jewish communal leadership. Even if the synthesis between Judaism and Americanism is a historical construction or a historical fiction,⁶² it is reasonable to ask how this fiction was constructed and how it has been maintained,⁶³ and public advocacy, public relations, and other political activities carried out by communal leadership organizations and defense organizations, including the examples of the work of the AJC discussed later in this study, played a significant role in both creating and maintaining this synthesis. At the heart of this dissertation is the argument that public advocacy carried out in various forms by communal leadership organizations contributed to this process. The numerous case studies of the AJC's public advocacy work provided below will illustrate the aims and breadth of these efforts.

The AJC and the Battle against Anti-Semitism

The most important aspect of all Jewish public advocacy in the United States during the early-twentieth century was the effort to prevent the growth (or an intensification) of anti-

⁶² Beth Wenger, who is a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, opens her book *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage* with the following anecdote about teaching American Jewish history: "Each year I teach a course in American Jewish history, and almost without fail, at some point during the semester, the class discussion takes a familiar detour. We might be discussing the mass migration of Jews to the United States or perhaps the various political expressions of American Jews, and invariably, a hand goes up. "Judaism teaches democracy," a student says in an attempt to explain historical developments ranging from immigrant acculturation to social activism to labor organizing. Heads nod. More often than not, I am the sole detractor, pointing out that Judaism and democracy have never been synonymous except...in the narratives created by American Jews." See: Wenger, 1.

⁶³ Although the "cult of synthesis" has become well entrenched, it has also been described as a historical construction, that is, as the deliberate product of efforts to foster and enhance the credibility of the perception of synthesis. Jerold S. Auerbach, for example, has argued that "the synthesis of Judaism and Americanism is a historical fiction." See: Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), x. While this assertion may be true insofar as this synthesis did not develop organically or without the intervention of American Jewish religious, communal, and political leaders, it is also unquestionably historically significant. The conflation of Judaism and Americanism is a historical construction that is the product of active engagement by Jewish leaders acting with the aim of establishing in America the social, political, and cultural environment where native born Jews and Jewish immigrants could feel secure, at home, and fully engaged in their country's social institutions, political processes, and economy.

Semitism among the broader American public, including white patricians and middle and lower class white Christians. Anti-Semitism is a specific term insofar as it denotes hatred of Jews, but the term has been broadly applied to many different actions, privately held beliefs, unconscious biases, and forms of expression. The term has been used to describe incidents as varied as organized violence against Jewish communities, hate speech by individuals, government approved discrimination in the armed forces, and official or unofficial quotas that limited the number of Jewish students in universities or the number of Jewish employees in the public service or private corporations. There are many manifestations and forms of anti-Semitism, and numerous means of fostering intolerance and spreading hate.

Although the American Jewish Committee is well-known for its efforts to lobby American legislators on behalf of persecuted Jewish communities in foreign countries, the most fundamental item on its agenda was the suppression of anti-Semitism in the United States. The AJC carried out these efforts through political engagement, including efforts to influence public opinion. No single tactic is effective against all the means of expressing hate or all the forms of bigotry and discrimination, but throughout the history of the American Jewish Committee, the organization has endeavored to develop effective approaches to countering all forms and manifestations of anti-Semitism. During the leadership tenures of Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall, as part of its public advocacy work, the AJC applied a number of different strategies and approaches to combat anti-Semitism in the United States.

As already noted, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American Jewry made significant efforts to foster the perception of compatibility between American and Jewish culture. Historian Beth Wenger notes “American Jews participated in an array of public events and produced and consumed a vast corpus of popular literature that championed the possibilities for

Jewish life in the United States. In speeches, newspapers, textbooks, public celebrations, and institutional proclamations, Jews regularly asserted the compatibility, similarity, shared values, and parallel trajectories of Jewish and American cultures.”⁶⁴ These efforts, for both inter and intra communal audiences, can all be described as forms of political engagement and public advocacy, and can be seen as part of a campaign to prevent the spread of anti-Semitism in the United States. As will be discussed below, the AJC devoted considerable resources to producing materials for both a Jewish audience and also the general American public that aimed to bolster these efforts, and convince both Jews and the general public that Jews belonged in America.

The range of public advocacy work carried out by the AJC illustrates that the organization’s leaders believed that American Jewry had to do more than just assert compatibility between Jewish and American culture: they had to demonstrate it, and, further, they had to engage actively to preserve it by shaping the social and political culture of the United States and the definition and scope of the nation’s laws protecting individual and civil rights. “Although they certainly harbored occasional doubts about the promises of America,” Wenger argues, “the overwhelming majority of Jews came to believe that the nation had indeed ushered in a new epoch in Jewish history.”⁶⁵ Some American Jewish communal leaders took an active role in ushering in that new epoch. They were active in the public arena in order to broadly shape a culture that would be tolerant of ethnic and religious diversity and to ensure that, in contrast to past Jewish historical experience, in America, the Jews would not be viewed as alien outsiders, usurers, heretics, and deicides, but, first and foremost, as equal citizens—as Americans.⁶⁶ The

⁶⁴ Wenger, 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁶ As will be discussed further in Chapter 3 of this study, race was an important component of how American Jewish leaders wanted their community to be perceived by the gentile majority. They wanted American Jews to be perceived as white and acquire the social status and privileges that accompanied that status in the United States.

AJC was founded during a period of violent persecution against Jews abroad, but the leaders of the AJC were, from the founding of the organization, concerned about anti-Semitism in the United States. They viewed manifestations of anti-Jewish bigotry and intolerance in America as among the “consequences of persecution” that they were dedicated to alleviating. The leaders of the AJC were consistent, however, in preferring quiet approaches to curbing all forms of anti-Semitism. In particular, they regarded public protests in the form of mass meetings, rallies, or counter-demonstrations as potentially harmful to the status and public perception of Jews because they felt that such public assemblies reinforced an already established and growing perception of Jews as a politically radicalized minority population.

As this study will reveal, the AJC also deliberately chose not to respond to some manifestations of anti-Semitism. This refusal to engage with anti-Semites is often described as “the silent treatment.” This tactic can be seen as complementary to the organization’s emphasis on, or preference for, quiet diplomacy, but, as will be shown, a number of concepts beyond concerns about optics and an aversion towards publicity informed the development and application of the AJC’s approaches to public advocacy and combatting anti-Semitism. During the first twenty-five years of its history, the AJC was, in general, apprehensive about publically responding to anti-Semitism in the United States because the organization calculated that any response could be either counterproductive or exacerbate the problem.

From a public relations perspective, there were a number of reasons cited by AJC leaders to justify disregarding some provocations; however, it must be noted that pride, whether ethnic, religious, cultural, or communal, also underlay this approach. Some Jewish leaders believed that it was beneath the dignity of American Jews as both adherents of one of the world’s great

religions and as American citizens with constitutionally protected rights to respond to scurrilous hate speech.

The strategy of declining to respond to some manifestations of anti-Semitism, whether in the form of speech or discrimination, was based on the premise that reacting to every occurrence of prejudice and intolerance could unintentionally lend credibility to anti-Semitic accusations and provide greater public exposure and media coverage for anti-Semites and their beliefs. Responding to every outburst of bigotry could, paradoxically, create the impression that these accusations or claims deserved to be taken seriously, and thus could do more harm.⁶⁷ Rather than responding directly to every anti-Semitic outburst or incidents of anti-Jewish discrimination, the AJC chose more indirect and long-term approaches. As will be shown, while the organization eschewed any protest activity that could reinforce the perception that American Jews were political radicals, the AJC was, from its founding, concerned about an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States and active in efforts to influence American public opinion. The AJC's emphasis on discretion, restraint, and avoidance of public protest has led to strong condemnations of the organization's approach to public advocacy. Its leadership has been called passive, timid, and even "cowardly;"⁶⁸ however, as this study will show, their silence should not be construed as passivity. When the AJC chose not to respond publically to a provocation, they were not ignoring the problem but had deliberated about the best way to respond given their overarching concerns about how their community would be perceived and their desire not to

⁶⁷ This approach, according to Civil Rights Movement historian Clive Webb, "was based on the assumption that publically engaging with political extremists conferred them with greater legitimacy in the minds of the public than would be the case by simply ignoring them." Clive Webb, *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 123.

⁶⁸ Naomi W. Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection: The American Jewish Committee and the Joint Foreign Committee in Defense of German Jews, 1933-1937," *American Jewish History* 90 (2002): 367. It should be noted that Cohen does not describe the AJC's tactics as cowardly; rather, her article contains accounts of how American Jewish leaders who were not associated with the AJC criticized the organization's response to anti-Semitic provocations.

have problematic or difficult social and political issues defined as “Jewish issues.” The previous scholarship on the AJC that minimizes the significance and breadth of the organization’s early advocacy and institution-building has mischaracterized the Committee’s early activities.

A New Account and Interpretation of the Early Years of the AJC

In the historiography on American Jewry and in the historiography on Jewish interest groups, the magnitude of the contribution of the American Jewish Committee’s work in its early years, and the originality of its approaches to public advocacy, have been underappreciated. On the occasion of the AJC’s sixtieth anniversary, the organization commissioned Naomi W. Cohen, who was at that time an associate professor of history at Hunter College, to write a history of the Committee’s first six decades. Cohen’s book *Not Free To Desist: The American Jewish Committee 1906-1966*, which was published in 1972, provides an account of the founding of the AJC and its activities up to the escalation of the Vietnam War. Her work is frequently cited by historians of American Jewry.⁶⁹ *Not Free to Desist*, according to historian Jonathan Sarna, “has become the standard history of the organization, and is well known to all students of American Jewish history.”⁷⁰

In her introduction, Cohen argues that the “For the first twenty-five years of its existence, the [American Jewish] Committee’s functions were limited, its scope narrow.”⁷¹ This study will show that this is not a fair assessment of the early history of the AJC. From the beginning, the AJC pursued a broad agenda. Further, the leaders of the AJC were innovative in the public

⁶⁹ Naomi H. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee 1906-1966* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972).

⁷⁰ Jonathan D. Sarna, “Goldstein, The Politics of Ethnic Pressure,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 83 (1993): 450.

⁷¹ Cohen, 19.

relations and juridical means that they employed in pursuit of their social and political objectives.

In *Not Free To Desist*, Cohen emphasizes the historical continuity between the public and political advocacy of the AJC and traditional forms of Jewish politics and diplomacy that were conducted throughout Jewish history by elite members of Diaspora communities, including leading members of the American Jewish community during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Cohen draws a parallel between the advocacy techniques employed by the AJC and the efforts of the *Hofjuden* or “court Jews” who formally represented Jewish communities at the Royal Courts of Early Modern Europe. She argues that the “creation of the American Jewish Committee did not significantly alter the *Hofjude* pattern of Jewish defense that the founders had traditionally pursued. Discreet pressure and backstairs diplomacy remained the trademark of the organization.”⁷² It is the argument of this dissertation, however, that this common and established assessment of the Committee’s early advocacy strategies fails to adequately appreciate that the projects undertaken or financed by the AJC that aimed to influence American public opinion and combat anti-Semitism represented a significant departure from the *Hofjude* model of public advocacy and Jewish politics. The scope of the AJC’s work during its first twenty-five years was neither limited nor narrow; their public relations work and public advocacy on behalf of the American Jewish community and world Jewry was substantial and, in some cases, innovative and unprecedented.

The AJC's public advocacy efforts between its founding in 1906 and the death of Louis Marshall in 1929 were new in the history of Jewish advocacy and Jewish communal leadership in the United States; their work was sophisticated, and, although they were influenced by

⁷² *Ibid.*, 25.

methods previously employed by Jewish leadership organizations in Europe, their approaches were innovative, including the way advocacy techniques employed by other Jewish organizations were tailored to be most effective in an American context. Their work was done with purpose, and inadequate attention has been given in the historiography, including in Professor Cohen's work, to the historical development and application of these techniques, and the impetus for their development.

Additionally, while the advocacy work of the AJC was not perfect or above criticism, it can be argued that some of the condemnations of the AJC in American Jewish historiography have been too strong or tainted by bias, particularly the criticisms found in what can be described as triumphalist historiography that, consciously or unconsciously, frames debates about the successes and failures of American Jewish communal leadership during the first half of the twentieth century from a Zionist perspective. These criticisms privilege the aims of the Zionist movement to restore or re-establish Jewish political sovereignty in the Middle East. For reasons that will be discussed below, the AJC and many of its first generation leaders were opposed to Jewish nationalism, and the organization itself is often described as being founded as an anti-Zionist group. As the AJC is perceived as being on the wrong side (or losing side) of the intra-communal debate over Zionism, it has been criticized for creating political and financial obstructions that arguably or potentially delayed the establishment of the State of Israel.

The assessment of the AJC should be more nuanced. As will be seen, the AJC's methods of advocacy were far more innovative than Cohen suggests, particularly in the organization's interplay between the use of the quiet lobbying that characterized Diaspora political traditions and the use of modern approaches to public relations and public advocacy. The organization continued to act as a lobby group and practice quiet diplomacy, but it did not eschew modern

public relations; rather, it was deliberate about when and how to cross the line between traditional strategies and methods and modern approaches to public and political advocacy. Significantly, the range of advocacy approaches deployed by the AJC throughout the twentieth century can be traced back to the work of the first generation of AJC leaders.

For example, in April 1913, only seven years after its founding, the AJC was informed that the American Humane Society was planning to organize a “nation-wide” protest against *shechita*, the Jewish ritual method for slaughtering animals.⁷³ The Committee’s leadership recognized that such a protest was a potential threat to the American Jewish community, singling out Jews as unnecessarily cruel to animals, and thereby casting aspersions against the entire community. In response, the AJC sought the cooperation of the British Board of Deputies, who had already had to contend with similar protests against kosher slaughtering practices in Britain.⁷⁴ The AJC also appointed a subcommittee made up of Judah Magnes, Cyrus Adler, Harry Friedenwald, and Solomon Solis-Cohen to study the subject further. The subcommittee was specifically empowered “to consult with distinguished American scientists, non-Jews, with a view to gathering expert opinions on the relative humanity of *shechita* as compared with other methods.”⁷⁵

The AJC understood the optics of the American Humane Society’s accusations; the leadership was anticipating an adverse public relations fallout from the publicity of these charges and moved to have a response ready to counter the Humane Society’s claims. Further, the leaders

⁷³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 20, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16455>.

⁷⁴ The British Board provided the Committee with a “private report” which they had commissioned that included “the opinions of eminent scientists, indicating that the Jewish method was at least not any more cruel than any other method of slaughter.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 20, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16455>.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

recognized that securing the expert opinion of non-Jewish scientists would lend their response greater credibility and forestall the general public's rejection of any arguments made by Jewish scientists as tainted by bias.

The AJC was prepared to respond to the accusations, but it made no attempt to pre-empt (or get ahead of) the Humane Society by releasing a public statement before the protest was announced. This forbearance was consistent with the AJC's established policy of refraining, whenever possible, from drawing unnecessary public attention and media scrutiny to the American Jewish community.⁷⁶ In the event, the Committee's patience was prescient; the Humane Society did not go forward with a nation-wide protest and there was no broader and potentially inflammatory public discussion of *shechita*.

Almost ten years later, however, the AJC again had to mobilize to counter accusations from the Humane Society that kosher slaughtering practices were cruel. The circumstances this time were significantly different. Instead of a protest campaign, the Humane Society had organized a Committee on Slaughter House Reform to study slaughtering practices across the country and prepare recommendations for new legislation regulating the meat and poultry packing industry. In connection with this effort, in 1922, the AJC received a request from the Humane Society to send a representative to the organization's fifth annual meeting that was being convened in St. Paul, Minnesota.⁷⁷

The mere fact of the request reveals the standing and reputation the AJC had established for itself. Although it was neither a democratic nor representative body, the Committee was

⁷⁶ There is also no record indicating that the organization attempted to quietly persuade the Humane Society against publically criticizing kosher slaughtering practices.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 11, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

sought out to speak for American Jewry.⁷⁸ The Humane Society wanted the AJC to provide an expert who could authoritatively describe kosher slaughtering practices to the attendees. The AJC did not ask a non-Jewish scientist to address the annual meeting. Louis Marshall asked Moses Hyamson, the Former Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, to attend the annual meeting on behalf of the Committee, and the AJC financed the Rabbi's trip.⁷⁹

Although he was not a scientist, Rabbi Hyamson's speech was a significant success. The AJC's Executive Committee reported that the address had been "well received" and that, following the meeting, Dr. Francis S. Rowley, the Chairman of the Committee on Slaughter House Reform, had made a public statement indicating that *shechita* would be exempt from any reform proposals and legislation supported by the Humane Society.⁸⁰ The AJC printed Hyamson's address in the organization's Annual Report and distributed it as a pamphlet.⁸¹

This discussion of the AJC's response to the Humane Society's allegations that kosher slaughtering practices were cruel has been included in the introduction to this study because the episode illustrates a number of quintessential features of the public advocacy of the Committee during the organization's early history. The organization's leaders and members kept themselves

⁷⁸ The Humane Society's overture to the AJC is also interesting given the subject matter, which was a question of religious practice. The AJC was not a religious body in the sense that it claimed no mandate over regulating religious practices (including Kosher butchering) or the training of religious leaders. From the perspective of optics and public relations, the AJC's involvement was consistent with the organization's aim to avoid the dissemination of information that could tarnish the reputation of American Jewry.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 11, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

⁸⁰ Rabbi Hyamson subsequently agreed to attend a conference between the Humane Society's Committee on Slaughter House Reform and the Institute of American Meat Packers, two of the main adversaries in the early-twentieth-century campaigns to reform slaughterhouse practices and food safety regulations in the United States. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 11, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

⁸¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 11, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

apprised of current events and trends in public opinion, and from a public relations perspective, they anticipated challenges and circumstances that could be exploited by anti-Semites (and supporters of immigration restrictions) to tarnish the reputation of their community. They avoided publicity and forbear responding to potential provocations while simultaneously preparing to act publically if necessary. They conducted research, gathering expert opinion, including experts who could not be easily disdained or dismissed by their opponents because of their religion.⁸² They used media to sway public opinion and support their arguments.

The description of how the AJC handled the threat posed by the Humane Society's claims about the cruelty of kosher slaughtering practices was also included here because it challenges some of the generalizations made about the Committee's advocacy during the early history of the organization. The AJC's direct response to the Humane Society's Committee on Slaughter House Reform was to accept the Humane Society's invitation to speak at a public meeting, which was open to members of the public and the press. Certainly the founders and early leaders of the AJC preferred quieter approaches, but they also recognized that public opinion could not be ignored and could be usefully martialled to further elements of the organization's agenda, including the Committee's efforts to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States.

While the AJC became more active and more visible after the Second World War, the Committee became involved in public relations and public advocacy from its founding in 1906. One of the purposes of this study is to illustrate the extent to which, beyond the lobbying of legislators and public officials, there has been historical continuity in the advocacy techniques employed by the AJC from the establishment of the organization, including the calculated use of

⁸² In this case, they chose a Rabbi to address the Humane Society but the AJC also gathered information from non-Jewish scientists that could be used to bolster the Rabbi's claims.

publicity, the gathering and dissemination of information, the funding of publications (or what could be described as the use of mass media), and the use of the American justice system.

This dissertation provides an account of the earliest efforts of the American Jewish Committee to influence American public opinion and advance its social and political agenda. It aims to show that, while the AJC certainly preferred and continued to practice the quiet diplomacy of traditional Jewish advocacy and communal defense, the organization was willing to employ more active and more public methods to further its agenda. The tactics the organization developed under Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall's leadership would become important facets of Jewish communal advocacy, and were the inspiration for subsequent public advocacy efforts in the United States for the remainder of the twentieth century.

In order to situate the analysis of the public advocacy strategies of the American Jewish Committee within the broader contexts of developments in modern Jewish communal leadership, and the history of the mass migration of Russian and Eastern European Jews to the United States, Chapters 2 and 3 of this study offer historiography and contextual background information. Chapter 2 examines the existing historiography relevant to this study, including analyses of nineteenth-century Jewish communal leadership organizations in a number of countries that were forerunners of the AJC.

One of the criticisms of the existing historiography and political science research on interest groups is that in privileging discussions of the goals of these organizations and the tactics they use to further their agendas, the context in which they act and which motivates them to act is neglected.⁸³ In light of this criticism, Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of the unique

⁸³ Marie Hojnacki, David C. Kimball, Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Barry, and Beth L. Leech, "Studying Organizational Advocacy and Influence: Reexamining Interest Group Research," *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (2012): 381.

constellation of factors in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America which led members of the American Jewish establishment to found the AJC, and describes how these factors would subsequently shape the Committee's approaches to public advocacy. When compared to the post-Second World War advocacy of prominent Civil Rights organizations, the AJC's efforts during the early history of the organization appear timid or passive and the organization has been criticized for privileging restraint and quiet lobbying over public protests and confrontations with anti-Semites. The AJC was certainly cautious but the organization's public advocacy was calculated to both prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States and foster a society in which Jews would be perceived and accepted as "insiders," as full participants and beneficiaries of American citizenship. The AJC's leaders' cautiousness must be understood in the context of the dynamics of race in early-twentieth century America, the ambiguous position of Jews in that racial dynamic, and the AJC's leadership's anxieties about the potential social and political consequences for acculturated American Jews of the mass arrival of hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews in the United States.

Chapters 4 through 8 include case studies of the diverse advocacy work that was carried out by the AJC between 1906 and 1930. Chapter 4 examines the AJC's responses to a number of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States. These case studies reveal that the AJC consistently emphasized minimizing publicity, but was willing on several occasions, or felt compelled, to act more publically in some circumstances in order to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. Chapter 4 includes examples in which the AJC declined to respond to anti-Semitic provocations, including incitement sponsored by the Ku Klux Klan, because the organization's leadership calculated that their intervention would only aggravate the situation.

Chapter 5 provides detailed case studies of two major incidents of anti-Semitism in the United States, the publication of Henry Ford's newspaper the *Dearborn Independent* and the blood libel accusation made against the small Jewish community in the town of Massena, New York. No study of Jewish public advocacy and communal leadership in the United States during the early-twentieth century would be complete without reference to these two high profile historical events. How the AJC responded to both provocations reveals a great deal about the organization's communal leadership and advocacy strategies and illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of the AJC's early approaches to communal defense and public advocacy.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the development of what can be described as the AJC's internal infrastructure to carry out its mandate as an advocacy organization. Considerable financial resources were devoted to building the Committee's information gathering and dissemination infrastructure between 1906 and 1930. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the leaders' deliberations about how to organize and finance the organization's activities. The dissemination of information to so-called "molders of opinion" was an important aspect of the AJC's public advocacy work. Chapter 7 includes an account of the substantial resources the organization devoted to compiling a service roll (or honor roll) which recorded the names of all Jews who fought for the United States in all branches of the American military during the First World War. Chapter 7 also contains case studies of the publications sponsored by the AJC. The AJC was a pioneer in the application of mass media as a public advocacy tool; however, between 1906 and 1930, the AJC relied on texts to reach the broadest possible audience. During the period covered by this study, books, articles, and pamphlets were the principal way the AJC sought to influence public opinion, and Chapter 7 examines in detail why the organization became involved in publishing and what the organization chose to publish.

Chapter 8 provides an account of the origins of the Committee's use of the American justice system to further its agenda. The AJC became much more active in using a litigation approach to public advocacy after the Second World War; however, between 1906 and 1930, legal recourses and juridical mechanisms were invoked by AJC leaders in the interest of either furthering the organization's social and political aims or curbing the spread of anti-Semitism in the United States. This chapter includes an account of the AJC's involvement in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*,⁸⁴ a landmark case about parents' rights to send their children to religious schools. The case was AJC's earliest venture into the arena of constitutional "test cases" and public interest and civil rights litigation before the United States Supreme Court.

Finally, Chapter 9 briefly examines how the public advocacy strategies and techniques developed by the first generation of AJC leaders influenced the organization's later advocacy work. Examinations of Committee policy statements and internal memorandums from the 1930s and 1940s reveal that the use of the public advocacy approaches employed by the founders of the organization continued to be mainstays of the AJC well into the twentieth century. The organization's later, more ambitious, and more well-known campaigns on behalf of American Jewry and other minority communities can be described as expansions or extensions of the advocacy strategies, efforts, and innovations of the organization's first generation of leaders

The fight against anti-Semitism, the forging of the "cult of synthesis," and the emergence of Jewish interest groups and political lobbying in the United States are important subjects in the historiography on American Jewry. A study of the public advocacy work of the AJC provides insight into all these areas. In essence, this dissertation is an account of the public relations and public advocacy work of one particular group of elite leaders from a minority community that,

⁸⁴ *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925).

especially during the period covered by this study, felt vulnerable and perhaps unwelcome in America. The AJC's public advocacy and public relations work illustrates the complexity of developing social cohesion in multicultural societies, the anxieties that spur leaders within minority communities to act, the intra-communal strife that can ensue as minority communities grow, acculturate, and stratify, and the breadth of public advocacy strategies that are available to minority and immigrant communities during the process of absorption, leading potentially to acculturation or fostering social acceptance.

Chapter 2: Historiography

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts and examines the existing historiography on Jewish communal leadership, describing the evolution of traditional Jewish communal defense towards the development of modern leadership and advocacy organizations, including the AJC. Part I describes historical Jewish leadership institutions and provides an analysis of nineteenth-century European Jewish communal leadership organizations that were forerunners of the American Jewish Committee. Some of the organizations mentioned in this section have not been adequately studied because the existing historiography and political science research on interest groups often privileges discussions of the goals of interests groups, and the tactics they use to further their agendas, without sufficiently considering the particular historical contexts in which these organizations form, and the motivations and historical forces that shape their activities. Part II provides an account of the historiography on the early history of the American Jewish Committee, and assesses and critiques the existing scholarship on the earliest public advocacy work of the organization.

Part I: The Evolution of Modern Jewish Leadership and Public Advocacy

In the Diaspora Jewish communities of Europe, Russia, North Africa, and the Middle East, there was a long established tradition of communal leadership and public advocacy carried out by individual members of those communities. Jewish communities were consistently vulnerable minority populations with limited civil and political rights; however, throughout the history of the Diaspora, there are numerous examples of Jews ascending to important positions in

government, gaining access to those in positions of power, or holding official status at court.⁸⁵ In his book *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, historian David Biale argues that, despite their historical status as a minority community, the survival of the Jews as a people suggests that at least some Jews must have possessed and exercised political power:

Without an appreciation of the political acumen of the Jews in earlier times, their long history can only appear to be a miraculous accomplishment. If we wish to understand Jewish survival from a historical rather than a theological point of view, however, we must look for explanations from the world of power and politics. Without some modicum of political strength and the ability to use it, the Jewish people would certainly have vanished. The history of the Jews is ‘abnormal’ due to their lack of territory for such a long period of time, but their response to this abnormal condition was always in fact political.⁸⁶

The social and political conditions of Diaspora communities varied considerably. Some were more insular and isolated than others. Some Jewish communities benefited from formal policies of tolerance and accommodation which, while denying them full equality and citizenship, and burdening them with higher rates of taxation than the majority of citizens, provided Jews with political status as a tolerated minority, and the privilege to self-govern their religious and internal affairs.

Regardless of their social and political conditions, Jewish communities had to work and live with their non-Jewish neighbors and establish relationships with government officials and other representatives of those in power. These interactions were often conducted or overseen by *shtadlanim*, individual Jews who would act as advocates and quasi-diplomats for their

⁸⁵ For a brief discussion of the history of prominent Jews holding important government or leadership positions in Muslim and Christian states, see David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 69-71. Indeed, Jewish history, including ancient Jewish history, abounds with examples of Jews ascending to important roles in the service of non-Jewish sovereigns, including: Mordechai in the court of Xerxes (Ahasuerus), Maimonides in the Courts of Al Qadi al Fadil and Saldin, and Don Issac Abrabanel in the Court of Alfonso V of Portugal.

⁸⁶ Biale, 6.

communities. The noun *shtadlan* has been variously translated as ambassador, pleader, advocate, intermediary, and intercessor. Translated literally, the term means “one who tries.”⁸⁷ Matthias Lehmann notes that the “role of the *shtadlan* (an ad hoc or even permanent representative of Jewish interests to the government) was common throughout the Jewish world.”⁸⁸ Throughout the Medieval era, *shtadlanim* served as an “intermediary between a clearly defined Jewish community and the gentile political authorities.”⁸⁹ These political representatives were usually prominent members of Jewish communities, who, because of their wealth or social position, had earned the confidence of their coreligionists and the esteem of the political leadership of the state. The *shtadlanim* lobbied those in power and intervened when they could to advocate for the interests of the Jewish community. In other instances, the work of the *shtadlanim* was less ambassadorial. Some merely acted as agents who were empowered by small local Jewish governing councils to deliver bribes to those in power.⁹⁰

By the Early Modern Era, the *shtadlan* approach to Jewish public advocacy had been formalized in the Royal Courts of central Europe. The *shtadlanim* of the Medieval Era evolved into the so called “*Hofjuden*” or “court Jews” of the Early Modern Era. According to Jacob Katz, the “social ascent of court Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been pointed to as an undoubtedly new feature of Jewish society at that time.”⁹¹ The *Hofjuden* served their sovereigns as representatives of their coreligionists and as important financial agents for both their own communities and for the host governments. “This type of Jew who acquires

⁸⁷ Simon Glustrom, *The Language of Judaism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 372.

⁸⁸ Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 12.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 30.

⁹¹ Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973), 28-29.

forbearance and standing by serving the politically powerful is no novelty in Jewish history. He is found,” Katz argues, “wherever Jews lived amongst Gentiles and relied on the protection of the mighty.”⁹² *Hofjuden* enjoyed official status at Court, access to those in positions of power, and privileges denied to both their coreligionists and the broader Christian majority.⁹³ They provided or arranged the financing their rulers needed to build armies and navies, to wage wars, and, in some cases, to consolidate their power towards absolutism.⁹⁴ As noted by Dean Philip Bell: “Although the position was rife with ambiguity, the court Jew could attain rank, honor, and respect; he was, however, always the servant of the sovereign. Court Jews...were not typically viewed as socially acceptable. They were, further, often easy targets for their enemies and their broad sphere of activity and influence often fostered hatred of an ever-impoverished population.”⁹⁵ Their power over the communities they ostensibly represented was also often resented by their coreligionists, who could not easily access their supposed representative because they were away at Court, and by other Royal officials, who were jealous over the privileges and access to the Sovereign enjoyed by Court Jews.⁹⁶

⁹² Katz, 29.

⁹³ For example, according to Dean Phillip Bell, “early modern German court Jews played important political and financial roles both within and beyond their communities. Court Jews were active in a variety of economic capacities: procurement, provisioning, industrial enterprises, the leasing of state monopolies, and some manufacturing monopolies.” See, Dean Phillip Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany: Memory, Power and Community* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 71. For a general description of the activities Court Jews, see: Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 101-118. Israel’s description of Court Jews is also cited by Bell. See: Bell, 71n. For a further discussion of the economic activities and special privileges enjoyed by Court Jews, see: Katz, 28-31.

⁹⁴ See: Selma Stern, *The Court Jew: a Contribution to the History of Absolutism in Europe* (New Brunswick: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950). There are also many examples of *Hofjuden* acting as important patrons of the arts and as art dealers. For a discussion of their roles as patrons of the arts in Early Modern Europe, and for some photographs of some works commissioned by Court Jews, see: Vivian B. Mann, “A Court Jew’s Silver Cup,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 43 (2008): 131-140.

⁹⁵ Bell, 71.

⁹⁶ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 372.

In her essay “Privileged Jews,” Hannah Arendt describes the *Hofjuden* as “exceptional Jews” in two ways.⁹⁷ In one sense, they were exceptional “because princes made exceptions in their favor.”⁹⁸ For reasons of both political expediency and financial necessity, European rulers granted a very small number of Jews extraordinary rights and unprecedented power both at Court and within the communities they formally represented. “It is true,” according to Arendt, “that behind the credit of every prince stood the credit of his hofjude.”⁹⁹ Secondly, the *Hofjuden* were exceptional individuals. They “owed their rise from the ghetto not only to favorable circumstances but also to their personal merits, their self-earned wealth, and their self-created social relations. They were particularly gifted, clever men, with a high degree of initiative.”¹⁰⁰

In exchange for their work as financial agents, the *Hofjuden* were empowered to directly petition their rulers on behalf of the communities they represented. As quasi-finance ministers, the scope of their work was, in many cases, substantial, international, and historically significant.¹⁰¹ However, as diplomats on behalf of their coreligionists, their diplomacy was restrained and of the modest and quiet variety: they did not seek to rally their people to particular causes; they did not lobby for dramatic changes or improvements; and they did not leverage their considerable financial influence to materially improve the social and political conditions of their coreligionists. When local grievances were brought before them, the *Hofjuden* intervened only when and where they felt they safely could. They were not classical liberals or agents of social and political progress for their communities; in fact, it can be argued that their service to their sovereigns perpetuated the oppression of their coreligionists and abetted the rise of absolutism in

⁹⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Privileged Jews,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8 (1946): 8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰¹ F.L. Carsten, “The Court Jews: A Prelude to Emancipation,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 3(1958): 140-156.

Europe. The *Hofjuden* offered their communities formal representation to those in power and a limited means of redress; however, during the era of the *Hofjuden*, the Jewish communities of Europe remained marginalized and oppressed.

Nineteenth-Century Jewish Communal Leadership Organizations

In contrast to the traditions and practices of the *shtadlanim* and the *Hofjuden*, modern Jewish leadership organizations developed far more expansive and activist approaches to public advocacy. The body of academic research on American Jewish history and Jewish communal leadership is substantial. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide more than a survey of the historical and academic material about the communal leadership of American Jewry, the relationships between the organizations that attempted to lead (or actually did lead) Jewish communities in America, and about how their efforts differed from the *shtadlanim* and the *Hofjuden*. It is, however, important to note at the outset that the establishment of the American Jewish Committee in the United States in 1906 was part of a pattern in the history of Jewish communal leadership or institutions around the world. Political Scientist David Truman's observation that that the "formation of associations tends to occur in waves" is accurate with respect to the development of modern Jewish leadership and communal defense organizations.¹⁰²

Throughout the nineteenth century, elite Jewish communal leadership organizations, such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the Centralverein

¹⁰² James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198. Wilson cites Truman's observation about the formation of organizations occurring in waves in order to make the point that the establishment of interest groups cannot be described as random and must be seen as linked to other developments, including, for example, the proliferation of new communications technologies. For more on the periods that saw significant growth of interest groups and other "membership associations" in the United States, see: Jocelyn Elise Crowley and Theda Skocpol, "The Rush to Organize: Explaining Associational Formation in the United States, 1860s-1920s," *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (October, 2001): 814-816. See also, Gerald Gamm and Robert D. Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29 (1999): 511-557.

deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, were established in a number of European countries. As discussed further below, it is significant to note that these organizations engaged in forms of public advocacy. The leaders of the AJC imitated or adapted the earlier advocacy work of these European organizations to further the Committee's social and political agenda in the United States. In some cases, the Committee developed new and more intensive approaches to public advocacy. For the purpose of this study, it may be emphasised that, in many ways, European Jewish organizations and their activities were precursors for the AJC and the Committee's approaches to public advocacy and public relations. Accordingly, an examination of some of these organizations and some of the existing scholarship on these groups has been included in this study to illustrate how the public advocacy strategies and techniques employed by the AJC in the United States were both influenced by the earlier efforts of Jewish communal organizations in Europe and, in some cases, represent a substantial expansion upon those efforts.

The leaders of the AJC were very alert to what was happening in Jewish communities around the world. The AJC's public relations projects aimed to utilize mass media and political and judicial processes to further the interests of the American Jewish community and, more broadly, to advance the cause of universal human rights and civil liberties for Jews and other minority groups in the United States, and around the world. While the AJC's wealthy and politically connected leaders and members continued to lobby for the interests of the American Jewish community and world Jewry, these efforts were now coupled with attempts to inform and edify the broader American public, and then appeal to that public for support. The case studies discussed in this study illustrate that the AJC's efforts were a significant historical departure from the far less activist *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* traditions of Jewish public advocacy.

The founding of the AJC can be seen as part of nineteenth-century trends in the evolution of Jewish communal leadership, the growing participation of emancipated European Jewries in the public sphere, and the advent of Jewish journalism. “The era of the court Jew was followed by that of Jewish emancipation.”¹⁰³ The outbreak of political revolutions, the rise of modern nation states, increasing Jewish economic integration, the spread of Enlightenment liberal individualism, and Jewish activism aimed at securing civil equality profoundly shaped nineteenth-century Jewish communal leadership. In her book *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero*, Abigail Green notes that the nineteenth century, which witnessed the formal or legal emancipation of Jewish populations across Western and Central Europe, was a formative period for Jewish political activism. “By the 1860s,” Green argues, “Jewish activism was beginning to come of age.”¹⁰⁴ With emancipation and acculturation, as well as greater exposure through the Jewish press to domestic discriminatory practices and the oppression of their coreligionists in other countries, nineteenth-century Western and Central European Jews, particularly acculturated, wealthy elites, became increasingly politically conscious and active. It must be noted that Eastern European and Russian Jews also became more politically active during the nineteenth century; however, in comparison to their Western and Central European coreligionists, the Jews of Eastern Europe and Russia were significantly more oppressed. After their emancipation, many Western European Jewish leaders emphasised efforts to accelerate acculturation as a step towards broader social acceptance by the majority. In Russia and Eastern Europe, ongoing oppression and often violent persecution resulted in Jewish activism and

¹⁰³ Katz, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 300. Green’s biography of Montefiore provides numerous examples of both quiet diplomacy and more public efforts to achieve social and political objectives. She notes, for example, that “Montefiore’s extensive travels, his political missions, and his fund-raising campaigns provided a critical focus for the emerging Jewish public—although their impact depended above all on coverage in the Jewish Press.” See: Green, 299-300.

communal leadership with different priorities. Although there were certainly Eastern European and Russian Jewish leaders who believed that acculturation would improve social, political, and economic conditions, in comparison to Jewish activism in Western and Central Europe, in general, Jewish activism in the East was either more radical (communist, socialist, and Zionist) or more religious, such as the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, and therefore privileged separation over acculturation.

The leadership aspirations of wealthy elites among recently emancipated European Jewish populations to create national communal organizations, as well as the proliferation of the Jewish press, were crucial nineteenth-century historical developments that provided alternatives to reliance on *shtadlanim* and *Hofjuden*. Before the establishment of organizations such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Jewish communal leadership can fairly be described as a matter of local concern. Jewish communities across Europe had small governing councils, known as *kehilot*, which oversaw local, internal matters and appointed *shtadlanim* to liaise with government leaders or conduct commercial negotiations with the majority population. With the founding of communal organizations with larger leadership ambitions and political goals, and significantly greater financial resources, Jewish political activism entered a new, modern phase.

The emergence of Jewish journalism also ushered in new approaches to public advocacy. The dramatic growth of Jewish journalism during the nineteenth century has been recognized as fundamental to the development of Jewish political activism, including the emergence of the modern Zionist movement. As historian Jonathan Frankel has noted, “in 1838 there was only one

Jewish journal in the world that carried a substantial quantity of news.”¹⁰⁵ Less than fifty years later, there were more than one hundred.¹⁰⁶ As noted by Frankel, “by linking Jews around the world and defining their common concerns, the Jewish press played a primary role in the evolution of a modern form of Jewish solidarity and ethnic identity.”¹⁰⁷

Nineteenth-century Jewish political activism, in this period before the rise of the modern Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel, was in a nascent but nevertheless dynamic phase. Numerous Jewish organizations were founded across Western and Central Europe that claimed to speak for their communities, and these organizations began to engage in different forms of advocacy. As noted above, although the AJC was not founded until 1906, the creation of the Committee can be viewed as part of nineteenth-century trends in European Jewish political activism. Some of the most prominent founders of the AJC were born in Europe, and would have been familiar with these organizations and their advocacy. Once in America, through the Jewish press and through personal correspondence, the American leaders were able to remain informed of the ambitions and activities of Jewish communal organizations in Europe.

Nineteenth-century Jewish leadership and political organizations were numerous and diverse in terms of their composition, constituencies, ideologies, goals, financial resources, political connections, and tactics.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, they were significantly fragmented.¹⁰⁹ Some of these

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Frankel, “Jewish politics and the press: The ‘reception’ of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (1860),” *Jewish History* 14 (2000): 30.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 31. Also quoted in: Jonathan Frankel, “Jewish politics and the press: The ‘reception’ of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (1860),” *Jewish History* 14 (2000): 29-30. For a further example, Abigail Green argues that Moses Montefiore’s advocacy “reflected different facets of this emerging Jewish solidarity; the unifying response to news about international disasters, the emphasis on humanitarian universalism, the complex interplay between the Jewish press and Jewish leaders on the one hand and international politics and communal realities on the other.” See: Green, 300.

¹⁰⁸ The nineteenth century witnessed both the emancipation of Jewish communities across Western and Central Europe and the emergence of new forms of communal leadership from within these now enfranchised minority populations. “From the second half of the nineteenth century,” historian Evyatar Friesel argues, “Jews in Western

Jewish organizations were class-based, that is, tailored to suit the interests of, for example, wealthy acculturated elites or Jewish workers. Accordingly, some organizations had significantly greater financial resources and political connections than others. Among the new leadership organizations, there were some that sought to present themselves as official intermediaries between the state and the Jewish community, and some, such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews, were indeed given quasi-regulatory functions to issue marriage licences, or supply permits to allow Jewish-owned businesses to remain open on Sundays.¹¹⁰ Some organizations wanted to be accepted by both their coreligionists and the broader majority as the voice or spokesperson of the Jewish community. Some organizations favored cooperation and coordination between Jewish communities in different countries, while others, conscious of the potential repercussions of any perception of “dual loyalty” among recently emancipated Jewries, sought to minimize the appearance of international ties between Jewish communities. Some organizations favored acculturation while others championed Jewish cultural particularism and legally protected minority rights, or campaigned for different forms of Jewish political sovereignty.¹¹¹ The nineteenth century also saw the beginnings of nationalistic organizations and the development of the modern Zionist movement.¹¹² Some of the new organizations were composed of Jews, but reflected ideological as opposed to nationalist ambitions, such as groups of Jewish socialists.

Europe were adapting to the social ways and cultural norms of the general environment—were integrating in general society. At the same time they began to formulate new concepts and to create new organizational structures that expressed Jewish interests and concerns.” See: Evyatar Friesel, “The Centralverein and the American Jewish Committee: A Comparative Study,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 36 (1991): 97.

¹⁰⁹ In contemporary Jewish political activism, support for the State of Israel is a coalescing issue and most organizations include constituencies from across Jewish denominations and different socio-economic classes.

¹¹⁰ Aubrey Newman, “The Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760 to the present,” *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 25 (2005): 81.

¹¹¹ “[T]he mid-nineteenth century,” according to Jonathan Frankel, “is often regarded as a high point in the development of the integrationist ideology among the modernizing sections of European Jewry.” See: Frankel, 29.

¹¹² Meir Seidler, “Zionism’s Conflicting Founding Designs and Their Ideological Impact,” *Israel Studies* 17 (2012): 176-190.

Others were founded as religious bodies to resolve ecclesiastical disputes and coordinate relations between congregations. The denominational organizations were composed of religious leaders who were in many cases highly esteemed by their congregations, and, in their sermons and work as community organizers, they also engaged in activities that could be described as political.

The Nature of the American Jewish Committee and the Evolution of Modern Jewish Leadership and Public Advocacy

What did the American Jewish Committee imitate, reject, and adapt from the beliefs and advocacy tactics of nineteenth-century Jewish organizations such as the Centralverein, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Baron de Hirsh Fund, the Jewish Colonization Association, and B'nai B'rith, among others? In his article "The Centralverein and the American Jewish Committee: A Comparative Study,"¹¹³ Evyatar Friesel employs a comparative approach to analyze how both the AJC and Centralverein responded to the growth of Jewish immigrant populations, their leaders' conceptions of modern Jewish identity, the evolution of their organizational structure, and their leaders' attitudes towards Zionism. Friesel concludes that the AJC and Centralverein "should be considered as the outstanding organizations of their type, in modern Jewish history. Both attained a level of ideological and organizational development much higher than that of comparable Jewish associations, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* included."¹¹⁴ By applying a compare and contrast analysis similar to Friesel's to a survey of nineteenth-century Jewish organizations,¹¹⁵ it is

¹¹³ Friesel, 97-125.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹¹⁵ The surveys of nineteenth century Jewish organizations included below are not intended to be comprehensive. Each organization's work has been substantial, and could be, and in many cases has been, the subject of thorough

possible to illustrate the range of the organizational structures, ideological beliefs, and advocacy tactics of these groups and their influence on the American Jewish Committee.¹¹⁶ A brief description of the nature, attributes, and characteristics of the AJC has been included below to provide a point of reference

The AJC, particularly during its first twenty-five years, was an elite leadership organization that, by design, was composed of few members and led by a small group of extraordinarily successful and wealthy men. In the historiography on American Jewry, the AJC is often identified with the early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment. As Friesel notes, the AJC “had no rank-and-file,” its leadership were “self-appointed spokesmen for Jewish causes.”¹¹⁷ The AJC did not aspire to be a democratic organization; the Committee purported to be “representative body” in the sense that its leadership and membership were the most qualified, most politically connected, and most financially capable of representing or speaking for the

study. In various forms, and using different rhetoric to describe their aims, these organizations were engaged in advocacy to defend Jews from ongoing persecution or establish conditions in which Jews would be free from the political and social disabilities that shaped Jewish life during the Medieval and Early Modern Eras in Europe. In *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914*, Ismar Schorsch, argues that: “The historical significance of the defense effort is that it took place at all.” See: Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 204. Under different circumstances, with different resources, and in pursuit of different goals, these organizations made the effort.

¹¹⁶ The analysis has been framed using a number of questions as a means of comparing the AJC with nineteenth-century Jewish communal organizations that can fairly be described as forerunners to the AJC. The questions employed in this analysis focus on the composition, ideologies, and approaches to advocacy of the various organizations. The questions include: At the associational or institutional level, what were the sources of funding of the organization? Was it financed by a small, wealthy cohort or did it rely on populist fundraising from a broader base? Can the organization be described as an “establishment group” connected to elites or was it a “representative body” with democratic legitimacy whose authority stemmed from its popularity among the majority of Jews? Was the organization controlled by a small number (perhaps as few as one of two key leaders) or did it have a corporate, hierarchical structure? At the ideological level, what were the fundamental principles of the Jewish organization? What were its goals? Were the goals religious or philanthropic in nature or did they have a political agenda? What was the organization’s prescription for improving the social, political, and economic position of Jews? Was the organization in favor of working to incrementally improve the situation for Jews through campaigning for local reforms or did it favor more radical solutions, such as political revolution, mass emigration, or the establishment of an independent Jewish state? In terms of approaches to public advocacy, what strategies did the organization develop or apply to achieve its goals? Did it see itself as philanthropic or was it comfortable describing its work as political advocacy? Did it favor or rely on quiet diplomacy? What was the organization’s attitude towards the press? If it engaged in forms of public advocacy, what techniques was it willing to employ? Was it willing to use publicity, propaganda, mass demonstrations, information gathering, and juridical means to achieve its objectives?

¹¹⁷ Friesel, 98.

American Jewish community. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, it can be argued the Committee was founded in order to avert the establishment of a democratic Jewish communal leadership body in the United States.

As for leadership, although the AJC had an Executive Committee to direct its operations and small advisory councils organized according to the geographic distribution of American Jewry, several leaders, most notably Louis Marshall , Cyrus Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and Jacob Schiff, were empowered (sometimes after the fact) to act in the name of the organization. Historian Deborah Dash Moore describes Adler, Marshal, and Schiff as “an oligarchic triumvirate” that used the AJC as an “organization framework for activities they had previously pursued as individuals.”¹¹⁸

The AJC did not have a broad base of support among American Jewry from which to fundraise. Although it did devote significant resources to fundraising, during the period covered by this study, the AJC relied on donations from a small number of its leaders and members in order to finance its operations and its public advocacy projects. The Committee’s “annual income averaged about \$8,000.00 and never exceeded \$10,000.00 prior to World War I.”¹¹⁹ However, as will be discussed in Chapter 7 of this study, some of the wealthiest leaders of the AJC, including Jacob Schiff and Julius Rosenwald, supplemented the AJC’s budget for public advocacy work by personally financing a number of projects, including the publication of books and the distribution of pamphlets.

The AJC was founded as a political organization. Although it was established to lead and speak for the American Jewish community, its ambitions did not include attaining a leadership

¹¹⁸ Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 94.

¹¹⁹ Nathan Schachner, *The Price of Liberty: A History of the American Jewish Committee* (New York: The American Jewish Committee and American Book-Stratford Press, 1948), 29.

position over Jewish denominational or congregational bodies. It must be noted, however, that many of the AJC's members were ardent supporters of Reform movement Judaism. They favored the Reform movement's significantly less rigid ritualism and emphasis on acculturation as a means of securing social acceptance for American Jews by the Christian majority.

The AJC's leaders had strong beliefs about the rights of Jews to feel secure, and fully participate in American society, politics, and the economy, but they were gradualists and pragmatists. They wanted to see improvements and effectively exercise political influence, but they were cautious men, not radicals. In terms of defining the organization's political orientation, it is fair to describe the AJC as liberal. While it purported to represent and speak for the American Jewish community, the AJC's public advocacy in the United States concentrated on preserving or enhancing the rights of Jews as individuals, as American citizens with constitutionally protected rights. As will be discussed further below, in general, the Committee's leaders avoided any action that might be perceived as politically radical or might foster the impression that Jews were radicals or, as a group, fundamentally different from Caucasian, Christian Americans. Accordingly, the AJC preferred quiet approaches in its advocacy work.¹²⁰ With the notable exception of the organization's campaign to build public support for the abrogation of the 1832 Russo-America Treaty, the AJC consistently counselled against the use of mass demonstrations or public confrontations. Quiet diplomacy and the fostering of "back channel" contacts would always remain a central component of the Committee's approach to advocacy and communal defense; however, as the case studies included in this study will show, the AJC was willing, from the beginning, to engage in more public and more active forms of

¹²⁰ "At the beginning," Friesel argues, the AJC "shunned publicity, or open action with the participation of the larger Jewish public. They preferred quiet efforts behind the scenes, and looked suspiciously upon the Jewish 'masses,' the newcomers, as they saw them." See: Friesel, 98.

political advocacy, and was willing to use mass media, constitutional courts, and the mainstream and Jewish press to further its social and political agenda. The organization engaged in use of publicity, propaganda, information gathering, and juridical means to achieve its objectives. The AJC's early public advocacy efforts have been either overlooked by historians of American Jewry and Jewish communal leadership, or unfairly characterized as merely the work of modern, extraordinarily wealthy *shtadlanim*. The AJC's diverse public advocacy efforts during the early-twentieth century were calculated and sophisticated attempts to influence public opinion. These activities can be seen as part of the maturation of Jewish political activism and public advocacy during the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, and can be described as significant departures from traditional approaches to Jewish public advocacy and communal defense.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and Sir Moses Montefiore

The Board of Deputies of British Jews (“The Board”) was founded in London in 1760, and was originally called the London Board of Deputies. It was not until the nineteenth century, and the drawn-out, piecemeal campaign towards full civic equality for British Jews, that the organization matured into a communal leadership organization with broader political ambitions.¹²¹ At its inception, the Board was composed of seven members, and it was not a representative body or democratic organization; the Board was composed of delegates representing Jewish congregations and, initially, was primarily concerned with fostering communal ties between older Sephardic congregations and the newly arrived and growing

¹²¹ For a brief analysis of the gradual dismantling of Jewish political disabilities in Britain, see: Michael Clark, *Albion and Jerusalem: The Anglo-Jewish Community in the Post-Emancipation Era 1858-1887* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9-15. According to Clark, “Equality came to the Jews of Britain in a piecemeal fashion. The process lacked a tutelary logic but was certainly characterized by gradual reform over a period of nearly thirty years: 1830-58.” See, Clark, 11. The campaign for the emancipation of British Jewry culminated with the admission of professing (non-baptized) Jews to Parliament in 1858.

Ashkenazi community. With the arrival of Reform Judaism in Britain, the Board became an important forum for establishing relationships and fostering social cohesion between older, traditional or Orthodox congregations and new Reform movement synagogues.

Like the AJC, the Board sought to claim a leadership position within its Jewish community.¹²² Also like the AJC, the Board was linked to the Jewish establishment, which, in the United Kingdom, was composed of extraordinarily wealthy merchants and bankers and Sephardic Jewish families who arrived before the substantial influx of impoverished Eastern European and Russian Jews to Britain during the nineteenth century. The Board was criticized along similar lines to the AJC for being an elite and undemocratic organization.¹²³ Its leaders were wealthy, politically connected, and acculturated Jews. Eventually, rival Jewish organizations emerged in the United Kingdom that challenged the leadership position of the Board, including the Anglo-Jewish Association, which had strong ties to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. The AJC experienced similar rivalries, most notably with the American Jewish Congress.¹²⁴

There is no formal or complete history of the Board.¹²⁵ The absence of a thorough historical account is surprising, firstly, because the organization is “currently regarded as the

¹²² According to Newman: “Throughout its history, the Board has always tried to insist on its role as the only official intermediary between the British Jewish community and the state.” See: Newman, 86.

¹²³ Clark, 114.

¹²⁴ The AJC also had rivalries and disagreements with the Federation of American Zionists (later called the Zionist Organization of America) and, at times, B’nai B’rith and its affiliate the Anti-Defamation League.

¹²⁵ In his article “The Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760 to the present,” Aubrey Newman states that “There is no formal history of the Board of Deputies,” although Newman notes that “Charles H. Emanuel, a former Secretary of the Board, published a work, *A Century and a Half of Jewish History* that was “extracted from the minute books” of the Board. See: Newman, 81n. In addition to his article, Newman published “a brief survey” of the Board in 1987. See: Aubrey Newman, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760-1985* (London: Vallentine Mitchell Publishers, 1987). In his *Albion and Jerusalem: The Anglo-Jewish Community in the Post-Emancipation Era 1858-1887*, Michael Clark notes that the Board has “virtually escaped historical examination. The historiography of the institution is almost non-existent.” See: Clark, 111. The establishment of the Board and some of its work are regularly cited in histories of British Jewry. See, for example, Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002). Endelman’s book contains material on the Boards

representative body for Jews in Britain,” and secondly, because for half the nineteenth century, Sir Moses Montefiore was the organization’s leading figure.¹²⁶ Green asserts that “Outside of Jewish circles,” Montefiore “is now a forgotten figure.”¹²⁷ However, during the nineteenth century, he “was one of the first truly global celebrities.”¹²⁸ Montefiore, who became one of the wealthiest men in Britain through his work as a stockbroker, assumed the Presidency of the Board in 1835, and, “until his final retirement in 1874, he virtually personified the Board.”¹²⁹

The recent publication of Abigail Green’s biography of Moses Montefiore includes a thorough account of his philanthropy and leadership of the Board. Green’s work reveals that both as a private individual and in his capacity as President of the Board, Montefiore engaged in public advocacy that aimed to shape public opinion in Britain, the British Empire, and globally.¹³⁰ The Board under his leadership applied a number of different advocacy tactics including quiet diplomacy, philanthropy, and public relations to achieve its objectives. For example, to secure full participation for Jews in the British political system, including the right to sit as Members of Parliament without first being baptized, the Board employed quiet diplomacy. This effort is often referred to as the campaign for “Jewish emancipation” in Britain, and it was

efforts to combat anti-Semitism, its role in the Jewish emancipation movement, advocacy on behalf of Jews in foreign countries, and the organization’s attitudes towards Reform Judaism and Zionism. The organization also appears in accounts of Victorian Era religious reform and in studies of the development of cultural pluralism in Britain. See, for example, David C. Itzkowitz “Cultural Pluralism and the Board of Deputies of British Jews,” in *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honor of R.K. Webb*, ed. R.W. Davis and R.J. Helmstadter (New York: Routledge, 1992), 85-101.

¹²⁶ Newman, 81.

¹²⁷ Green, 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ Newman argues that “In many ways it could be argued that it was only in 1835 that the Board really came into existence.” See: Newman, 83.

¹³⁰ Green argues that Montefiore “played a critical role in the crystallization of modern Jewish consciousness: bridging the gap between the informal influence exerted by eighteenth-century Jewish financiers...and the more formalized lobbying efforts of international Jewish organizations and other groups in our own era.” See: Green, 2.

conducted discretely.¹³¹ In this campaign and in others, Montefiore, and other Anglo-Jewish leaders such as Nathan Rothschild and Isaac Goldsmid, used the less confrontational approaches of writing private letters to influential figures and lobbying for reforms by gathering signatures for petitions to important political leaders and British institutions, including the House of Lords.¹³²

On domestic matters and campaigns for reforms within Britain, Montefiore and the Board preferred less confrontational approaches. For external matters outside the British Empire, however, Montefiore was willing to engage in much more public forms of advocacy. Montefiore is perhaps most well-known for his pilgrimages seeking relief and redress for persecuted Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa. The pilgrimages, which were calculated attempts to garner media attention, made him internationally famous, and a hero to nineteenth-century Jews.¹³³

Montefiore and the Board were conscious of the optics of their philanthropy and advocacy work, and were judicious about the imagery and language they used to frame their

¹³¹ According to Green, the campaign “was conducted largely behind closed doors—at meetings held in private houses and at political dinner parties” where Montefiore, and other leaders of British Jewry, including Nathan Rothschild and Isaac Goldsmid, “hobnobbed with the great and the good.” See: Green, 88.

¹³² For examples, see: Green, 91 and 304.

¹³³ For example, Montefiore travelled to the Ottoman Empire in 1840 in response to the so-called “Damascus Affair,” which resulted from an allegation of blood libel against the Jewish community of Damascus. After the disappearance, and assumed murder, of a Capuchin Friar, more than a dozen Jews were imprisoned and tortured in Syria. Montefiore, as part of a delegation of Jewish notables that included Louis Loewe and Adolphe Crémieux of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, had separate audiences with Mohamed Ali Pasha and Sultan Abdülmecid I. The incident received a great deal of attention in the British and international press and the delegation were able to secure the release of the surviving prisoners (several had died while incarcerated) and a decree from the Sultan refuting the blood libel charge against the Jews. In 1858, Montefiore made a similar pilgrimage to Rome in response to the “Mortara Affair;” which involved the kidnapping by Papal authorities of an Italian Jewish child believed to have been secretly baptised by his Catholic au pair. He also travelled to Morocco in 1864 and Romania in 1867, in response to the outbreak of pogroms against the Jewish communities of those countries. Montefiore is also considered a crucially important figure in the growth and agricultural and economic modernization of the Jewish community of Palestine during the nineteenth century. Montefiore made seven pilgrimages to Palestine during his life, the last at age 91, and these voyages garnered the attention of both the Jewish and mainstream press.

reform proposals and relief work.¹³⁴ They were innovative in terms of collaborating with other interest groups in order to further their objectives. The Board sought to build goodwill between Anglo-Jewish leaders and other philanthropists and social and political activists to enable them to frame their advocacy as important for the British Empire, and civilization in general, as opposed to narrowly significant for only British Jews or Jews living outside the British Empire.¹³⁵ For example, Montefiore cultivated a strong relationship with leaders of the antislavery movement in Britain. According to Green, “antislavery was the middle-class cause par excellence” and Montefiore became involved in the ultimately successful antislavery campaign out of personal conviction but also to build alliances with other reformers.¹³⁶

In linking their efforts to improve the situation for Jews with broader efforts at social and political reform, Montefiore and the Board exhibited a tendency in nineteenth-century Jewish activism that would continue well into the twentieth century, and remains a feature of contemporary Jewish advocacy. This approach emphasises influencing social and political change without drawing attention to Jewish interests in the proposed reforms, or the Jewish leaders involved in the campaign and the fundraising to bring about those reforms. As will be seen in the case studies included in this study, the AJC also practiced this form of indirect advocacy. For example, the leaders of the AJC recognized that the social and political position of American Jews was tied to the social and political conditions of all minority populations in the

¹³⁴ Green states that: “Sensitive to the universalist currents in Victorian culture, [Anglo-Jewish leaders] appreciated the need to present international Jewish relief as part of Britain’s wider civilizing mission.” See: Green, 315.

¹³⁵ Green suggests that Montefiore’s “ties with Quakers, Evangelicals, antislavery campaigners, and Christian Zionists helped to place the cause of Jewish relief at the heart of a wider humanitarian campaign for civil rights and religious liberty.” See: Green, 6.

¹³⁶ The most dramatic example of Montefiore’s efforts to build these close ties was the so-called “emancipation loan.” In 1835, Montefiore and Nathan Rothschild “underwrote the huge sum of £15 million, taken on relatively unfavorable terms. This was bad business but very good politics, because the money was intended to underwrite the final absolution of slavery in the British Empire.” See Green, 102-103. Green argues that “the emancipation loan was an act of practical and symbolic importance” because it helped finance the anti-slavery movement and reinforced the relationship between Jewish and gentile activists in Britain. See: Green, 103.

United States. With this in mind, they contributed financially to the advocacy work of non-Jewish interest groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and intervened in constitutional litigation concerning the rights of minority communities in which Jews were not involved but stood to benefit from a ruling that clarified or reinforced the civil rights of minorities in the United States.

Another commonality that the Board shares with other nineteenth-century Jewish organizations, as well as with the AJC, was a preoccupation with the collection of information, particularly statistical information that could be cited to dispel allegations made against the Jewish community.¹³⁷ The acceptance of this responsibility was part of a public advocacy strategy that anticipated that future problems or slights against British Jews could be countered with the dissemination of clear and reliable information to molders of public opinion, including political leaders and the mainstream press.¹³⁸

In common with other European Jewish organizations, the Board was concerned about education, including that provided to Jewish immigrants and their children.¹³⁹ The Board was active in efforts to expand and reform the curriculum of schools, and Montefiore was a governor and significant fundraiser for the Jews' Free School in London. The philanthropy to improve education was noble, but it was also shaped by the concerns of acculturated Jews in Britain that the growing population of Jewish immigrants, with their alien appearance, strange customs, and crowded living conditions, would tarnish the social status and reputation of Anglo-Jewish elites.

¹³⁷ Newman notes that “the Board made itself responsible for the collection of a wide range of statistical information.” See: Newman, 84.

¹³⁸ The importance placed on the gathering of information also extended to the international philanthropy of the Board under Montefiore’s leadership. For example, on his own initiative, and at his own expense, Montefiore funded a “comprehensive survey of the Jewish population” of Alexandria. This was done in order to identify which social problems were in need of the greatest attention and thus maximize the impact of international Jewish philanthropy. See: Green, 152.

¹³⁹ Green argues that Montefiore “would have understood the importance of education in preparing immigrants for British life.” See: Green, 152.

Education was emphasised in Anglo-Jewish philanthropy in order to encourage or enhance the pace of acculturation.

Montefiore and the Board were involved in efforts to influence the attitudes of the general public, and Montefiore consistently demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of publicity and media relations. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the Board used the press and publications to influence public opinion and further its social and political agenda. The Board's careful management of optics and efforts to garner positive coverage in the mainstream press reflected the fact that, during the nineteenth century, text and photographs were really the only forms of mass media. The organization recognized the potential utility of the mainstream press in any effort to reach and provide information to a broad audience. The Board also subsidized the publication of books and pamphlets that were intended for a gentile audience, including refutations of anti-Semitic charges, such as the alleged use of Christian blood in Jewish rituals.¹⁴⁰

The Board's leadership within Anglo-Jewry was eventually challenged by the emergence of rival Jewish groups in Britain, and the Board did resist its displacement by other leadership organizations. At the international level, however, the Board demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with other groups and coordinate its relief work with other Jewish organizations in order to maximize the efficiency of these efforts.¹⁴¹ In contrast to Jewish organizations such as the Zionists and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Board did not seek to claim an international leadership role over a unified world Jewry. The Board was interested in providing

¹⁴⁰ For a brief discussion of a refutation the Board subsidized repudiating the charge that "the shedding of non-Jewish maiden blood is considered among the Jews a sacred act," see: Green, 410.

¹⁴¹ This is not to say that the relationships between the leaders of the Board and the leaders of other Jewish communal organization were always harmonious, including the relationship between Montefiore and Adolphe Crémieux of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. See: Green, 154.

relief to impoverished or oppressed Jewish communities, but it conceived of this work as philanthropy as opposed to political advocacy. In its philanthropy, the Board built close ties, and was willing to collaborate with Jewish leaders in other European countries, including Adolphe Crémieux of the Alliance Israélite Universelle.¹⁴²

The Board's attitude towards Zionism and relationship with Jewish nationalists was more nuanced than that of the AJC. Under Montefiore's leadership, there was considerable advocacy concerning the Jewish community of Palestine, but that advocacy occurred before the organization of Zionism into an international movement. With some notable exceptions, members of the early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment were hostile towards the aspirations of the Zionist movement because they viewed Zionism as either a religious fad or as a threat to the reputation of American Jews. The American Jewish establishment feared Zionism because it could lead to allegations of dual loyalty. Anglo-Jewish leaders were also concerned about how Jewish nationalism might impact the reputation of British Jewry, but the imperial ambitions of the British Empire and the religious fervor of Victorian Era evangelicals made it possible for Anglo-Jewish leaders to safely and actively engage in efforts to support the Jewish population of Palestine and encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine.¹⁴³ The Board and Montefiore were, therefore, able to openly engage in philanthropy on behalf of the Jewish community of Palestine.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Crémieux was present at the meeting in London where the leaders of the Board discussed how to respond to the Damascus affair. See: Green, 133.

¹⁴³ Arguably the circumstances in mid-nineteenth-century Britain were more favorable to the ultimate goals of the later-founded Zionist movement than those of early-twentieth-century America. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the rise of Christian Zionism in Britain, and efforts to settle Eastern European and Russian Jews in the Ottoman Empire were seen by some British politicians as in the interest of British foreign policy because the growth of a European population in the Middle East could be used as a pretext to undermine Ottoman control over the region.

¹⁴⁴ Montefiore's substantial philanthropy was crucially important to building both the Jewish population of Palestine and the ability of that population to sustain itself.

Although it was founded in the eighteenth century, the Board was a very important nineteenth-century Jewish organization. Under Montefiore's leadership, the Board engaged in a wide variety of advocacy, including quiet diplomacy, but also calculated efforts to garner media attention and sway public opinion through the collection and dissemination of information. The Board's work illustrates Green's assessment that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, at least in Britain, Jewish activism had "come of age" and progressed well beyond the traditional communal defense approaches used by generations of Jewish leaders in the Diaspora.¹⁴⁵

The Alliance Israélite Universelle and its Affiliates

Jewish emancipation in France was a development connected to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. Emancipation was realized through an act of the Constituent Assembly, passed on September 27, 1791. The act formally extended the equal rights promised in the Declaration of Rights and Man and Citizen to French Jews; nevertheless, disabilities remained in the post-Revolutionary Era and well into the nineteenth century. The emancipation edict was the first of its kind in Western Europe, but it would take additional advocacy campaigns, carried out by both French Jews and sympathetic allies, to bring about full civic equality for French Jewry.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Green, 300.

¹⁴⁶ For an account of the gradual dismantling of Jewish disabilities in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century France, see: Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 17-35. While the French Revolution brought about legal (or technical) emancipation, the antireligious policies and anticlericalism of the Revolutionaries were sometimes directed against French Jews who maintained Orthodox customs. According to Hyman, the "primary target" of the anticlericalism of the Revolution was the Catholic Church. "Although the revolutionaries did not direct their antireligious policies against synagogues in particular, they did continue to distinguish Jews in other ways. They clearly opposed signs of Jewish particularism...the Jewish man's beard and sidelocks...and the married Jewish woman's wig were unacceptable, for they signalled religious fanaticism and hence lack of support for the Revolution." See: Hyman, 32. The emancipation of French Jewry also reinforced intra-communal divisions and conflicts within French Jewry between the acculturated Sephardic communities of South Western France, and the more isolated, larger Ashkenazi communities of Alsace. See: Hyman, 29.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle (“the Alliance”) was founded in 1860 “by a small group of...activists who believed that French Jews had a special mission to combat anti-Semitism and fight for Jewish emancipation worldwide.”¹⁴⁷ Its founders included lawyer Narcisse Leven, journalist Isidore Cahen, businessman Charles Netter, Jules Carvallo, an engineer, and Eugène Manuel, a writer and educator. The most high-profile founder was lawyer and politician Adolphe Crémieux, who was sixty-four when the Alliance was founded, and had already had a long career of involvement in Jewish communal leadership and activism in France, including a ten year tenure as a member, vice president, and briefly president, of the Central Consistory, the foremost Jewish leadership organization in France.¹⁴⁸

The Alliance was founded and led by professional, upper middle-class, and acculturated French Jews, but the Alliance was not an establishment organization. The organization was created to challenge the *Consistoire* (or Consistory system), which was the existing, establishment leadership structure of nineteenth-century French Jewry.¹⁴⁹ The Consistory had been instituted during Napoleon I’s rule and, based on the geographic distribution of French Jewry, established small councils and ecclesiastical courts consisting of both Rabbis and laymen to ensure that French Jews were adhering to the edicts of the central government, engaging in

¹⁴⁷ Vicki Caron, “Review of *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle* by Michael Graetz,” *The Journal of Modern Jewish History* 70 (1998): 184.

¹⁴⁸ Crémieux “was a major public figure in the French state who served twice as Minister of Justice.” See: Moria Paz, “A Non-Territorial Ethnic Network and the Making of Human Rights Law: The Case of the Alliance Israélite Universelle,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Rights Law* 4 (2009-2010): 10.

¹⁴⁹ In his book *The Jews of Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, historian Michael Graetz describes the founders of the Alliance as being from the “periphery” of French Jewry: “All had experienced a similar life path: both attracted to and repulsed by Jewish society, they maintained their distance from traditional Judaism and the consistorial institutions—without, however, going as far as a total break with their community of origin.” See: Michael Graetz, *The Jews of Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 257.

secular as well as religious education, and complying with French military conscription policies.¹⁵⁰

In the historiography on French Jewry, the Consistory is regarded as a politically conservative institution¹⁵¹ as compared to the Alliance, which was a far more activist and ambitious organization, whose leaders claimed a much broader political mandate.¹⁵² In the historiography on Jewish communal leadership, the Alliance is often listed along with the Board of British Deputies, the AJC, and the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, as the major modern Jewish organizations. It is frequently suggested that all these organizations shared similar goals¹⁵³ The Alliance, however, was unique from other major nineteenth-century Jewish organizations for a number of reasons, including, perhaps most importantly, for its internationalism. The leaders of the Alliance espoused a conception of modern Jewish identity in which cultural and religious bonds between Jews living in different countries were not diminished for reasons of public perception, or the affinity between Jews subordinated out of political necessity to protect their status as newly emancipated citizens with equal rights.

Under the Alliance model, there was no inherent antagonism between religion and nationality: an individual's status as a Jew, or adherent to any religion, could exist in harmony with that individual's status as a French, British, German, or American citizen. This model

¹⁵⁰ The Consistories were empowered to resolve ecclesiastical disputes, and the Central Consistory in Paris was responsible for appointing local Rabbis and possessed oversight power over the decisions of the local councils.

¹⁵¹ For example, Michael Graetz provides the following description of the Consistory's approach to public advocacy and communal defense: "Confined to their administrative work and preoccupied with their professional obligations, they judged it useful, to improve their image, to practice charity towards all, to abstain from all public debate, and to avoid inciting Christian opinion against the Jews. In the place of turmoil, they sought the peace of conformity." See: Graetz, 257.

¹⁵² According to Jay R. Berkovitz, the establishment of the Alliance "was an expression of dissatisfaction with the way the consistory responded to the various incidents [of anti-Semitism in France and the persecution of Jews abroad] and represented a bold, more independent Jewish conscience." See: Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-century France* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 245.

¹⁵³ Evyatar Friesel argues that "the aim of these associations was the implementation of civil and political rights for Jews in countries where such rights were still non-existent, or existed but were not observed." See: Friesel, 97.

contrasts sharply with the guiding principles of the AJC, whose leaders were consistently concerned with how highlighting Jewish religious difference, racial and cultural distinctiveness, and ties to Jews living in other countries, could lead to accusations of dual loyalty or engender hostility from the majority.

At the time of its founding, the Alliance's political agenda was steeped in both the rhetoric and principles of the French revolution, which purported to be "universal" ideas, relevant to all people regardless of faith or nationality. Later, the organization's philanthropic projects, including its well-known international network of French-language schools, reflected French imperial ambitions in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁵⁴

In some ways, the Alliance defies some of the categories that are often used to distinguish between the political agendas of modern Jewish organizations. On the surface, there are difficult to reconcile contradictions in its ideology. On the one hand, the Alliance emphasized the cultural and religious bonds that existed among Jews globally; on the other, accelerating the pace of the acculturation of Jewish populations, both inside and outside of France, was at the heart of the organization's ideology and agenda. Like the Board of Deputies and the AJC, the Alliance was careful and deliberate about the rhetoric the organization used to describe its aims. Its leaders advocated international Jewish "solidarity," but always framed it in a manner appealing to France's political leaders and general public; their notion of solidarity was consistent with nineteenth-century French political ideals.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of the influence of the Alliance's education program, see: Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

¹⁵⁵ Historian Lisa Moses Leff argues that the Alliance's conception of solidarity "represented the essence of Jewish social values, including an unwavering sense of justice rooted in Jewish tradition. Yet, [for the leaders of the Alliance], this solidarity did not set Jews apart from gentiles; it was an open solidarity, solidified in democratic institutions, intended to redeem the entire world." See: Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 168.

The appeal to universalism sets the Alliance apart from Jewish organizations that limited their mandates to improving social and political conditions for Jews in individual countries, providing relief to the victims of violent persecution, or building international support for Jewish political sovereignty.¹⁵⁶ In common with British politicians and philanthropists who saw the British Empire as a “civilizing” force around the world, the Alliance’s rhetoric of solidarity appealed to French political elites who believed the ideals of the French Revolution could and should be exported around the world. The “Alliance leaders’ use of universalism rhetoric formed an important part of their ongoing process of acculturation.”¹⁵⁷ Historian Lisa Moses Leff argues that “By grounding republican concepts within Jewish tradition, Alliance leaders found a way to express their Jewish identity in terms meaningful in French political culture.”¹⁵⁸ This political language achieved a number of important objectives. Domestically, it allowed the leaders of the Alliance to maintain that Jews belonged in France and that France was good for the Jews. The Republic’s universal ideals were aiding Jewry’s transition from archaic religious practice and social isolation into modernity. At the international level, the leaders of the Alliance used this rhetoric to define their aims and to portray their efforts as good for French Jewry, good for world Jewry, and, perhaps most importantly, as consistent with the ideals of the Revolution and in the best interests of the French Republic.

To further its objectives, the Alliance built strong ties to non-Jewish and non-French reformers and politicians who were sympathetic to their aims, including Emmanuel Pétaval-Olliff. The organization also began to fundraise and recruit members outside of France, including

¹⁵⁶ In her book *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France*, Lisa Moses Leff argues that because the Alliance’s conception of Jewish solidarity “was not tied to any particular state, Alliance leaders depicted their organization as one that was free to operate in the arena in which citizens of different nations came together in the name of liberal values.” See: Moses Leff, 168.

¹⁵⁷ Moses Leff, 168.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

in the United States.¹⁵⁹ The recruitment of non-French Jews was controversial: for example, the activities of Nissim Béhar, the Alliance's representative in the United States, were deeply resented by American Jewish leaders because they felt that the Alliance's conception of Jewish identity, and its political agenda, could tarnish the reputation of American Jews.¹⁶⁰

The Alliance also sought to establish affiliate organizations in other European countries, including the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Austrian Allianz, and the Hilfsverein Der Deutschen Juden. The relationship between the Alliance and its affiliates was often contentious because the affiliates wanted greater autonomy from the organization's Central Committee in Paris, and grew concerned that their organizations (and therefore their advocacy) would be perceived as being tied to the interests of France, a foreign power.¹⁶¹

Although the Alliance contributed substantially to philanthropic efforts to improve the social and economic conditions of the Jewish population of Palestine, the Alliance was not a Zionist organization. Its espoused internationalism conceived of the Jewish populations dispersed throughout the world as potential vanguards of progressive, republican, or liberal ideals. This view contrasted sharply with Zionism's vision of an ingathering of exiles.¹⁶² The Alliance's ideology is often described as being in opposition to Zionist aspirations. Nevertheless, Michael Graetz argues that the Alliance can be treated as a forerunner of Zionism. After ongoing

¹⁵⁹ "By 1869, the Alliance had a membership of 11,364 Jews...organized into local chapters of ten or more." See: Schorsch, 26.

¹⁶⁰ See: Zosa Szajkowski, "Jewish Diplomacy: Notes on the Occasion of the Centenary of the Alliance Israélite Universelle," *Jewish Social Studies* 22 (1960): 145 and 151.

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of the leadership structure of the Alliance and the dynamics which brought about the establishment of its affiliates, see: Zosa Szajkowski, "Conflicts in the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Founding of the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Vienna Allianz and the Hilfsverein," *Jewish Social Studies* 19 (1957): 29-50.

¹⁶² Graetz portrays the emergence of the Alliance as reflective of the modernizing and integrationist trends that followed the emancipation of Western and Central European Jewries. He argues that, in France, "a new Jewish attitude was coming into existence...whose essence lay in the idea of a mission. It was a set of diffuse historical and philosophical traits that were nevertheless sufficiently consistent to reanimate a vanished pride and inspire new confidence in the persistence of Judaism." See: Graetz, 257.

persecution in Eastern Europe and Russia, and scandals such as the Dreyfus Affair, undermined the notion that acculturation would entail social acceptance, Graetz argues that the same sense of mission that inspired the founders of the Alliance would invigorate the campaign for Jewish political and territorial sovereignty.

From its founding, the Alliance placed an emphasis on media relations and demonstrated an understanding of the power of the modern press to reach and influence a mass audience.¹⁶³ The Alliance's Manifesto describes the press as "an invaluable lever to remove the mountains of hostile prejudice. This is a force of only recent creation—one which was not at the free disposal of our fathers. We...must make greater efforts to avail ourselves of it...At every moment, there are facts to reveal, accusations to refute, truths to spread."¹⁶⁴ The Alliance also saw the press, including the burgeoning Jewish press, as an invaluable source of information and, like the AJC and other nineteenth-century Jewish groups, placed a premium on gathering information.

The Alliance used the press extensively to draw attention to outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence overseas, but the organization was more cautious at home.¹⁶⁵ Its application of public advocacy techniques, including media relations, distinguishes the Alliance as a modern communal leadership organization, but inside France, the organization's leaders habitually chose to practice the traditional, quieter approaches to Jewish communal defense. In his *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914*, Ismar Schorsch argues that, in its domestic political advocacy, nineteenth-century French Jewry "never made the same transition to self-defense" as was exhibited by comparable German Jewish leadership organizations such as the

¹⁶³ Jonathan Frankel notes that: "In its Statement of Goals, the Alliance had put great stress on what it described as the extraordinary importance of the press." See: Frankel, 32.

¹⁶⁴ Frankel, 32.

¹⁶⁵ According to Zosa Szajkowski: "The Alliance was careful not to intervene officially in cases of anti-Semitism in France itself...Neither did the Alliance intervene against antisemitism in Algeria." See: Zosa Szajkowski, "Jewish Diplomacy: Notes on the Occasion of the Centenary of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, *Jewish Social Studies* 22 (1960): 149.

Centralverein.¹⁶⁶ The Alliance's rhetoric and advocacy strategies granted the organization significant freedom to criticize publically the activities of foreign governments, but constrained it to remain silent on abuses and outrages at home.

The leaders of the Alliance were also reluctant to invoke the French justice system to achieve domestic reforms.¹⁶⁷ Before entering French politics, Adolphe Crémieux was a well-known French jurist and, decades before he became involved with the Alliance, he participated in important legal challenges that sought to erase distinctions between the rights of Jews and the rights of other French citizens. Most notably, Crémieux argued two successful challenges to the *oath more Judaico*. Crémieux and the Alliance's later reluctance to use a litigation approach in their advocacy reflected the organization's preference for more discreet reform efforts within France.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle was a major nineteenth-century Jewish organization. While central elements of its internationalism would have been anathema to the men who founded the AJC, many of its public advocacy strategies, including its use of the press, the collection of information, and discretion in the domestic exercise of publicity, were incorporated into the AJC's earliest approaches to public advocacy.

¹⁶⁶ Schorsch argues: "Despite intense provocation for more than a decade, culminating in anti-Jewish riots [in France] in January and February 1898 in which synagogues and Jewish stores were burned and individual Jews beaten, French Jewry never relinquished its basic policy of silence. It disdainfully refused to counter the torrent of anti-Semitic propaganda; it tenaciously continued to hope for and rely on the assistance of concerned Christians. And above all, it feared giving the appearance of defending another Jew. Even the respected Alliance Israélite Universelle...maintained a vigorous silence on the Affair, so as not to open itself to the charge of defending Jewish interests to the detriment of France." See: Schorsch, 204.

¹⁶⁷ While the Alliance was reluctant to apply juridical approaches to advocacy domestically, the organization has an interesting relationship to the history of international human rights law. Moria Paz argues that the Alliance developed a "legal strategy" that "was spectacularly successful in affecting the development of international law and especially the discourse on human rights." Paz argues that the organization's emphasis on religious equality and minority rights was particularly important to the development of international law. The Alliance's leaders' advocacy on behalf of these concepts at important international conferences, including the 1878 Congress of Berlin and the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, was, Paz argues, crucially important to the "birth of modern human rights law." See: Paz, 22.

The Baron De Hirsch Fund and the Jewish Colonization Association

Baron Maurice de Hirsch was a German-born Jewish financier and a major figure in late-nineteenth-century Jewish philanthropy. He was born into a family with a long history of involvement in banking. It was one of the few Bavarian Jewish families that had been elevated into the nobility. De Hirsch made a fortune of his own as a bond trader and in the railway business. He was not a religious man, but after the death of his only son, Lucien de Hirsch, in 1887, the Baron became deeply involved in international Jewish philanthropy.

De Hirsch sponsored two organizations whose primary purpose was to help persecuted Russian and Eastern European Jews emigrate, resettle, and sustain themselves in new homes through farming or participation in the skilled labor force. De Hirsch's philanthropy was motivated by a collection of ideas, including auto-emancipation and a conception of the oppressed Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe as a people in need of redemption. De Hirsch believed they could be redeemed through the modernization of their way of life and their reintegration into the ordinary economy, as productive farmers or skilled tradesmen. He "disdained the traditional form of Jewish philanthropy, the giving of alms."¹⁶⁸ Instead, he privileged education and labor, and his goal was to provide Jews with the skills that were needed to be successful in modern economies. Further, he believed that Jewish participation in the labor force would change the perception or image of the Jews among the people with whom they lived, leading to social acceptance, tolerance, and greater security.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Kennee Switzer-Rakos, "Baron de Hirsch, The Jewish Colonization Association and Canada," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 32 (1987): 388.

¹⁶⁹ According to Kennee Switzer-Rakos: "[Baron de Hirsch] believed it was necessary to eradicate the causes of poverty and not just to relieve the symptoms. He maintained that 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 normalizing the Jewish position in

In 1889, de Hirsch allocated 2.4 million dollars of his fortune to establish the Baron de Hirsh Fund (“the Fund”). Two years later he established a separate organization, the Jewish Colonization Association (“JCA”), with an initial capital investment of two million pounds. A year later, he invested an additional seven million pounds to support the JCA.¹⁷⁰ While both organizations were endowed by de Hirsch, the two organizations were structured differently and used different rhetoric to describe their mandates.

The concept of auto-emancipation, with its emphasis on political autonomy, sustainability, and Jewish participation in the labor force, was very important for the Zionist movement as well, but the Fund and the JCA’s model was different from the Zionist project, because it was not necessarily tied to any particular territory.¹⁷¹ The policies of the Fund and the JCA reflected a pragmatic conclusion that there was no feasible way to substantially ameliorate the social and economic conditions of oppressed Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe, and that Palestine could not sustain a substantial influx of Jewish immigrants.

The Baron de Hirsch Fund was an American organization, led by prominent American Jewish leaders. Concerns about public perception shaped how the Fund described and carried out its philanthropy. It framed its philanthropy as “immigrant aid” to Jews who had already arrived in the United States as opposed to defining itself as an organization that encouraged and subsidized the emigration of Russian and Eastern European Jews. The Fund described its philanthropy as being designed to relieve overcrowding in East Coast cities by directing the

society was through productive labor...The existence of a self-sufficient Jewish working force...would also demonstrate to the rest of the world that despite prejudice and restriction Jews were capable of playing a ‘useful’ role in society.” See: Switzer-Rakos, 388-389.

¹⁷⁰ Switzer-Rakos, 391n.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 390.

newcomers to occupations outside the cities and which would promote the integration of Jewish immigrants into the American economy as productive farmers or skilled tradesmen.¹⁷²

The Fund's focus on providing assistance to Jewish immigrants to help them settle in less developed areas in the United States, and the careful rhetoric the organization used to describe these efforts, is consistent with the anxieties of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment. Since the 1880s, American Jewish leaders had been deeply concerned about the growing number of Russian Jewish immigrants seeking refuge in the United States. These leaders did not want to be perceived as facilitating the *en masse* immigration of their coreligionists; at the same time, they wanted to ensure that when new Jewish immigrants settled in the United States, they did not become a conspicuous minority population.

The leaders of the Fund were comfortable describing their work as educational, as being intended to impart the necessary skills to new immigrants who had never been involved in agriculture or the skilled vocations, and were unfamiliar with democratic institutions and the American way of life.¹⁷³ The Fund established the Educational Alliance in New York City and sponsored the publication of pamphlets in order to further these objectives. The Fund's most substantial efforts were directed towards establishing agricultural colonies for new Jewish immigrants, such as Woodbine, New Jersey. Its trustees were also comfortable describing their

¹⁷² In an article written for *The Charities Review*, Myer S. Isaacs, the Fund's first President, acknowledged that the organization was "especially anxious to prevent the massing of immigrants in the cities." See: Myer S. Isaacs, "The Baron de Hirsch Fund," *The Charities Review* 1 (1891): 37. Relieving overcrowding in American cities, and avoiding negative press coverage of these conditions, was similarly an important goal of other high profile American Jewish organizations during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, including the Industrial Removal Office and the Galveston Information Bureau.

¹⁷³ There was no hesitancy," according to Isaacs, "in declaring that as Americans the proposed trustees [of the Fund] could not act upon any lines that apparently assisted emigration and that the primary object of the Fund should be educational." In his article, Isaacs specified that the Fund would provide for "training immigrants in a handicraft," "improved mechanical training for adults and youths," "instruction in agricultural work and improved methods of farming," and "instruction in the English language and in the duties and responsibilities of life and citizenship in the United States." See: Isaacs, 31.

activities as a means of providing commercial assistance, including loans and land grants, to new immigrants who were essentially starting small businesses.¹⁷⁴

The JCA's sphere of influence was significantly broader than the Fund's, and its leaders used different rhetoric to describe the organization's goals. During de Hirsch's life, in contrast to the Fund, the JCA described its work as dedicated to facilitating the mass emigration of persecuted Jews. The JCA sponsored large scale efforts to resettle Russian and Eastern European Jews in Argentina, Brazil, and Canada, including the purchase of large swathes of land to be apportioned to new immigrants.¹⁷⁵ After de Hirsch died in 1896, the leaders of the JCA placed less emphasis on emigration and began to devote a considerable portion of their resources to establishing educational institutions for Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe or in areas that had already experienced a substantial influx of Jewish immigrants, including Canada.

It is important to emphasize that the work of both the Baron De Hirsch Fund and the Jewish Colonization Association was philanthropic in nature. Neither organization purported to be political organizations like the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the AJC, or the Alliance. Their agenda did not include political advocacy aimed at enhancing Jewish rights in countries where they were an oppressed minority; instead, these organizations focussed on programs to resettle as many Jews as possible, or provide them with the training they would need to participate in the economy and acculturate into the way of life of their new countries.

It is also important to note that, while both these organizations were philanthropic endeavors, they were structured and incorporated as businesses. Like the AJC, both the Fund and the JCA were led and controlled by a small number of men. The Fund was managed by a board of trustees that included Jacob Schiff, Oscar Straus, and Mayer Sulzberger, some of the

¹⁷⁴ Issacs, 33.

¹⁷⁵ Switzer-Rakos, 385-406.

prominent America Jewish leaders who would later establish and lead the American Jewish Committee. The JCA had shareholders and a Council of Administration. De Hirsch was by far the largest shareholder, but among the others were high profile Jewish leaders from a number of countries, including Nathaniel Rothschild and Eugene Pereire.¹⁷⁶

As already noted, after De Hirsch died, the JCA shifted its priorities. “By the time the First World War broke out, it had become a very different agency...it was no longer dedicated solely to the removal of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe...The new administrators sponsored programmes they believed would make Jews thrive in the East and in the New World.”¹⁷⁷ Many of the JCA’s resettlement projects failed,¹⁷⁸ and because of ongoing persecution and economic stagnation, Jews continued to flee the East *en masse*. The majority wanted to resettle in North America or Palestine, but many also arrived in Central and Western Europe. The shift in the JCA’s priorities reflected the concerns of Western European Jewish leaders that the continuing growth of Jewish immigrant populations in their countries posed a threat to the social status and security of acculturated Jews. The Jewish leaders devoted

¹⁷⁶ De Hirsch developed close ties with the Alliance Israélite Universelle and became a major donor and, later, a member of the Alliance’s Central Committee. Near the end of his life, de Hirsch transferred some of his shares in the JCA to several European Jewish leadership organizations including the Alliance and the Anglo-Jewish Association. See: Switzer-Rakos, 394.

¹⁷⁷ Switzer-Rakos, 406.

¹⁷⁸ The JCA’s settlement projects failed for a number of significant reasons including poorly selected farm land and the inexperience of the colonists. For example, David William Foster, Melissa Fitch Lockhart, and Darrel B. Lockhart note that the JCA’s attempts to settle Eastern European and Russian Jews on agricultural colonies in Argentina “were dismal failures.” The colonists were “elated to have escaped the hardships of their homeland, [but] many were disappointed to discover that life in the agricultural colonies was not the rural utopia they had envisioned. Life was extremely difficult on their farms. Hardships, including bad harvests, insect plagues of biblical proportions that devoured crops, and occasional hostility from the Creole population were endured. Perhaps the most difficult stumbling block came from the JCA itself, which, following the death of the baron, seemed overrun by corruption and unfair treatment of the colonists, many of whom experienced serious financial failure.” See: David William Foster, Melissa Fitch Lockhart, and Darrel B. Lockhart, *Culture and Customs of Argentina* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 22. In Canada, Harold Troper argues that the JCA failed to establish significant Jewish agricultural settlements because Jewish immigrants to Canada were more interested in establishing themselves in urban centers, particularly Montréal, rather than settle in rural regions. See: Harold Troper, “Jews and Canadian Immigration Policy, 1900-1950,” *The Jews of North America*, ed. Moses Rischin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 49-50.

considerable resources to providing Jews with skills training in Russia and Eastern Europe in order to reduce the level of Jewish emigration and in the hope that greater Jewish participation in the labor force would result in a decline in anti-Semitism.

The Baron de Hirsch Fund and the JCA possessed both unprecedented financial resources and larger ambitions than previous Jewish communal organizations. Neither organization was part of the Zionist movement, but they did possess certain ideological convictions. Both organizations espoused their founder's beliefs about the importance of skills training and labor force participation to improving the social and economic conditions of Jews and the perception of the Jewish community. The ideological foundations for their programs share a great deal in common with the integrationist priorities of other nineteenth-century Jewish leadership organizations. These priorities would influence later work by the AJC, which was consistently concerned with how the majority of the American people viewed the American Jewish community, and what they could do to improve that perception and, thereby, reduce anti-Semitism.

B'nai B'rith and the Board of Delegates of American Israelites

The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith ("B'nai B'rith") was founded by twelve young German-Jewish immigrants in New York City in 1843. The organization challenged the established leadership structures of the early-nineteenth-century American Jewish community, which were grounded in congregationalism and, in New York City, the aspirations of a small community of well-established Sephardic Jewish families. The founding of the organization, the mandate it claimed, and its social and philanthropic activities, reflect a pattern in modern Jewish history and the sociological evolution of Diaspora communities, in which intra-communal conflict between an establishment community and recently arrived immigrants results in a

redistribution of communal leadership power. In this case, the conflict was between the patrician Sephardic establishment and the growing community of Ashkenazi immigrants from Germany.¹⁷⁹

The mid-nineteenth-century American Jewish community did not have central leadership organizations. Separate congregations remained the major religious and communal institutions of American Jewry during this period. Numerous proposals to facilitate greater cooperation between congregations had failed.¹⁸⁰ Antagonism between the Jewish establishment and the new immigrant community, the absence of a strong central leadership organization, and rivalries between congregations left the American Jewish community unable to effectively cooperate to pursue large scale philanthropic projects, expand Jewish educational institutions, engage in public advocacy, or agree on who should represent the community in interactions with government authorities.

Small Jewish charities, synagogue-based charitable initiatives, mutual aid societies, and *landsmanshaftn* (benefit societies based on geographic origins), were very active during this period, but the scale of these efforts paled in comparison to what would be carried out later by larger and more ambitious organizations. B'nai B'rith “developed as an indigenous response to ‘the vacuum created by the absence of an organized communal framework and the chaos of synagogue autonomy.’”¹⁸¹ The founding of B'nai B'rith also reflected a trend in the growth of voluntary community and civic associations in the United States during the mid-to-late-

¹⁷⁹ Deborah Dash Moore argues that “Because native-born Jews were too much American and too little Jewish, the established Jewish community was unable to facilitate the immigrants’ adjustment to living Jewishly in the new land. Instead, the community stimulated the newcomers’ creativity.” She argues that the new German Jewish immigrants “opened up the American-Jewish community to reconstruction.” See: Dash Moore, 4.

¹⁸⁰ According to Dash Moore, between “1840-1855, all proposals for congregational federation met with rebuff.” See, Dash Moore, 8.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

nineteenth century.¹⁸² Fraternal orders were among the forms of voluntary association that were in ascendency during this period in the United States.¹⁸³ B'nai B'rith adopted the customs and rituals of earlier established fraternal orders and claimed the broad social and philanthropic mandate of non-Jewish organizations. Indeed, the most significant distinguishing feature of B'nai B'rith during the early history of the organization was its status as a fraternal order. This organizational structure, and emphasis on symbolism and initiation rituals, set B'nai B'rith apart from any of the other nineteenth-century Jewish leadership or philanthropic organizations discussed in this chapter.

Several of the organization's founders, including Henry Jones, Reuben Roadacher, William Renau, and Isaac Rosenbourg, had been members of older, predominantly non-Jewish, fraternal orders, such as the Masons and the Odd Fellows. The founders incorporated some of the symbolism and ritualism of these fraternal orders into the new organization's rites. Rituals that included ceremonial objects, costumes, passwords, the recitation of specific texts, and sometimes "role-playing,"¹⁸⁴ were a "central component of American fraternal culture."¹⁸⁵ The founders of

¹⁸² According to political scientists Jocelyn Elise Crowley and Theda Skocpol, "The era from the end of the [American] Civil War through the early-twentieth century witnessed a sustained surge of civic mobilization, most of which was embodied in representatively governed voluntary federations." See: Jocelyn Elise Crowley and Theda Skocpol, "The Rush to Organize: Explaining Associational Formation in the United States, 1860s-1920s," *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (2001): 815

¹⁸³ For example, during this period, membership in organizations such as the Knights of Pythias and the Knights of Columbus was steadily increasing. See: Crowley and Skocpol, 817.

¹⁸⁴ Daniel Soyer, "Entering the 'Tent of Abraham': Fraternal Ritual and American Jewish Identity, 1880-1920," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 9 (1999): 164.

¹⁸⁵ Daniel Soyer argues that "ritual can serve a number of functions in organizational life. Aided by the power of secrecy, it helps to create a bond of common experience among the members...Most important, however, initiation rituals can relieve tensions concerning transitions in the status of an individual or groups and help to reconcile the emotional and social dualities created by those transformations." See: Soyer, 160. For a brief description of B'nai B'rith's initiation rituals, and alterations that were made to these rituals after 1890, see: Soyer, 164.

B'nai B'rith were deliberate in their efforts to fuse the rites of fraternal orders with symbolism that would appeal to Jews.¹⁸⁶

B'nai B'rith was composed of Jews, but it was a secular organization that aimed to synthesize or amalgamate elements of traditional Jewish communal ties and culture with the American way of life. "It synthesized the components of both Jewishness and Americanism into a unique amalgam that assumed the benefits of emancipation and affirmed the value of being Jewish."¹⁸⁷ Acculturation and Americanization were therefore at the heart of B'nai B'rith's earliest agenda. The organization's "immediate orientation derived largely from the needs of German-Jewish immigrants. Foremost was that for fellowship, a feeling of belonging, a sense of community... B'nai B'rith appealed directly to those suffering from the isolation and insecurity of immigrant life."¹⁸⁸ In the absence of both close ties between the Sephardic Jewish establishment and German immigrants and a recognized communal leadership framework, B'nai B'rith offered its members a means of adjusting to American society, of preserving some elements of their religious and cultural heritage, and of fostering a sense of community and friendship. In her *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*, Deborah Dash Moore argues that the organization's founders fashioned a historically unique path towards acculturation.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ According to Deborah Dash Moore: "The secret rites, special regalia, passwords, and mottoes adopted by B'nai B'rith reflected its American structure. But its founders bound this structure to Jewish history and folklore by giving the officers Hebrew titles: the President was Grand Nasi, the vice-President was Grand Aleph, and the Secretary was Grand Sopher. By emphasizing the inherently Jewish nature of the organization and by evoking historic Jewish associations, B'nai B'rith tied a religious past to a secular future." See: Dash Moore, 7.

¹⁸⁷ Dash Moore, 7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸⁹ According to Dash Moore: "Though they embarked on an uncharted course when they opted for a Jewish fraternal order, they adopted the voluntary associational pattern to synthesize Jewish and American behavior. B'nai B'rith's founders, seeking to reconcile Judaism with American society discovered their solution neither in immigrant ethnicity nor in religious pluralism but in a new covenant which they institutionalized in a voluntary association that was both characteristic of mid-nineteenth-century America and organically Jewish." See: Dash Moore, 9.

In its earliest years, the organization was a bastion of the emerging American Jewish middle and upper-middle class, which was composed of the recent German Jewish immigrants who made up the majority of B'nai B'rith members. The organization's mandate expanded with the influx, beginning in the 1880s, of the largest waves of Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigration to United States. While the organization's lodges continued to facilitate the Americanization of Jewish immigrants, it also began to broaden its agenda to include philanthropic and educational activities for Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants and, eventually, public advocacy in an organized and public effort to combat anti-Semitism in the United States.

In 1913, in the aftermath of the lynching in Georgia of Leo Frank, B'nai B'rith founded the Anti-Defamation League ("ADL"). Until the founding of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in 1963, the ADL was arguably the only Jewish defense organization in the United States that had a higher public profile than the American Jewish Committee. The ADL's higher profile stemmed from both its strategy to combat anti-Semitism, which emphasized publically responding to manifestations and expressions of anti-Semitism, and the considerable financial resources the organization was prepared to dedicate to their efforts.

The national philanthropic fundraising apparatus B'nai B'rith developed over the first seventy years of its history was used to support their new defense organization's campaign against anti-Semitism. The ADL "concentrated on the struggle against anti-Semitism and operated with a budget and professional staff significantly larger than those of the American Jewish Committee."¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Friesel, 105.

The AJC and the ADL approached the fight against anti-Semitism with different, even contrasting, philosophies. The AJC was willing to use public advocacy but, as this study will show, the Committee's methods were more subtle and more cautious than those of the ADL. The ADL was dedicated to an open, often confrontational approach, to fighting anti-Semitism. "B'nai B'rith explained that its reason for establishing the ADL was that 'Jewish and non-Jewish citizens [had] failed to meet [defamation] by any means save quiet criticism.'"¹⁹¹ The name B'nai B'rith chose for the ADL, which emphasizes that its purpose is to reply to expressions of anti-Jewish prejudice, reveals the extent to which they were committed to public advocacy to achieve their objectives. The ADL's founding charter defined its aims and identified the means the organization was prepared to employ:

The immediate object of the League is to stop, by appeals to reason and conscience, and if necessary, by appeals to law, the defamation of the Jewish people.

Its ultimate purpose is to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike and to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against, and ridicule of any sect or body of citizens.¹⁹²

From the beginning, the ADL emphasized efforts to shape public opinion. Sigmund Livingston, the Chicago-based lawyer who was the ADL's first leader, saw "public opinion as the arbiter of social behavior...[and] shaped the ADL's philosophy accordingly."¹⁹³ At the heart of the ADL's approach to public advocacy was the idea that slurs against Jews and Judaism could not be ignored or go unanswered. The AJC was often prepared to let scurrilous hate speech and manifestations of anti-Semitism go unanswered because they believed that any response could exacerbate the problem. In contrast, the ADL believed that expressions of hostility and prejudice

¹⁹¹ Dash Moore, 108.

¹⁹² Benjamin Epstein, "The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith," *Race and Class* 10 (1969): 369.

¹⁹³ Dash Moore, 109.

towards Jews, if unanswered, would propagate social and political conditions in which anti-Semitism was tolerated by the general public.¹⁹⁴

Both the AJC and the ADL were prepared to use censorship as a tool to fight anti-Semitism. Both organizations ultimately abandoned this strategy; however, the ADL's early emphasis on censorship was different than that of the AJC. The AJC considered using statutes that prohibited the dissemination of offensive material through the mail to curb the spread of anti-Semitic materials. The ADL's approach was more public. The organization threatened to organize boycotts against theaters that staged anti-Semitic productions and newspapers that espoused anti-Semitic views or published anti-Semitic advertisements.¹⁹⁵ Ultimately, the ADL moved away from advocating censorship, and "adopted a policy of public protest of offensive material," including demanding retractions or corrections, and threats to exert financial pressure by organizing boycotts against companies that advertised in newspapers that carried anti-Semitic content.¹⁹⁶

To combat anti-Semitism, the ADL used many of the same techniques as the AJC. The ADL sponsored public education campaigns, published materials, financed academic research, lobbied legislatures, cooperated with other Jewish and non-Jewish civil rights and defense organizations, and became a very high profile intervener in civil rights litigation.

It was during the earliest years of the ADL that the contrasts between the League and the Committee's approaches to public advocacy were most evident. In comparison to the AJC, the ADL was bolder in both describing and pursuing its agenda. There was antagonism between the

¹⁹⁴ According to Dash Moore: "The idea of fighting anti-Semitism by influencing public opinion 'guided Livingston's work and prompted him to organize the ADL into the first Jewish defense agency solely concerned with defamation of name.'" See: Dash Moore, 109.

¹⁹⁵ For example, in 1914, "a nationwide campaign was launched to remove 'The Merchant of Venice' from public schools and public libraries." See: Richard A. Walsh, "Anti-Defamation League After Sixty-Five Years," *America* 139 (1978): 226.

¹⁹⁶ Richard A. Walsh, "Anti-Defamation League After Sixty-Five Years," *America* 139 (1978): 226.

two groups as they competed with each other, and with the Zionist movement and the American Jewish Congress, to assert a leadership position over American Jewry. Eventually, however, the two organizations became close collaborators. The ADL was the public face of a multi-leveled effort to fight anti-Semitism that included both immediate replies to provocations and the AJC's long term strategies.

The growth of voluntary associations constituted a major American social movement in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.¹⁹⁷ American Jews, including recent immigrants, embraced lodges and fraternal orders. B'nai B'rith was the first and largest Jewish fraternal order, but "at least twenty-two" other similar Jewish fraternal organizations were founded in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, including the Order of Brith Abraham and the Independent Western Star Order.¹⁹⁸ Reflecting the social antagonism that divided Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants from the German Jews who became the new American Jewish establishment, Yiddish-speaking immigrants also formed their own fraternal orders, such as the Oshmener Brotherhood. By 1917, the "Jewish orders enrolled nearly half a million individuals in close to three thousand lodges."¹⁹⁹

As a fraternal order, B'nai B'rith was distinct from subsequent Jewish leadership organizations. From the perspective of the development of Jewish communal leadership in the United States, arguably the organization's significance rests in how it functioned as a proving ground for future leaders of American Jewry. Many of the most well-known leaders of American

¹⁹⁷ Crowley and Skocpol compiled a list of significant "membership federations" founded between 1815 and 1951. Their list includes high profile organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Grand Army of the Republic, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the American Federation of Labor, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. See, Crowley and Skocpol, 817.

¹⁹⁸ Soyer, 163.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Jewry, including Simon Wolf, Adolph Kraus, and Oscar Straus, became involved in Jewish politics and Jewish activism through B'nai B'rith.

Although Jewish fraternal orders and lodges proliferated during the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, efforts continued to establish a Jewish communal leadership organization that could encompass the religious differences, economic disparities, and social and political ambitions of the growing American Jewish community. By the mid-nineteenth century, American Jewry was a well-organized community with dozens of fraternal associations and charities; however, there was no central leadership, and some Jewish leaders recognized that this absence was undermining the effectiveness of Jewish-sponsored philanthropy and the social cohesion of American Jewry.

After the founding and growth of B'nai B'rith, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (“the Board”) was founded in 1859. This is historically significant because the Board was the first Jewish leadership organization in the United States to claim a national mandate. The Board was established to unify, represent, and advocate for the social and political interests of American Jewry, but the organization dissolved after less than twenty years when, in 1878, the Board merged with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In comparison to the AJC, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites had a different organizational structure, different aims, and significantly less financial means.

The Board was a congregational body. It was composed of representatives from different synagogues whose members or leadership chose to join the organization. At the time that the Board was founded, there were about one-hundred and fifty Jewish congregations in the United States. Only twenty-four agreed to join. The members were overwhelmingly traditional or Orthodox congregations. Several Sephardic synagogues joined, but no Reform movement

synagogues agreed to participate. One similarity between the Board and the AJC, therefore, was that while both organizations claimed national mandates, they both lacked broad bases of support from the community they purported to represent.

The historical context of the establishment of the Board was dramatically different from the circumstances that led to the establishment of the AJC, which was formed during a period of unprecedented Jewish immigration to the United States. The Board was organized to unify the mid-nineteenth-century American Jewish community, which was small, geographically dispersed, and divided by denomination and national origin. The Board gave itself the mandate of coordinating fundraising, philanthropy, and religious education. It was also established to “collect statistics” on the American Jewish community and “to keep a watchful eye on all occurrences at home and abroad.”²⁰⁰

Like the AJC, the Board was concerned about the growth of anti-Semitism in the United States and did lobby on behalf of Jewish interests. As a lobby group, the Board had some notable achievements, including a successful effort to persuade the United States Congress to provide Jewish clergymen to the Union Army during the American Civil War. Ultimately, however, due to a lack of financial support from either wealthy benefactors or from the relatively small American Jewish community, the Board could not sustain itself as an independent communal leadership organization.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Allan Tarshish, “The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, 1859-1878,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 49 (1959): 20.

²⁰¹ Given the organization’s roots as a congregational body mostly composed of delegates from traditional or Orthodox congregations in the United States, it is perhaps ironic that the Board ultimately merged with the Reform movement’s Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It is significant that an organization that was founded for philanthropic and communal leadership purposes could be ultimately absorbed into an ecclesiastical organization. This did not develop into a pattern in the history of American Jewish leadership organizations. The most high profile American Jewish leadership organizations of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century established a sharper distinction between ecclesiastical bodies and political organizations. Rabbis were often prominent leaders of Jewish public advocacy and defense organizations, but these groups were dedicated to achieving social and political goals

While this effort to organize a national body ultimately failed, the Board established a precedent of greater and broader cooperation between different elements of the Jewish community in the United States. The subsequent establishment of organizations such as the AJC, the ADL, the New York Kehillah, and the Congress movement were based on the Board's model of more substantial cooperation between elements of American Jewry to achieve recognized communal objectives.

The German Jewish Organizations

A discussion of the advocacy of nineteenth-century Jewish leadership organizations in Germany has been reserved for the end of this section because of the close nature of the cultural and ideological connections that existed between the leaders of these organizations and the men who founded the AJC. Some of the AJC's earliest public advocacy and public relations work, including the compiling of a First World War Honor Roll, were modelled on the work of German Jewish leadership and advocacy organizations. As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, the founders of the AJC were principally German-born Jews or the American-born children of mid-nineteenth-century German-Jewish immigrants to the United States. The founders of the AJC's approach to communal defense, and their attitudes about controlling or shaping the general public's perception of American Jewry, was strongly influenced by the problematic experience of German Jewry during and following that community's campaign for legal emancipation and civic equality during the nineteenth century. Some of the AJC's attitudes and approaches were

that affected the status and security of the Jewish community as opposed to resolving intra-communal debates over dogma, rituals, and the regulation of religious conversions and inter-faith marriages. Ecclesiastical bodies and umbrella groups representing different Jewish denominations remained important to American Jewish politics because of the influence religious leaders could exert on the opinions of their congregations but American Jewry has maintained a strong division between religious leadership bodies and political organizations. For a further discussion of the formation of the Board, its activities, its fiscal challenges, and the circumstances which led to its merger with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, see: Tarshish, 16-32.

formed in response to lessons learned from the similar aspirations, but much more serious and difficult circumstances, of their German coreligionists.

While there were ideological commonalities and similar approaches to public advocacy between the AJC and major German Jewish organizations, most importantly the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (“Centralverein”), there were significant, indeed profound differences, in the context in which the groups formed and attempted to exert influence. Jewish political and social activity has always been easier in the United States than in Germany.²⁰² In contrast to Jewish communal leadership in the United States, in building their leadership organizations and developing their approaches to communal defense, German Jewish leaders had to contend with the legacy of legal disabilities, social isolation, and deeply entrenched anti-Semitism among German elites, the general public, and within important institutions such as the civil service and the military.²⁰³ Further, for most of the nineteenth century, support for the political unification of Germany had been nurtured through appeals to nationalism, with an emphasis on common language, religion, and culture, and these nationalist aspirations created significant barriers to the social integration of German Jews.²⁰⁴ During the nineteenth century, German Jews who wanted to integrate into German society and the economy

²⁰² Evyatar Friesel notes that “the general background against which [the AJC] has operated has given it much more latitude than the Centralverein enjoyed.” See: Friesel, 122.

²⁰³ According to Schorsch: “Few developments in German Jewish life since the beginning of the emancipation struggle were unaffected by the constant and widespread anti-Jewish sentiment of the environment.” See: Schorsch, v.

²⁰⁴ The social ties reinforced through nationalism, with its emphasis on common language, religion, and culture, can be juxtaposed against Enlightenment political ideals about the inherent rights of individuals and the voluntary “social contract” through which individuals choose to form communities. “Romantic Nationalism, stressing the irrational ties of society and its organic and historical character, presented for the Jews barriers much more difficult to overcome.” See: Friesel, 112. The idea that acculturation could solve the so-called Jewish question was premised upon the universalism of Enlightenment ideals. It is a dramatic understatement to note that the fostering of German nationalism during the nineteenth century would have tragic consequences for German Jewry, and for Jewish populations across Europe, during the twentieth century.

encountered greater barriers to their acculturation and social acceptance than were present in the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

The course of the emancipation of German Jewry during the nineteenth century and the outcome of these reforms was different from Jewish emancipation in other Western European countries, such as Britain and France. Germany was not a unified, modern nation-state with a central government until 1871 and the establishment of the German Empire under Kaiser Wilhelm I. Some of the many kingdoms, principalities, duchies, and territories that made up the pre-unification German *Kleinstaaterei* had substantial Jewish populations, and, in contrast to Britain and France, the fragmented nature of Germany's political geography resulted in staggered emancipation, with some German-speaking territories emancipating their Jewish populations much earlier than others.

There was no new or uniform legal regime for emancipated Jews across the region; different territories granted Jews different rights at different times. Some Jewish communities, for example, were granted greater economic freedom long before political rights. While reforms to the legal status of Jewish minority populations were all described as emancipation, the result of the various reform efforts was that Jewish communities dispersed across the numerous German-speaking territories of Central Europe did not all have the same rights.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Prussia, for example, which had granted full citizenship to its Jewish population in 1812, “refused to extend the emancipation to the new territories acquired at the Congress of Vienna [in 1815]...In violation of its own absolutist principles, the government tolerated a situation in which twenty-one different sets of laws were allowed to govern the status and conduct of the disparate Jewish communities of the realm.” See: Schorsch, 4. The nature of the emancipation of Prussian Jewry can fairly be described as formal (or legal) but not substantive, which is to say that the new regulations and the liberal rhetoric did not have the effect of normalizing the social and political conditions of the Jewish community. Some Prussian Jews (or Jews living in territory controlled by Prussia) were granted citizenship, but disabilities and discrimination persisted long after the emancipation edict of 1812. “The Jewish community remained legally only a tolerated private corporation. It could not purchase land or build a synagogue without royal approval nor compel individual members to pay their communal taxes.” See: Schorsch, 5.

In terms of Jewish communal leadership, there was no central authority that presided over the Jewish populations scattered throughout the territories that would eventually be absorbed into Germany, but there were numerous local Jewish governing councils and religious courts and small leadership organizations made up of rabbis and laymen.²⁰⁶ Many rural Jewish communities were geographically isolated. In German cities, Jewish communities were often legally required to remain concentrated in certain neighborhoods. For practicing Jews, their cultural and religious life, and their sense of communal cohesion, was deeply tied to their local synagogue.²⁰⁷

In some of the German territories that had been occupied by Napoleon's forces in 1813, Jewish leadership bodies analogous to the French consistory model were founded and were allowed to remain in power after the defeat and withdrawal of the French.²⁰⁸ Jewish leadership organizations were also established by German sovereigns. In Baden, for example, "a Jewish Oberrat was founded by the grand duke in 1809."²⁰⁹ In Prussia, which had one of the largest Jewish populations in the pre-unification *Kleinstaaterei*, and which became the center of German power after unification, some Jewish communities had leadership organizations modelled according to the traditions of the *kehillot* or more modern derivatives of the consistory and these unconsolidated organizations were allowed to continue.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Bart Wallet notes that in "large parts of the *Kleinstaaterei*...especially in Prussia, Bavaria, and Saxony, no overall organization for the Jewish communities was founded. These communities kept their semi-autonomous positions, which included independence vis-à-vis other Jewish communities." See: Bart Wallet, "Napoleon's Legacy—National Government and Jewish Community in Western Europe," in *Simon-Dubnow-Institut Jahrbuch VI 2007, Special Issue: Early Modern Culture and Haskalah—Reconsidering the Borderlines of Modern Jewish History*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Shmuel Feiner (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 295.

²⁰⁷ Congregationalism, according to Bart Wallet, "characterized Jewish life in the northern German states." See: Wallet, 295.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ The French invasion of Germany, and the ultimate withdrawal of the French, had a substantial impact on the history of local Jewish leadership organizations in Germany. "In large parts of Prussia there were no central organizations, but [after the defeat of Napoleon] the ones that already existed were allowed to continue. The

Local Jewish leadership organizations were sanctioned by German sovereigns and allowed to remain in power (or continue functioning) because they could be appropriated to further the interests of regimes that were undergoing a process of modernization towards political absolutism while simultaneously managing the growth and regulation of an early industrial economy. The existing Jewish leadership bodies, regardless of their composition or historical mandate, “created an easy opportunity to control the Jewish community...they were also a tool to have new laws easily implemented and...they served to have the support of the Jewish elite in the nationalization of the community.”²¹¹ While these Jewish organizations were historically significant, their ability to effectively exert political influence was undercut by both the relatively small size of their constituencies and the political reality that, despite formal emancipation, greater economic opportunity, and growing participation in the professions, German Jews remained a marginalized, victimized, and distrusted minority population in Germany throughout the nineteenth century.

The staggered and imperfect nature of the emancipation of German Jewry, and the length and difficulty of the campaign for civic equality, profoundly affected the German Jewish community. Post-emancipation German Jewry was a deeply divided community. There were traditional Orthodox Jews who wanted to maintain the separation (judicial and administrative autonomy) between the Jewish community and the German majority, political liberals who favored acculturation or assimilation, early Jewish nationalists who believed Jews would never be truly safe as a tolerated minority in Germany, and adherents of the Haskallah and the Reform movements who believed in the need to substantially change Jewish religious practice and

consistories that once were part of the French structure [during the occupation] remained functioning even after 1814 (the split of the Rhineland from France). These regional consistories, however, were not united in an overall structure to replace the Consistoire Central.” See: Wallet, 295n.

²¹¹ Wallet, 298.

communal customs in order to end the social isolation and persecution of the German Jewish community.

Intra-communal mistrust resulting from both theological and political differences undermined social cohesion. Some Orthodox leaders rejected “cooperation with liberal Jews, whom they regarded as *poshim*, or sinners.”²¹² Liberal German Jews viewed the Orthodox as an archaic community whose commitment to traditional rituals and separation propagated anti-Semitism. The antagonism that existed between the different sectors of German Jewry created impediments to the development of stronger Jewish leadership bodies.

Even after formal emancipation, disabilities remained that hindered the full participation and integration of German Jews into German society and the economy. In many cases, as noted above, for German Jews, the political status of citizen did not entail the same rights and privileges as their Christian neighbors. Social exclusion and employment discrimination, in addition to the perseverance of anti-Semitic beliefs among the general population, prompted numerous debates both within the Jewish community and by German politicians and intellectuals, about how to integrate the Jewish community into the German nation. According to Ismar Schorsch, “the common denominator of the endless debate... was the extent to which Jews would have to surrender their Jewishness to gain full citizenship.”²¹³ Many German Jews were prepared to undertake religious conversion in order to overcome the social, political, and economic barriers that continued to obstruct their full integration into German society.²¹⁴

²¹² Barnet Peretz Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question: Anti-Semitic Trials and the Press in the Early German Empire* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 4.

²¹³ Schorsch, 2.

²¹⁴ The external pressure by the majority on the German Jewish community had profound consequences for Jews as individuals. “This unrelenting pressure to assimilate and convert,” according to Schorsch, “was the decisive force in shaping the relationship between the modern German Jew and his ancestral religion. Because Judaism loomed as the insurmountable barrier to equality, Jewishness suddenly became an inescapable condition of painful self-consciousness.” See: Schorsch, 5.

Some aspects of these debates about assimilation, acculturation, religious reform, and conversion affected leaders within the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment. The American context, of course, was substantially and substantively different; however, as in Germany, Jewish leaders in the United States struggled with how to sculpt the public image of Judaism and the Jewish community in order to ensure that acculturation, integration, and full civic equality did not require religious conversion or provoke an anti-Semitic backlash from white patricians and the Christian majority.

In Germany, acculturation was significantly more difficult and more complicated because, to a much greater extent than in the United States, religious affiliation in Germany, even after emancipation, continued to have political, legal, social, and economic ramifications for Jews as individuals and as a community. Consequently, German Jews had to contend with a hostile and xenophobic environment and were pressured to either repress and conceal all aspects of their cultural and religious difference or convert to Christianity in order to gain the full rights of German citizenship.

American Jews would have to contend with similar pressures but never to the same extent. American Jewish leaders were, however, alert to the need to enhance the pace of the acculturation of new Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe in order to preserve their own patrician reputation and ensure that a hostile environment did not develop in the United States. In Germany, with the hostile environment already well-established, Jewish leaders struggled to find ways to balance the preservation of their religious and cultural heritage and traditional communal ties while, at the same time, trying to influence how the Jewish community was perceived by the majority of Protestant and Catholic Germans and prevent a further intensification of anti-Semitism in Germany.

In the post-emancipation era, some elements of German Jewry had benefited substantially, with greater economic prosperity and participation in some professions. “German states had granted their Jewish subjects economic freedom far earlier than civic equality, with the result that by the beginning of Bismarck’s Empire the urban and occupational concentration and the prosperous economic circumstances of German Jewry decisively offset its numerical insignificance.”²¹⁵ In the campaign for emancipation, German Jews had accepted an arrangement wherein, as individuals, they exchanged formal equality and access to greater economic opportunities for the public suppression of their communal identity. For many German Jews, this bargain had entailed profound economic and social benefits but, ultimately, it was not without political consequences. “Nearly a century of German pressure,” Schorsch argues, “had rendered [German Jews] incapable of any public affirmation of their Jewishness.”²¹⁶

Additionally, the rapid economic ascent of the Jewish community did not go unnoticed by the Christian majority. The growing and prominent participation of German Jews in all areas of German commerce, society, and the arts, in conjunction with well-entrenched anti-Semitic beliefs among the broader population, provoked an intense reaction within the general population and among the leadership of some German political parties. The absence of strong communal leadership institutions left the German Jewish community unprepared for the anti-Semitic and nationalist backlash that did appear during the late-nineteenth century in Germany.

In exchange for the benefits of full emancipation, German Jews suppressed (or concealed) public expressions of their religious and cultural distinctiveness. “The tremendous pressure on the Jews to establish their German identity by repressing every religious, social, and ethnic distinctiveness had transformed being Jewish [in Germany] into a wholly internal

²¹⁵ Schorsch, 13.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

matter.”²¹⁷ Consequently, the campaign for Jewish emancipation, and the post-emancipation efforts of German Jews to establish their *bona fides* as “regular,” or “normal,” or “ordinary” Germans, had left German Jewry without the institutions needed to effectively engage in communal defense and public advocacy that other European Jewish communities had developed during the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. “No regional or national organizations existed to irritate German sensibilities. Jewish life did not extend beyond the confines of the local corporate community.”²¹⁸

Internally, beyond of the gaze of the majority of the German public, the Jewish community was active in terms of ecclesiastical change with the development of the Reform movement. In academia, the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (Science of Judaism) program was methodologically innovative and historically significant, but this scholarship was not popular literature. In terms of communal leadership and public advocacy, German Jewry “had not produced a single permanent regional, national, or international organization.”²¹⁹

The Gemeindebund

The founding of the *Gemeindebund* in 1869 was the first attempt by the Jewish communities dispersed across the *Kleinstaaterei* to build an effective and centralized communal leadership body. The establishment of this organization predated the formal unification of Germany in 1871. In 1869, German Jewry lacked political organizations, but there were local leadership bodies. Additionally, there were close relationships between representatives of different congregations with similar philosophies about religious practice or religious reform,

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

including a synod of liberal rabbis and laymen. The initial effort to establish a centralized leadership body was structured around these existing local leadership groups and congregational associations. The organization was envisioned as a means of “uniting the communities of German Israel [*des deutschen Israels*] for the protection of common interests and the pursuit of common objectives.”²²⁰

The Gemeindebund did engage in various forms of public advocacy to combat anti-Semitism, but the initial impetus for creating the organization, which countered the established post-emancipation custom of suppressing public expressions of Jewish communal identity, was the appearance of illegal Jewish immigrants from Russia in Germany and the efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle to recruit German members. “Cholera and famine had recently aggravated the chronically impoverished conditions of Russian Jewry...and the illegal emigration of destitute Jews...mushroomed accordingly.”²²¹ The appearance of large numbers of impoverished foreign-born Jews in the German countryside “threatened to blemish the public image of Judaism and provided potential ammunition for anti-Semitic agitation.”²²²

The threat to the public perception of German Jewry was considered sufficiently serious by German Jewish leaders that they risked the backlash that the founding of the Gemeindebund might engender in order to build the communal and institutional resources they believed they needed to effectively address this problem.

Nationalist sentiments among German Jewish leaders also motivated them to found the Gemeindebund. According to Schorsch, a “spirit of German nationalism...permeated the

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, 26.

deliberations” of the organization’s founders.²²³ In particular, the recruitment activities of the Alliance Israélite Universelle were resented by German Jewish leaders. The Alliance had been very successful in recruiting German Jews to join the organization.²²⁴ German Jewish leaders considered the growth of German membership in the Alliance as a potential source of anti-Semitism because, despite the Alliance’s internationalist rhetoric, they feared the organization would be perceived as French and the participation of German Jews in its activities could therefore be construed by the general public as unpatriotic.

As anti-Semitism grew in intensity through the late-nineteenth century in Germany, the leaders of the Gemeindebund made organized efforts to respond to the worsening situation. When anti-Semitic publications began to circulate widely, the Gemeindebund lobbied for changes to press laws to prevent the circulation of these materials, but these efforts were unsuccessful. The organization sought redress through German courts against the publishers of anti-Semitic materials. They had some early successes, but opposition to their legal strategy from public prosecutors, who in most cases had sole discretionary power to decide to move forward with a case, demonstrated that the nineteenth-century German legal system could not be relied upon as a means of Jewish communal defence.

The organization shifted towards using publications to refute anti-Semitic allegations and enlighten the broader German public. The Gemeindebund “invested a considerable amount of money in the distribution of apologetic literature written by Christians.”²²⁵ The organization also sponsored academic historical research by founding the Historical Commission of the Deutsch-Israelitishcer Gemeindebund, which was composed of three Christian and three Jewish

²²³ *Ibid.*, 25.

²²⁴ In 1869, of the Alliance’s 11,364 members, 1,712 were German Jews, “a national contingent surpassed only by that of the French.” See: Schorsch, 26.

²²⁵ Schorsch, 43.

historians. The mandate of the Commission was to revise the existing historiography on German Jewry by treating “the history of German Jewry as an integral part of the overall history of Germany.”²²⁶ With financial backing from the leaders of the Gemeindebund, the Commission’s six scholars began a project to systematically collect, translate, and interpret “all Hebrew and non-Hebrew sources dealing with the history of the Jews in Germany.”²²⁷

The public advocacy efforts of the Gemeindebund were historically unprecedented in Germany. The organization’s public and organized response to the rising intensity of German anti-Semitism was a clear break with German Jewry’s custom of suppressing public displays of its communal identity. The organization was reaching out to an external audience. These efforts were sophisticated public advocacy, but they also reveal the legacy and social impact of the prolonged battle for full civic equality. Schorsch argues that the “Gemeindebund endeavored to reach three distinct groups with the tactics it gropingly developed to combat anti-Semitism. The appeal to the courts aimed at silencing the anti-Semites. The apologetic literature stated the Jewish case to the still large body of uncommitted Germans.”²²⁸ The Gemeindebund’s third audience was the German Jewish community itself. In common with other Jewish leadership organizations, the Gemeindebund counselled restraint with respect to combatting domestic anti-Semitism. They were willing to lobby legislators, subsidize publications, and pursue legal challenges, but they had no enthusiasm for public demonstrations or public confrontations with anti-Semitic agitators.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

²²⁷ Schorsch argues that public relations and public advocacy underlay the reasons why the Gemeindebund chose to finance this project. In his view, the Commission was established to “provide irrefutable evidence of the antiquity of Jewish life in Germany. The allegedly alien character of the German Jew was to be proven a charge without substance, and in the process Jewish sources might even offer material on the medieval history of Germany as well.” See: Schorsch, 45.

²²⁸ Schorsch, 47.

The leaders of the Gemeindebund also believed that the Jewish community was responsible for managing the way it was perceived by the majority and bore responsibility when that image was tarnished. When the Gemeindebund “periodically addressed itself to the Jewish community... The tenor of this address... was largely determined by the widely shared conviction that the tactless and insolent behavior of many Jews precipitated much of the current anti-Semitic furor. The self-criticism which suffused this message reflected the self-image that German Jews had come to adopt during the battle for emancipation.”²²⁹

The public advocacy work of the Gemeindebund represent the earliest efforts at developing a unified, national strategy for Jewish communal defense in Germany, but the organization had a limited amount of support among German Jews. It was a self-constituted organization composed of congregational leaders with no formal mandate from either the Jewish community or from the state. Further, its leadership was overwhelmingly composed of liberal Jews because many traditional Orthodox congregations declined to join the organization or send delegates to its meetings. The organization gradually dissolved due to the absence of a broad base of support within the Jewish community, and the decline of the organization’s leaders’ enthusiasm after most of their public advocacy efforts proved to be ineffective. Many German Jews were either ambivalent towards the Gemeindebund and its goals or continued to adhere to the principle that the price of full civic equality was the public suppression of their religious identity.

The Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (“the Abwehrverein”)

²²⁹ Schorsch notes that, among German Jews, there remained an “undertone of apprehension” in their advocacy and a “reluctance to resist” the defamation of their community. See: Schorsch, 47 and 71.

Only after a “second unexpected wave of Jew-hatred in the early 1890’s” did Jewish leaders begin to revive the effort to establish an effective and national Jewish communal leadership organization in Germany.²³⁰ As anti-Semitism intensified, some Jewish activists began to publically respond. “[T]here were many local initiatives by individuals and organizations who chose to publically counter anti-Semitic slander. Those initiatives were supported by large segments of the Jewish public.”²³¹ However, intra-communal tensions between liberal and Orthodox Jews, as well as the community’s traditional reluctance to engage in any form of public activism, arguably delayed the formation of a larger and more ambitious leadership organization.

Throughout the late-nineteenth century, German Jewry benefited from, and relied upon, intercession and advocacy on its behalf from sympathetic German Christians. At the beginning of the 1890s, the most active and effective Jewish defense group in Germany was arguably the Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (“the Abwehrverein”), an organization founded in 1891 by German Christians. The organization’s first public declaration was signed by five hundred German Christians, who were all economic elites or leaders in their fields and professions. Their first public statement “condemned the campaign of hatred against the Jews as contrary to the character of the German people, its historical development, and its place among the civilized nations of the world.”²³²

By 1893, the Abwehrverein had more than thirteen thousand members.²³³ Jews were allowed to join the Abwehrverein, and many did, but Jews were not part of the organization’s

²³⁰ Schorsch, 53.

²³¹ Jacob Borut, “‘Not a Small Number of Notables’: The Geographical and Occupational Structure of the Central Verein [sic] Membership During Its First Years,” *Jewish History* 9 (1995): 53.

²³² Schorsch, 82.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 82.

leadership, although they were major financial sponsors of its work.²³⁴ A discussion of the Abwehrverein's public advocacy efforts has been included in this discussion because German Jewry's substantial financial support for this non-Jewish group's activism can be described as a form of indirect activism, a tactic that was adopted by other Jewish organizations, including the AJC.

The Abwehrverein tried to develop a number of different approaches to combat anti-Semitism through public advocacy. Their first strategy, which they ultimately abandoned, was to send public speakers to anti-Semitic rallies to present counterarguments. The organization "soon dropped the plan as futile and even detrimental."²³⁵ Their speakers were often denied permission to speak or given little time to make their arguments. "In most cases, the anti-Semitic sponsors exploited the presence of a spokesman from the Abwehrverein to draw still larger crowds, which they would then inflame with their own hateful oratory."²³⁶ The Abwehrverein tried to organize separate rallies, but "lack of funds and demand forced the discarding of this tactic as well."²³⁷

The Abwehrverein chose not to use the German justice system to fight anti-Semitism. The organization "feared that court cases would merely serve the anti-Semites as a sounding board for their ideas while transforming the defendant into a hero or martyr."²³⁸ They calculated that the failure of these prosecutions to go forward, or acquittals, could cause significantly more harm from a public relations perspective. German public prosecutors "repeatedly displayed an

²³⁴ The "available evidence suggests that the major portion of the [Abwehrverein's] annual budget of about 40,000 marks actually did come from Jewish sources." See: Schorsch, 93.

²³⁵ Schorsch, 83.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

aversion to punishing agitators, and there was little the [Abwehrverein] could do to alter the impression that the courts' restraint somehow vindicated the anti-Semites."²³⁹

In order to influence the broader German public, the Abwehrverein concentrated on using mass media, including propaganda.²⁴⁰ "From the start, the major effort of the Abwehrverein was invested in publication."²⁴¹ The organization sponsored the publication of *Mitteilungen*, a weekly newspaper. The newspaper was intended for a general audience, but the publishers also believed the newspaper's effect in the fight against anti-Semitism could be enhanced if it was read, and trusted as unbiased, by people who were in a position to exert the greatest possible influence on the German public, including journalists, newspaper editors, politicians, and political candidates. This tactic was an early manifestation of another approach to Jewish public advocacy that would become increasingly practiced throughout the twentieth century by numerous communal defense and public advocacy organizations, including the AJC. The goal was to persuade a subset of important, or powerful, or famous people to exercise their influence on behalf of your agenda. The tactic would later be described as overtures to "molders of public opinion."²⁴²

For the Abwehrverein, "the program proved to be of limited effectiveness...Local newspaper editors were frequently reluctant to use the material."²⁴³ Nevertheless, the organization continued to fund the publication of *Mitteilungen*, including the compilation of

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Schorsch uses the term "counterpropaganda" to describe the publications sponsored by the Abwehrverein because he sees the organization as essentially defensive. In his view, the group was engaged in a public advocacy campaign to refute the information (or propaganda) being disseminated by anti-Semites. See, Schorsch, 86.

²⁴¹ Schorsch, 85.

²⁴² The phrase "molders of opinion" appears for the first time in the AJC's archives in the Committee's Fifteenth Annual Report. The report includes a reprint of a public appeal signed by twenty-eight prominent Americans, including Woodrow Wilson, William Howard Taft, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Charles A Beard, calling for Americans of all faiths to unite to combat racial and religious prejudice. See, "The Peril of Racial Prejudice: A Statement to the Public," in Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed September 17, 2014.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1922_1923_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, pages 332-334.

²⁴³ Schorsch, 86.

digests of material from the newspaper sent directly to newspaper editors. “Friends criticized the effort as too academic and thereby failing to reach the circles most seriously infected. But [the Abwehrverein’s] spokesmen contended that the publications disseminated essential information for the eventual enlightenment of the German people.”²⁴⁴ While the Abwehrverein recognized the limited immediate impact of these efforts, they adopted a long term view, believing that the gradual accumulation and dissemination of this information would eventually bring about important progress in the fight against anti-Semitism in Germany.

The Abwehrverein was unique for its willingness to become involved in political campaigns. The group openly opposed anti-Semitic candidates, funded the campaigns or fundraised for candidates who rejected anti-Semitism, subsidized the publication of campaign literature and promotional material, and “urged liberals not to vote for an anti-Semite under any circumstances.”²⁴⁵ Its involvement in political campaigning is significant because it is indicative of the greater freedom non-Jewish activists possessed to describe their agenda and engage in public advocacy in late-nineteenth-century Germany. Defense organizations led by German Jews were consistently reluctant to be seen as publically involved in political campaigns because they feared that these activities could lend credibility to the widely held belief that the political agenda of German Jewry differed substantially from that of the majority of Germans.²⁴⁶ In the United States, Jewish leaders were similarly reluctant to have the Jewish community become publically involved in political campaigns because they did not want to foster the impression that Jews voted as a bloc (the so-called “Jewish vote”) and, therefore, possessed more influence (or more power) than other American citizens.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁴⁶ The Centralverein, for example, devoted considerably less resources to political campaigning than other contemporaneous German interest groups. See: Schorsch, 133.

While public advocacy was a crucial part of the Abwehrverein's approach to combatting anti-Semitism, the organization also practiced more traditional forms of advocacy including the nurturing of private relationships. The group's founders and leaders were prominent public figures who were connected to each other and to their opponents through their work and social circles.²⁴⁷

The Centralverein deutscher Straatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens

Ultimately, the Abwehrverein had very little success in countering the intensification of anti-Semitism in Germany during the late-nineteenth century.²⁴⁸ As the situation worsened, German Jewish leaders debated if they should respond, and how they could become involved in publically defending their community. This movement towards more substantial and public political engagement, which culminated with the establishment of the Centralverein deutscher Straatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, required German Jewish leaders to move boldly against their community's now well-established tradition of suppressing expressions of Jewish communal identity or political solidarity. There was, however, substantial opposition within the German Jewish community to entering into public quarrels with anti-Semites, and there was a concern that some German progressives, who were "traditional allies of the Jews in the struggle for their rights would react unfavorably."²⁴⁹ It was the perception of, and the fear of a backlash to,

²⁴⁷ The organization "encouraged its members to exert personal influence" but, in the absence of public statements of changes of position, it is always difficult to measure the impact of these kinds of private overtures. See: Schorsch, 86.

²⁴⁸ Schorsch argues that the Abwehrverein "exerted no immediate influence upon the course of German anti-Semitism...[I]n the two years following the creation of the [organization], anti-Semitism reached alarming proportions." See: Schorsch, 103.

²⁴⁹ Borut, 52.

engaging in public advocacy on behalf of Jews, and on behalf of Judaism, that was the major impediment.²⁵⁰

The establishment of the Centralverein in 1893 and the public advocacy tactics the organization adopted were radical changes from traditional Jewish leadership practices in Germany. It is an interesting reflection of the unique social and political conditions of late-nineteenth-century German Jewry that the formation of this leadership and advocacy group is treated in the historiography as a radical act despite the fact that the ideology of the organization was fundamentally consistent with nineteenth-century liberalism and its political activities mirrored those of contemporaneous non-Jewish German interest groups.²⁵¹

Abraham Margalioth argues that the Centralverein “was not only a civil rights organization; it was just as much an ideological organization.”²⁵² At the heart of the organization’s ideology, however, there was nothing radical beyond the unprecedented willingness of a German Jewish organization to express its goals publically and engage in political activism to further its objectives. The organization “and its activities reflect a major change within German Jewry...particularly in its relationship to the surrounding German society. This relationship changed from a passive sometimes even submissive stand towards the wrongs inflicted upon it, to what some researchers describe as a proud ‘Jewish Activism.’”²⁵³

The leaders of the Centralverein wanted German Jews to be treated and perceived as Germans. They balanced an effort to engage in communal defense and combat anti-Semitism

²⁵⁰ The public or open aspect of the campaign was a source of considerable anxiety for German Jewish leaders. “To fight anti-Semitism...invariably required a public affirmation of Jewish identity. But such a display of Jewishness was precisely what the extended battle for equal rights had conditioned Jews to fear and loathe.” See: Schorsch, 1. According to Schorsch, German Jewry’s “deep aversion to self-defense [sic] epitomised their commitment to abide by the terms of their admission.” See: Schorsch, 1.

²⁵¹ Borut, 52.

²⁵² Abraham Margalioth, “Remarks on the Political and Ideological Development of the Centralverein before 1914,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988): 106.

²⁵³ Borut, 51.

with emphasizing the status of Jews as individual citizens of Germany. The name the founders chose for the organization, which translates into the “Central Union of German Citizens of Jewish Faith,” emphasizes that their conception of their own identity privileged their German nationality over their religion. They did not advocate for special privileges or radical solutions, and, like a number of other high profile nineteenth-century Jewish leadership organizations, they were opposed to Jewish nationalism, and competed with Zionist organizations for the hearts and minds, and financial contributions, of their coreligionists.²⁵⁴

The Centralverein was founded, composed, and led by German Jewish elites who favored acculturation and economic integration, objectives which were consistent with the goals of the earlier struggle for Jewish emancipation, civic equality, economic opportunity, and religious tolerance. The founders and leaders of the Centralverein were Reform Jews who had moved away from the rituals and ways of life of the Orthodox community. Their eagerness to defend German Jewry is extraordinary because, even though they had chosen a German identity over a Jewish identity, they were unwilling to abide the continuing and intensifying attacks against their community.²⁵⁵ Their religious difference was a fact of their identity that they asserted and practiced privately, if at all; however, the persistence and growing intensity of German anti-Semitism caused the founders of the Centralverein to conclude that they had to act in an unprecedentedly public manner.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ For a review of the conflict between the Centralverein and German Zionists, including the Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland, see: Jehuda Reinharz, “Advocacy and History: The Case of the Centralverein and the Zionists,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988): 113-122.

²⁵⁵ Jehuda Reinharz argues that the Centralverein “satisfied the honor of German Jews who wanted to think of themselves as fighting for their rights, but *most of these Jews did not believe in the tradition and religious institutions which they so vigorously defended.*” See: Jehuda Reinharz, “Review of Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914 by Ismar Schorsch,” *Jewish Social Studies* 35 (1973): 298. [Emphasis in original.]

²⁵⁶ The founding of the Centralverein had both social and political significance. According to Schorsch: “[The] formation of the Centralverein...signalled the beginning of a Jewish revision of the terms of emancipation. The defense of Jewish honor by an open fight against anti-Semitism embodied a repudiation of concealment as the price

The Centralverein tried to recruit as large a membership as possible from among the different branches and varied congregations of German Judaism, as well as from unaffiliated German Jews.²⁵⁷ The Centralverein's efforts to build its reputation as a mass organization were crucial to its public advocacy strategy. The organization's "leaders viewed widespread mobilization of support as a precondition for fulfilling its basic goals."²⁵⁸ These leaders wanted the organization to be perceived as the representative organization of German Jewry in order to be able to exercise the greatest amount of control and discretion over public pronouncements made on behalf of the Jewish community, and to establish the legitimacy of their leadership when dealing with or negotiating with government authorities. Three years after its founding, the organization had recruited more than five thousand individual members, and an additional thirty-nine corporate members, which were other German Jewish organizations and congregations that agreed to become affiliated with the Centralverein. By 1903, the numbers had increased substantially to more than twelve thousand individuals and one hundred affiliated organizations.²⁵⁹

To be most effective at fighting anti-Semitism, the founders believed the organization needed to espouse a conception of German Jewish identity that could earn the trust, or be

for equality. The Centralverein undertook to recondition the German Jew to assert his Jewishness publically. In place of traditional behind-the-scenes appeals to the seat of power for special protection, the Centralverein waged its battle against anti-Semitism before the eyes of the German public. The Centralverein's historical importance...lies not in its nominal success in combatting the forces of German anti-Semitism, but rather in its impact upon the mentality of German Jewry. By means of a mass organization, it labored during the two decades before the...[First World War] to revive the self-esteem and self-image indispensable for survival which German Jewry had sacrificed in the fight for equality." See: Schorsch, 12-13.

²⁵⁷ The recruitment of as large a base as possible was important for the political status of the organization in Germany. Broad appeal was also important for achieving its objectives within the German Jewish community. According to Jürgen Matthäus: "From its foundation...the [organization's] aim had been a double one: '...to gather together the German citizens of Jewish faith regardless of religious and political orientation in order to encourage them in the energetic preservation of their civil and social equality as well as in the cultivation of a German sentiment.'" See: Jürgen Matthäus, "Deutschtum and Judentum under Fire: The Impact of the First World War on the Strategies of the Centralverein and the Zionistische Vereinigung," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988): 131.

²⁵⁸ Borut, 52.

²⁵⁹ Schorsch, 119.

acceptable to, the broader Christian German majority. They wanted to foster the notion that Jews privileged their loyalty to the German nation over their religious heritage. Accordingly, their aim to “cultivate” a “German sentiment” involved both their ideology and their public relations efforts. This aspect of their declared agenda reflected the persistence of a belief among German Jewish leaders that German Jews were at least partially responsible for some of the social and political antagonism directed against them by the German majority.

In an era when the majority of anti-Semitic beliefs stemmed from the charge of deicide or religious and communal stereotypes, as opposed to theories of racial inferiority, the leaders of the Centralverein believed they could fight anti-Semitism by trying to shape the public image of German Jewry. They wanted to restore the self-respect and dignity of a community that had been perpetually oppressed, and, more recently, had spent one hundred years lobbying for civic equality but had continually encountered obstructions to their social integration. In addition to this communal restoration, the leaders of the Centralverein also endeavored to remove what they perceived to be some of the causes of anti-Semitism that stemmed from within the Jewish community. In particular, they believed that the communal insularity of the Orthodox community and the unscrupulous (and well publicized) business behaviour of some German Jews reflected badly upon German Jewry as a whole, and provided anti-Semites with evidence that could be easily exploited to indict the entire community. The Centralverein is often grouped with other prominent nineteenth-century Jewish organizations that favoured or promoted acculturation as the solution to the “Jewish question.” In conjunction with its public advocacy efforts on behalf of the German Jewish community, the Centralverein was also working to change that community from within as part of its strategy to fight anti-Semitism.

While it was important that the Centralverein be perceived as a large and representative organization, it was in fact led and controlled by a small number of prominent, acculturated German Jews, including Eugen Fuchs, Edmund Friedemann, Paul Nathans, Raphael Löwenfeld, and Julius Issac.²⁶⁰ The Centralverein wanted to be perceived as a mass organization, but, like the AJC, it always functioned as an interest group led by a small cohort of wealthy, acculturated elites.²⁶¹

The Centralverein applied many of the same public advocacy approaches as earlier Jewish defense groups, including the sponsorship of research and the publication of materials designed to combat anti-Semitism. The organization established an internal “publications-apologetics committee” to develop reprisals to common anti-Semitic canards and funded the publication of a monthly magazine, *Im deutschen Reich (In the German Empire)*.²⁶² “In addition to printing educational literature on Judaism, it also frequently responded directly to the polemics of individual agitators.”²⁶³ The organization’s leaders lobbied German parliamentarians, including lobbying on behalf of qualified Jewish judicial candidates for appointments to the bench. They protested the employment discrimination practiced by German industries, and “carefully watched the German scene for new manifestations of anti-Semitism.”²⁶⁴ Individual members would report incidents of anti-Semitism to the Centralverein’s leadership, which would then formulate a response. In many instances, this response included attempts to seek redress

²⁶⁰ Abraham Margalio notes that “The mentality and forms of the activity of the [Centralverein] remained those of a *Bürgerverein*, [a civil association] and never became those of a *Volksbewegung*, or mass organization.” See: Margalio, 103-104.

²⁶¹ Like the AJC, the activities of the Centralverein were coordinated by a small, elite leadership group. “While it is true that the [Centralverein] fostered a sense of Jewish self-confidence and pride in its members, it is nonetheless also true that the bulk of defense activity was carried out not by the rank and file, but by the central board.” See: Margalio, 103.

²⁶² Margalio, 103.

²⁶³ Peretz Hartston, 274.

²⁶⁴ Schorsch, 132.

through German courts. As will be discussed further below, the Centralverein was very active in trying to use the German justice system as a forum to fight anti-Semitism. After considerable and contentious internal debate, the organization cautiously became involved in campaigning against openly anti-Semitic political candidates.²⁶⁵

Although the leaders of the organization were certainly aware of the persecution experienced by their coreligionists in other countries, the Centralverein concentrated on ameliorating the social and political conditions of German Jewry.²⁶⁶ Any advocacy on behalf of foreign Jewish populations would have conflicted with the Centralverein's sense of itself as a German organization. It "deliberately limited the scope of its...activities to Germany alone. This self-limitation was not a question of geography, but one of ideology, and it expressed the guiding principles of its leadership in the matters of German-Jewish identity and of German Jewry's relations with Jews beyond the German frontier."²⁶⁷ In contrast to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which promoted itself as an international organization, the Centralverein consciously adopted a significantly narrower mandate. This decision reflected the nationalist (or Germanophile) orientation of the organization, but it was also strategic. The leaders of the Centralverein believed that any assertion of an international agenda would have engendered domestic hostility and undermined the organization's ability to effectively pursue its goals in Germany.

During its early years, the Centralverein concentrated on using the German justice system to fight anti-Semitism. "The Centralverein itself regarded the vigorous utilization of the courts as

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

²⁶⁶ The leadership of the Centralverein was committed to a domestic agenda. "Even when the heads of the [Centralverein] demonstrated an interest in the fate of Jews in other lands, as members of the same faith, they did not translate that interest into political acts of international solidarity." See: Margalio, 102.

²⁶⁷ Margalio, 101.

its most important operation.”²⁶⁸ This emphasis on the use of juridical means to fight anti-Semitism distinguishes the Centralverein from contemporaneous Jewish organizations that were reluctant to practice the same methods. The AJC was willing to use juridical means to further its objectives; however, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, its methods and objectives differed substantially from those of the Centralverein.

Evyatar Friesel notes that the Centralverein “worked mainly on the legal level: it was a style in accordance with its principles.”²⁶⁹ These principles included a commitment to a vigorous defense of Jews and Judaism in public forums, including mass media and courts of law. “The same year that it was founded, in 1893, the *Centralverein* had established a legal defense commission (*Rechtsschutzkommission*), headed by Eugen Fuchs, to act through the courts against antisemitic actions and publications.”²⁷⁰ The German law on libel, and three additional articles in the Uniform Criminal Code of the German Reich dealing with incitement to violence, defamation of religious bodies, and committing a gross nuisance, offered the lawyers of the *Rechtsschutzkommission* juridical means of confronting individual anti-Semites and the publishers of anti-Semitic materials.²⁷¹ “By 1902, the legal department of the Centralverein was handling an average of one hundred cases annually.”²⁷² As will be discussed further in Chapter 8 of this study, this case load represents a substantially larger degree of intervention and advocacy through the legal system than practiced later by the first generation of AJC leaders.

Despite the risk of acquittals, potential obstructionism from public prosecutors, and an earlier history of ineffective outcomes, German courts were embraced as an ideal forum for

²⁶⁸ Schorsch, 132n. This assessment is quoted from endnote 61 of chapter 5 and can be found on page 246.

²⁶⁹ Friesel, 107.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁷¹ Schorsch’s study contains a detailed discussion of the Centralverein’s legal strategies. See, Schorsch, 123-132.

²⁷² Schorsch, 127.

fighting anti-Semitism because their proceedings were mostly public and their decisions carried the weight and authority of the state, and therefore the most legitimacy. “Under the leadership of Eugen Fuchs, the Centralverein filed many successful lawsuits against anti-Semitic agitators.”²⁷³ They also lost a significant number of cases, particularly in the earliest years of the program, when the organization had not yet developed a strict criterion to select cases that were likely to succeed in court.

While there were successful prosecutions, these ruling did not establish a deterrence effect. “Punishment rarely exceeded a few hundred marks or a few days or weeks in prison.”²⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the symbolic importance of these victories was privileged over their potential immediate effect on fighting anti-Semitism. According to Barnet Peretz Hartston, “Fuchs did not measure his success by the number of lawsuits he won, but considered his goal to educate the nation and cultivate civic courage among German Jews.”²⁷⁵ The impact of this legal strategy may be impossible to gauge, but the use of juridical means remained a major component of the Centralverein’s public advocacy during the entire history of the organization.²⁷⁶

The Centralverein was a very important and prominent nineteenth-century Jewish leadership organization that continued to advocate on behalf of German Jewry until it was ultimately outlawed and dismantled by the Nazis in 1938. It is obviously difficult, in light of the discrimination suffered by German Jewry during the Third Reich and the destruction of the community during the Holocaust, to assess the achievements of an organization that was founded to defend this minority community. The historiography on the organization, and assessments of

²⁷³ Peretz Hartston, 274.

²⁷⁴ Schorsch, 131.

²⁷⁵ Peretz Hartston, 99 and 101.

²⁷⁶ For a further discussion of the Centralverein’s legal strategy and its use of juridical approaches to public advocacy during the Weimar era, see: Udo Beer, “The Protection of Jewish Civil Rights in the Weimar Republic: Jewish Self-Defence through Legal Action,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988): 149-176.

the successes and failures of its strategies for communal defense, include strong criticisms of the organization's emphasis on acculturation, alleged passivity or timidity, and opposition to Zionism; however, the historiography also highlights the political legacy of the emancipation struggle, and the persistent hostility of the environment in which the leaders of the Centralverein tried to exercise influence. For the purposes of this study, it is significant to note that the organization was committed to public advocacy, and used a variety of approaches to combat anti-Semitism, including approaches that would later be adopted by the AJC.

Nineteenth-Century Jewish Organizations as Forerunner of the AJC

The above survey of some of the public advocacy of nineteenth-century Jewish organizations, and the different contexts in which these groups tried to exert influence, illustrates the breadth of Jewish activism during this period, and the extent to which their activities were innovative and represent a substantial departure from Jewish leadership and communal defense traditions. The American Jewish Committee, which was founded after all of the organizations described above, mirrored a great deal of the political attitudes, concern for optics, long term planning, organizational structures, and advocacy strategies of these earlier organizations.

The exercise of political influence and encouraging social and cultural change requires capital. The substantial philanthropic achievements of organizations like the Baron de Hirsch Fund, the Jewish Colonization Society, and B'nai B'rith, would not have been possible without the historically unprecedented access these organizations had to wealthy benefactors and financial support from the burgeoning Jewish middle classes. The AJC, like most leadership organizations, recognized that access to substantial financial resources and ongoing fundraising were crucial to their efforts. Particularly during its early years, the AJC benefited from the generosity of its wealthiest founders.

In common with the leaders of the Board of Deputies and the Centralverein, the leaders of the AJC thought it was important that the Committee be viewed as a representative organization, but preferred that power be concentrated among the members of the Executive Committee. Like the Alliance, the Board, the Centralverein, and the Baron de Hirsch Fund, the AJC privileged acculturation, or at least the appearance of gradual acculturation, over perpetual communal isolation. This emphasis on acculturation reflected their concerns about the gentile majority's perception of Jews, and their fears that the Jewish community would be seen as racially inferior and alien in America.

The AJC was prepared to combat anti-Semitism publically and, in common with the Centralverein, respond to incitement. The founders and leaders of the AJC were conscious of the persecution experience by Jews both domestically and in foreign lands, and were prepared to act. Like the Alliance, the AJC felt a greater degree of freedom to respond to the persecution of Jews in other countries, and the organization is perhaps most well-known for its advocacy on behalf of Jewish communities outside the United States. Although the AJC shared the concerns of the leaders of the Centralverein about fostering any impression of dual loyalty, these concerns did not constrain their willingness to lobby the American public and the American government on behalf of their foreign coreligionists. Domestically, however, the AJC's actions were more cautious and were almost never reflexive. There were numerous, often egregious, provocations, but, in most cases of domestic anti-Semitism, the AJC counselled restraint. The Committee's strategies balanced the domestic timidity of the Board and the Alliance with some of the boldness of the Centralverein and the Anti-Defamation League. The AJC was prepared to respond publically, but they were cautious. They were consistently concerned about the optics of

their interventions and, as will be shown, carefully considered the potential benefits and risks of their public advocacy activities.

Part II: The Historiography on the American Jewish Committee's Public Advocacy

The American Jewish Committee has been studied by historians and political scientists as a high-profile American Jewish leadership organization. The Committee's earliest activities, however, when the AJC was still a very small organization, have drawn less attention in the historiography on the organization and in the historiography on American Jewry. The case studies of the AJC's early public advocacy included in this study will illustrate the underappreciated breadth, sophistication, and innovation of these efforts.

Historians and political scientists have examined the Committee's activities before and after the First World War, including: its successful lobbying of American lawmakers to abrogate Russo-American Treaty of 1832;²⁷⁷ its efforts to oppose the imposition of literacy tests for new immigrants and to maintain liberal immigration policies;²⁷⁸ its involvement with the formation of the Kehillah in New York City;²⁷⁹ and its attitude towards the Zionist movement.²⁸⁰

The antagonism between the AJC and the American Jewish Congress has also been studied in accounts of American Jewish history, and in examinations of the political beliefs of

²⁷⁷ Naomi Cohen devotes an entire chapter of *Not Free to Desist* to the abrogation campaign. See Cohen, 54-80. Cohen also wrote a further account of this campaign in an article published in the journal *Jewish Social Studies*. See: Naomi W. Cohen, "The Abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832," *Jewish Social Studies* 25 (1963): 3-41. See also: Carl George Winter, "The Influence of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832 on the Rights of American Jewish Citizens," *American Jewish History* 41 (1951): 163-194. In the historiography on the abrogation campaign, the episode is often referred to as the "passport question" because the rhetoric of the public advocacy campaign (which was mirrored in press accounts of the controversy) centered on the how Russia, a supposed ally of the United States, was disrespecting America by discriminating against holders of American passports. See, for example: Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21-22.

²⁷⁸ Judith S. Goldstein, *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure: The American Jewish Committee Fight Against Immigration Restriction, 1906-1917* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).

²⁷⁹ See, for example, Daniel P. Kotzin, *Judah L. Magnes: An American Jewish Nonconformist* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 103-116.

²⁸⁰ See: Moses Rischin, "The Early Attitude of the American Jewish Committee to Zionism (1906-1922)," *American Jewish History* 49 (1959): 188-201.

American Jews.²⁸¹ There is also considerable scholarship on the Committee's efforts, under the leadership of Louis Marshall, to obtain a public apology from Henry Ford for the anti-Semitic content of the *Dearborn Independent*.²⁸² Because the AJC's leadership was comprised of successful men, including Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, and Julius Rosenwald, the biographies of these leaders contain accounts of some of the Committee's work.²⁸³

The Committee's work between 1906 and 1929, the historical significance of these efforts, and how its early activities influenced later work have been given less attention in the historiography on the organization. In terms of public advocacy, one exception is the Committee's campaign in favor of the abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832. This campaign was the organization's most dramatic entry into the open practice of public advocacy, and one of the most significant political achievements of the first generation of AJC leaders. The purpose of the campaign was to have the United States withdraw from this trade agreement because of alleged Russian violations of the treaty. The impetus for the AJC's involvement was the differential treatment and discrimination American Jews (both native-born and naturalized citizens) suffered while travelling in Russia under an American passport. Russia's treatment of Jews travelling under an American passport (some of whom had been born in Russia but had fled to the United States) violated the seventy-year-old commercial treaty signed by the two

²⁸¹ See, for example, Henry L. Feingold, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 15. See also: Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 197-199.

²⁸² See, for example: Robert S. Rifkin, "Confronting Antisemitism in America: Louis Marshall and Henry Ford," *American Jewish History* 94 (2008): 71-90. See also: Victoria Saker Woeste, "Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920-1929," *The Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 877-905.

²⁸³ See, for example: Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters, Volume 2* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1928); Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover: University Press of New England and Brandeis University Press, 1999); Mathew Mark Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Peter M. Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

countries. In its advocacy, the Committee portrayed Russia's discrimination against American Jews travelling within its borders not as a manifestation of anti-Semitism, but as an affront to the dignity of the United States. In later years, the practice of using rhetoric that broadened the significance of prejudice against Jews or expressions of anti-Semitism would become a prevailing strategy of the AJC as it sought to protect American Jewry by promoting religious tolerance and legal protections for all minority groups in the United States.

The existing historiography on the AJC consistently incorporates nine major themes.²⁸⁴ Firstly, there is the theme that the organization was formed during a period of widespread and often violent persecution against Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe. Secondly, there is the theme that the AJC was an elite organization comprised of wealthy, acculturated Jews, and adherents of Reform movement Judaism in the United States. Thirdly, there is the theme that, in common with elite nineteenth-century European Jewish leadership organizations, the founding of the AJC is identified as a significant development in the history of modern Jewish communal leadership and the maturation of Jewish political activism in the Diaspora. Fourthly, there is the theme that the Committee can be criticized for its elitism and undemocratic character and for the means it used to attain and sustain a leadership position over the growing community of Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants in the United States. Fifthly, there is the theme that as a Jewish

²⁸⁴ Historian Lawrence Grossman's description of the AJC is characteristic of much of the scholarship on the organization: "The American Jewish Committee, the oldest existing Jewish defense and community-relations organization in the United States, was founded in 1906 by a small group of successful American Jews of Central European background. While the immediate impetus was the need for some organized body to speak for the Jewish community to the U.S. government about pressuring Tsarist Russia to stop pogroms against Jews, the Committee took on other issues as well, fighting against limitations on immigration to the U.S. and combating manifestations of anti-Semitism. A self-constituted Jewish elite mostly associated with the reform movement in Judaism, the AJC worked quietly, behind the scenes, utilizing the contacts its members had with government officials and other influential Americans. In the eyes of the Committee, American Jews had no interests separate and apart from other Americans; what the AJC sought was simply to eliminate the barriers to full Jewish participation in American life and to secure, as far as possible, Jewish equality in other countries." See: Lawrence Grossman, "Transformation Through Crisis: The American Jewish Committee and the Six-Day War," *American Jewish History* 86 (1998): 28-29.

interest group, the AJC was dedicated to using quiet diplomacy and the personal connections of its leaders to the upper echelons of American institutions, to achieve its political objectives. Sixthly, there is the theme that the Committee preferred to frame its political ambitions and its domestic political activities as broadly important to all Americans as opposed to narrowly important to American Jews.²⁸⁵ In this regard, the motives for the AJC's public advocacy and its associated rhetoric are connected to the anxiety or fear exhibited by the elites of the American Jewish establishment that the *en masse* arrival of new Jewish immigrants would precipitate an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. Seventhly, there is the theme that the Committee preferred to publically deny the existence of Jewish voting blocs, but, in private negotiations with American lawmakers, "created the impression that it spoke for and perhaps controlled the Jewish immigrant voters who were regarded by a number of politicians as an important factor in certain local, state, and national elections."²⁸⁶ Eighthly, there is the theme that the AJC was hostile towards Zionism because the aspirations of the movement could lead to charges of dual loyalty. Ninthly, there is the theme that the AJC encouraged the rapid acculturation of Jewish immigrants because its founders believed that greater Jewish integration into American society would forestall an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ According to Naomi Cohen, a fundamental premise of the AJC's approach to its domestic political activities was to "divest" political issues "of any Jewish label." See: Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 29.

²⁸⁶ Goldstein, 61. Goldstein argues that the "AJC's political clout would partially rest upon...[the] widely held belief" that the organization was capable of controlling the voting behavior of the American Jewish community. See: Goldstein, 61.

²⁸⁷ Regarding the anxieties of the American Jewish establishment, Grossman emphasises that acculturated Jews were deeply concerned about the social impact of new Jewish immigrants: "Committee members were conscious of their Jewish responsibility toward the large numbers of East European Jews entering the country but at the same time feared that these un-Americanized masses—bringing with them Old World customs and alien ideologies, holding public rallies and protests meetings instead of working patiently through the existing Jewish establishment—threatened to create the image in the public mind that American Jewry saw itself as a foreign culture transplanted artificially to American shores. Such an assumption might evoke an anti-Semitic reaction and endanger the status of all American Jews. Committee members, therefore, considering themselves the natural 'stewards' of the community, took on the mission of educating the new arrivals in proper Americanism." See: Grossman, 29.

In its public advocacy work, the AJC took on the mission of persuading the broader American public that the new immigrants who made up the majority of the growing American Jewish community were loyal to their new home and would contribute to American society. The AJC was founded during a period of intense anti-Jewish persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe and the Committee was certainly an elite organization whose small, well connected leadership cohort, tried to exercise control over both their newly arrived coreligionists and how their community was perceived by the broader American public. Anxiety and status insecurity shaped the AJC's approaches to public advocacy but the existing historiography on the organization which criticizes its efforts as timid or passive misjudges or fails to recognize the strategies and considerations that underlay the AJC's earliest activities. The organization was often silent but its leadership did not ignore provocations; rather, they were deliberate about if and how to respond. As will be discussed throughout this dissertation, they declined to respond when they thought that there was nothing they could do to mitigate the harm that had already been done or believed that any organized response from the American Jewish community would only aggravate the problem. In comparison to the public advocacy and protests of the Civil Rights movement, the AJC's early efforts do appear timid or passive but the organization's archives reveal both the extent of the leadership's deliberations and that, from an early date, the Committee was building its capacity to engage in more overt forms of public advocacy.

The AJC's hostility towards Zionism is one of the most contentious aspects of the organization's history. The AJC is described as an anti-Zionist (or non-Zionist) group that opposed Jewish nationalism because its goals were impractical and its rhetoric was potentially dangerous. The anxieties and status insecurity of the acculturated Jews of the American Jewish establishment shaped the attitudes of early-twentieth-century American Jewish elites towards the

aspirations of Jewish nationalism. The AJC's antagonism towards Zionism stemmed from both an ideological and a public relations perspective. According to Donald Fishman, the "Jewish establishment felt threatened by the [Zionist] movement in two ways. First, they perceive that the advocacy of Zionism by a minority faction within the Jewish community would impugn the patriotism of all American Jews in the eyes of the non-Jewish majority. Secondly, they regarded Zionism as an obstacle to the successful integration of Eastern European immigrants. Faced with a dual challenge, the establishment fashioned a rhetorical response that was nativist, alarmist, and derisive."²⁸⁸ The Zionists' assertion that Jews were a nation (as opposed to a religious group) conflicted with the AJC's founders' conception of their identity, which privileged their American citizenship over their ethnic, racial, and religious difference. They were concerned that emphasizing separatist political aspirations would call into question the patriotism of native-born and naturalized American Jews.

Donald Fishman argues that, notwithstanding the AJC's reputation for discretion in the exercise of influence, open public advocacy was at the heart of the organization's mission from the beginning, because it was founded to confront and marginalize the Zionist movement in the United States. Fishman argues that, before the founding of the AJC, the American Jewish establishment was already gaining experience in public advocacy within the Jewish community through what he describes as a "campaign" to discredit (and thereby limit the growth of) the Zionist movement in the United States. According to Fishman, "the anti-Zionist response was immediate and vitriolic. The campaign contained publicly expressed statements of hostility, intimations of disaster if the movement were to succeed, and constant appeals to the reigning

²⁸⁸ Donald Fishman, "Reform Judaism and the anti-Zionist persuasive campaign," *Communication Quarterly* 46 (1998): 389.

system of values.”²⁸⁹ Fishman describes these efforts as sophisticated public advocacy, designed to undermine Zionism while simultaneously building the patriotic sentiments of American Jews and the broader American public’s perception of the patriotism of this new, and steadily growing, immigrant community. “Overall,” Fishman argues, “the tactics employed by anti-Zionists were designed to exploit the pretensions and confusing aims of the [Zionist] movement, to undermine the credibility of its leaders, and to demonstrate the impracticality of its objectives. Beneath the surface, these efforts by anti-Zionists were tied to their general outlook: Having found a utopia in America, it was heretical and disloyal to seek a utopia elsewhere.”²⁹⁰

The marginalization of Zionism, however, was not the predominant aim of the AJC’s public advocacy during the early-twentieth century. Their main goal was to overt an intensification of anti-Semitism and the Committee’s opposition to Zionism was part of that effort. Marginalizing Zionism was an aspect of this effort within the larger campaign to educate the American people and influence American public opinion, over both the short and long term, towards tolerance, respect, and co-existence.

The public advocacy work and applications of mass media employed by the American Jewish Committee that took place after the Second World War were more substantial and have attracted more attention from scholars than the AJC’s activities during the time period covered by this study.²⁹¹ The motivations and the origins of this more overt postwar advocacy, however, can be traced back to the activities of the first generation of AJC leaders. The case studies included in this dissertation will show that all of the advocacy strategies that the AJC would

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 383.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 389.

²⁹¹ See, for example: Art Simon, “*Make Way for Youth: The American Jewish Committee and the Social Problem Film*,” *American Jewish History* 97 (2013): 367-389. See also: Cohen, 333-344.

apply after the Second World War, and the organizational infrastructure needed to carry out this kind of work, were developed, or developing during, the early history of the organization.

The limited amount of existing scholarship on the AJC's public advocacy between its establishment in 1906 and the death of Louis Marshall in 1929 is found in just three studies of the early history of the organization: Nathan Schachner's *The Price of Liberty: A History of the American Jewish Committee*, Judith S. Goldstein's *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure: The American Jewish Committee Fight Against Immigration Restriction, 1906-1917*, and Naomi W. Cohen's *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966*.²⁹² Schachner and

²⁹² Nathan Schachner, *The Price of Liberty: A History of the American Jewish Committee* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1948); Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972); Judith S. Goldstein, *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure: The American Jewish Committee Fight Against Immigration Restriction, 1906-1917* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990). Additionally, the AJC commissioned and published another short study of its history to celebrate the organization's fiftieth anniversary. See: Frederick W. Robin and Selma G. Hirsh, *The Pursuit of Equality: A Half Century of the American Jewish Committee* (New York: Crown Publishers and the American Jewish Committee, 1957). Robin and Hirsh's account of the AJC's early history can be described as a piece of promotional material as opposed to an academic study. Their work is rarely cited in the historiography on the Committee. Their account, however, contains arguments and evidence that are consistent with the existing historiography on the Committee. For example, they situate the founding of the Committee in the context of the largest waves of Eastern European Jewish immigration to the United States and the concerns of the American Jewish establishment during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century: "How to succor victims of oppression had long troubled thoughtful American Jewish leaders. Emerging domestic problems created by massive migration from Eastern Europe also stimulated further talk of an American organization to protect the civil and religious rights of Jews the world over...some sort of permanent, broad-gauged body was needed. A few men set out to find a way." (See: Robin and Hirsh, 14.) They also identify the strategy underlying the AJC's early efforts to "Americanize" issues in order to divest them of a Jewish label. They cite, for example, a speech delivered by Louis Marshall during the treaty abrogation campaign in which the AJC leader sought to portray Russia's discriminatory treatment of American Jewish passport holders as insulting to all American citizens, regardless of the faith: "The painfully slow methods of diplomacy have failed. We, a nation of 100,000,000 Americans, stand at the door of Russia, hat in hand, pleading with it...With a sardonic smile Russia answers: 'Not yet'...It is not the Jew who is insulted; it is the American people. And the finding of a proper remedy against this degradation is not a Jewish but an American question." (See: Robin and Hirsh, 19.) Similarly, Robin and Hirsch identify how concerns about how Jewish communal activism would be perceived by the majority of Americans influenced the strategies and methods that the Committee adopted. For example, in contemplating how to respond to the articles published in the *Dearborn Independent*, Robin and Hirsh note that: "It was essential to weigh the merits of each proffered course before leaping into ill-advised action. Committee leaders deduced that a Congressional hearing, as urged by some, would only 'enable anti-Semites to shovel all manner of lies into the record' rather than silence them. Suppression of the *Dearborn Independent* by law was rejected as 'un American' interference with freedom of speech. Similarly, prosecution of its distributors smacked of persecution. A libel suit, too, would risk giving further publicity to the very libel it hoped to halt. The Committee preferred 'condemnation at the bar of public opinion' and decided, therefore, to 'rely on the sense of justice of the American people' rather than 'upon legal proceedings.'" (See: Robin and Hirsh, 31.) Although they do not refer to the "cult of synthesis," Robin and Hirsh argue that promoting this concept to both the broader American

Cohen's books were both commissioned by the AJC;²⁹³ Goldstein's book is based on her doctoral dissertation.²⁹⁴

Schachner and Cohen's studies contain accounts of some of the AJC's earliest public advocacy efforts but, as will be shown, there are significant gaps in their descriptions and analyses of the organization's activities. Goldstein's work focuses on the AJC's lobbying of American lawmakers during the first ten years of the organization's history. In Goldstein's account, the public advocacy and public relations carried out by the AJC is treated as historically significant but ancillary to the organization's activities as a lobby group. This dissertation will provide a broader and more thorough analysis of the Committee's efforts to shape public opinion

public and to new Jewish immigrants was at the heart of the Committee's agenda during the early history of the organization: "In those first three decades of the twentieth century, when one out of every three Jews was relatively new to this country, the Committee sought to promote, among all Americans, a wider understanding of Jews and Judaism; also self-understanding among American Jews. It labored to demonstrate what is now accepted as a truism: that Americanism and Judaism are mutually reinforcing, that to be a good American requires no man to sacrifice his religion or the ties that link him through bonds of sentiment and memory with his co-religionists elsewhere." (See: Robin and Hirsh, 24.) Their account also identifies the Committee's early commitment to information gathering as significant. They refer to the Committee-sponsored investigations of the American Jewish community and its sponsorship of the *American Jewish Year Book* as reflective of the AJC's "inquiring spirit" but they provide few details or further analysis of the deliberations of the organization's leaders. (See: Robin and Hirsch, 24.) Finally, in common with this study but in contrast to much of the historiography on the early history of the AJC, Robin and Hirsh argue that the Committee's earliest public advocacy activities were significant and influenced the organization's later, more conspicuous and well-known advocacy on behalf of American Jewry and other ethnic and religious minority communities in the United States. They argue that out of the Committee's earliest activities "was born the modern technique of mobilizing the resources of the mass media in a planful [sic] public-information program to combat bigotry, not as a minority problem, but as an American problem." (See: Robin and Hirsh, 39.)²⁹³ Schachner and Cohen acknowledge in the prefaces to their books that their studies were commissioned by the AJC. In both cases, the authors assert that the Committee did not attempt to influence their scholarship or their conclusions. Schachner writes: "It must be stated at the outset that this is not an official history of the American Jewish Committee. Though sponsored by and issued under the imprint of the Committee no attempt has been made by its officers or members to censor or influence in any way the judgments and interpretations of the author. He is to be considered as solely responsible for the material that has gone into this book... He has attempted, though himself currently a member of the staff, to be wholly objective in the writing of the history." This quote is taken from the preface of Schachner's history of the AJC. The page is unnumbered. Cohen asserts that she was given open access to archived materials and complete freedom to interpret the documents and assess the activities of the Committee: "Although the American Jewish Committee commissioned this study as part of the observance of its sixtieth anniversary, its direction ended there. I was given complete and unlimited access to all archives and records. Staff members responded to my queries freely and critically. I formed my own opinions, and I alone am responsible for the interpretation of the materials. 'They'll never believe you,' Dr. [John] Slawson [a former Executive Vice-President of the AJC] warned me. That may be, but I would like to keep the record straight." See, Cohen, ix-x.²⁹⁴ See, Jonathan D. Sarna, "Goldstein, The Politics of Ethnic Pressure," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* LXXXIII (1993): 450.

and fight anti-Semitism during the leadership tenures of Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall than the accounts that appear in Schachner, Goldstein, and Cohen's studies.

Nathan Schachner's account of the AJC's earliest public advocacy work concentrates on the Committee's response to the pogroms in Russia. He argues that the Committee wanted to formulate a public response to the atrocities, but did not feel it could call on the American government to intervene without first convincing the broader American public that responding to these attacks was in American interests. "The Committee realized," according to Schachner, "that the problem could not be attacked frontally. It could not call on the American nation for official intervention in Russia. The plight of the Jews in Russia, though shocking enough to the generous conscience of Americans...did not come within the proper sphere of direct governmental action."²⁹⁵ Schachner argues that as the AJC wanted to be perceived by the general public as an American organization, the Committee's natural sphere of influence was on domestic matters that concerned American citizens; the pogroms, however, were a Russian problem.

Although it was appropriate, and not without precedent, to spearhead philanthropic initiatives to provide aid to coreligionists in foreign countries or the survivors of violent persecution, seeking the involvement of the American government in the internal matters of an ally was, however, another matter. Thus, Schachner argues that to justify their advocacy on a foreign issue, and build domestic support for government intervention, the AJC's leaders had to redefine the pogroms as an atrocity that in some way concerned the broader American people.

²⁹⁵ Schachner, 33.

“There were,” Schachner asserts, “indirect methods that could be properly employed by the Committee in their capacity as American citizens.”²⁹⁶

Schachner argues that the Committee decided to disseminate information about Russia as a first step towards martialling public support for government intervention: “For one thing, the Committee decided that the Jews would best be aided in their fight for human and legal rights in Russia by adequately informing all Americans ‘of the existing status of Russian affairs, with particular reference to the character of the Russian people and of their existing methods of government.’”²⁹⁷ This “campaign of education” resulted in the founding of the AJC’s first Press Bureau to monitor and collect information published about Russia, and involved the publication of a series of articles and the distribution of material to American newspapers in order to gain sympathetic coverage and editorial comment.²⁹⁸ These activities, developed in the AJC’s early years, though unsuccessful in stemming the violence in Russia or securing the intervention of the American government, would become standard practice for the AJC.

In addition to the establishment of the AJC’s Press Bureau, Schachner briefly cites a number of other instances in which the Committee employed public advocacy or public relations techniques in order to further the organization’s objectives. He mentions the AJC’s investigation of the Associated Press’ biased sources for information on Russia;²⁹⁹ the AJC’s publicity campaign concerning the blood libel trial of Mendel Beilis;³⁰⁰ the Committee’s efforts to secure the abrogation of the Russo-American treaty of 1832;³⁰¹ the establishment of the AJC’s Bureau

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 44-47.

of Jewish Statistics and Research;³⁰² the AJC's publication of the book *Jews in the Eastern War Zone*;³⁰³ the creation of the AJC's War Records Office;³⁰⁴ the organization's sponsorship of Herman Bernstein's *The History of a Lie*;³⁰⁵ and the Committee's efforts to have historically false and potentially inflammatory scenes removed from the film "King of Kings," a dramatization of the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.³⁰⁶

Schachner argues that the AJC's "policy was pragmatic and free of dogmatism. [The organization] acted with boldness when boldness was indicated, and moved warily in cases where reckless publicity might prove harmful."³⁰⁷ He notes that there were instances when the AJC declined to engage in any form of public relations campaign, and mentions specifically the organization's decision to take no action against the Ku Klux Klan out of a concern that "reaction from Jewish organizations as such would merely provide additional propaganda for the sheeted Knights and spread the fire instead of quenching it."³⁰⁸

These important examples of the AJC's public advocacy work and strategy are noted by Schachner, but they are not fully analyzed. The intention of this study is to provide a more thorough account of these instances, and others that were ignored or diminished by Schnachner, Cohen, and Goldstein. This study will also situate these actions within the broader context of the AJC's efforts to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States during the early-twentieth century.

Judith Goldstein's *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure* concentrates on the relationship between the AJC's leadership and American politicians. Her study focusses on the AJC's

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 54-55.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

activities as a lobby group dealing with American lawmakers during the early-twentieth century. The focus of the Committee's lobbying was on the policy debates over new immigration restrictions, including requiring literacy tests and, most importantly, on the issues associated with the treaty abrogation campaign. Goldstein portrays the AJC's political ambitions as substantial, but, with the exception of the public advocacy the organization practiced during the abrogation campaign, she describes the Committee's lobbying tactics as "low-keyed."³⁰⁹ She argues that the organization "never tried to galvanize the Jewish vote; it never made Congressmen its 'mere spokesmen;' it never employed high-powered, prominent lobbyists or resorted to bribery; nor did it use insider information to gain an advantage over its opponents."³¹⁰

In Goldstein's view, the abrogation campaign to end the trade pact between Russia and the United States, during which the AJC sponsored the distribution of pro-abrogation materials and staged public rallies, was a major deviation from the pressure politics and advocacy tactics that had been adopted by the Committee's founders. Normally, the organization preferred "inconspicuous, behind-the-scenes contacts with politicians as a way of avoiding criticism from non-Jewish political groups."³¹¹

Goldstein argues that the leaders of the AJC, and in particular Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall, "wanted to impress their political attitudes and lobbying techniques on the [American] Jewish community because they believed in rapid assimilation rather than separatism, in reform rather than radical change, and in quiet persuasion through direct access to men in government rather than public rallies and mass action."³¹² She shares the consensus view that the AJC's approach to public advocacy was shaped by the anxieties of the American Jewish establishment

³⁰⁹ Goldstein, 337.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

and the political divisions within early-twentieth-century American Jewry. The leaders of the AJC, according to Goldstein, “were jealous and fearful of other Jewish leaders, Zionists or Russian-Jewish labor leaders...They feared that others would upset the dignified, discreet tone of the uptown style of pressure politics...and would spoil the facade of German-Jewish assimilation and the fragile appearance of German and Russian-Jewish unity.”³¹³ In comparison to Schachner’s and Cohen’s account of the antagonism between the American Jewish establishment and communal and political leaders from other segments of American Jewry, Goldstein’s assessment is more acute: “Marshall and Schiff prided themselves on their roles as leaders and patently did not want to share their power with new people and ideological enemies. Those enemies were the Zionists and the congress movement that the Zionists spawned.”³¹⁴

Goldstein treats the public advocacy that was funded or organized by the leaders of the AJC more narrowly than this study. She describes the AJC’s public advocacy as part of the organization’s efforts to sway American lawmakers as opposed to one element of a broader strategy. The purpose of the AJC’s public advocacy, in her view, was to create political pressure regarding particular issues and was not part of a general strategy to shape American public opinion or fight anti-Semitism in the United States. Her narrow interpretation of the AJC’s advocacy is most evident in her analysis of the AJC’s activities during the abrogation campaign. “All of the AJC’s public efforts,” according to Goldstein, “were aimed at persuading Congress to pass a joint resolution directing the President to terminate the Treaty” with Russia.³¹⁵ She argues that the campaign was successful because it was coordinated to coincide with the build up to the 1912 Presidential and Congressional elections. “Politicians recognized,” Goldstein argues, “that

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 292.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

abrogation provided a good foreign policy issue with which to build support among an important ethnic group.”³¹⁶

Goldstein views the abrogation campaign more as seizing an opportunity than a part of a larger strategy of public advocacy. Although the dispute with Russia was a complicated matter of international relations and treaty interpretation, from the perspective of electoral politics and strategy, support for abrogation was a simple matter of declaring oneself for or against. The issue offered candidates an opportunity to distinguish themselves from their opponents. In districts with large Jewish populations, it was a potential “wedge issue,” and the public advocacy work coordinated by the AJC was designed to show American lawmakers that support for abrogation was sufficiently animated to be the deciding factor in their races. The abrogation campaign was without question the AJC’s most substantial and most public exercise of public advocacy during the early-twentieth century; however, as will be shown, the scope of the AJC’s public advocacy efforts, and the resources the organization devoted to building the infrastructure needed to carry out public advocacy, suggests that the Committee had more ambitious social and political aims beyond the fight against literacy tests and immigration restrictions and the abrogation campaign.

Naomi Cohen’s *Not Free to Desist* is the leading work on the early history of the American Jewish Committee, and contains the most substantial analysis of the of the Committee’s involvement in public advocacy before the escalation of the Vietnam War. She summarizes the Committee’s approach to public advocacy by noting that the organization was always deliberate in its actions, cautious about publicity, and wanted to control statements purportedly made on behalf of the American Jewish community: “The Committee’s tactics called for a moderate campaign, gauging the proper moment to apply pressure and restraining

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

individual Jews for making incorrect or intemperate statements. It frowned upon indiscriminate agitation which not only ‘wasted powder and shot’ but stimulated activity among opponents.”³¹⁷

According to Cohen, the American Jewish Committee was uncomfortable asking Jewish lawmakers to act as spokesmen for Jewish causes because of how this activity might affect the general public’s perception of the American Jewish community. The Committee “preferred to avoid situations in which a Jewish congressman, posing as the champion of his people, might attempt to direct policy independently of the Jewish stewards.”³¹⁸ In her opinion, the same concerns about perception also led the leaders of the AJC to publically repudiate the idea of a Jewish vote (or Jewish voting blocs) even though, according to both Cohen and Goldstein, the AJC was comfortable reminding vulnerable lawmakers about the potential influence of Jewish voters in specific districts and, at times, made representations about the Committee’s ability to sway Jewish voters. “Although the Committee preferred to deny publicly the existence of a Jewish vote, even on specific questions,” Cohen notes that the organization “used that vote as a weapon when bargaining with political leaders. For pragmatic purposes it realized that the strength of a minority in a democracy rested on the ballot.”³¹⁹

Cohen’s study emphasises the reluctance of the American Jewish Committee to engage in forms of public advocacy; however, some of the material she includes in her study, and in her later work on the AJC, demonstrates that the AJC was far more involved, and far more concerned with public advocacy, than she acknowledged.³²⁰ Cohen’s assessment of the AJC’s approach to public advocacy is surprising given that some of her own work sheds light on the

³¹⁷ Cohen, 42.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

³¹⁹ Cohen, 32. See also: Goldstein, 61.

³²⁰ See: Naomi W. Cohen, “The Abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832,” *Jewish Social Studies* 25 (1963): 3-41.

public advocacy work of the AJC, particularly in the treaty abrogation campaign and the Committee's efforts to maintain liberal immigration policies in the United States.³²¹

During the abrogation campaign, for example, Cohen argues that the "gravity of the situation and the high stakes encouraged the Committee to let down its usual conservative guard and use more daring tactics. Not only did it discard backstairs diplomacy in favor of a public campaign, but it also cultivated cooperation with non-Jews and threw its weight into the political arena."³²² The organization earmarked twenty-five thousand dollars for the campaign, which included the distribution of thousands of copies of pro-abrogation materials.³²³ In the late stages of the campaign, the Committee supported the staging of mass protest rallies.³²⁴ In fact, the AJC organized "an enormous abrogation rally in New York City which featured appearances by two Presidential hopefuls, Woodrow Wilson and Champ Clark," as well as speeches from several Senators and Congressman, and William Randolph Hearst.³²⁵

In assessing this campaign, Cohen concludes that the AJC "succeeded in arousing American public opinion and forcing the hand of an antagonistic administration."³²⁶ While Cohen identifies the AJC's public support of the abrogation campaign as unprecedented in the

³²¹ See: Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 37-80. Cohen's assessment is also surprising because *Not Free to Desist* contains strong criticisms of the AJC's failure to engage in public advocacy. For example, Cohen chastises the AJC's leadership for failing to campaign on behalf of American entry into the League of Nations, despite the organization's strong support for Woodrow Wilson's postwar program and the AJC's support for the creation of the World Court. According to Cohen, "by its silence and often exaggerated aloofness from political issues, the Committee retreated when the battle was only half won. The United States was not ready for a League of Nations, and the American Jewish Committee was unprepared to guide public opinion to new directions." See: Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 122. Cohen is also critical of the AJC's failure to more effectively and consistently cooperate with interest groups representing other ethnic and religious minority communities in the United States. She argues that "until the 1930s participation in non-Jewish affairs was limited and unplanned. Especially interesting in light of later developments was the Committee's refusal to fight Negro segregation in government service during the Wilson administration." See: Cohen, 29

³²² Cohen, 55.

³²³ Goldstein, 165-166.

³²⁴ Cohen, 71.

³²⁵ Goldstein, 167-168.

³²⁶ Cohen, 54.

history of the organization, she concludes that this campaign was a dramatic exception to the strategies and approaches that typically shaped the AJC's public advocacy work. According to Cohen, the campaign was a singular instance of self-confidence from the otherwise cautious Committee.³²⁷

It is true that the first generation of AJC leaders did not engage in any further public relations and public advocacy campaigns on the scale, and of the same visibility, as the abrogation campaign; however, the organization did not retreat from efforts to influence American public opinion. In the years after the abrogation campaign, until the death of Louis Marshall, the Committee cultivated and practiced more subtle, and long-term, but nevertheless still public, approaches to influencing public opinion.

Cohen's assessment of the AJC's public advocacy is surprising because she acknowledges that the AJC believed that efforts to educate the public, and gather and disseminate information, were part of the organization's mandate. The American Jewish Committee, according to Cohen, "strongly stressed 'enlightenment' as its proper function as defense agency."³²⁸ *Not Free to Desist* contains numerous examples of the AJC engaging in public advocacy or building the institutions its leaders believed would help the organization achieve its political objectives. In addition to the treaty abrogation campaign, Cohen cites the distribution of articles on czarist Russia, the exposure of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a forgery, and the research the AJC commissioned to analyze the economic effects of immigration as examples when Committee resources were "directed to mobilize mass sympathy for immediate and concrete problems."³²⁹ Her view is also surprising because Cohen acknowledges that the

³²⁷ See: Cohen, 80.

³²⁸ Cohen, 33.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

Committee used books and pamphlets, including the studies it sponsored, such as *Jewish Disabilities and the Balkan States*, *Jews in the Eastern War Zone*, and *Jewish Contributions to Civilization*, to further its objectives.³³⁰

There were numerous additional and ambitious AJC-sponsored efforts to influence American public opinion that were given little attention or left out of Cohen's account. For example, Cohen gives very little consideration to the AJC's attempt to catalogue an honor role of all Jews who served in the American armed forces during the First World War.³³¹ This is again surprising given, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, the significant financial resources that the AJC devoted to this project. Cohen acknowledges that, after World War I, the Committee exhibited an "increased sensitivity to anti-Semitic manifestations. Statements and articles containing derogatory remarks about Jews were systematically tracked down and answered."³³² Her study, however, does not provide a survey of these numerous cases nor detail the organization's strategy and deliberations when deciding how to (or if to) respond to a variety of different manifestations of anti-Semitism in the United States. One of the purposes of this study is to provide a more complete survey of everything that the first generation of AJC leaders tried to do to curb the growth of anti-Semitism in the United States, and to describe the advocacy and public relations strategies that underlay those efforts.

³³⁰ Cohen describes some of the AJC's publications as works that were commissioned specifically for narrow audiences, most importantly lawmakers and policymakers. "Studies like *Jewish Disabilities and the Balkan States* and *Jews in the Eastern War Zone* were circulated among government officials as a prelude to Committee requests for diplomatic intercession. The Committee even had a ready scholarly rebuttal when criticisms of the [Jewish] ritual method of animal slaughter arose. Less immediate but more ambitious was Joseph Jacobs's study *Jewish Contributions to Civilization*, answering the 'higher anti-Semitism' propagated by Werner Sombart, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and their ilk." See: Cohen, 34. For more on the AJC's publication of *Jews in the Eastern War Zone*, see: Cohen, 86.

³³¹ Cohen, 100.

³³² *Ibid.*, 100-101.

Not Free to Desist contains accounts of the internal development of the AJC's advocacy infrastructure. The significance of these institutional developments, however, is downplayed in favor of an interpretation of the AJC's public advocacy that stresses the group's exercise of quiet diplomacy and emphasizes the continuity between the AJC's activities and Jewish communal leadership traditions. The significance of these efforts should not be diminished. Ironically, some of Cohen's descriptions of these developments convey their magnitude. For example, she writes:

Seeing scientific inquiry as a tool for social planning, [the Committee] assumed many of the tasks of a research bureau. At the first level was self-edification. Since it was axiomatic that the Committee leaders should know the situation of Jews abroad, they invited reports from officials of other Jewish organizations, gave financial assistance to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and employed a staff to read and translate foreign periodicals. They initiated research on the general subject of race classification and ferreted out legal precedents for abrogating a treaty or for using American consulates as refuges for pogrom victims. They wanted to know the number of Jewish congregations and the number of Jewish criminals, how American Jewish farmers lived, how Prohibition would affect Jewish religious practices.

The Committee set up a Bureau of Jewish Statistics, which later was amalgamated into the Bureau of Jewish Social Research and Statistics. It also assumed responsibility for the publication of the *American Jewish Year Book*...on whose articles the executive expended a great deal of thought. The Committee's statistical machinery permitted it to cooperate with the government in the periodic censuses of religious bodies and, more important, to disseminate significant information to the general public.³³³

The development of the Committee's infrastructure was crucial to its practice of public advocacy. Cohen states that "Obviously, all this activity was not purely disinterested"³³⁴ but, in *Not Free to Desist*, she is reluctant to emphasize the broader social and political significance of these efforts. Admittedly, it is an uncomfortable and potentially provocative notion to acknowledge that a group of wealthy Jews sought to sway public opinion in the United States

³³³ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

and devoted considerable financial resources to achieving that goal. Cohen avoids the question of the wide-ranging ambitions of the AJC's public advocacy, but she bluntly rejects the notion that the activities of the AJC were designed to shape the beliefs and attitudes of American Jews. She states: "Nor did [the Committee] ever seriously consider how it might shape the thinking of the American Jewish community. It remained aloof, ever the beneficent patrician—a guardian, yet a spectator—until the world-shaking events of the 1930s launched upon new paths."³³⁵

As this dissertation will show, the evidence available in the AJC's archives suggests that this is not an accurate assessment of the activities of the first generation of AJC leaders. Through their philanthropy, which encouraged the acculturation of new Jewish immigrants, and through public relations efforts, which sought to influence the social and political beliefs of both American Jews and the broader American public, the organization was self-consciously involved in an effort to shape American public opinion.

Additionally, the Committee's earliest public advocacy efforts went beyond insular Jewish issues. Cohen states that before the First World War "the Committee's concern encompassed merely the Jew, but it would be only a short step to the realization that the struggle for freedom in America is indivisible, that it could not be won within the confines of a single ethnic group."³³⁶ Some leaders of the AJC recognized this from the very beginning and were conscious of framing the issues that were of concern to them as matters of ensuring and perfecting American democracy, not merely defending or securing the social status and political rights of American Jews. Their methods were often subtle, but the American Jewish Committee was neither aloof nor disinterested in exercising its influence to shape the social and political

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

culture of the United States and the political beliefs and social attitudes of the broader American public.

Chapter 3: The Historical Context of the Founding of the AJC

Introduction: Interest Group Scholarship

The American Jewish Committee has been described as a communal advocacy organization, a communal defense organization, a communal leadership body, a Jewish group, a civil rights organization, a human rights organization, an elite cabal, and a lobby group.

Arguably, the most fitting and neutral (or least inflammatory) label for the AJC is to describe it as an “interest group.” In contemporary society, interest groups have attracted a great deal of media attention, public scrutiny, and academic commentary because of criticism of their role in shaping public opinion and foreign and domestic policy.³³⁷ At the very least, it is fair to state that interest groups are recognized by political leaders and the general public in modern democratic states as significant, although not necessarily good faith or virtuous, participants in governmental decisions making at all levels, from local to international.

Today, the AJC is considered a part of the so-called “Israel lobby.” For example, the Committee is mentioned numerous times in John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt’s well-known book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*.³³⁸ Mearsheimer and Walt’s book, which was published in 2007, generated significant controversy and provoked substantial protest from American Jewish organizations and other interests groups because it claimed that the “real reason why American politicians are so deferential [to Israel] is the political power of the Israel

³³⁷ In the United States, the alleged role of interest groups in influencing governmental policy on international relations, such as the support of neoconservative groups for the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, and on a number of important domestic issues, including gun rights (second amendment rights), abortion rights (reproductive health), and energy policy (environmentalism) are regularly discussed in contemporary media.

³³⁸ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007).

lobby.”³³⁹ At the time of the founding of the AJC in 1906, there was no State of Israel and, as noted earlier in this study, the Committee’s attitude toward Jewish political sovereignty has changed over time, but the organization has always been an interest group and it has always been concerned about its public image, public relations, and public advocacy. While Mearsheimer and Walt’s work has been praised by some for its bravery in exposing the truth and derided by others as anti-Semitic, it is significant that they also wrote that “Like the efforts of other ethnic lobbies and interest groups, the activities of the Israel lobby’s various elements are legitimate forms of democratic participation, and they are for the most part consistent with America’s long tradition of interest group activity.”³⁴⁰ Interest groups like the AJC, and many others, have a long history of trying to exert political influence in the United States.

Possibly because of their larger public profile, interest groups have recently been given more attention by scholars, particularly political scientists seeking to explain their formation, their perseverance, their role in modern democratic states, and the means they employ to influence public policy and public opinion. The scholarship on interest groups is sufficiently large, specialized, and enduring to have recognized landmark works including David Truman’s *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*, C. Wright Mills’ *The Power Elite*,³⁴¹ Robert Dahl’s *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*,³⁴² and Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*.³⁴³

In *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*, David Truman defines interest groups as “any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes

³³⁹ Mearsheimer and Walt, 5.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

³⁴² Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

³⁴³ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes.”³⁴⁴ This definition is often cited by other scholars in the field and is sufficiently broad to encompass the diverse work of the American Jewish Committee, including its earliest public advocacy and public relations activities, and its efforts to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States during the early-twentieth century.³⁴⁵

In their introduction to *Interest Groups Unleashed*, Paul S. Herrnson, Christopher J. Deering, and Clyde Wilcox argue that interest groups have consistently been active in the American political process. “Throughout American history,” they argue, “interest groups have sought to influence public policy. The right of citizens to organize and petition government is enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution, and groups of farmers, workers, bankers, religious activists, environmentalists, and others long have used their money, manpower, and ability to lobby national government.”³⁴⁶ Herrnson, Deering, and Wilcox further argue that interest group activity, although always political in nature, has never been limited to the lobbying of lawmakers. The work of these groups has always been broader, including attempts to “lobby government officials, the media, and the general public in an effort to influence laws and regulations.”³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Jack L. Walker, *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 4. A truncated version of Truman’s definition of interest is also cited by Ronald J. Hrebenar. See: Ronald J. Hrebenar, *Interest Group Politics in America* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 8.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Paul S. Herrnson, Christopher J. Deering, and Clyde Wilcox, “Introduction” in *Interest Groups Unleashed*, edited by Paul S. Herrnson, Christopher J. Deering, and Clyde Wilcox (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 1-2.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

As noted earlier in this study, David Truman argued that the “formation of associations tends to occur in waves.”³⁴⁸ In the historiography on interests groups, the early-twentieth century has been identified as an important period in the development of these organizations in the United States. The foundation of the AJC can be seen as a manifestation of a historical trend in early-twentieth-century America that saw the proliferation of larger, more sophisticated, and more ambitious social and political organizations. James Q. Wilson, for example, mentions the formation of the American Jewish Committee as part of a “great burst in the organization of associations, especially those of national scope” that “took place in the first two decades of the twentieth century.”³⁴⁹ According to Wilson, “There has never been anything like it before or since.”³⁵⁰ In addition to the AJC, among the notable national organizations founded during this period were the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Medical Association.

In the scholarship on interests groups, there is no generally accepted single “grand theory” in the field, although attempts have been made to develop an overarching model for studying interests groups as “either impediments to or instruments of democracy.”³⁵¹ Scholarship in this field has been diverse in terms of methods and perspectives, including “normative theory,” which seeks to both understand and assess the democratic merit or legitimacy of the

³⁴⁸ James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198. Wilson cites Truman’s observation about the formation of organizations occurring in waves in order to make the point that the establishment of interest groups cannot be described as random and must be seen as linked to other developments, including, for example, the proliferation of new communications technologies. For more on the periods that saw significant growth of interest groups and other “membership associations” in the United States, see: Jocelyn Elise Crowley and Theda Skocpol, “The Rush to Organize: Explaining Associational Formation in the United States, 1860s-1920s” *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (October, 2001): 814-816. See also, Gerald Gamm and Robert D. Putnam, “The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXIX (Spring, 1999): 511-557.

³⁴⁹ James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Marie Hojnacki, David C. Kimball, Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Barry, and Beth L. Leech, “Studying Organization Advocacy and Influence: Reexamining Interest Group Research,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (2012): 381.

activities of interest groups, and “formal theory,” which relies heavily upon Mancur Olson’s theories.³⁵² There is also a considerable body of scholarship on interests groups that attempts to use empirical models to study these organizations. As already noted in the introduction to this study, a number of scholars have developed and applied different empirical models to measure or assess the impact of the advocacy work of interests groups and which attempt to quantify the influence of these organizations on the outcomes of specific policy debates.³⁵³

In their 1998 book *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and Political Science*, Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech analyzed a significant amount of the academic research on interest groups published between 1950 and 1995.³⁵⁴ Among other recommendations, they called for scholars to be more sensitive to the context in which interest groups form and attempt to exert influence. Less than twenty years later, in a review of existing scholarship in the field, which was published in 2012, Marie Hojnacki, David C. Kimball, Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Barry, and Beth L. Leech, concluded that “considerable progress” had been made in the field in paying more attention to context.³⁵⁵ They argued, however, that attention to context remains important because “Efforts to systematically observe groups in the environments in which they develop, make decisions, and take action, and in a way that

³⁵² Formal theory is unique for the scope of the arguments that are emphasized by this analytical approach. Olson examined the development and work of interest groups using what can be described as an evolutionary perspective. Formal theory treats the emergence of interest groups as linked to traditional social structures, most importantly the family, and as the product of the transition and transformation of modern states from agrarian societies to advanced, industrial economies.

³⁵³ See: Jan Potters and Randolph Sloof, “Interest groups: A survey of empirical models that try to assess their influence,” *European Journal of Political Economy* 12 (1996): 403-442.

³⁵⁴ Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech, *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and Political Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

³⁵⁵ Hojnacki, Kimball, Baumgartner, Barry, and Leech, 386.

recognizes the variation in those environments, could advance not only our understanding of groups but also our understanding of politics and policy making more generally.”³⁵⁶

In light of these suggestions about more thoroughly exploring the context of the creation and activities of interest groups, Chapter 3 of this dissertation provides a review of the historical context which led to the founding of the AJC, including an examination of the social, economic, and political divisions that existed between the early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment and the rapidly growing community of Eastern European and Russian Jewish immigrants to the United States. This review also includes discussions of the impact of the dynamics of race in early-twentieth century America on Jewish public advocacy, identifies the motivations of the founders of the AJC, and substantiates the argument of this study that the early public advocacy activities of the Committee have been misunderstood or under-appreciated in the historiography on the Committee and the historiography on American Jewry.

The Stimuli for New Approaches to Jewish Public Advocacy in America

The founding of the AJC, the goals that it pursued, and the means that it employed are connected to most of the important events and controversies in the historiography on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American Jewry. Most importantly, the establishment of the Committee is connected to the well-documented social, political, and religious divisions that existed between American Jews of German descent and those of Eastern European and Russian descent, and the conflicts within the American Jewish community that accompanied the rise of Communism and the emergence of the modern Zionist movement. Additionally, the dynamics of racial identity, and the centrality of questions of race in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

century American society and politics, influenced the advocacy strategies the AJC's founders developed and the projects they chose to support. The AJC's social and political agenda, and the advocacy techniques that the organization developed and employed, were shaped by the intra-communal divisions in American Jewry, the American Jewish establishment's status insecurity, and this elite community's fears about an intensification of both religion and race-based anti-Semitism in the United States. Several important historical factors came together to act as stimuli for a new approach to public advocacy that included efforts to influence American public opinion, and to utilize the rule of law and the oversight powers of constitutional courts in the United States.

Jews in the American Racial Binary

The founders of the American Jewish Committee could not avoid confronting the dynamics of race and race relations in the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Race and questions of racial identity have shaped the United States' social and political evolution. Even today, social divisions, economic disparities, and antagonism between ethnic groups remain prominent in contemporary America. The institution, abolition, and legacy of slavery, the presence of a substantial (and unassimilated) indigenous population, the growth through waves of immigration of large communities of ethnic minorities, and the social and political power consistently exercised by a Caucasian (largely Protestant) patrician class, made race and racial identification perhaps the most prominent aspect of the country's nationalism and national identity until the middle of the twentieth century. Gary Gerstle describes this phenomenon as the "enduring potency of the racialized tradition of American nationalism... This was the tradition that held that full privileges and opportunities were to be granted to particular

‘racial’ groups and not to others. It rooted nationality in race and declared that certain national groups should be barred from the United States because they possessed racial traits that rendered them unassimilable.”³⁵⁷ In a nation founded and built through immigration, questions and uncertainties about who could belong, about who could become insiders and who would always remain outsiders, were central and, crucially, these considerations informed debates about American national identity well into the twentieth century. This section will describe how American Jews and Jewish immigrants’ attempts to acculturate into American society complicated the strict white or black racial binary operating in the United States. This section will also describe how questions of race, and Jewish efforts to secure identification as white, shaped the advocacy tactics of the American Jewish Committee.³⁵⁸

Historian Eric L. Goldstein notes that “whites [in the United States have] consistently tried to understand the racial landscape through the categories ‘black’ and ‘white.’”³⁵⁹ Goldstein argues that “Jews gradually became Caucasian over the course of the twentieth century.”³⁶⁰ American Jewry’s leadership organizations, including the AJC, spearheaded the efforts of American Jews to claim the social standing and privileges of whiteness while simultaneously campaigning to erode the social, legal, and political significance of race in the United States.

³⁵⁷ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 161.

³⁵⁸ According to Eric L. Goldstein: “To white Americans of the pre-World War II era, Jews were a racial conundrum, a group that could not be clearly pinned down according to prevailing racial categories. Jews...presented a mix of qualities that was unusual among American ‘racial’ groups...Unlike African Americans, who were seen by whites of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the epitome of a backward, preindustrial race, Jews appeared to be thoroughly implicated in the urban, industrial, capitalist order that characterized the modern ‘civilized’ world.” See: Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-2.

³⁵⁹ Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

³⁶⁰ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 172.

From their first appearance in America, Jews were recognized as different.³⁶¹ This early differentiation, however, was a matter of religion as opposed to race. “In the early republic,” Matthew Frye Jacobson notes, “Jewishness was most often taken up as a matter not of racial difference marked by physicality, but of religious difference marked by a stubborn and benighted failure to see Truth.”³⁶² Jews and anti-Semitic sentiments were present in the United States during the earliest history of the nation but, during this period, animosity towards Jews was grounded in the alleged complicity of the community in the execution of Jesus and disparaging stereotypes about their commercial activities. A racial basis for anti-Jewish bigotry only gained currency in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century and coincided with an intensification of a racialized conception of the nation’s identity. It also coincided with the first wave of substantial Jewish immigration to the United States, the rise of eugenics, and the popularization of so-called scientific theories of racism and racial superiority. The intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States during this period “was part of a broader pattern of late-nineteenth-century racism against all southern and eastern European immigrants, as well as against Asian immigrants...African Americans, Native American, and Mexicans.”³⁶³

During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, public debates and discussions of race and the social and political position of American whites became increasingly animated as the power of the Caucasian majority (and white Protestant elites) was being eroded by the dramatic growth of immigrant populations, including European immigrants such Italian and Irish Catholics and Russian Jews, who, as will be discussed further below, were Caucasian in terms of

³⁶¹ For a brief discussion of the status and treatment of Jews in the United States during the colonial era, see: Jacobson, 171-172.

³⁶² Jacobson, 171-172.

³⁶³ Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 26.

skin tone but were not perceived as white by the white Protestant patrician class and were therefore denied the social standing and privileges of whiteness in the United States. Karen Brodtkin notes that the “late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century saw a steady stream of warnings by scientists, policymakers, and the popular press that ‘mongrelization’ of the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon race—the real Americans—by inferior European races (as well as by inferior non-European ones) was destroying the fabric of the nation.”³⁶⁴ Concerns about the decline of American whites (through both immigration and intermixing or “miscegenation”) were widely expressed during the era, including in influential books such as Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916)³⁶⁵ and Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy* (1920).³⁶⁶

The racial status of American Jews became entangled in these debates as the Jewish population of the United States grew and the community became more conspicuous. Nineteenth-century German Jewish immigrants to the United States made a conscious effort to acculturate into the gentile majority. They aimed to “pass as white” and their relatively small numbers, their skin tone, their rapid rise into the middle, upper-middle, and professional classes, and their embrace of (or conformity to) the American way of life made their effort to attain the status and privileges of whiteness possible. “The eagerness to be white,” Brodtkin notes “is not hard to understand, since whiteness [in America] is a state of privilege and belonging.”³⁶⁷ The arrival of over a million impoverished, Orthodox, and politically radical Eastern European Jewish immigrants threatened this status and the advocacy tactics and rhetoric about race adopted by the AJC sought to mitigate the harm to the reputation of American Jewry, and the social acceptance

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁶⁶ For a brief discussion of Stoddard’s views, see: Jacobson, 96-97.

³⁶⁷ Brodtkin, 182.

of Jews in American society, caused by the dramatic growth of a new immigrant population that was perceived as both religiously different and racially inferior.

American Jewish leadership organizations were conscious of questions of race and how the perception of their community's racial identity (or racial status in the black or white binary) would shape how mainstream American society treated American Jews and recent Jewish immigrants. Gerstle notes that "Eastern and southern Europeans...felt the sting of racial prejudice and sought to escape it. One way was to devote oneself to America's civic nationalist tradition and to fight for an end to all forms of racial discrimination. Another way was to hide one's lowly ethnic origins and to emulate 'the Nordic' in the hopes that somehow one could join the loftiest American race. In the 1930s, these two responses coexisted side by side, sometimes in the mind of the same individuals."³⁶⁸ Long before the 1930s, however, communal leaders of minority communities sponsored parallel efforts to both gain the privileges of whiteness and subvert the social and political conventions (and laws) that maintained racialized distinctions between American citizens of different colors and different faiths. Goldstein argues that European immigrants including Italians, Irish, and Eastern European Jews "did not automatically become white on these shores, but had to learn and claim this status as they acculturated."³⁶⁹ During their earliest advocacy efforts, the leaders of the AJC tried to assert American Jewry's claim to the social standing and privileges of whiteness even as they campaigned and lobbied to end discrimination based on racial and religious difference. Indeed, as will be discussed throughout this study, concerns about the perception of Jews as a race (or as "a people," as a religious minority, and as "ordinary" or "regular" Americans) shaped the Committee's

³⁶⁸ Gerstle, 183

³⁶⁹ Goldstein, 4.

approaches to public advocacy and were at the heart of their campaign to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States during the twentieth century.

In comparison to visible minority communities, American Jewry possessed advantages in their campaign to claim the status and privileges of whiteness in the United States. Despite widely held and disparaging views about supposedly common and identifiable Jewish physical characteristics, American Jews, including both the German Jewish immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century and the later waves of Eastern European and Russian Jews, were Caucasian.³⁷⁰ However, Goldstein notes that “in multiple ways, claiming the status of ‘whites’ in America was far from simple for Jews. It involved a complex emotional process in which conflicting desires for acceptance and distinctiveness often found no easy balance.”³⁷¹ Apart from how they were viewed by others, and how they tried to influence how they were viewed by others, there was a countervailing and differentiating racial component to how American Jews in both the establishment and new immigrant communities self-identified, to how they conceived of their identity and their relationship and ties to their coreligionists regardless of national origin or skin color.³⁷² The “notion that Jews shared a racial identity had an emotional appeal that tugged against the benefits of joining America’s privileged white majority.”³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Beyond questions of physical appearance, a further impediment to Jews being accepted into the white mainstream in the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was language and spoken accents. The German Jews who made up the early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment learned English but they could not shed their native accents. For example, according to Stephen Birmingham, when speaking English, Jacob Schiff’s “accent made him difficult to understand.” See: Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 309. Similarly, the Yiddish speaking immigrants who arrived later could be distinguished by their accents and the extent of their command of the English language. For both groups of immigrants, it was their American-born children who, by the sound of their voice, would be able to more fully acculturate into the white, American mainstream.

³⁷¹ Goldstein, 3.

³⁷² This inclusive conception of Jewish “peoplehood” that transcended the racial diversity of Jewish communities around the world did not prevent members of the American Jewish establishment from using the rhetoric of racial difference to distinguish between themselves and their newly arrived coreligionists. At times, questions of race permeated debates within the American Jewish community about their communal identity and conception of “peoplehood.” With the increasing arrival of Eastern European Jews in the United States, the German Jews of the

In the context of the categorization of people as either black or white, the racial component of Jewish self-identification was problematic. “An ethnic or racial conception of Jewish identity edged close to the beliefs of anti-Semites who would fence Jews out of the white mainstream. It resonated with the views of most white Protestant patricians.”³⁷⁴ Further, asserting Jewish racial distinctiveness, while authentically felt and a matter of pride within the community, conflicted with how the American Jewish establishment wanted the Jewish community to be perceived by the mainstream. “While the knowledge that they were considered a problematic group in the American racial schema motivated Jews to try to conform to the prevailing racial paradigm and identify themselves unambiguously as white, their ongoing commitment to a distinctive identity often cut against their attempts to claim whiteness.”³⁷⁵ This tension between Jewish distinctiveness and commonality with the white American majority shaped the early public advocacy of the American Jewish Committee. As will be discussed further below, in their public advocacy on behalf of American Jewry, the AJC sought to marginalize and minimize public discussion of the racial component of Jewish self-identification, even as key members of this leadership cohort believed deeply in the notion of Jews as a distinct

American Jewish establishment differentiated between their small and largely acculturated community and the newcomers using racialized rhetoric. For example, Jacobson sites an article from the *American Hebrew* which described the late-nineteenth-century community of German-American Jews as “closer to the christian sentiment around him than to the Judaism of these miserable darkened Hebrews.” See: Jacobson 175.

³⁷³ Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 50. Jews understanding of their own distinctiveness as a race transcended the boundaries of the division between black and white that characterized the racial hierarchy in the United States. For example, American Jews were aware of the existence of non-Caucasian Jewish communities, including the Ethiopian and Yemeni Jewish communities. The AJC sponsored aid programs for both communities. Despite the color of their skin, these communities were still thought of as part of “the Jewish people.”

³⁷⁴ Breitman and Lichtman, 50.

³⁷⁵ Goldstein, 2.

race (or people) and spoke privately about their community using the rhetoric of racial difference.³⁷⁶

As Karen Brodtkin argues, American Jews would eventually be perceived as “white folks” but, during their acculturation into American society, American Jewry experienced coercion to adopt the manners and style of white patricians from both the majority culture and from within their community.³⁷⁷ According to Goldstein: “Certainly Jews...pursued whiteness; it was key to their meteoric rise to become one of the most successful American ethnic groups. But there was also a good deal of coercion involved in the process by which Jews became part of the white majority.”³⁷⁸ External pressure in the form of social exclusion and discrimination was one aspect of this coercion but conformity was also impressed upon new Jewish immigrants by the American Jewish establishment, who sponsored a series of philanthropic and education programs to accelerate the pace of the acculturation of their coreligionists and, in their public advocacy on behalf of the community, sought to present Jews as white, ordinary Americans.

American Jews felt that they had a racial identity but the AJC publically denied that identity, and sought to suppress public expressions of the idea of Jewish racial distinctiveness, for the sake of how their community would be perceived and in order to obtain for American Jewry the benefits of having the status of being white in America. In the case of the members of

³⁷⁶ For example, Joseph Jacobs, a British-born scholar who was a member of the original organizing committee that coordinated the founding of the AJC, espoused a conception of Jewish difference that was fundamentally grounded in race. See Jacobson, 180-181. According to John M. Efron, throughout his career Jacobs “continued to amass material for two major anthropological-historical works that he was never to complete. Fortunately, he had privately printed the outline of his proposed *The Jewish Race: A Study in National Character*. It was to be two massive tomes of sixty-seven chapters describing the ‘historic causes’ and racial ‘traits’ of the Jews.” See: John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 89.

³⁷⁷ Jacobson presents a different interpretation of the trajectory of American Jews from non-white to white. Both Brodtkin and Jacobson agree, however, that how Jews were perceived by the American mainstream has undergone significant shifts. See: Jacobson, 199.

³⁷⁸ Goldstein, 5.

the organization's leadership, all of whom had already acculturated into American society, it must be noted that they were also seeking to preserve the social status that they enjoyed and believed they had earned.

With few exceptions, notwithstanding the beliefs of American Jews and their own personal identification with Jewishness distinctiveness, during the period covered by this study, the extent to which the leaders of the AJC sought to minimize discussions of Jews as a distinct race and the racial component of Jewish identity is striking.³⁷⁹ AJC leaders lobbied for the exclusion of the racial category "Hebrews" from the national census and investigations led by the United States Immigration Commission.³⁸⁰ At the Versailles Peace conference in 1919, AJC leaders promoted the inclusion of minority rights and protections for minority communities in the treaty but explicitly rejected using race as the basis for defining who would be entitled to these rights and, potentially, the protection of the League of Nations.³⁸¹ They were concerned

³⁷⁹ In an exception to the AJC's preferred practices, discussions of race played a role during the treaty abrogation campaign. As already noted, the leaders of the AJC tried to avoid public discussion of Jewish racial distinctiveness; however, they were comfortable referring to Jews as a race in the practice of quiet diplomacy. In their political lobbying efforts during the abrogation campaign, they emphasized that Russia was discriminating against Jews on the basis of race and that "the entire situation... is unconstitutional, the United States Government being bound by its law to guarantee equal rights to all citizens without regard to race or religious belief." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>. There is irony in the fact that the AJC's leaders were requesting the American government censure the race-based discriminatory behavior of another country even as race-based discrimination against Jews, African Americans, Asian immigrants, Latinos, and the country's indigenous peoples was legal and widely practiced in the United States.

³⁸⁰ See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 1, 1909, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16447>. See also: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 13, 1909, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16448>. The Committee also carried out discreet inquiries into how race-based classifications were used by different government agencies and departments and quietly lobbied to have the use of these classifications discontinued. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 20, 1910, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16449>.

³⁸¹ See: "Appendix to Minutes of Executive Committee March 2nd, and 6th, 1919," American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16467>.

that using the rhetoric of racial difference to describe the Jewish communities that were scattered across the redrawn borders of postwar Europe would impact how Jews were perceived in the United States. “During the 1924 hearings on immigration restriction, Jewish advocates had publically avoided identifying Jews as a race or people and instead had insisted that Jews belonged to the ‘white race.’”³⁸² Although they received numerous requests, the AJC consistently declined to participate in or to finance studies that tried to substantiate claims of Jewish racial difference or that described Jews as constituting a separate race.³⁸³ They also declined to assist in the publication of books that emphasized the racial component of Jewish identity.³⁸⁴

Concerns about how race would impact the treatment and social acceptance of Jews in the United States shaped Jewish political activism during the early-twentieth century but, as already noted, the AJC’s leaders were themselves conflicted, as was the Jewish community that they were was attempting to lead and to represent. “Ultimately,” Goldstein argues, “despite

³⁸² Breitman and Lichtman, 50.

³⁸³ In 1923, the AJC’s Executive Committee declined to assist Dr. H.H. Laughlin, an “Expert Eugenics Agent” to the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, in a proposed survey of the number of Jewish students in American colleges. According to the Executive Committee minutes, it “was the sense of the Committee that there are no valid grounds for an investigation of students in American Universities according to race or religion.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 4, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16475>. In a rare exception to its policy of declining to sponsor research concerning race, in 1926 the Committee contributed \$2000 to help finance an “anthropological investigation” into racial differences being led by Ignatz Zollschan and Franz Boas. The Committee hoped the results of this research might be used to undermine the findings of others studies that were regularly cited by Eugenacists and proponents of race-based immigration restrictions. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 12, 1925 American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16479>. See also: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on March 14, 1926, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16481>.

³⁸⁴ For example, in 1917, the Committee declined a request for assistance from John W. Lewis, who was hoping the Committee would help him publish a new edition of *The Restoration of the Jews*, which had been written by his grandfather, Seth Lewis. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 11, 1917, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed July 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16463>.

growing fears about how race might be used against them, few American Jews could depart with a racial self-understanding.”³⁸⁵ Racial distinctiveness and notions of Jewish “peoplehood” continued to shape how Jews conceived of their identity but, for the AJC, it was important that discussions of Jews as a distinct race remain within the community. The AJC sought to promote the idea that Jews were only different from other white Americans in terms of their religious beliefs and that this was an irrelevant difference in a society which possessed a deeply entrenched reverence for freedom of religion. Jewish racial distinctiveness was something that they did not want to draw attention to; it was a notion that they did not want scrutinized (or embraced) by white Protestant patricians and the broader American public.

The Anxiety of the American Jewish Establishment

The German Jews that immigrated to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century prospered in America. The majority had arrived in the United States poor, but they rose quickly into the middle class and some into the upper echelons of the wealthy. Many had amassed considerable fortunes or risen to prominent positions in the professions, the judiciary, and civil society: “Proportionally speaking, in no other immigrant group in American history have so many men ascended so fast from rags to riches as had this first generation of German Jews.”³⁸⁶

This earlier generation of Jewish immigrants embraced the Reform movement, at the time the most liberal denomination of Judaism, and made a conscious effort to integrate into American society. The Reform movement’s emphasis on distinguishing between private

³⁸⁵ Goldstein, 186. Goldstein also notes that “While American Jews were never forced to deny their Jewishness altogether, the ultimate loss of ‘race’ as a term of self-definition rendered inarticulate some of their deepest feelings of group solidarity and difference.” See: Goldstein, 6.

³⁸⁶ Robert Rockaway and Arnon Gutfeld, “Demonic Images of the Jew in the Nineteenth Century United States,” *American Jewish History* 89 (2001): 373.

worship, which preserved some elements of traditional Jewish ritual, and public behavior, which was consistent with the way of life of the gentile majority, was an important component of how a number of the early leaders of the AJC conceived of American Jewish identity. Many of the AJC's early leaders were also members of Reform synagogues, including Louis Marshall, who, in addition to his other professional and civic commitments, was a board member and president of New York's Temple Emmanuel, the flagship synagogue of the Reform movement in the United States.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the American Jews of German descent were the wealthiest, most politically secure, and socially-confident Jewish community in history.³⁸⁷ The German American Jews also had the good fortune to be members of one of the largest Jewish communities in history to be full citizens of a democratic polity. German-American Jewry had adapted to the American way of life and integrated into American society. They were a prosperous, tolerated, patriotic, and largely invisible, minority community. As will be discussed below, the influx of significant numbers of impoverished and Orthodox Russian and Eastern European Jews into the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was a source of considerable anxiety for these acculturated German American Jews. They had successfully integrated into American society and, in defense of their own social status and reputation, they began to encourage the acculturation of new Jewish immigrants.

In the historiography and social science research on the social integration of immigrant and minority communities, the separate processes of acculturation and assimilation are often

³⁸⁷ For a detailed account of some of the social and commercial achievements of some of the families who are considered part of the American Jewish establishment, see Stephen Birmingham's bestselling book *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

conflated.³⁸⁸ Indeed, the processes of acculturation and assimilation often occur at the same time, and both are connected to the progression of integration that can occur when established communities absorb new immigrants or when new immigrants adapt to their new social and political conditions. Acculturation and assimilation, however, can be distinguished from each other. In brief, assimilation implies a fusion or exchange of identities, where a minority population adopts the custom and beliefs of the majority. Assimilation is “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups; and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.”³⁸⁹ In contrast, acculturation implies greater balance between the preservation of tradition and accommodating or adopting the ways of life of the majority. Acculturation also implies greater agency on the part of minority populations, as they choose where and how to change their customs, conform to the behaviour of the majority, or preserve elements of their ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage.

The distinction between assimilation and acculturation has been an important and often debated topic in the historiography on the social history of modern Jewish communities, particularly regarding countries where emancipated Jewish communities or new Jewish immigrants transitioned relatively quickly from poverty and social isolation into the middle class. Some historians are reluctant to describe Jewish integration as assimilation. For example, in her book *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*, Marion A. Kaplan argues that “German Jews acculturated to German society, but they

³⁸⁸ Jonathan Frankel notes that it “was the sociologist Milton M. Gordon who, with his book of 1964, *Assimilation in American Life*, did more than anybody else to win acceptance for the idea that ‘acculturation’ should be clearly distinguished from ‘assimilation.’” See: Jonathan Frankel, “Assimilation and the Jews in nineteenth-century Europe: towards a new historiography?,” in *Assimilation and community: The Jews in nineteenth-century Europe*, eds. Johnathan [sic] Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 21.

³⁸⁹ Raymond H.C. Teske, Jr. and Bardin H. Nelson, “Acculturation and Assimilation: A Clarification,” *American Ethnologist* 1 (1974): 359.

did not ‘assimilate’... The terms ‘assimilation’ implies that the vast majority of Jews sought to fuse with other Germans in the desire to give up their religious or cultural distinctiveness. It suggests a kind of submission, an exchange of ‘Jewishness’ for ‘Germanness.’”³⁹⁰ In her view, acculturation, including the acceptance of external, objective behaviour and standards of the dominant culture, more accurately describes the integration of German Jewry.³⁹¹ Kaplan argues that labelling the integration of German Jewry into Germany society as assimilation ignores the conscious efforts of German Jews, including the efforts of German Jewish women in the private sphere, to balance the preservation of their traditions with the accommodation of middle-class German mores.³⁹² German Jews earnestly embraced a German identity; they wanted to be seen as fellow citizens, but neither Judaism nor Jewishness disappeared in Germany in the aftermath of Jewish emancipation and the integration of some Jews into German society.

For the present purposes of discussing the integration of German Jews into American society, these notions of assimilation and acculturation are helpful. It can be argued that Reform movement Judaism, which originated in Germany but flourished in America, was an expression of the agency of German Jews in attempting to balance the preservation of elements of their religious heritage with demands (or pressure) for social conformity from the majority.³⁹³ The

³⁹⁰ Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11.

³⁹¹ Kaplan provides the following definition of acculturation: “By the term ‘acculturation,’ I mean the acceptance of external, objective behaviour and standards of the dominant culture. [German Jews] adopted styles of dress and manners of speech, they moved out of predominantly Jewish neighborhoods into new ones...they accommodated to contemporary middle-class attitudes towards work and achievement, and they developed a deep loyalty to the fatherland. They saw no contradiction between their *Deutschtum* (Germanness) and their *Judentum* (Jewishness).” See: Kaplan, 10.

³⁹² According to Kaplan: “[A]ssimilation” provides an inaccurate picture of German Jews. It focusses exclusively on public conduct and conscious identity...taking both at face value. It ignores unconscious identity and important emotional and behavioral factors, particularly in the private sphere...Moreover, it slights what anthropologists call “culture”—“the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of work and thought characteristic of a community.” See: Kaplan, 11.

³⁹³ The extent to which the dominant culture accepted (or merely tolerated) their Jewish fellow citizens remains a highly debatable question.

term acculturation is preferred by historians of Jewish integration because nowhere in modern Jewish history was the melding between the dominant and minority culture ever complete. Jews across the Diaspora have a well-documented history of privileging the preservation of their religion, culture, and heritage over complete immersion into the society and culture of the majority among whom they live.

Acculturation is not only an individual process; the phenomenon also occurs at the communal level where leaders, often economic elites, are able to exercise influence on how minority communities adapt to new social and political conditions. Weighing the role of elites in acculturation is significant for any examination of the history of Jewish integration because, historically, Jewish communal organizations actively engaged in efforts to promote social integration. Indeed, according to Paula E. Hyman, it was elites who were the vanguards at succeeding in reshaping Jewish communal institutions and encouraged acculturation.³⁹⁴

In the United States, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, elites among German American Jewry actively tried to encourage the acculturation of their Eastern European coreligionists. These efforts were the foundation of a pattern of elite intervention in both influencing the behavior of new Jewish immigrants and trying to shape how that community was perceived by the majority of Americans. The motivations for these efforts defined the

³⁹⁴ The leadership of elites in this process was historically significant. According Paula E. Hyman: “It was elites that first internalized the critique of traditional Jewish society...It was elites who broke most radically with traditional patterns of Jewish life and reshaped the Jewish communal institutions of their time. Finally, it was the elites that defined and articulated an emancipationist ideology which emphasized inculcating the values of citizenship to a new generation of Jews. According to that ideology a new Jewish identity would emerge, in which civic consciousness would be harmonized with Jewish religious sensibility. Jewish citizens would abandon their ethnocentrism and define their fellow citizens as their brethren. They would realize the moral degradation inherent in the traditional Jewish occupations of petty commerce. And they would place the acquisition of secular culture at the center of their concerns and relegate traditional Jewish learning to an ancillary position.” See: Paula E. Hyman, “The social contexts of assimilation: village Jews and city Jews in Alsace,” in *Assimilation and community: The Jews in nineteenth-century Europe*, eds. Johnathan [sic] Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 110-111.

relationship between German American Jews and new Jewish immigrants, and profoundly shaped Jewish public advocacy in the United States, including the work of the American Jewish Committee, during the early-twentieth century.

At the turn of the century, acculturated German American Jews enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, security, and stability; nevertheless, there was considerable anxiety among the leaders of this community about the potential consequences of an *en masse* wave of new Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and from Russia arriving in the United States. There was also anxiety that the rise of Socialism, Communism, and Zionism, and the popularity of these movements among recent Jewish immigrants to the United States, would foster a belief among the broader American public that Jews were not, and could not be, loyal, true, or patriotic Americans.

By the late-nineteenth century, the so-called *Ostjuden*, who were more religious and traditional than their coreligionists of German descent, made up the overwhelming majority of new Jewish immigrants to the United States. The *Ostjuden* were for the most part poor. As many had spent years in religious study, they did not have the practical skills and abilities that would have been acquired through a secular education. They were also an insular community, and, in contrast to the German-Jewish immigrants and Reform Jews, maintained many “old country” traditions and customs in their new American home and resented the condescension and “cold philanthropy” of the establishment Jewish community.³⁹⁵ According to historian Gerald Sorin, there was reciprocal resentment and antipathy between the groups.³⁹⁶ In short, while the Jews of

³⁹⁵ Sorin, 34.

³⁹⁶ Antagonism between the two communities remained pronounced well into the twentieth century. According to Sorin: “The cultural and class arrogance of the German Jews in the United States, and their turn of the century fear that anti-Semitism would inevitably increase in the face of massive immigration of *ostjuden*, never fully dissipated.

German descent had become acculturated and practically indistinguishable from the white, Christian American majority, the *Ostjuden*, by customs, appearance, and communal insularity, were outsiders in America. The establishment community of Jews of German descent viewed the dramatic growth of the Yiddish-speaking immigrant population as a threat³⁹⁷ to their stability and security in the United States.³⁹⁸

In assessing the concerns of the established Jewish community, it is necessary to ask whether there was any need or justification for their anxiety. A great deal has been written on the “exceptional” historical experience of Jews in the United States.³⁹⁹ This historiography argues that American Jewish history can be distinguished from the history of other Diaspora Jewish communities because cultural and racial anti-Semitism never became widely entrenched among the majority of Christian Americans, and because anti-Semitism was never embraced by any major American political party. According to this school of thought, the American Jewish experience is exceptional because, in contrast to Jewish history in Western and Eastern Europe, the “Jewish question” was never posed in the United States. American Jews “at no point

Likewise, the resentment and bitterness of the Eastern European Jews over the condescension and ‘cold philanthropy’ of the *yahudim* never completely disappeared.” See: Sorin, 34.

³⁹⁷ It is important to note that the hostility of the German Jews towards Eastern European and Russian Jews existed before the waves of mass immigration that followed the pogroms of 1881-1884 and the pogroms of 1903-1906 which caused hundreds of thousands of Jews to immigrate to the United States. The hostility between the two groups intensified as more new immigrants arrived; however, even when the population of Yiddish-speaking Jews in the United States was very small, their German coreligionists discriminated against them because they were poor. The German Jews were concerned that the poverty of their coreligionists would undermine their elite social status. Prior to the outbreak of the pogroms, German Jewish leaders had, at times, opposed open immigration policies in order to limit the number of impoverished Jews arriving in America. See Sorin, 34-38.

³⁹⁸ The anxiety of the German Jewish establishment is ironic because less than sixty years before the mass arrival of Russian and Eastern European Jews in the United States, the arrival of a large number of German Jews in America had produced similar anxiety among the small group of wealthy Sephardic Jewish families who were accepted as part of New York City’s high society. The nineteenth-century Jewish immigrants from Germany had the reputation of having bad manner (pushy) and were looked down upon for their involvement in crude professions (peddling, dry goods). The establishment Sephardic families were proud of their place among New York’s elite and worried that their patrician status was threatened by the newcomers. See, Birmingham, 127.

³⁹⁹ One of the earliest accounts of American exceptionalism in the historiography on American Jewry is Oscar Handlin’s book *Adventures in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954). Another often cited example is Ben Halpern’s essay “America is Different.” Ben Halpern, “American is Different,” *Midstream* 1 (1955): 39-52.

underwent an emancipation process wherein they needed to prove themselves worthy of citizenship. They became citizens at the founding of the republic without special consideration.”⁴⁰⁰

The absence of official oppression and persecution, however, does not entail social acceptance.⁴⁰¹ The absence of the worst outrages of European anti-Semitism does not mean that Jews felt truly comfortable in America. There were anti-Jewish sentiments among the general American population, much of which was rooted in longstanding accusations such as the charge of deicide.⁴⁰² According to historians Robert Rockaway and Arnon Gutfeld, “demonic representations of the Jew appeared frequently in American culture throughout the [nineteenth] century.”⁴⁰³ The broader American public was regularly exposed to anti-Semitic tropes in sermons, school textbooks, and popular literature.

The intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States was a nineteenth-century historical development. According to Richard B. Morris, “Anti-Semitism was definitely out of

⁴⁰⁰ Tony Michels “Is America ‘Different?’ A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism,” *American Jewish History* 96 (2011): 201. The absence of state sponsored anti-Semitism in the United States distinguishes the American Jewish experience from that of Canadian Jews. Until the Second World War, a majority of Canada’s Jewish population, and the majority of new Jewish immigrants to Canada, lived in Montreal. The Jewish communities of Québec were victims of social and political discrimination on religious grounds because of the confluence of the institutional anti-Semitism of the Catholic Church and the Church’s social influence and political power in Québec. For a further discussion of the nature of institutional anti-Semitism in Québec, see Pierre Ancil’s essay “Interlude of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919-1939” in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan T. Davies (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992), 135-167.

⁴⁰¹ A notable exception to the general absence of state-sponsored discrimination against Jews in the United States was the protracted early-twentieth-century debate over immigration quotas, which culminated with the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924. From its founding, the AJC was openly involved in lobbying Congress against the passage of immigration restrictions. The only example of systematic persecution against American Jews occurred during the American Civil War. On December 17, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant issued “General Order Number 11,” which mandated the expulsion of all Jews in the areas Grant’s forces had occupied (most of the states of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky). The order was issued as part of an effort to disrupt the black market trade in cotton, in which Southern Jews were allegedly acting as major brokers. For an account of this incident, see: Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).

⁴⁰² Rockaway and Gutfeld, 362.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 355-356.

fashion in the America of the Revolutionary Era.”⁴⁰⁴ Prior to the 1840s, the Jewish population of the United States was very small, numbering less than 50,000 across the entire country.⁴⁰⁵ As the Jewish population of the United States grew, and as some prosperous Jews tried to enter elite Protestant social circles, anti-Semitism surfaced in the form of social exclusion;⁴⁰⁶ however, anti-Semitism in the United States intensified in the decades after the American Civil War.⁴⁰⁷ “From the end of the Civil War until the beginning of the twentieth century,” Leonard Dinnerstein argues, “the United States witnessed the emergence of a full-fledged antisemitic society. Like the hysteria exhibited during the war, the institutionalized bigotry that developed afterwards reflected the biases of practically every stratum in society.”⁴⁰⁸ Hostility towards Jews transgressed class and religious divides in America during this period.⁴⁰⁹ “Anti-Jewish feeling in the late-nineteenth century was the product of a complex constellation of forces. It was tied to general nativism, rooted mainly in agrarian regions, and was reinforced by elites who perceived their displacement in a rapidly changing society.”⁴¹⁰ As in other historical periods, the Jews were a convenient scapegoat for the societal challenges that accompany dramatic social, economic, and political change. In the case of the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, those challenges followed the industrialization of the economy, and the rapid growth of an

⁴⁰⁴ Richard B. Morris, “The Role of Jews in the American Revolution in Historical Perspective,” in *American Jewish History: The Colonial and Early National Periods, 1654-1840*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock (New York: Routledge, 2013), 60.

⁴⁰⁵ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 24.

⁴⁰⁶ The Jewish population of the United States numbered only 4,500 in 1830. By 1845, the Jewish population had grown to approximately 40,000. At the start of the American Civil War, there were approximately 150,000 Jews in the United States. See, Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 24.

⁴⁰⁷ In both the North and the South, the political career of Judah P. Benjamin contributed to the growth of anti-Semitic sentiments. Benjamin, a British-born Jew, had served in the Confederate Cabinet, first as Attorney General, then as Secretary of War, and finally as Secretary of State. In the North, he was despised for being part of a conspiracy that nearly destroyed the country; in the south, he was blamed for the Confederacy’s military defeat. Rockaway and Gutfelt, 372.

⁴⁰⁸ Dinnerstein, 35.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ Sorin, 36.

ethnically and religiously diverse population. Tobias Brinkmann argues that “Jews were identified as agents or [sic] modernity and blamed at the same time for such contradictory developments as radical anarchism and cutthroat capitalism.”⁴¹¹ The economic depression of 1893, the arrival in the United States of millions of Catholic immigrants, who had been exposed to the anti-Semitic teachings of the Catholic Church, the emergence of the populist movement, and the rise of eugenics and a racialized conception American nationalism, also contributed to an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States during the late-nineteenth century:⁴¹² “Together these factors created an environment that tolerated odious characterizations of Jews.”⁴¹³ While it was not distinguished by widespread violence, the German-Jews did encounter anti-Semitism in the United States. Some of the American-born leaders of the AJC, such as Louis Marshall and Joseph M. Proskauer, had to contend with anti-Semitism while growing up in America.⁴¹⁴

It is also important to note that there was a lack of formal legal protections in the United States to prevent discrimination against any minority population, including Jews. The Supreme Court of the United States’ 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*⁴¹⁵ had upheld the constitutionality of the “separate but equal” doctrine and state laws that mandated racial segregation. Discrimination, particularly against African Americans, Asian immigrants, Latinos,

⁴¹¹ Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 160

⁴¹² Rockaway and Gutfelt, 373.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ Louis Marshall, who was raised in Syracuse, New York, encountered anti-Semitism in the sermons that he was required to attend at public school. Proskauer, who grew up in Mobile, Alabama, was called a “Christ killer,” and was assaulted by a group of boys when he was twelve years old. Rockaway and Gutfelt, 365. For an account of Jewish immigrants to the United States getting into street fights in order to defend themselves from attacks by non-Jewish immigrants in densely populated urban areas, and how this contributed to a surge of professional Jewish boxers in the early-twentieth century, see: Stephen H. Norwood, “‘American Jewish Muscle:’ Forging a New Masculinity in the Streets and in the Ring, 1890-1940,” *Modern Judaism* 29 (2009): 172-173.

⁴¹⁵ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

and the country's indigenous peoples, was legal and widely practiced. Jews were also the victims of discriminatory practices, particularly labor force discrimination, housing discrimination in the form of restrictive covenants on the sale of land, and social exclusion when applying for membership in clubs and other organizations.

The German Jewish immigrants, possibly more than any other group of nineteenth and twentieth-century European immigrants, felt acutely that they had to demonstrate their loyalty to America, and their leaders believed that through acculturation they would gain personal security, economic opportunities, and social acceptance. The community's emphasis on acculturation was supported by their experiences in Germany prior to their migration to North America. Most of the German Jews who immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century left before the unification of Germany and the complete emancipation of Germany's Jews, both of which occurred in 1871. However, some of the kingdoms and principalities that would later be absorbed into the unified Germany emancipated their Jewish populations long before 1871, including some of territories with the largest Jewish populations, such as Prussia, where Jews were granted full rights in 1812. In the territories where Jews were granted legal emancipation, they had quickly begun to acculturate into German society. Historian Susan Roth Breitzer argues that the German Jewish "immigrants quickly adjusted to American society, largely because acculturation had become a way of life for the majority in the old country, thanks to legal emancipation that was part of the general rise of the modern capitalist state."⁴¹⁶ The emphasis on acculturation reflected this community's conception of their individual and group identity. Their identity as Jews was subordinate to their identity as Germans. Breitzer notes that, until the First World War, many German Jewish immigrants to the United States "identified themselves more

⁴¹⁶ Susan Roth Breitzer, *Jewish Labor's Second City: The Formation of a Jewish Working Class in Chicago, 1886-1928* (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2007), 26.

as German than as Jewish.”⁴¹⁷ Now established in the United States, they wanted to be identified by everyone as white and American. This privileging of nationality over religion, and the desire to disseminate the notion that they felt more strongly about their country than their faith, was consistent with the social integration practices and rhetoric of emancipated Jews in nineteenth-century Germany. This conception of Jewish identity reflects what was expected of emancipated Jews in the aftermath of the removal of legal disabilities in Germany. In exchange for citizenship, including full political rights and full participation in German society, German Jews were expected to suppress public expressions of their Jewishness. This privileging of national identity over religious identity was so entrenched among acculturated German Jews that it endured in many even after they immigrated to the United States.⁴¹⁸

The German-Jewish immigrants of the nineteenth century were conscious about not appearing or behaving as if they were separate and distinct from the majority of Americans. Their presence in the United States garnered little attention because of their relatively small numbers and their efforts to acculturate. The arrival of well over a million impoverished Yiddish-speaking immigrants, the concentration of their settlement in East Coast American cities, and their Orthodox dress and customs, was noticed by the general public and was not a matter of indifference to the established Jewish community. Throughout the period of the mass migration of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe, the American Jewish establishment feared that the conspicuous growth of the immigrant Jewish community would alienate the American public and lead to a corresponding rise in anti-Semitism in the United States. This fear would

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ Well into the twentieth century, the German language was the language of everyday use (and the language used in business negotiations) for German Jewish immigrants. The elite social circles of the American Jewish establishment preserved the customs of upper middle class Germans, including in how they ran their households, conducted business, and raised their children. They were proud to be American citizens and wanted to be perceived as white Americans; in their conception of their heritage, many privileged their Germaneness over their Jewishness and this inclination did not subside until American entry into the First World War against Germany.

cause significant intra-communal tension between the establishment leaders of the German-American Jews and the growing population of Russian and Eastern European immigrants. Additionally, this fear would prove to be one of the stimuli for the development of the AJC's approaches to Jewish public advocacy.

The American public's perception of the growth of the Jewish immigrant population was treated by the American Jewish establishment as a situation that had to be managed in order to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism. Similarly, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of poverty-stricken Jewish immigrants fed the expansion of Jewish political and labor organizations in the United States, and the greater political prominence of these groups was another situation that the leaders of the American Jewish establishment believed they had to manage.

Jewish political and labor organizations of varying sizes and ideologies had been established in the United States long before the mass arrival of Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, these organizations had grown substantially and matured beyond the recruitment and indoctrination of new members; they began to engage in forms of public advocacy, including labor strikes, boycott threats, small public demonstrations, and large protest marches. In response to this new wave of activism, members of the American Jewish establishment began to organize and engage in forms of public advocacy, including the organization of non-confrontational public demonstrations and fundraising campaigns for relief efforts. These efforts went well beyond the traditional boundaries of the quiet diplomacy of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude*, and, as will be described further below, influenced the development of the AJC's approaches to public advocacy and public relations.

Some of the anxiety of the American Jewish establishment would prove to be prescient. While no major American political party adopted anti-Semitism as a part of their platform, much of the language surrounding the early-twentieth-century debates on immigration restrictions, including the rhetoric of racial difference used to describe the new immigrants, were only thinly veiled (or barely veiled) warnings about the dangerous social and political consequences of unrestricted Jewish immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe. The passage of immigration reform legislation that included restrictive quotas in 1921 and 1924, insofar as these reforms aimed to limit the number of Jews and other minorities among new immigrants, could be described as a form of state-sponsored racism and anti-Semitism. At the very least, these immigration reforms differentiated Jews from other potential immigrants on the basis of doubts about their ability to participate in the labor force, and integrate into the American way of life.

The debate and passage of these measures, and the press coverage of the increasingly public activities of Jewish political and labor groups, meant that acculturated Jews could no longer conceive of themselves as an invisible minority. The presence of millions of their Eastern European coreligionists, and the perception that they were a politically radicalized population, had garnered significant attention that distinguished Jews, wealthy or poor, as different from the majority of white Christian Americans. For the leaders of the acculturated German Jews, the development of this negative perception of Jews by the broader American public was a threat that had to be countered.

As already noted, throughout the period of mass Jewish immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe, the American Jewish establishment was deeply concerned that the dramatic growth of the Jewish community would result in an escalation of anti-Semitism in the United States. They were not wrong. Their anxiety about these developments, and their efforts to shape

how the broader American public felt about Jews, led to the establishment of the AJC and the development of the Committee's approaches to public advocacy, public relations, and communal defense. The American Jewish establishment's perceived need for an organization that could speak for American Jews without fostering a wider belief in Jewish radicalism spurred the founding of the AJC and influenced how the AJC engaged in public advocacy.

The Pogroms in Russia

The worsening situation for Jews in Russia was another stimuli that encouraged the leaders of the AJC to establish the organization and to move away from the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* traditions of Jewish public advocacy and to develop new approaches to public advocacy. Historian Shlomo Lambroza has commented that "Russia has never been a good place to be a Jew."⁴¹⁹ The outbreak of systematic violence against Russian Jews during early 1880s had precipitated the first large wave of Russian Jewish immigration to the United States. For the next twenty years, sporadic outbreaks of violence against Jewish communities in Russia were common.⁴²⁰ The period between 1903 and 1906, however, was a particularly bad time. The Pale of Settlement, the territory within Imperial Russia where Jews could legally reside, was a large geographic region, comprising more than 1.2 million square kilometers. Between 1903 and 1906, anti-Jewish violence touched every corner of this territory. In the three years following the first Kishinev pogrom in 1903, there were more than six hundred and fifty further attacks against the

⁴¹⁹ Shlomo Lambroza, "The Tzarist Government and the Pogroms of 1903-1906," *Modern Judaism* 7 (1987): 287.

⁴²⁰ For accounts of the pogroms of the 1880s and their aftermath, see: John D. Kliner and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Jewish communities of the Pale, including a second major attack against the Jewish community of Kishinev in late 1905.⁴²¹

The outbreak of widespread violence against the Jewish communities of the Russian Empire during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was a calamity of such a scope, intensity, and duration that it could not be arrested or even modestly impeded by the intervention of individual Jews with political connections inside or outside Russia. As will be discussed further below, some prominent American and European Jews did vainly attempt to use their personal political connections and financial resources to persuade Russia to do more to protect Jewish communities and stem the violence, but these efforts were futile. During this period, there were hundreds of spontaneous and carefully planned (and state-sanctioned) outbreaks of violence against the Jewish communities of the Pale of Settlement.

The campaigns to stop the violence in Russia and provide aid to those who had survived did, however, galvanize change in Jewish communities in the United States. The first Kishinev pogrom, which occurred on April 6th and 7th 1903, was a crucial turning point in the history of the Russian, Eastern European, and American Jewish communities. Kishinev was by no means the first significant attack against a Jewish community in Imperial Russia. Attacks against Jews perpetrated by the Russian majority or by members of other minorities in the Russian Empire, including Cossacks, Ukrainians, and Moldavians, were in fact common.⁴²² Outbreaks of violence occurred with enough frequency that their impact, and the fear of random acts of violence, has been inscribed on Ashkenazi culture.⁴²³ The first Kishinev pogrom, however, was unique both

⁴²¹ Lambroza, "The Tzarist Government and the Pogroms of 1903-1906," 287.

⁴²² See: John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴²³ See: David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

for the scale of the violence and, ultimately, for the international historical consequences of that violence.

The first Kishinev pogrom was also significant for the coverage that it received in the western press, particularly in the United States. For example, on April 28, 1903, *The New York Times* published the following account of the pogrom:

There was a well laid-out plan for the general massacre of Jews on the day following the Russian Easter. The mob was led by priests, and a general cry, "Kill the Jews," was taken up all over the city. The Jews were taken wholly unaware and were slaughtered like sheep. The dead number 120 and the injured about 500. The scenes of horror attending this massacre are beyond description. Babes were literally torn to pieces by the frenzied and bloodthirsty mob. The local police made no attempt to check the reign of terror. At sunset the streets were piled with corpses and wounded. Those who could make their escape fled in terror, and the city is now practically deserted of Jews.⁴²⁴

Other newspaper reports describing the violence and its aftermath would emerge in the following days and weeks.⁴²⁵

The media exposure was not limited to New York City. *The Atlanta Constitution*, for example, translated and printed on their front page a letter that a Jewish resident of Atlanta had received from his brother, who had survived the first Kishinev pogrom:

[A] mob of two hundred started the massacre. I and my wife hid three days in a cellar without food or water, and when we went back into our house we found everything in it demolished. Besides killing over one hundred men, women and children, the barbarians, who call themselves Christians, broke up everything they found in the houses. Kishinef [sic] is desolate. Please, for G-d's sake, send me enough money for my wife and I to go to your great country, where a man can live in peace and worship G-d as he chooses. I know you will regret to hear that our uncle and aunt were among

⁴²⁴ "Jewish Massacre Denounced," *New York Times*, April 28, 1903, 6.

⁴²⁵ See, for example: "Ravaged by Cossacks: Two Hundred Georgian Towns and Villages Destroyed," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 1906, 3.

the victims. But for the cellar under our house I and my wife would have also been murdered.⁴²⁶

The American Jewish community and the broader American public were well-informed about the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Russia. The American government was also aware of what was happening to the Jews of Imperial Russia.⁴²⁷ The notoriety of the events called for a response from both quarters.

The outbreak of large scale and systematic violence against the Jewish communities of the Russian Empire, and the mass flight of Jews that was spurred by this violence, prompted American Jews to act to protect their Russian coreligionists. Prominent members of the American Jewish establishment led these efforts. They were trying to stop the violence, but they were also working to assuage their own anxiety: “Although the German Jews achieved unparalleled success in the economic sphere and many commentators praised them for their sobriety, work ethic, low crime rate and family ties, uncertainty about their place in Christian America beset many of them...[The] influx of impoverished eastern European Jews...contributed to their anxiety.”⁴²⁸ Economic stagnation and violent persecution were the principal causes of Jewish emigration from that country. An end to the violence would reduce the number of Jews seeking refuge in the United States. Even a reduction in the scale of the violence might slow the pace of Jewish emigration and give the American Jewish establishment more time to plan for their arrival and settlement in the United States, and their integration into the American way of life.

⁴²⁶ “Uncle and Aunt Among Victims,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 22, 1903, 1.

⁴²⁷ See: Outrages Perpetrated on Jews in Russia, Memorandums between Robert S. McCormick and John Hay, April 29, 1903, May 9, 1903, and May 13, 1903, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1903*, Volume I, Russia, 712-713.

⁴²⁸ Rockaway and Gutfelt, 369-370.

The scale of the violence abroad and the anxiety over its potential consequences at home necessitated a communal response that went beyond the traditional *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* approach. Anti-Jewish violence in Russia motivated prominent members of the American Jewish community to pursue new social, political and international objectives, including providing aid to the victims of the pogroms. The response was activist and not merely reactionary or limited to quiet diplomacy. While all elements of the American Jewish community participated in these efforts, the communal response was led by the elite of the American Jewish community and, in particular, the leaders of the German-American Jewish establishment.

By the end of the nineteenth century, years before the largest waves of Jewish immigration to the United States, the American Jewish community was already well-organized. “Jewish life in America,” according to historian Daniel Soyer, “reflected the centrality of mutual aid societies and lodges in the creation of ethnic identity even before the arrival of large numbers of Jews from Eastern Europe.”⁴²⁹ There were synagogues in every major city on both the East and West coasts of the United States, and there were dozens of Jewish philanthropic and fraternal organizations. Jewish philanthropy and institution-building mirrored that of other ethnic and religious groups in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America. “The internal culture of the Jewish societies in the nineteenth century duplicated that of their non-Jewish counterparts.”⁴³⁰ The synagogues, hospitals, and orphanages sponsored by American Jews, and the *Landsmanshaft* and mutual aid societies they founded, were not conspicuous because this kind of communal and philanthropic activity was also commonly practiced by other ethnic and religious groups.

⁴²⁹ Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and the American Identity in New York, 1880-1939: Jewish landsmanshaftn in American Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 45.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

In the immediate aftermath of the first Kishinev pogrom, existing Jewish philanthropic and fraternal organizations, such as the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, the United Hebrew Charities, the Educational Alliance, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Hebrew Union Veterans Association, began to raise funds to provide aid to the survivors. New Jewish defense and relief organizations of varying sizes and ambitions were also established in major American cities. In New York, for example, a group of wealthy Jews of German descent organized a new independent relief fund. The fund was chaired by Emanuel Lehman, one of the founders of the commodities brokerage that later became a huge investment bank, and its treasurer was Daniel Guggenheim, the extraordinarily wealthy proprietor of a mining empire. Its sixteen man executive committee included Justice Nathan Bijur, Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, and Cyrus Sulzberger, four of the founders of the AJC.⁴³¹

The old and new organizations were not able to alter Russian policy, change conditions on the ground in the Pale, nor provide much relief as the violence continued over the next three years; however, some of the accomplishments of these organizations were substantial efforts to animate American public opinion in the hope of spurring the American government into action. For example, twenty-seven petitions, including one with more than twelve thousands signatures, were sent to President Theodore Roosevelt, asking him to intervene and urge Czar Nicholas II to put an end to the campaign of anti-Jewish violence. Local Jewish leaders of communities outside of New York City organized public street protests. In 1903, there were large anti-Russia or anti-pogrom rallies in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, and St. Louis. The largest rally was organized in New York City, and was held at Carnegie Hall on May 27, 1903. Seth Low, the Mayor of New York, and Grover Cleveland, the former President of the

⁴³¹ “American Bounty for Kishineff [sic] Sufferers,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1903, 16.

United States, addressed the crowd and denounced the atrocities of the pogroms.⁴³² While mass protests were normally viewed by the American Jewish establishment as potentially dangerous, in the case of protesting the outrages of the Russian pogroms, the establishment did not object and, in some instances, they helped fund and organize the rallies. Their acquiescence to public protests by American Jews was probably tied to the minimal risk involved. There was a major humanitarian crisis unfolding in Russia, and, as the pogroms were not a domestic issue, the American Jewish establishment was probably less concerned about how protesting this issue would impact the reputation of American Jewry. In comparison to labor protests or Zionist parades, the anti-Russia and anti-pogrom rallies were less likely to foster the impression that Jews were political radicals or unpatriotic. These efforts at providing international assistance to coreligionists also carried less risk because they were not unprecedented in America. For example, American Catholic lay groups devoted considerable resources to sponsoring social reform movements for, and charitable assistance to, Catholics in Europe during this period.⁴³³

Despite the protests, the violence in the Pale continued, and the Jews of Imperial Russia continued to flee from the calamity *en masse*. From the perspective of Jewish communal leadership and public advocacy in the United States, the scale of the fundraising, intra-communal cooperation, and the willingness to engage in calculated public expressions of political views, were important precedents for more substantial public advocacy by American Jewry throughout the twentieth century.

⁴³² Stuart E. Knee, "The Diplomacy of Neutrality: Theodore Roosevelt and the Russian Pogroms of 1903-1906," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 19 (1989): 71-72.

⁴³³ For an account of the international philanthropic and social reform activities of early-twentieth-century American Catholic organizations, see: Deirdre M. Moloney, *American Catholic Lay Groups and Transatlantic Social Reform in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

A Reaction to Zionism

In addition to the mass arrival of new Jewish immigrants in the United States and the provocations of the pogroms in Russia, the growing popularity of the Zionist movement triggered a response from wealthier and acculturated American Jews. The founding of the AJC was in many ways a counter or a response to the growing popularity of Zionism. The way in which the American Jewish establishment responded to and dealt with the Zionist movement influenced the development of AJC's approach to public advocacy and communal defense.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Zionism was a well-organized international movement. In the United States, the cause was spearheaded by the Federation of American Zionists, which had been founded in Baltimore in 1896, one year before the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. In less than ten years, Zionism had built a substantial international base of support among some segments of Jewries in both Western and Eastern Europe, particularly among proletarian Jews in the East and a small cohort of acculturated (and disaffected) intellectuals and professionals in the West. In America, the movement remained marginal for some time, especially among established or wealthy Jews; however, the continuous influx through immigration of Jews who were sympathetic to the aspirations of the movement was crucially important to the eventual ascendancy of Zionism as a fundamental component of American Jewish politics.

There were a number of wealthy American Jews who favored the creation of an independent Jewish state or other political arrangements to secure Jewish sovereignty over a territory that could be a safe haven; however, during this early period, support for Zionism was divided along class lines in the United States, and the movement was significantly more popular among working-class Jews and new immigrants. In the historiography on American Zionism,

Justice Louis Brandeis' embrace of Zionism in 1913, and his participation in leading the movement, is often identified as the moment when Zionism moved from marginal to mainstream among American Jews.⁴³⁴

Before Brandeis embraced Zionism, American Zionist leaders were conscious of the opposition to their movement among wealthy and acculturated Jews in the United States. In an article published just before the sixth annual convention of the Federation of American Zionists in 1903, Leon Zolotkoff, the Grandmaster of the Knights of Zion, acknowledged that Zionism lacked support from the wealthy elites of American Jewry: "It is true that the wealthy Jews are still withholding their support from the movement. They watch and wait. They can afford to do so. But while their support would greatly accelerate the movement, their opposition cannot stop it. For since when have the persecuted and oppressed peoples been saved by the rich?"⁴³⁵

Zionism was rejected by the American Jewish establishment but elements of the ideology were embraced by leading American Jewish intellectuals, including Solomon Schechter, Israel Friendlander, Mordecai Kaplan, and Horace Kallen, who distinguished between the political aspirations of the movement in Palestine and its potential cultural effects in the Diaspora. They espoused "Cultural Zionism," which asserted that the recognition and maintenance of a Jewish cultural and religious distinctiveness were commensurate with the ideals of a pluralistic America, and would allow for the cultural integration of Jews, as such, into American society.⁴³⁶ In many

⁴³⁴ See: Sarah Schmidt, "The Zionist Conversion of Louis D. Brandeis," *Jewish Social Studies* 37 (1975): 18-34. According to David Gleicher, "The importance of Brandeis to the fledgling American Zionist Movement cannot be overstated. He single-handedly ended the dual loyalty fear among Jews. He said that to be a good Zionist was to be a good American, because Zionism stood for the same ideals that made America great." See, David Gleicher, *Louis Brandeis Slept Here: A Slightly Cynical History of American Jews* (New York: Geffen Publishing House, 1997), 78.

⁴³⁵ Leon Zolotkoff, "Recent Progress of the Zionist Movement. By Leon Zolotkoff, Grandmaster of the Knights of Zion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1903, 17.

⁴³⁶ According to Benny Kraut: "Cultural Zionism was at once both a sociocultural movement bearing a coherent, although by no means uniform, ideology and an acculturation tactic for American Jewish survival. Its advocates...differed on the centrality and meaning of religion, the viability of European Jewish life, and the policies

ways, the proponents of Cultural Zionism and cultural pluralism were prescient about the way that Zionist ideals of Jewish peoplehood could forge social and political cohesion among American Jews, and more broadly, among Jewish communities across the Diaspora. Their model, which blends pride in ethnic and religious heritage with secular patriotism, reflects the reality of contemporary American Jewish identity and politics. During the period of large scale Jewish immigration, however, the American Jewish establishment, due to their status insecurity and the social and political significance of race in the United States, were concerned that public expressions of Jewish distinctiveness could lead to an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States, and, accordingly were hostile towards the aspirations of the Zionism movement and its leaders.

The rise of Zionism, particularly its popularity among new Jewish immigrants to the United States, was viewed by some leaders of the Jewish establishment and some leaders of the Reform movement in America as a dangerous development that had to be countered. Their opposition to Zionism had important historical consequences. It further entrenched intra-communal divisions between acculturated Jews and new immigrants, and was the impetus for the creation of new Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, and the development of new approaches to public advocacy in the United States.

Opposition to Jewish nationalism was not the position of every establishment leader or rabbi within the Reform movement; however, years before the outbreak of systematic violence in Russia, Reform rabbis in the United States were publicly denouncing Zionism and warning of

of political Zionism. Nevertheless, they did reach consensus on other critical ideas that constituted the core beliefs of the cultural Zionist ideal: the indivisibility of Jewish nationality from Jewish religion; the necessity of seeking Jewish cultural inspiration from Jewish Palestine; and the expectation that cultural Zionism would contribute to Jewish national, cultural, and spiritual renewal in America, promote self-reliance, attract the young and hence unite generations, and heal the religious and cultural fragmentation of Jewish life.” See: Benny Kraut, “Jewish Survival in Protestant America,” in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 37.

the potential dangers Jewish nationalism posed to acculturated American Jews and to the peace and stability they enjoyed in America. “The future of Judaism lies in the United States,” argued Dr. Maurice H. Harris, the rabbi of Harlem’s Temple Israel. “The law has gone forth from Jerusalem never to return. Zionism is working against the Western trend of civilization.”⁴³⁷ On October 2, 1902, in his Yom Kippur sermon, Rabbi Joseph Silverman of Temple Emanuel in New York, echoed Rabbi Harris’ views and proposed an alternative to Zionism:

There are many millions of Jews in the world... We could be a force in the world if united. I do not favor concentration of Israel in Palestine, or in any place, but I do favor the thorough organization into a strong Central Committee. There should be an International Jewish Protective Association that could exercise great power and influence.⁴³⁸

Rabbi Silverman was a very influential figure within the American Reform movement. A number of the founders and early members of the AJC were members of his congregation. Many of these acculturated Jews shared his view that American Jews should work towards building world Jewry into an organized international community represented by citizens in populations all around the world as opposed to the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state in the Middle East.

It is indicative of how Zionism created divisions not only among acculturated Jews and new immigrants, but also within the Reform movement itself, that Rabbi Silverman’s colleague at Temple Emanuel, Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, was a supporter of Zionism and had attended the First Zionist Congress. When Gottheil died in 1903, there was considerable debate among Temple Emanuel’s trustees and congregants about whether his position should be filled by a committed Zionist. The search for Rabbi Gottheil’s replacement was a contentious matter that persisted for three years. At least six candidates were seriously considered for the position,

⁴³⁷ “Jewish Rites Held on Brooklyn Bridge,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1902, 2.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

including Rabbi Stephen Wise, an important leader of the Zionist movement in the United States and one of the first rabbis within the Reform movement to embrace Zionism.

In the end, Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, who was described by the *New York Times* as an “earnest Zionist,” was chosen as Gottheil’s replacement.⁴³⁹ When he took the position at Temple Emanuel, the American-born Magnes had only two years of experience as a rabbi and was only twenty-nine years old. Nonetheless, he had a great deal of experience in communal activism. At the time of his appointment, Magnes was also the secretary of the Federation of American Zionists, a leader of the Kehillah, and the President of the Jewish Defense Association. Although he was a Reform rabbi, he was a well-known and popular communal leader among the Eastern European immigrants on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Eighteen months after he took the position at Temple Emanuel, Magnes accepted an appointment to the AJC’s executive committee.⁴⁴⁰

The tension over Zionism within the Reform movement could also be found in the differing opinions among the founders of the AJC about the merits and potential risks of Zionism. While the AJC is often described in the historiography on American Jewry as starting out as an anti-Zionist organization, there were among the founders of the AJC some men who rejected Zionism, but who were not opposed to other political arrangements that could secure

⁴³⁹ “Dr. Magnes A Rabbi of Emanu-El at 29: Unanimously Called to Fill the Place of Dr. Gottheil,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1906, 9.

⁴⁴⁰ The argument has been made that Magnes was offered the rabbinical position at Temple Emanuel and brought into the leadership of the AJC as a means of restraining him from engaging in communal activism that conflicted with the social and political agenda of the German Jewish establishment, including his public support for the creation of an elected American Jewish congress. It has also been argued that establishment leaders elevated Magnes into the leadership of the AJC in order to capitalize upon his popularity among newly arrived Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants. As Magnes was both a committed Zionist and well-known for his communal activism on the East Side, his involvement in leading the AJC would boost the organization’s popularity among Jewish immigrants and accordingly enhance the legitimacy of the AJC’s claim to lead and speak for American Jewry. See for example: Daniel P. Kotzin, *Judah L. Magnes: An American Jewish Nonconformist* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 100-102. It is also interesting, and consistent with the German-Jewish establishment’s history of ethnic nepotism and endogamy, that Magnes married Beatrice Lowenstine, Louis Marshall’s sister-in-law, in 1908, bringing him into both the Jewish establishment’s leadership and social circles.

persecuted Jews a safe haven. It is also significant to note that during the early years of the organization, a number of high profile leaders of the AJC, including Judge Julian Mack, resigned from the Committee in order to become more active as leaders of the Zionist movement in the United States.

By the early-twentieth century, Jewish nationalism as an international movement had already experienced the tumult of an ideological schism between the Zionists, who favored the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and the Territorialists, who favored the establishment of a free and democratic Jewish state in any suitable territory that could accommodate the influx of a substantial portion of world Jewry. In the United States, the Territorialist movement was led and financed by some of the same wealthy Jews of German descent who founded the AJC. The American branch of the Jewish Territorialist Organization (ITO) was established at a meeting at the New York home of Cyrus Sulzberger on April 26, 1906. Other future AJC leaders and members were also present at this meeting, including Oscar Strauss, Herman Rosenthal, Herbert Freidenwald, and Daniel Guggenheim.⁴⁴¹ At this meeting, Mayer Sulzberger, Strauss, and Guggenheim were appointed the first Executive Committee of the American ITO.

Their support for Territorialism was pragmatic not ideological or religious. Jews were continuing to flee violence and persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe and the Territorialists privileged securing these refugees a suitable safe heaven over the idealism of reestablishing a Jewish state in Palestine. They also viewed the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state (or autonomous zone) on any suitable territory as a means of diverting Jewish immigrants away from the United States, where their conspicuous growth, it was believed, was a significant threat

⁴⁴¹ "ITO Society Organized: Jews in This City Start an American Territorialist Movement," *New York Times*, April 27, 1906, 7.

to those Jews who had already integrated into mainstream American society. The ITO asserted, quite reasonably, that a Jewish nationalist movement that was willing to accept any suitable territory was more likely to succeed. They were critical of the nationalist ideal that would only accept a Jewish state on a portion of the most contested territory in the history of western civilization, and believed that the preoccupation with Palestine would doom any effort to secure an autonomous safe haven for Jewish refugees. They were wrong about the prospects of a Jewish state in Palestine, but their support and leadership of Territorialism distinguished them from other members of the American Jewish establishment who believed that Jewish nationalism or Jewish political sovereignty in any form was either a temporary religious fad or a serious threat to acculturated Jews in the United States and other western countries. In any event, they were an activist advocacy group that was willing to publically support the idea of an independent Jewish state (or autonomous safe haven), and engage in fundraising and political lobbying on behalf of this cause.

Moreover, it is significant to note that this division of opinion among the American Jewish establishment about the potential benefits and pitfalls of Jewish nationalism prompted a debate about the goals, methods, and limits of Jewish public advocacy. While some leaders viewed Zionism as a threat that might engender accusations of dual loyalty and call into question the patriotism of naturalized American Jews, others saw the creation of a Jewish state as a potential solution that could forestall a rise in anti-Semitism in the United States by diverting potentially millions of poor Jewish immigrants away from the country. Both sides in this debate were less concerned about the goals of Jewish nationalism and how they would be realized than they were about how Jewish nationalism would shape or impact the broader American public's opinion of Jews. Both sides in this debate were also willing to engage in public advocacy.

As events unfolded, it would take several decades for acculturated Jews to become more comfortable in America, and confident enough about their status as a minority community to embrace Zionism and include support for Israel as a central part of their identity and their politics. The fact that Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe, and particularly their children, were rapidly acculturating in a pattern similar to other immigrant communities encouraged the American Reform movement's tolerance and eventual full embrace of Zionism. Years of congressional debates in the House of Representatives and Senate about imposing or removing restrictions to Jewish immigration to the United States and, crucially, the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust, would also establish a consensus in favor of Zionism and support for Israel among virtually all elements of the American Jewish community, including the AJC's leadership. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, even the most ardently anti-Zionist elements of the American Jewish community (with the notable exception of a relatively small group of Orthodox fundamentalists), recognized that Zionism would have to be reckoned with, and incorporated into American Jewish identity and the public advocacy of Jewish communal leaders in the United States.

Much of the historiography on the AJC presents the organization as an anti-Zionist group that only reluctantly accepted Zionism when it was clear that the movement had been embraced by the overwhelming majority of American Jews and world Jewry. Although many of the founders of the AJC opposed Zionism, the association of other founders with the Zionist movement or the ITO shows that not all the founders and early leaders of the organization were fundamentally opposed to the idea of an independent Jewish state. Moreover, there is evidence of

early overtures from the AJC to important Zionist organizations, including the Zionist Central Bureau in Cologne, Germany.⁴⁴²

Eventually, the AJC would become one of the most significant supporters of Zionism in the United States and an important ally of the State of Israel, but, in the years leading up to the founding of the AJC, the rise of Zionism, its popularity among new immigrants, and concerns about how that support would be interpreted by the broader American public, was a source of anxiety for some of the men who founded the American Jewish Committee. This anxiety was another stimuli for establishing an elite leadership organization and a move away from the quiet diplomacy that characterized the traditional approaches of Jewish communal leaders to public advocacy.

The Problem of Communism, Socialism, and Labor Movements

The rise of communism, socialism, and labor movements in the United States was another historical factor that influenced the development of new approaches to Jewish public advocacy. Although the 1917 Russian Revolution, the establishment of communist states, and the “red scares” were still years away, by the beginning of the twentieth century, there were

⁴⁴² See: Letter from Joseph Jacobs to David Wolffsohn, President of the Zionistische Central Bureau, December 27, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 11. This letter is interesting not only for its offer of cooperation from the leaders of the American Jewish establishment to prominent European Zionists. In the letter, the AJC also requests that the Zionistisch Central Bureau “send in all your reports or other publications as issued, they will be filed for reference. Reports, proceedings, etc., are much desired, as through them this office will be enabled to keep in touch with the work of your organization.” This can be described as an early example of a practice that the AJC would maintain throughout its history. In addition to its work as a communal defense and advocacy group, the AJC was always an information gathering organization. It can be argued that the AJC has always been in some ways a quasi-intelligence gathering service. They funded numerous efforts to collect information about the American Jewish community, world Jewry, and actual or potential enemies of the Jewish people. Some of these information gathering activities were either benign or done to help further the more liberal elements of the AJC’s broader social and political agenda, such as maintaining open immigration policies in the United States. It must be noted, however, that these activities were also often done in order to enable the organization to more effectively suppress or counter intra-communal developments that were inconsistent with the social and political agenda of AJC’s leaders.

already significant concerns about the rise of radical socialism and communism in the United States.

There was a history of labor agitation and large strikes, and some elements of the American labor movement were gathering strength during this period.⁴⁴³ Among those most concerned about the rise of communism were Jewish leaders within the established community of American Jews of German descent. Some of these leaders, it must be noted, had deep financial ties to the large manufacturing and mining corporations whose viability and profitability were most threatened by any potential improvement in the bargaining position of American labor. It is clear, however, that American Jewish leaders were also very concerned about the popularity of radical political ideas, including socialism and communism, among new Jewish immigrants, and how that popularity would impact the American public's perception of Jews and the Jewish community. These concerns were not baseless. The link between Jewish participation and leadership and the growth of American capitalism is as strong as the link between Jewish participation and leadership and the growth of the American labor movement.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ Two of the most well-known and historically significant large scale labor actions of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century were the Pullman Strike of 1894 and the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902. For a description of the these events, and discussions of their impact on the history of collective bargaining and anti-unionism in the United States, see: Troy Rondinone, "Guarding the Switch: Cultivating Nationalism during the Pullman Strike," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8 (2009): 83-109. See also: Robert H. Wiebe, "The Anthracite Strike of 1902: A Record of Confusion," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (1961): 229-251. For a discussion of the legislative and jurisprudential developments that impacted the development of the organized labor movement in the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, see: Calvert Magruder, "A Half Century of Legal Influence upon the Development of Collective Bargaining," *Harvard Law Review* 50 (1937): 1071-1117.

⁴⁴⁴ For an account the relationship between Jews and the evolution of modern capitalism, see: Jerry Z. Muller, *Capitalism and the Jews* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Muller's account also contains brief discussions of Jewish leadership of Communist parties around the world and how this leadership impacted the public perception of Jews. See: Muller, 134-136. According to Muller: "The identification of Jews with Communism was grounded in the fact that while few Jews were in fact Communists, men and women of Jewish origin were particularly salient in Communists movements. 'Judeo-Bolshevism' was a myth. But like many myths, it had just enough connection to reality to make it a plausible specter." See: Muller, 135.

For example, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), founded in 1886, “was established under the leadership of Samuel Gompers...a Jewish immigrant.”⁴⁴⁵

Even before the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Eastern European and Russian Jews in the United States, the Jewish labor movement was already well organized in New York City. The major Jewish labor groups, which were led by a small group of German and Russian radicals and socialists, had been established before the arrival of the largest waves of Jewish immigrants, which occurred after 1900.⁴⁴⁶ According to labor historian Will Herberg, among the Jewish immigrants who arrived in New York City in the middle of the nineteenth century was “a tiny but very aggressive minority of intellectuals and intellectually minded workers who had received some radical indoctrination in the revolutionary movements of Eastern Europe. These radicals included socialists of different degrees of extremism.”⁴⁴⁷

Socialism was not the only radical ideology espoused by these future labor leaders. Among them were also “anarchists, ‘philosophical’ and violent; Comtean positivists; land reformers; ethical culturists; and doctrinaires of almost every other school. Though engaged in continuous and bitter conflict among themselves, with few exceptions all these radical groups agreed on the necessity of reaching the masses with the gospel of ‘education and organization.’”⁴⁴⁸ The leaders and members of these organizations were social and political activists who did not shy away from building their organizations and engaging in public advocacy.

⁴⁴⁵ Ehud Manor, *Forward, The Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts) Newspaper: Immigrants, Socialism and Jewish Politics in New York, 1890-1917* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 3.

⁴⁴⁶ Will Herberg, “Jewish Labor Movement in the United States: Early Years to World War I,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 5 (1952): 504.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Among the earliest and most politically active Jewish political and labor groups in the United States were the *Jewish Workers Union*, the Jewish branch (Branch 8) of the *Socialist Labor Party*, and most importantly, the *United Hebrew Trades*. Even before the arrival of the largest waves of Jewish immigration, these groups had already earned a reputation in New York City. For example, in its 1905 review of the twelfth volume of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, the *New York Times* drew specific attention to the entry on “Trade Unionism:” “the Jewish workman is a natural unionist, as we in this city know.”⁴⁴⁹

The *United Hebrew Trades* (UHT), whose membership included both skilled and unskilled workers, was founded in New York in 1888. The UHT acted as an outreach and umbrella organization. Its leaders helped Jewish workers in various industries and in the performing arts to form unions. Fraternal organizations were also established, including, most importantly, the *Workmen’s Circle* (WC) in 1892. The growth of a Jewish labor and Yiddish language press also predated the mass arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, including newspapers such as the *Arbeter Tsaytung* (“Workers Paper”), *Zukunft* (“Future”), and the *Frei Arbeiter Stimme* (“Free Workers Voice”). *Forverts* (“The Yiddish Daily Forward”), one of the most widely read and historically significant Jewish newspapers in the United States, was established in 1897.⁴⁵⁰

By the turn of the century, the Jewish labor movement in New York City, particularly the UHT, was sufficiently organized, confident, and funded to openly engage in political lobbying of city councilors in New York City and state legislators in Albany. For example, on November 16,

⁴⁴⁹ “A Great Work Ended: Completion of the Jewish Encyclopedia—A Remarkable Series,” *New York Times*, December 30, 1905, BR923.

⁴⁵⁰ For a discussion of the historical significance of *Forverts*, both as a Jewish publication and as a mouthpiece for Jewish social and political activists, see: Ehud Manor, *Forward, The Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts) Newspaper: Immigrants, Socialism and Jewish Politics in New York, 1890-1917* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009).

1900, New York State's Industrial Commission heard testimony from Louis Harding, an executive member of the Builders' League, in which he complained bitterly about the political influence in Albany of Jewish labor groups from New York's East Side.⁴⁵¹ Harding alleged that Jewish labor organizations had retained lobbyists and had set up offices in Albany to lobby members of the State Legislatures when the houses were in session. He further alleged that Jewish labor groups kept a "black list" with the names of legislators who were, in their view, unsympathetic to labor, and threatened to target these legislators during the next election campaign.⁴⁵² "The legislators are afraid of the labor vote," Harding testified, "and they don't hesitate to say so."⁴⁵³

As more Jewish immigrants arrived after 1900, the established Jewish labor organizations found that a significant number of the new arrivals were already sympathetic to their beliefs and goals. In common with the small group of radicals who founded the Jewish labor movement in the United States, many of the Eastern European and Russian Jewish immigrants who arrived in New York City in the first decade of the twentieth century had already experienced some ideological and political instruction (or indoctrination) in their native countries. A significant number of the new Jewish immigrants were members or adherents of the *Bund* (General Jewish Workers Union), a group which Herberg describes as "an organization of Jewish socialists that was winning a name for itself in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe."⁴⁵⁴ As a result, many Jewish immigrants were already either sympathetic to socialism, or self-professed socialists or communists, when they arrived in America. The arrival of thousands of Jewish

⁴⁵¹ "East Side Immorality: Dr. Blaustein Testifies Before the Industrial Commission—Holds Police Responsible," *New York Times*, November 16, 1900, 2.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ Herberg, 511.

immigrants with ties to the *Bund* would have a significant impact on the history of the Jewish labor movement and on the growth of socialism in the United States.⁴⁵⁵

In short, by the time the largest wave of Jewish immigrants came to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the infrastructure needed for class cohesion, effective collective bargaining, applying political pressure, public advocacy, ideological instruction, and potential radicalization were already in place on Manhattan's lower East Side. These forces had an influence on the founding of the AJC and the development of the organization's public advocacy techniques. While the leaders of the German Jewish establishment had begun to engage in some forms of public advocacy in response to international events, they were far less comfortable with public advocacy on behalf of domestic social and political causes than some leaders on the East Side. In common with their response to the popularity of Zionism, once again, the Jewish establishment's primary concern was a matter of public perception. They feared that the political beliefs and public activism of the East Side labor groups might incite anti-Semitism in the United States.

The response of the American Jewish establishment to the growth of the Jewish labor movement and the popularity of some radical political ideas on the East Side was historically significant, and would shape intra-community relations and the means and objectives of Jewish public advocacy in the United States for decades. In contrast to the majority of Americans, or at least the majority of American political leaders and prominent capitalists, the leaders of the American Jewish establishment did not fear communism in and of itself. Their concern was not a matter of conflicting ideas about the distribution of wealth or who should control the means of production. Many Jewish establishment leaders were wealthy capitalists who had a great deal to

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

lose, but they were not afraid of a communist or radical political revolution in the United States. Rather, these leaders were concerned about the potential social consequences for American Jewry of any widespread belief among the general American public that Jews were disproportionately and prominently leading or participating in radical political movements.

In this case, the leaders of the Jewish establishment were prescient. The perception that Jews were radicals and communists did emerge and became a source of anti-Semitism in the United States during the twentieth century.⁴⁵⁶ The American public's perception of Jewish radicalism and support for communism was an issue that the AJC and other Jewish advocacy groups were required to address, particularly during the early years of the Cold War.

As will be discussed below, throughout its history, the AJC made considerable efforts to limit the influence of Jewish radicals within the American Jewish community, and to undermine the association in American public opinion of Jews and Judaism with communists and communism. In the years leading up to the founding of the AJC, and as leaders from all sectors of American Jewry began to debate the establishment of some form of national Jewish leadership body in the United States, Jewish establishment leaders wanted to ensure that any organization that would ultimately claim to represent and speak for the entire American Jewish community would not be led or unduly influenced by radicals and communists.

Lessons from the Call for a National Organization

⁴⁵⁶ For a brief discussion of the link between the perception of Jews as communists and the intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States during the twentieth century, see: Richard Frankel, "One Crisis Behind? Rethinking Antisemitic Exceptionalism in the United States and Germany," *American Jewish History* 97 (2013): 235-258. According to Frankel: "The purported connection between Jews and Bolsheviks placed the image of the Jew at the heart of the First Red Scare, making them, in the eyes of many, a fundamental threat to national security." See: Frankel, 243.

The growth of American Jewry through the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Russian and Eastern European Jews, the organizational successes of the anti-pogrom campaigns, the rise of Zionism, and the popularity of socialism among new Jewish immigrants prompted the beginning of a discussion among American Jewish leaders about the need for a permanent national body to represent, and advocate for, the interests of the American Jewish community and, potentially, world Jewry. In the years leading up to the founding of the AJC in 1906, these often contentious debates had both positive and negative lessons for Jewish leaders who wanted the American Jewish community to organize to pursue effective public advocacy. On the one hand, these debates were informative about how the community might organize; on the other hand, the debates over the composition and aims of a national Jewish conference would deepen the divisions between acculturated Jews of German descent and the community of Yiddish-speaking and Orthodox Jews whose numbers in the United States were steadily increasing.

The establishment of a permanent national body was the focus of the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) when it convened in Detroit on June 29, 1903. The CCAR was, and remains, an umbrella organization representing, and composed of, the Reform movement's rabbis in North America. In 1903, the CCAR's President was Rabbi Joseph Silverman of Temple Emanuel in New York, which, as already noted above, was the synagogue of several founders of the AJC. During his presidential address at the CCAR, Rabbi Silverman praised the work done in the aftermath of the first Kishinev pogrom by Jewish relief organizations, but he also highlighted their limitations. In the rabbi's view, the absence of any centralized national organization to coordinate the relief effort undermined its effectiveness:

The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith and other societies felt it was their duty and their mission to use the machinery of their organizations for the amelioration of the unfortunate situation in Russia, and possibly for a prevention of its recurrence. We do not

question the right of any Jewish society to exert all its power and influence in behalf of justice in general and Jewish interests in particular, but we regret that, owing to the existence of so many associations pursuing independently similar objects, much effort, much influence and money, are often dissipated, and concerted action, which might lead to quicker and better results, is prevented. We often present the sad spectacle of a house divided against itself.⁴⁵⁷

To remedy this situation, Rabbi Silverman proposed that the CCAR appoint a commission to study the feasibility of establishing a national organization to represent the interests of American Jews. Rabbi Silverman, in the same presidential address, presented his own proposal for the creation of a national American Jewish Synod that could speak for the entire American Jewish community.⁴⁵⁸

There were a number of significant problems with Rabbi Silverman's Synod proposal. First, in effect, Rabbi Silverman was proposing the establishment of a religious body that would duplicate some of the mandate of the CCAR, which was the organization responsible for resolving ecclesiastical divisions within the Reform movement in the United States and Canada. If the goal of any new national body was effective public advocacy and communal defense, what was needed was an organization that could address political and social issues of concern to the entire American Jewish community, not ecclesiastical controversies.

Secondly, Rabbi Silverman's proposal did not include Jewish congregations and organizations that were outside the Reform movement, nor provide a platform for unaffiliated Jews. At this time, the denomination that would evolve into Conservative Judaism was still in an early stage of development. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the flagship organization of Conservative Judaism, lacked financial support, and, until 1913, Conservative

⁴⁵⁷ "Dr. Silverman Urges Jews to Organize," *New York Times*, June 30, 1903, 3.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Judaism did not have a congregational organization in the United States. However, an organization that did not even purport to represent the unaffiliated or the rapidly increasing Orthodox community of Eastern European and Russian Jews could not legitimately claim to represent the entire American Jewish community. These weaknesses appear to have been overlooked by the Conference. The CCAR approved the creation of a “Committee on Synod,” and gave its members one year to study the issue and compile a report.⁴⁵⁹

The Committee on Synod

Exactly one year later, the “Committee on Synod” presented its findings at the 1904 annual meeting of the CCAR in Louisville, Kentucky. The committee’s report favored the creation of the Synod just as proposed a year earlier in Detroit by Rabbi Silverman. Their report also outlined a number of significant recommendations for the structure and practices of the Synod. The establishment of a national organization to represent the social and political interests of the American Jewish community as a whole was not the goal of the proposed Synod, and the substantial weakness of excluding the Yiddish-speaking and Orthodox Jews remained. The committee’s recommendations, in fact, accentuated the weaknesses of Rabbi Silverman’s proposal. The recommendations made it clear that the Synod would be another umbrella organization for Reform Judaism in North America. There was no mention of including representatives from Orthodox congregations. Under the committee’s proposal, the Synod would be an entirely new institution; no existing Jewish institutions would be dissolved or folded into the new Synod. The committee recommended that the Synod convene only once every five years, that it be composed of both rabbis and laymen, and that those representatives be locally

⁴⁵⁹ “Rabbis Favor a Synod,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1904, 6.

elected by Jewish communities across the country. The new body would be concerned with ecclesiastical questions of concern to the Reform movement, not political and social issues of potential concern to the entire American Jewish community. Finally, the committee recommended that the Synod have “an Executive Board of at least ten men,” although its purpose was not defined by the committee.⁴⁶⁰

While an American Jewish Synod organized according to Rabbi Silverman’s proposal and the recommendations of the CCAR’s “Committee on Synod” was never established, the initiative was historically significant. It was the first time that the creation of an elected national Jewish congress of any kind was discussed openly by Jewish communal leaders, and the first time that these kinds of intra-communal debates were covered by the mainstream press in the United States. The proposed composition and structure of the Synod was also significant, including, perhaps most importantly, the notion that existing Jewish institutions could continue to exist in parallel with this new body, and could work in concert with it through a coordinating or executive body.

Before any new body could be established, however, a number of questions would have to be answered. Reflecting the chauvinism of the times and the context of these deliberation, the notion that the leaders of any such body would be men was taken as a given; however; should those men be men of industry or clergymen? And, further, should they be appointed to their positions or elected by the community? If appointed, by whom? If elected, how would those elections be viewed by the broader American public? An appointed committee would lack legitimacy within the Jewish community; however, an elected committee might be dominated by

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.* The proposed quorum of ten men for the Executive Committee matches Jewish tradition regarding the minimum number of congregants that need to be present before prayers can begin (*minyan*). This level of specificity may be coincidental but arguably reflects the religious, as opposed to political, foundation and orientation of the proposed group.

radicals, or lead to accusations of dual loyalty, and foster suspicions among the Christian American majority about the level of patriotism of American Jews.

Divisions in the American Jewish Community and East Side Philanthropy

The weaknesses of the Synod proposal reflected the social and religious divisions that continued to divide the American Jewish community at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite these deep divisions, in an article published in the 1904 *American Jewish Year Book*, Cyrus Sulzberger was optimistic that the two communities were growing closer:

American Jewry looks with confidence into the future. Growing in numbers and importance, in culture and the means of culture, it recognizes the problems wherewith it has to deal and its shortcomings in handling them. The closer kinship with the newcomer has been slow of attainment, yet those on the lookout see the signs of the better day.⁴⁶¹

Much of Sulzberger's optimism was misplaced. While the leaders of the two communities cooperated on philanthropic projects, they had somewhat different motivations and aims. For example, there was considerable cooperation between establishment and immigrant leaders on philanthropic projects for the residents of Manhattan's lower East Side, but the motivations of the establishment and Reform leaders were not without self-interest. A brief examination of the philanthropy on the East Side of the German Jewish establishment is informative in understanding the origins and objects of the AJC.

On one level, the philanthropy of the American Jewish establishment can be seen as a manifestation of the noblest ideals of American progressives during the early twentieth century,

⁴⁶¹ Cyrus L. Sulzberger, "The Year, 5664," in *The American Jewish Yearbook, Volume VI, 1904-05*, ed. Cyrus Adler and Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1904), 39.

including Jane Addams, Frances Kellor, and Robert Woods.⁴⁶² “For these reformers,” Gary Gerstle notes:

the plight of European immigrants—the inadequate wages, the slum conditions in which they lived, the infectious diseases from which they suffered, and the urban vices to which they had succumb (prostitution, gambling, and political corruption)—symbolized what was wrong with America. These reformers had not turned on the immigrants. Rather, through extensive contacts with immigrants at settlement houses, in unions, and in politics, they had come to view the immigrants sympathetically and to devise a reform agenda oriented towards their needs. The social welfare reformers called for better working conditions, higher wages, improved housing and sanitation, playgrounds to give children more wholesome recreation, Americanization programs to teach immigrants English, and public museums and libraries to cultivate immigrant minds.⁴⁶³

The concentration of settlement and the poverty of new Jewish immigrants on the East Side caused significant social problems. There was poor sanitation and a shortage of adequate housing, and, with more immigrants moving in every week, more resources were needed to help the community absorb the new arrivals. Both Russian and German Jewish leaders wanted to alleviate these problems and improve living conditions on the lower East Side. The German Jewish leaders, however, were also anxious about public perception, and about how the growing Jewish community was being viewed by the Christian majority.

For the establishment leaders, the coverage that the overcrowding on the East Side was receiving in the press, including reports on youth crime, filthy streets, prostitution, and spousal abandonment, were particular sources of concern. For example, a report published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* identified “the Russian Jew as the chief offender” in what was believed

⁴⁶² Progressivism, as Gary Gerstle notes, was in ascendency during this period: “The ranks of these reformers had swelled in the first decade of the new century, but they still felt neglected by the national parties and the media.” See, Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 72. In 1912, leading progressives formed a new national party led by Theodore Roosevelt.

⁴⁶³ Gerstle, 72.

to be an epidemic of spousal abandonment (or “wife desertion”) among new immigrants to the United States.⁴⁶⁴ Equally troubling, the same report also emphasized the role of rabbis in abetting this social problem by granting Jewish divorces (*gettin*) to men who arrived in America in advance of their wives and children.

In response to both the real and perceived social problems on the East Side, and the public relations embarrassments caused by the press coverage of these problems, Jewish establishment leaders directed substantial financial and human resources towards a series of philanthropic efforts to improve conditions on the East Side. Their motives were altruistic, but they were not purely altruistic. Their philanthropy was shaped by their status insecurity and their desire to accelerate the acculturation of new Jewish immigrants. To their credit, the Jewish establishment leaders who gave generously to improve conditions on the East Side appear to have genuinely felt that they had a duty to act; however, it must be acknowledged that they also had an agenda, and that they had the means to see that agenda realized. Jacob Schiff, probably the most generous philanthropist during this period of American Jewish history, saw his financial support for charities as a duty, but he also made it clear that his generosity was not charity for charity’s sake.⁴⁶⁵ His philanthropy was altruistic and also strategic. He aimed to improve

⁴⁶⁴ Jane Addams, “The Worst Phases of Wife Desertion,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 8, 1906, F2.

⁴⁶⁵ Judith S. Goldstein estimates that Schiff contributed between fifty and one hundred million dollars to different sectarian and non-sectarian charities and institutions, including significant gifts to the Red Cross, the Montefiore Hospital, the Salvation Army, the Semitic Museum at Harvard, the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, the Young Women’s Hebrew Association, the Talmud Torah religious schools, the Ethical Cultural Society, the Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Publication Society, and the Jewish Division at the New York Public Library. See Judith S. Goldstein, *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure: The American Jewish Committee’s Fight Against Immigration Restriction, 1906-1917* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 26. In his annotated collection of Schiff’s correspondence, Cyrus Adler recounts a humorous episode in which Schiff made a donation to the International Congress of Gregorian Chant after receiving an unsolicited request for support. In replying to this request, Schiff wrote: “Your communication of the 22d instant which reached me yesterday, in which, you say: ‘I am confident that every Catholic will feel it a privilege to contribute to this fund,’ was, no doubt, sent to me erroneously, as I have the advantage of being a Jew, but nevertheless, this need not prevent me from heeding the appeal in your letter to contribute to so good an object, for, if anything is catholic in the general sense of the word, music certainly is so, and so is religion, for its true purpose is always the same, as you will no doubt agree, in all faiths, and on the top of

conditions on the East Side, forestall a rise in anti-Semitism, and provide a means for established Jewish communal leaders to exercise influence and control over the growing immigrant population of the East Side.⁴⁶⁶

The efforts funded and led by the American Jewish establishment to improve conditions on the East Side are akin to other progressive era philanthropic projects that have been praised for the breadth of their ambitions, but also criticized for their mixed motives. On the one hand, the wealthy and acculturated Jewish sponsors of these efforts generously provided desperately needed aid to their newly arrived Eastern European and Russian coreligionists, and they had a number of significant successes, including the construction of settlement houses, new hospitals, day schools, and recreation centers. On the other hand, these efforts, and the attitudes underlying them, were often resented by the intended beneficiaries. “The German Jews,” according to historian Joyce Mendelsohn, “were often regarded as condescending, and their imperious manner was resented by the poor Eastern European Jews.”⁴⁶⁷ The various projects of the American Jewish establishment on the East Side had the goal of increasing the pace of acculturation and social integration, and, thereby, removing the perceived threat that the continued growth of an outsider community might foster anti-Semitism in the United States and undermine the security

the mountain all paths unite.” See: Jacob H. Schiff, *Jacob Schiff, His Life and Letters Vol. II*, ed. Cyrus Adler (New York: Doubleday, 1928), 49.

⁴⁶⁶ Schiff wrote: “Many, if not most men of means, acknowledge the duty imposed upon them to permit their fellow beings to benefit to some extent through the larger wealth which a kind Providence has allotted to them. As a rule, those who have acquired wealth through their own exertion will be more ready to carry this duty into practical effect than those whose fortune has come to them through inheritance... It is no sacrifice, and consequently hardly meritorious action, to dispose of part of one's fortune by testament, for with our death we cease to own and to enjoy the wealth accumulated during life. Charity and philanthropy, to be effective, should have personal supervision, for it is unlikely that others can carry into practical effect our ideas and intentions as well as we can do it ourselves... The surplus wealth we gain, to some extent, at least, belongs to our fellow beings; we are only the temporary custodians of our fortunes; let us be careful that no just complaint be made against our stewardship, nor against the refusal to permit others entitled to it to enjoy a tithe of our wealth until the inexorable laws of Nature compel us to leave it behind.” See: Jacob H. Schiff, *Jacob Schiff, His Life and Letters Vol. I*, ed. Cyrus Adler (New York: Doubleday, 1928), 355-356.

⁴⁶⁷ Joyce Mendelsohn, *The Lower East Side Remembered and Revisited: A History and Guide to a Legendary New York Neighborhood* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1993), 20.

of Jews that had embraced American culture, and had already acculturated into the American way of life.⁴⁶⁸ The projects funded by the American Jewish establishment were philanthropic; however, at their core, they were also examples of elites disregarding the agency and aspirations of impoverished people and imposing their mores on a marginalized and subaltern community.

While the leaders of the American Jewish establishment continued to participate, lead, and fund philanthropic projects, they also began to take steps towards the creation of a national Jewish organization. The anxiety caused by the continuing growth of the immigrant population and the prevalence (or at least the perception) of radicalism among the new arrivals made the American Jewish establishment distrustful of a democratic model for communal leadership. While they continued to cooperate with and negotiate with Orthodox and labor leaders, in the years leading up to the founding of the AJC, the leaders of the American Jewish establishment started to act on their own initiative as if they had a mandate to act on behalf, and speak for, the whole American Jewish community.

“Organization on a Rational Theory”

It is possible to distinguish, broadly speaking, the historical, social, cultural, religious, political, and economic developments that influenced the founders of the AJC to act on their own and found the organization. As the violence in Russia continued and more Jews arrived in America, Jewish leaders continued to debate who would represent and act on behalf of American Jewry. Among Reform Jews and the leaders of the Jewish establishment, there was anxiety that

⁴⁶⁸ The philanthropy of the American Jewish establishment included a campaign to encourage new Jewish immigrants to move out of the East Side and settle in other areas of the United States. The Industrial Removal Office was established for the express purpose of alleviating the problems of overcrowding on the East Side by providing assistance to new immigrants who were willing to leave New York and establish new Jewish communities outside of the major cities of the East coast. The efforts to resettle new immigrants outside of New York, however, were for the most part a failure. The number of new immigrants settling on the East Side was always significantly greater than the number being relocated to other parts of the United States.

the founding of a national Jewish organization, particularly one composed of elected representatives, would become an extension of the Zionist movement or be perceived by the majority of Americans as unpatriotic, radical, or communist. Among the Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking community, there was anxiety that a new national organization would merely be a puppet of the Reform movement, a liberal movement whose religious doctrine they rejected, whose patronizing leaders they resented, and of which they were deeply suspicious.

Piecing together the exact order of events which led to the formation of the AJC, however, is difficult. Judith S. Goldstein has commented that “unfortunately, no good work on the formation of the AJC exists.”⁴⁶⁹ This is not because the AJC has been overlooked in the historiography on American Jewry and interests groups. As one of the most prominent and influential Jewish organizations in the United States and internationally, the AJC has garnered a great deal of attention from historians. The absence of a thorough account of the formation of the committee is a consequence of the fact that the creation of the AJC was coordinated by a very small group of men. This process was not transparent or open, and this important aspect of the AJC’s history casts a shadow over the organization; it leaves the AJC exposed to the charge that it was a secret organization. How the AJC was established is especially problematic because the supposed existence of clandestine Jewish societies composed of wealthy financiers is a prevailing trope in anti-Semitic propaganda.

As the account of events described in the earlier part of this chapter reveals, the decision to create a non-democratic communal defense organization was the culmination of a long historical progression characterized by mostly unsuccessful political activism and persistent intra-communal strife. The work of Jewish establishment leaders to raise funds to aid the victims

⁴⁶⁹ Goldstein, 53n.

of pogroms, increase public awareness about the atrocities in Russia, and call on American political leaders to intervene to stop the violence were substantial and unprecedented in the history of Jewish communal defense and political activism in the United States. These efforts, however, were ineffective. Random and planned acts of violence against Jewish communities in Russia continued to erupt notwithstanding protests in major American cities and the coverage these events received in the press. The Jewish establishment leaders who had engaged in the quiet diplomacy of the *Hofjude* tradition and who had spoken directly with President Roosevelt and representatives of the State Department were rebuffed. “They confronted a President who told them bluntly of the limits of their power and of his own. Roosevelt left no doubts in their minds about how little he would or could do.”⁴⁷⁰ The German Jewish leaders were frustrated by the ineffectiveness of their efforts, and they believed that these efforts would continue to be futile as long as the American Jewish community was unable to speak with one voice. And, they were afraid that even if American Jewry could speak with a united voice, it might not only be less effective, it could be harmful if it was construed by the American public as radical, socialist, communist, or unpatriotic.

Much later, by the early 1950s, there would be sufficient commonalities among American Jews of varying backgrounds, synagogue affiliation, and economic class, that broad consensus on social, economic, and political questions, and appropriate communal responses, might be possible. This was not the case at the beginning of the twentieth century. During this period, American Jewry was starkly divided by language barriers, economic circumstances, differences in religious practice, conflicting political ideologies, extent of acculturation, and different apprehension and unease about the future. According to Judith S. Goldstein:

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

The German and Russian Jews embodied different traditions. There was a language barrier between the Yiddish and Russian speaking and the German and English speaking Jews. There were religious differences between Orthodox, as well as non-practicing Russian Jews, and the reform German Jews. Economic and political differences separating capitalists from socialists and anarchists; political disputes divided American assimilationist from Zionists. But most important was the psychological gap between the powerful and the powerless, the givers of charity and the supplicants, between the satisfied, successful, and relatively secure German Jews and the poor, awkward, and frightened Russian Jewish immigrants.⁴⁷¹

The men who founded the AJC came to the conclusion that it was simply impossible to bridge all of these divisions. The threats to Jewish communities abroad, the prospect of new immigration restrictions at home, and the intensification of anti-Semitism in America meant that someone had to act. The establishment leaders were wealthier, more connected, and more powerful and they decided to take matters into their own hands.

There is no complete record that can be used to reconstruct an account of the founding of the American Jewish Committee. Much of the planning and negotiations was done in private discussions. The founders left some written record of their deliberations in their personal correspondence but, most regrettably, a fire at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1966 destroyed a significant amount of Jacob Schiff's archived personal correspondence.⁴⁷² Thorough minutes, including transcriptions of the proceedings, exist of the earliest meetings of the AJC, but a great deal of the substance of the private discussions between the founders that occurred in the months leading up to those earliest meetings is unknown. It is no wonder that Naomi Cohen titled her introduction to her account of the AJC's first sixty years "Organization was in the Air." While it is, therefore, not possible to document the entire story of the AJC's creation, it is clear

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁷² As a result of the fire, "No large collection of [Schiff's] papers is available for the years before 1914." See: Goldstein, 27n.

that in 1906, Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler, Cyrus Sulzberger, Meyer Sulzberger, Samuel Greenbaum, Julian Mack, and Nathan Bijur took it upon themselves to create an organization to represent and speak for American Jewry. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, the establishment of an elite communal leadership organization was not without precedent in modern Jewish history. In addition to the historical factors and intra-communal tensions already discussed above, in choosing to create a non-democratic organization, the founders of the AJC were inspired by elite Jewish communal organizations in other countries, most importantly the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Alliance Israélite Universelle in France, and the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Germany. The decision to form an American iteration of these groups was made with a great deal of consideration. The AJC's founders were aware of the controversy that would accompany their decision to act without the participation of all elements of American Jewry. The founders brooded about the wisdom of creating the AJC; some were deeply concerned about establishing any organization that would explicitly reinforce the perception of Jews as different or separate from the rest of Americans. The AJC's founders argued about who should lead the organization, about whom they should include in the membership, and about how those members should be chosen. They also made some efforts to mitigate the damage that would be done to the relationship between the German Jewish establishment and Yiddish-speaking immigrants by inviting some prominent and wealthy Russian and Eastern European Jews to join the organization.

The wealthy and influential members of the American Jewish establishment took matters into their own hands, and, in many cases, they disregarded or ignored the views of the growing immigrant community of Yiddish-speaking and Orthodox Jews. The leaders of the Jewish establishment's answers to the questions raised by the failed Synod effort, and their response to

their concerns about the popularity of Zionism, communism, and socialism among new Jewish immigrants, was to fashion a form of Jewish communal leadership in the United States that privileged acculturation into the white mainstream and was male-dominated, elitist, and undemocratic.

In their defense, at this time, a calamity was unfolding in Russia, and American Jewry was a heterogeneous group that lacked the social and political cohesion needed for effective public advocacy. The American Jewish community was also, it must be noted, impacted by the deeply entrenched racial divisions that characterized American society during this period. As noted above, American Jews occupied an ambiguous position in America's racial hierarchy. Despite their Caucasian skin tone, American Jews, regardless of their economic class, were victims of race-based and religious-based discrimination and social exclusion and were denied the status and privileges of being perceived as white in the United States.⁴⁷³ A number of significant events that occurred shortly after the first Kishinev pogrom, including the ongoing systematic violence in the Pale, the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, and the celebration of the two-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the first Jewish settlement in America, provided the small group of elites who would ultimately establish the AJC with opportunities to represent American Jewry and, for better or for worse, influence how the broader American public viewed the growing community of American Jews. While they had no mandate from the people for whom they claimed to speak, they nonetheless took it upon themselves to act.

⁴⁷³ Long before the mass arrival of Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the United States, members of the wealthiest strata of American Jewry were not spared from the indignities of race-based and religion-based discrimination. For example, in one very well-known and widely reported incident, in 1877, Joseph Seligman was denied accommodations at the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York because the hotel had a policy of refusing to admit "Israelites." For a further discussion of this incident, see: Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 141-147.

As discussed above, before the founding of the AJC, the communal defense and advocacy work of the American Jewish establishment was more consistent with the traditional *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* model of Jewish public advocacy. “The tradition of the ‘Court Jew,’” according to Arthur Silver, “influenced the political mentality of the wave of German immigration.”⁴⁷⁴ The wealthy and connected leaders of the Jewish establishment, who thought of themselves as “stewards” of their community, tried to intervene when they could.⁴⁷⁵ However, their limited success and their anxieties about the threats posed by mass Jewish immigration and the growing popularity of Zionism, communism, and socialism would eventually lead to the founding of the AJC, and a departure from the traditional approaches to Jewish public advocacy. Between 1903 and 1906, in the absence of a national Jewish organization, individual Jews, or small groups of prominent men working together on an *ad hoc* basis, attempted to respond to threats to the Jewish communities abroad, and to shape the broader American public’s perceptions of the growing American Jewish community. It can be argued that the origins of the AJC, and the origins of the AJC’s public advocacy strategies, can be traced to the work done by these members of the Jewish establishment during this period.

The American Jewish establishment’s response to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 illustrates the beginning of their transition from the old traditions of Jewish public advocacy towards a new, modern approach. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War coincided with the ongoing violence against the Jewish communities of the Pale of Settlement. In the lead-up to the outbreak of the war, and during the fighting, Jewish bankers in both Europe and the

⁴⁷⁴ Arthur Silver, *Jews in the Political Life of New York City, 1865-1867* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1954), 3. Also quoted in: Manor, 122 (49n).

⁴⁷⁵ Naomi W. Cohen, “Friends in Court: An American-Jewish Response to Antisemitism,” in *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1987), 314-317.

United States tried to leverage their considerable clout in international financial markets to persuade the Russian Government to stop the persecution of Russian Jews.⁴⁷⁶ When these attempts failed, these bankers used the same clout and connections to punish Russia by helping Japan finance its war effort. Jacob Schiff, in his capacity as the director of the investment bank Kuhn, Loeb and Company, helped Japan secure substantial international loans, and led the efforts to obstruct Russia's ability to secure financing for the war.⁴⁷⁷ In the aftermath of Russia's defeat, Schiff, in concert with other American and European bankers, tried to obstruct Russia's ability to secure loans to pay Japan any war indemnity that might have been negotiated as part of a peace treaty.⁴⁷⁸

This potential impediment to Russia securing postwar loans attracted the attention of the press in the United States at least in part because Jewish leaders released public statements to the media in which they openly threatened to use Jewish influence over international financial markets to bankrupt Imperial Russia and to undermine its relations with United States. A strong case can be made that these interventions, over both the short and long term, did significantly more harm than good to the interests of the Jewish community in the United States and world Jewry, but these interventions demonstrate that the elite leaders of the Jewish community were transitioning to a new approach to public advocacy.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ See, for example: C.C. Aronsfeld, "Jewish Bankers and the Tzar," *Jewish Social Studies* 35 (1973): 87-104.

⁴⁷⁷ After the war, in recognition of the assistance he had provided Japan, Schiff was granted a private audience with Emperor Meiji. He was the first foreign born private citizen (as opposed to a representative of a foreign government or royal family) to be given that honor. After his private meeting with the Emperor, Schiff was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun at a gala in his honor.

⁴⁷⁸ The peace negotiations were conducted in the United States. The United States Navy hosted delegations from both Russia and Japan at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. President Theodore Roosevelt won the 1906 Noble Peace Prize for his efforts to mediate an end to the war, and, ultimately, an indemnity was not a part of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the brief, but historically significant, conflict.

⁴⁷⁹ In the short term, the claims of Jewish establishment leaders to be speaking for American Jews and acting on behalf of world Jewry escalated the already well entrenched divisions and tensions between the different communities of American Jews. In the long term, their threatened intervention in financial markets helped foster,

Another illustration of the American Jewish establishment's move away from old traditions of public advocacy was Simon Wolf's effort to influence a change in Russian policy towards the Jews of the Pale. While the Portsmouth negotiations to end the Russo-Japanese War were ongoing, Wolf, a German-born American Jewish leader, wrote a letter to Count Sergei Witte, a member of the Russian delegation at the negotiations. The letter was published in *The Washington Post*. At the time, Wolf, a Washington D.C. based lawyer, was the President of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith. His letter to Witte is a *tour de force* of diplomatic and public relations blunders. On the subject of Jewish influence in international finance, for example, Wolf displayed no subtlety or foresight: "Russia, at this juncture, needs two important elements to insure its future prosperity and happiness: money and friends. The Jews of the world, as citizens of their respective countries, control much of the first, and would make a magnificent army of the latter."⁴⁸⁰ Wolf was similarly straightforward, provocative, and tactless about the harm that Jewish-owned media could inflict on Russia by swaying American public opinion against Russia, and, by extension, the American government's ability to treat Russia as a friend and ally.⁴⁸¹ Wolf's public statements certainly represent a break from the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude*

and continues to provide fodder for, some of the accusations of Jewish economic conspiracy and domination found in anti-Semitic propaganda such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

⁴⁸⁰ Simon Wolf, "Jews to Make Stand: Price of Loan to Be Russian Hebrew Reforms. Wolf's Letter to M. Witte," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 1905, 3.

⁴⁸¹ In his published letter, Wolf provocatively wrote: "There is no disguising the fact that, in the United States especially, the Jews form an important factor in the formation of public opinion and in the control of the finances... a large number of representatives and influential journals of the world, and the United States no less, are owned and controlled by Jews: that by virtue of their mercantile and financial standing in this country, they are exercising an all potent and powerful influence in the direction of not only public opinion but of editorial comment. Understand me distinctly, that this power is not used to subvert or destroy, but to resent and defend, aggression on the one hand and rights on the other, and thus, owing to the lamentable and deplorable conditions of the Jews in Russia, your government suffers a loss not only of prestige, but influence and friendship... We do not hate Russia; we do not wish her destruction; we have no desire to see her humiliated, but you must admit that 'blood is thicker than water,' and as long as the Jews of Russia are treated as aliens there can be no peace or concord between us." See: Simon Wolf, "Jews to Make Stand: Price of Loan to Be Russian Hebrew Reforms. Wolf's Letter to M. Witte," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 1905, 3.

traditions of quiet diplomacy, and, after the founding of the AJC, the organization's leaders made considerable efforts not to repeat these mistakes.⁴⁸²

The efforts of Jewish leaders to leverage their influence in international finance to secure better treatment for their Russian coreligionists included other missteps, but these efforts also demonstrate that American Jewish leaders were transitioning away from the traditional, more circumspect approach of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* model of Jewish public advocacy towards a new approach. Shortly after the publication of Wolf's letter, Count Witte agreed to meet with an *ad hoc* committee of Jewish leaders in August 1905. Among the Jewish leaders at this meeting were Jacob Schiff, Simon Wolf, Oscar Straus, and Adolf Kraus, all acculturated Jews of German descent who would become influential figures within the AJC. The meeting between Witte and the Jewish delegation began cordially, but descended into a shouting match. Jacob Schiff lost his temper after Witte suggested that Russia's Jews were not ready for full citizenship and equal rights, and, even if Russia's Jews were ready, the granting of those rights would so enrage the

⁴⁸² Wolf's statements and the entire campaign to threaten Russia with financial sanctions and negative coverage in the American press had significant consequences that continue to haunt the American Jewish community and world Jewry. Simon Wolf's letter to Count Witte is also interesting for its inclusion of references to social and political questions that are not directly connected to the economic sanctions Jewish bankers threatened to impose against Russia. These sections of Wolf's letter were probably not intended for Witte, but were rather included for the wider audience of the American public. For example, Wolf goes to great length to substantiate and defend the patriotism of naturalized American Jews, particularly the patriotism of his less acculturated Russian coreligionists: "The Jews born in Russia, who have been compelled to come to this country, either voluntarily or involuntarily, have proven, and are proving, by their splendid citizenship and great success that they are not, as men, different from any other human being, but that when given a chance under equal conditions, they prove not only their worth, but in many directions their superiority. Therefore, if the unnatural restraints were thrown off, and the Jews of Russia given the same chance for life and happiness that citizens of other faiths of that country enjoy, I am absolutely confident that the Jewish question in Russia would cease, they would become absorbed and assimilated, as they are in this country, and England, France, Germany, and Italy, and instead of being a menace, they would become a help and strengthen every element of the nation's prosperity." Wolf's letter also contains a section which reflects the concerns of acculturated German Jews about reducing the number of Russian Jews trying to immigrate to the United States: "Another very important factor which you in your great wisdom ignore and will appreciate, is the fact that in giving the Jews full liberty in Russia, you prevent immigration to United States and thus settle once and for all a problem that confronts the government of the United States, and may, in the course of time, become a subject of international contention: thus by relieving the situation, you at one stroke win also the friendship not only of the government, but of the entire people of the United States." See: Simon Wolf, "Jews to Make Stand: Price of Loan to Be Russian Hebrew Reforms. Wolf's Letter to M. Witte," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 1905, 3.

rest of Russia's population that anti-Jewish violence would only escalate.⁴⁸³ The meeting ended with the delegation of Jewish leaders delivering an ultimatum to Witte—there would be no loans to Russia as long as the persecution of the Jews continued.⁴⁸⁴ However, the absence of a war indemnity in the Treaty of Portsmouth meant that Russia would not immediately need to raise a substantial sum, and, despite the Jewish delegation's threat, the Russian government was still able to secure significant foreign investment, even after the outbreak of the First Russian Revolution. While the threat to impose financial sanctions on Russia and the meeting with Count Witte were mishandled, the Jewish leaders were successful in generating some favourable editorial comment in American newspapers, and the leaders were beginning to learn new approaches to advancing the causes of the Jewish community.⁴⁸⁵

Unfortunately for Schiff and the other leaders of American Jewish establishment, their attempt to prompt concessions from the Russian government was not well received by their Russian and Eastern European coreligionists in America. Their "action was loudly decried. Many were aghast at the idea of Jews sitting down with the henchmen of the czar as well as the self-appointed nature of the representation."⁴⁸⁶ The anger of the new immigrants was not only grounded in the notion that the Jewish establishment had acted on their behalf without any mandate, but also in the unique political history of Russian Jewry, in which many Russian Jews had experienced and resented the intervention of self-appointed Jewish establishment elites, the

⁴⁸³ Arthur William Thompson and Robert A. Hart, *The Uncertain Crusade: America and the Russian Revolution of 1905* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 73.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴⁸⁵ For example, in its reporting on the meeting with Witte, the *Atlanta Constitution* included an editorial titled "What America Thinks": "Mr. Witte, who is a man of extraordinary force and strength and understanding, seemed to give his approval to the sentiments expressed by the committee, but he is helpless against the grand ducal oligarchy and its supporting holy synod. However, he will do his country real service if he takes to heart the talk of these American Jews, who speak not only for their creed, but for the entire country, and impress upon the czar and St. Petersburg officialdom the odium which rests upon Russia for its Kishineff and other outrages." See: "What America Thinks," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 21, 1905, 4.

⁴⁸⁶ Cohen, 6-7.

maskilim, in their affairs in their birth country.⁴⁸⁷ The Russian *maskilim* were deeply resented by the communities they claimed to represent. In America, the activities of the American Jewish establishment were similarly resented by new Jewish immigrants. Thus, the efforts of the self-appointed Jewish emissaries were both divisive and ineffective. They aggravated the divisions between Reform and Orthodox, and German and Eastern European Jews, and, furthermore, as noted above, the efforts did not have any impact on Russian policies in the Pale.⁴⁸⁸

One consequence of the aggravated divisions in the Jewish community was that it reinforced the approach of the elite taking matters into their own hands. In the months leading up to and following the meeting with Witte, a group of establishment Jewish leaders was increasingly working on its own with minimal or no participation and input from Jewish immigrant and labor leaders. By the end of 1905, this small group had made the decision to break with all pretense of democratic representation and started to build the organization that would become the AJC. The urgency of their efforts to organize an effective Jewish advocacy group in the United States was prompted not only by the ongoing violence in Russia and the fallout from the meeting with Witte, but also by the renewed efforts of some Jewish leaders, including Rabbi Judah Magnes, to establish an elected American Jewish congress.

⁴⁸⁷ In his book *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia*, historian Eli Lederhendler provides an account of the emergence the *maskilim*, a new group of Jewish leaders in nineteenth-century Russia who were adherents of the Jewish Enlightenment movement (*Haskalah*). While they were not nearly as wealthy or powerful as the group of acculturated Jews that founded the AJC, there are nevertheless some significant similarities between the two groups. Both groups had moved away from traditional Jewish rituals and practices, both groups had ties to those in power, and both groups sought to claim a leadership position over their more traditional coreligionists. The *maskilim* had been agents of the Russian ruling class, and had served as press censors. They openly criticized the practices of their more traditional coreligionists in the Russian and Jewish press, including criticising the power of the *kehillot*, the small local governing councils that wielded significant power within the isolated Jewish communities of the Pale of Settlement. According to Lederhendler, the *maskilim* also acted as informers that kept Russian authorities apprised of the activities of local community leaders and political and labor groups. See: Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: political tradition and political reconstruction in the Jewish Community of tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴⁸⁸ Two months after the meeting with Witte, the second Kishinev pogrom erupted on October 19 and 20, 1905.

At the same time that the meetings that led to the creation of the AJC were being held, leaders of the American Jewish establishment continued to direct or coordinate philanthropic projects and public advocacy programs on their own initiative. After the violence of the second Kishinev pogrom in October of 1905, prominent Jewish leaders in New York City bolstered their fundraising and relief efforts. Jacob Schiff and Cyrus Sulzberger established the National Committee for the Relief of the Sufferers in Russia. Schiff, as Treasurer of this committee, sent four hundred telegrams to Jewish leaders in cities across the United States asking them to raise funds locally and entrust those funds to his new committee. The committee raised a million dollars in its first eighteen days.⁴⁸⁹

The leaders of this fundraising effort also decided to make a dramatic entry into public relations with what today might be described as brand management. On their own initiative, they decided to organize events to celebrate the two-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the first Jewish settlement in America. Jacob Schiff chaired the committee that planned the celebration. Among the other organizers were Cyrus Adler, Jacob H. Hollander, and Simon Wolf.⁴⁹⁰ The committee's ambitions and achievements were substantial, and their activities were reported in the American press.⁴⁹¹ They coordinated two days of celebrations across the United States to coincide with the American Thanksgiving holiday. At a time when the overwhelming majority of American Jews were foreign born, this committee gave itself the task of demonstrating to both new Jewish immigrants and the broader American public both the pride and patriotism of

⁴⁸⁹ "Fund Exceeds \$1,000,000, Still More to Come: Jews of American Accomplish a Giant Relief Task," *New York Times*, December 3, 1905, 8. The fundraising effort was national in scope. The *New York Times* published daily tallies of the money donated to the fund. The published reports provided totals of the money donated from each major American city. The figures for donations from unions and fraternal lodges as well as individual donations from both gentiles and Jews were also published by the newspaper.

⁴⁹⁰ "Jews will Celebrate: Anniversary of Landing Will Be Generally Observed," *The Washington Post*, October 6, 1905, 2.

⁴⁹¹ See, for example: "Jews to Celebrate Founding of Faith in United States," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 5, 1905, E6.

American Jews. This was a new type of advocacy for the Jewish community. While these celebrations were public, and in some cases quite dramatic, these were not protests.

In New York City, for example, the anniversary was celebrated with a gala at Carnegie Hall.⁴⁹² The event was a choreographed pageant and steeped in symbolism, including the elaborate way in which the landmark concert hall was decorated for the occasion.⁴⁹³ Jacob Schiff presided as the master of ceremonies, and among the other speakers were former President Grover Cleveland, New York Governor Frank W. Higgins, New York City Mayor George B. McClellan Jr., and Bishop David H. Greer. A letter from President Theodore Roosevelt and a telegram from Vice President Charles W. Fairbanks were read to the enthusiastic crowd.⁴⁹⁴ The gala also included musical performances by “The Downtown Cantors,” a fifty man choir made up of cantors from New York City synagogues, who were accompanied by the New York Symphony Orchestra and another two hundred and fifty singers from the Choral Union.

While the gala was advertised as a celebration for Jews, the event was really a public relations campaign (or event) on behalf of Jews. It was not merely an exhibition of ethnic, religious, or cultural pride. The gala was designed to be a demonstration of the gratitude of Jews

⁴⁹² The event was covered extensively and reviewed by the *New York Times*. The coverage included a detailed account of the proceedings and the full texts of the speeches delivered by high-profile attendees. See: “Jewish Celebration Full of Enthusiasm: Cleveland, Higgins, and McClellan at Great Meeting,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1905, 1.

⁴⁹³ The decorations integrated symbols of American patriotism with Jewish adornments: “The vast auditorium, into which were crowded upwards of 5,000 persons, was lavishly and artistically decorated. The lower tier of boxes, all of which were filled to their capacity, were draped in bright red, the broad hangings being decorated with the coats of arms of the different States. The second-tier, which was also crowded, was hung in green, on which were placed at intervals of a few feet embossed golden bucklers, emblematic of Jerusalem. The upper galleries, which were crowded to their limit, were draped in festoons of American flags, and the big stage, which was so densely packed with singers that the speakers and members of the committees could barely find seats at the extreme outer edge of the platform, was similarly decorated.” See: “Jewish Celebration Full of Enthusiasm: Cleveland, Higgins, and McClellan at Great Meeting,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1905, 1.

⁴⁹⁴ The committee which organized the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Jewish settlement in America commissioned sculptor Isidore Konti to design a medal to mark the occasion. A copy of the medal was struck in gold and presented to President Roosevelt. According to Felix Adler, Jacob Schiff “was the anonymous donor who bore the expense of having this medal prepared.” See: Jacob Schiff, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters, Volume II*, ed. Cyrus Adler (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1928), 67.

to be in America, and the faith Jews placed in America as their new home and the new center of Jewish life. In his speech at the gala, Jacob Schiff went to great lengths to emphasize these sentiments, while at the same time drawing attention to the ongoing violence in Russia. This, too, was a new form of Jewish advocacy that seized upon American values, idealism, and national pride.⁴⁹⁵ The last speaker at the gala was the Rev. Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, the Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York. In contrast to Schiff's speech, in which he emphasized the secular dimensions of Jewish culture and Jewish identity in America, Rabbi Mendes added a religious element to this new conception of Jewish identity and politics, but both speakers situated American Jewish patriotism in the same rhetoric traditionally used by the broader Christian American majority.⁴⁹⁶ After Rabbi Mendes' speech, the choir and orchestra began singing the Jewish hymn "Adon Olam (Eternal Lord)." When the hymn was done, the crowd rose to its feet and accompanied the choir and orchestra in a rendition of "My Country Tis of Thee."

⁴⁹⁵ In his speech at the gala, Schiff stated: "When some months ago it was decided to celebrate the settlement of Jews in United States...the people of the Jewish faith throughout the land felt glad and proud, because this beloved country of their adoption had become the great exponent of human liberties and freedom of conscience, furnishing an example to the world how great and powerful a people can become who give equal opportunity to all, no matter what their origin or their profession of faith may be. But our gladness has received a shock our hopes and expectations have for the time being become dispelled. The brotherhood of man our prophets have taught us to look forward to, still remains a dream...Racial prejudice and hatred are still rampant, the Jew still remains the martyr, whose life must be sacrificed so that freedom and enlightenment for which he has ever battled, shall triumph, even in darkest Russia... Because of this great blessing the United States is bestowing upon mankind, the Jew everywhere is an ardent admirer of America and her people and everywhere his face is set longingly and hopefully towards these shores. We who are Americans, pledge ourselves anew upon this momentous occasion, to our fellow citizens, from whatever race they may have sprung or whatever faith they may profess, that we ever stand ready to be one with them in every endeavor to further augment the greatness of this beloved common country." See: "Jewish Celebration Full of Enthusiasm: Cleveland, Higgins, and McClellan at Great Meeting," *New York Times*, December 1, 1905, 1.

⁴⁹⁶ Rabbi Mendes stated: "What does the celebration mean? How would G-d have us understand it? Surely not as an occasion to indulge in mere recitation of Jewish achievement in this land during the last two hundred and fifty years! Surely not by self-congratulations because our lines have been cast in pleasant places while our brethren abroad have met sorrow and misfortune!...The supreme significance of the celebration is that we must realize G-d's purpose—as we conceive it—in bringing us to this land to help by the lives we live as Jews and as American citizens to up build this Nation's strength, her liberties, her progress, by our own loyalty to these ideals. G-d. Reverence. Righteousness. Responsibility." See: "Jewish Celebration Full of Enthusiasm: Cleveland, Higgins, and McClellan at Great Meeting," *New York Times*, December 1, 1905, 1.

The Carnegie Hall gala shows a new approach to public advocacy and embodied the Jewish establishment's view of American Jewish identity, an identity in which Jews outwardly appear and behave as every other Caucasian American,⁴⁹⁷ are as loyal to America as any other patriotic citizen, and aspire to the same goals as their fellow citizens. In this conception of Jewish identity, there is no place for Jewish self-identification as a distinct race and the fact of Jewish religious distinctiveness is considered a personal or private matter; an irrelevant difference in a free and religiously tolerant society in which, privately, a person can believe whatever they want. To the extent that Jews were religiously different, that difference had no effect on their loyalty to America. If anything, their belief in G-d animated their patriotism in the same way as faith enlivened the patriotism of the broader Christian majority. The Jewish establishment leaders sought to promote the view that, like the American founding fathers and all the immigrant groups that later settled in the United States, the Jews had come to America by G-d's grace to do G-d's work by helping to make America great. This was a much different form of Jewish identity, one which privileged citizenship and acculturation over religious, ethnic, and cultural distinctiveness. Promoting this conception of Jewish identity, to both new Jewish immigrants and to the broader American public, required a more novel form of public advocacy than the traditions of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude*. The Carnegie Hall gala also reflected the Jewish establishment's preferences in terms of tactics for public advocacy. While they had decisively departed from the quiet diplomacy of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* approach, they were not social and political agitators. Their approach was pragmatic. They believed in communicating their message without

⁴⁹⁷ According to Karen Brodtkin, despite their Caucasian skin tone, it took a long time for American Jews to be accepted as "white folks" by white Americans. Jewish religious difference, and the nation of origin of Jewish immigrants, distinguished them from white Protestants, with English and Western European heritage, and Southern and Central European Catholics. Brodtkin argues that it was not until after the Second World War that Jews were conferred the "many institutional privileges of white racial assignment" in the United States. See, Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and what that Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 3.

provocative rhetoric or confrontational action that could obstruct the reception of that message, alienate white patricians, or be used by anti-Semites and proponents of immigrations restrictions to describe American Jews as political radicals.

The views and the methods of public advocacy of the Jewish elite were not necessarily shared by Jewish leaders outside of the Jewish establishment. Only four days after the Carnegie Hall gala, Jewish labor unions, fraternal societies, and the Jewish Defense Association led by Rabbi Judah Magnes, organized a massive anti-Russia street protest in New York City. The “Parade of Lamentation” was made up of an estimated 125,000 people, all dressed in black.⁴⁹⁸ The march started on the lower East Side and over several hours made its way to Broadway and then to Union Square. The Grand Marshal of the parade was Joseph Barondness, a prominent leader within the labor movement on the lower East Side.⁴⁹⁹ In contrast to the earlier anti-pogrom rallies, the “Parade of Lamentation” was significantly larger and more overtly political. When the crowd arrived at Union Square, Barondness read a seven-article resolution. Among other things, it condemned the Russian government and the violence of the pogroms, chastised the international community for its indifference, openly called on the American government to intervene, and urged Russian Jews and Jews everywhere to take up arms and defend themselves.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ “Jews, In Huge Parade, Mourn Dead in Russia: 125,000 March in Line from the Lowe East Side to Union Sq.,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1905, 6.

⁴⁹⁹ Barondness was followed by a fifty-piece marching band and a large group of men carrying black banners, American flags, and white flags embroidered with blue six-pointed stars in their centers. See: “Jews, In Huge Parade, Mourn Dead in Russia: 125,000 March in Line from the Lowe East Side to Union Sq.,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1905, 6.

⁵⁰⁰ When Barondness was finished reading the seven articles, he asked the crowd if they favored the resolution to say “aye.” According to the *New York Times* a “ripple went through the crowd like wind rising to a hurricane which roared ‘aye.’” The protest march was orderly, but nevertheless caused substantial disruptions in New York City. Thirteen-hundred police officers, including three hundred mounted police, were dispatched to control the crowd. All businesses between Fourth Street and Union Square were forced to close. When the march made its way up Broadway, the police had to close the street and reroute all traffic. See: “Jews, In Huge Parade, Mourn Dead in Russia: 125,000 March in Line from the Lowe East Side to Union Sq.,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1905, 6.

American Jews from all denominations and economic classes participated in the “Parade of Lamentation,” but, by the end of 1905, cooperation between the leaders of the Jewish establishment and those of other elements of American Jewry on the creation of a national body to represent American Jewry had reached an impasse. While the debates over the powers and composition of a national Jewish organization stalled, a small group of Jews of German descent began to act. Through philanthropic projects and quiet lobbying, they continued to exercise a degree of control and influence over Jewish communal affairs that exceeded their relatively small numbers. It was from this group that the AJC was to emerge. At meetings in late 1905 and early 1906 of a small club made up of members of New York City’s German Jewish establishment, whose members called themselves “The Wanderers,” those in attendance decided to “take the initiative” and create, in their view, a more effective and less dangerous organization to speak for American Jewry before a competing organization could be established by Jewish labor leaders, Zionists, and Orthodox immigrants.⁵⁰¹

By the beginning of 1906, the membership of “The Wanderers” had already appointed a committee made of up of Cyrus Sulzberger, Judge Samuel Greenbaum, Judge Nathan Bijur, Professor Joseph Jacobs, and Louis Marshall, to develop a plan for a national, non-democratic, and elite committee of Jewish leaders. This committee chose Judge Meyer Sulzberger of Philadelphia to appoint a committee of seven men who would work to create a new Jewish organization. Judge Sulzberger appointed the men who had chosen him to his “Committee of Seven.”

In the letter in which he accepted his appointment to the Committee of Seven, Louis Marshall urged that the committee “should convene at a very early day in order that we may not

⁵⁰¹ See: Cohen, 8-9. See also: Kotzin 101-102.

lose the benefit of the sentiment which has been developed in favor of an organization on a rational theory.”⁵⁰² By “an organization on a rational theory,” Marshall meant an association that would assuage the concerns of the acculturated Jews of the American Jewish establishment that a national Jewish leadership body, particularly one composed of elected representatives, would be less effective and potentially dangerous.⁵⁰³ A democratic conference might not be able to benefit from the political connections of wealthy and prominent American Jews, and could potentially fall under the control of Communists, radicals, and Zionists and risk damaging public opinion towards Jews and intensifying anti-Semitism in the United States.

Insofar as the leadership of the AJC was undemocratic and its membership was made up of prominent and successful Jews, its founding can be seen as consistent with, or an extension of, the *shtadlan* or *Hofjude* model of Jewish public advocacy in which wealthy and politically connected elites lobby the powerful on behalf of their coreligionists. As noted above, this pattern of leadership was also consistent with the involvement of wealthy elites and professionals in reform movements during the Progressive Era. Within a short period of time, the leaders of the AJC began to develop and implement new, modern means of public advocacy and communal defense. In particular, the ways in which this small group of elites coordinated responding to outbreaks of anti-Semitism in the United States, conducted extensive research, commissioned numerous publications, and invoked the power of constitutional courts were significant and

⁵⁰² Letter from Louis Marshall to Professor Joseph Jacobs, February 24, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 11.

⁵⁰³ In his *The Age of Reform*, Richard Hofstadter notes that this form of elite leadership, with wealthy philanthropists and lawyers occupying prominent positions, was characteristic of the Progressive Era. “It may be objected,” Hofstadter notes, “that the progressivism espoused by corporation lawyers on a moral holiday would be a rather conservative sort of thing. In fact it was, but this was not out of harmony with the general tone of the Progressive movement, especially in the Eastern states, where this kind of leadership played an important role. There Progressivism was a mild and judicious movement, whose goal was not a sharp change in social structure, but rather the formation of a responsible elite, which was to take charge of the popular impulse toward change.” See: Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 163.

historically unprecedented in the United States. These approaches to Jewish communal defense and communal leadership went well beyond the traditions of the *shtadlan* or the *Hofjude*. The remainder of this dissertation provides an account of the AJC's attempts to engage in public advocacy during the first twenty-five years of the organization's history.

Chapter 4: The AJC's Responses to Domestic Anti-Semitism

Introduction

The establishment of the American Jewish Committee was covered by American newspapers but, among the American public, the founding of the new advocacy organization went largely unnoticed or attracted little interest.⁵⁰⁴ Within the American Jewish community, however, the announcement of the founding of the organization, and the publication of the AJC's membership and constitution, was controversial.⁵⁰⁵ Some of the Jewish community's response was antagonistic. Two months after the founding of the AJC, during the annual convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the intra-communal tension and rivalry was exposed. In a speech that *The Washington Post* described as having "fairly electrified his audience, and carried them away with enthusiasm," Rabbi Moses Gries of the Cleveland Temple challenged the composition, elitism, and legitimacy of the newly created AJC.⁵⁰⁶

While the leaders of the Committee made efforts to alleviate the intra-communal tension generated by the founding of the organization, they also moved forward with their advocacy work on behalf of Jewish causes. The Committee immediately began to respond to outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence in foreign countries, to manifestations of anti-Jewish prejudice and

⁵⁰⁴ For an example of the press coverage of the founding of the American Jewish Committee, see: "American Jews Organize: Committee of Fifty of Representative Israelites is Formed," *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1906, 3. See also: "A Chance for the Jews," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 28, 1906, B4. Although the majority of the AJC's leaders lived on the East Coast, the founding of the Committee was covered across the country. For example, see: "Jews Get Together: Hebrews Representing All States Meet at New York and Perfect Organization," *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 1906, 12.

⁵⁰⁵ The *American Hebrew* newspaper placed an advertisement in the *New York Times* announcing that its most recent edition contained a copy of the AJC's constitution. See: "The American Hebrew Out To-Day," *New York Times*, November 30, 1906, 2.

⁵⁰⁶ "Gauntlet Thrown Down to Jewish Committee By Rabbi Moses Gries," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 16, 1907, 1-2. In his speech, Rabbi Gries fervently criticized the legitimacy of the American Jewish Committee's aspirations to lead and speak for the American Jewish community: "It is self-created, self-appointed; it has no right to exist. The Jewish spirit is essentially Democratic. As Americans and as Jews, we shall not accept the false doctrine that 'selection is better than election.' Absolutism to some students of government may seem a better form of government than a republic, but we want no despotism however benevolent." See: "Gauntlet Thrown Down to Jewish Committee By Rabbi Moses Gries," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 16, 1907, 1-2.

incitement, and to incidents of anti-Semitism in the United States.⁵⁰⁷ Notwithstanding the challenges to the legitimacy of their leadership, the leaders of the AJC began to speak for, and act on behalf of, the American Jewish community.⁵⁰⁸ This chapter describes the AJC's response to events in the United States that the organization perceived as either manifestations of anti-Semitism or as sufficiently serious from a public relations perspective to warrant their intervention. The AJC's responses to these incidents illustrate the nature and the development of the organization's approach to public advocacy in the United States.

Throughout this chapter, the term "optics" will be used to frame the discussion of the strategies which underlay the AJC's decisions to take actions to counter domestic manifestations of anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish incitement during the early history of the organization.

According to Ben Zimmer, the use of the term optics to describe "political appearances," "perception," or how an event or incident will be read or interpreted by the general public, is a

⁵⁰⁷ Concerns about perception within the Jewish community and how the new organization would be received by Jews outside the American Jewish establishment were expressed during the earliest phases of the building of the organization. In his letter accepting his appointment to the Committee, Elias Wolf Lewin-Epstein, a Russian-born Jew who had prospered in America by founding the Carmel Wine Company, expressed concerns that his invitation to join the AJC was only a symbolic gesture intended to solidify the organization's claim to represent the whole of American Jewry. Lewin-Epstein urged the founders to consider including more Russian Jews in the new organization: "I accept the appointment and am ready to serve. I presume that I am wanted on the committee to represent the Russo-Jewish views, and I therefore beg to say that in consideration of the large Russo-Jewish population in this country, they are, in my opinion, entitled to a larger representation and the committee." Despite his concerns, Lewin-Epstein clearly believed that a communal organization was needed and recommended that the group begin holding meetings "in New York as soon as possible." See: Letter from Elias Wolf Lewin-Epstein to Joseph Jacobs, February 22, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 11.

⁵⁰⁸ In response to the intra-communal criticism that emerged after the founding of the AJC was announced, Rabbi Max Heller of New Orleans, who had accepted an invitation to join the Committee, published an editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* describing the AJC. In the editorial, Heller offered a summary of the negotiations that brought about the creation of the AJC and acknowledged that the founding had generated significant criticism within the American Jewish community. Heller also defended the AJC and concluded by expressing his hope that the criticism the organization had received from within the American Jewish community would not undermine the Committee's potential influence: "The present status of opinion throughout the country among thinking Jews seems to be that while the men forming the committee are admitted to be on the whole the most representative men that could have been chosen, the objection which is urged, with much heat from many sides, is to the undemocratic method of selection by which the committee has been organized. Is to be hoped that the great weight of influence which these men exercise jointly, as well as separately, will not be impaired by captious criticism." See: Max Heller, "Rabbi Max Heller Tells of Committee of Sixty," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 17, 1907, 7.

relatively recent linguistic development. The term began being used in this sense during the 1970s, and became more common in political and commercial discourse, and in the practice of public relations, over the next forty years.⁵⁰⁹ Optics has “nothing to do with the eyes, but it has everything to do with the way the public sees things.”⁵¹⁰ As will be seen in the case studies included in this study, the leaders of the AJC used different language to describe their concerns about how manifestations of anti-Semitism, if left unchallenged, would shape the general public’s perception of American Jews; however, the material available in the organization’s archives clearly illustrates that the Committee was concerned about how diverse expressions of anti-Jewish intolerance, incitement, and scandalous and unpatriotic behaviour attributed to American Jews, could harm the public perception and social status of the American Jewish community. Their public advocacy in response to these incidents aimed to mitigate the potential ramifications of these events on the reputation of American Jewry, and the peace and security of this community in the United States. The materials available in organization’s archives also reveal that, in choosing how, and if, to respond to a provocation or incident, the AJC’s leadership considered how their response would be perceived and interpreted by the general American public and affect the attitudes of the general public towards American Jews.

During the period covered by this study, the Committee did not formulate a single policy to address the diverse incidents and manifestations of anti-Jewish prejudice that they viewed as problematic. Incidents were addressed on a case-by-case basis, and, while there are some common elements to the way the AJC acted in response, the organization’s consideration of optics, that is, how the American public might interpret both the incident and any response from American Jewish communal leaders, explains how the leaders of the AJC planned their

⁵⁰⁹ Ben Zimmer, “On Language: Optics,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 7, 2010, 14.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

responses, be it through public advocacy or, more often, quiet diplomacy. During these early years, the leaders of the Committee tended toward approaches that would minimize public attention on the Jewish community. The leaders consistently sought to avoid publicity or greater scrutiny of their community by the mainstream press, and, only on rare occasions, did they release public statements to counter specific allegations made against the American Jewish community. Their emphasis on avoiding publicity led them to decline to become publically involved in some of the most dramatic instances of anti-Jewish prejudice during the first half of the twentieth century. For example, out of concern for how the general public would interpret the intervention of Jewish communal leaders, some serious provocations, including the activity and racist rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan, the lynching of Leo Frank, and, later, the propaganda work of American Nazis, were not publically countered by the AJC. As a matter of strategy, the Committee often declined to respond to provocations that they judged should be considered offensive to all Americans, regardless of their faith. The leadership sought to avoid having disputes or controversies given a “Jewish label,” or narrowly defined by the media and the general public as only of concern to Jews or only offensive to the American Jewish community. Their reticence to enter the fray following some egregious provocations is at the heart of the criticisms made about the Committee’s passivity; however, it must be noted that this reticence was consistent with the organization’s advocacy strategies and preferred approaches to communal defense. The KKK threatened many segments of American society and attacked core principles of the nation’s constitutional law. American Jews were not the Klan’s principal victims; the KKK’s vigilantism and use of terror tactics against African American communities in the South challenged the integrity of country’s laws and law enforcement institutions and exposed the enduring racism of the former Confederate States. The lynching of Leo Frank,

although incited by deeply entrenched anti-Semitism in the American South, was more broadly a miscarriage of justice, indicative of the racial bias, absence of due process, and corruption that tainted the State of Georgia's legal system and law enforcement institutions. The anti-Semitism of American Nazis was only one aspect of this fascist party's ideology; their political beliefs and aims conflicted with American ideals and the notion that the nation should be a free and democratic society. In these examples, anti-Semitism was only one feature of significant social problems or threats to the rule of law. The Committee's reticence to see broadly significant issues become understood by the general public as narrowly of concern to Jews explains the cautious strategy the organization often adopted. As described in Chapter 3, given the context in which the AJC was working, the adoption of their cautious strategy can be understood, but the difficult circumstances and social and racial divisions that the Committee's leaders recognized and had to contend with does not absolve the organization of the assessment that its leaders could have acted more boldly. As will be discussed further below, the preference of Committee leaders to avoid publicity and to decline to respond to some of the more dramatic manifestations of anti-Semitism arguably left the organization inexperienced, and ill-prepared to effectively advocate on behalf of American Jews, and world Jewry, during the crises of the 1930s and 1940s.

This chapter will show that the American Jewish Committee took a broad view about the types of incidents or manifestations of intolerance and incitement that were potentially harmful to the general public's perception of American Jewry. As the many examples that will be discussed in this chapter illustrate, the Committee's leaders deliberated about if, when, and how, to publically respond to incidents that they saw as threatening Jewish interests or the general public's perception of the American Jewish community. The incidents that they addressed were as multifarious as the circulation of a press account about a soldier in uniform being barred from

entering a synagogue; the alleged corrupt business practices of American Jews; the depiction of Jews in theatrical productions; the media attention garnered by blood libel trials in foreign countries; the public statements released by the leader of the Ku Klux Klan; theatrical presentations of dramatizations of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; the publication of books with anti-Semitic content; and the supposed link between Jews and the spread of Communism. In Chapter 5, the two most notable case studies of the AJC's earliest approaches to public advocacy will be closely considered: the Committee's response to the anti-Semitic content of Henry Ford's newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, and how the organization reacted when, based on suspicions grounded in the blood libel canard, a Rabbi was interrogated during a kidnapping investigation in Massena, New York.

The Boston Sailor Incident

One of the first incidents that illustrates the AJC's consideration of optics, of how Jews would be perceived by the gentile American public, and the Committee's preference for avoiding, whenever possible, publicity, or increased attention to a controversy, was an incident in 1908 at Temple Adath Jeshurn, an Orthodox synagogue near Boston. The resulting controversy, which included the dissemination of false information that cast aspersions on the patriotism of America Jews and created intra-communal antagonism among American Jewish leaders, followed the publication in newspapers, including a front page story in *The New York Times*, of a report that a uniformed United States Marine had been barred from entering a synagogue during a High Holiday service.⁵¹¹

⁵¹¹ "Angry at Rebuff of Sailor: Metcalf Says American Should Respect Uniform as They Respect Flag," *New York Times*, September 20, 1908, 1.

Some of the existing historiography on this incident concentrates on how the actions of different Jewish leaders revealed a division among American Jewish elites in the aftermath of the establishment of the American Jewish Committee. Older leadership organizations, including B'nai B'rith and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, were hostile towards the upstart AJC, and they opposed the mandate the organization claimed as the spokesperson of American Jewry and the representative organization of the community.⁵¹² However, as will be discussed further below, the Boston Sailor incident revealed not only that there was a “turf war” among different elements of American Jewish leadership, but also that the various organizations and factions within them were evolving different approaches to communal defense and public advocacy.

It is important to note first that the initial reports on the incident that were circulated through the mainstream press turned out to be false. The uniformed Marine, E.R. Williams, had not been barred from the synagogue; however, before the published claims could be investigated and refuted, Simon Wolf, the Chairman of the Board of Delegates of Civil Rights, a subsidiary organization of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, released public statements speculating as to why the Marine might have been prevented from entering the synagogue. According to Mathew Mark Silver, Wolf “indulged in a dubious theory about Jewish tradition barring uniformed persons from religious services, and (quite wrongly) involved [V.H. Metcalf,] the Secretary of the Navy in a discussion of the incident.”⁵¹³

In what Silver describes as the “ugliest moment” of the turf war between the AJC and other American Jewish organizations, the AJC’s President Mayer Sulzberger “took the lead,

⁵¹² Mathew Mark Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 139.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

exploiting one of Wolf's lapses in judgement" to both discredit Wolf and to build the reputation and status of the Committee.⁵¹⁴ Sulzberger and Wolf exchanged letters, both publically and in private, that were critical of each other's responses to the incident in Boston. Wolf defended his actions, arguing in a public letter that the "apparent offense against patriotism could only be excused by the existence of some custom as tenaciously held by the orthodox Jews as that of wearing the hat."⁵¹⁵

It was Wolf's reporting of the incident to V.H. Metcalf, the Secretary of the Navy, however, that was arguably his most significant misstep. After hearing of the incident from Wolf, Metcalf publically criticized the barring of the Marine in the press, which increased the amount of media attention and public scrutiny.

As press scrutiny of the controversy grew, Wolf appears to have recognized his mistake. He tried to create distance between himself and the organization he led, claiming that his public statements were made as a private individual and not on behalf of his organization. The AJC, according to Silver: "pounced upon Wolf's indiscretion, hoping to discredit this rival once and for all. As though in illustration of the theory that the worst turf wars occur when rivals do not know what they are supposed to be doing on their own turfs, the AJC's anti-Wolf actions were overkill."⁵¹⁶

Sulzberger was aggressive in criticizing Wolf. In a private letter to Wolf, Sulzberger refused to concede that Wolf's statements were not made on behalf of the Board of Delegates: "When the head and representative of a public organization writes a public letter on a public question which is peculiarly within the province of his organization, everybody has a right to

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ Letter from Simon Wolf to the Honorable Mayer Sulzberger, October 20, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 11.

⁵¹⁶ Silver, 139.

believe, and does believe, that he is acting as the agent of his principal, as he ought to... But even as your own letter, it ought never to have been written.”⁵¹⁷ In the same letter to Wolf, Sulzberger described how his own organization responded to the incident in Boston. This letter is thus revealing about the AJC’s approach to public advocacy. Sulzberger told Wolf that the AJC did not initially make any public statements; rather, the organization initiated an investigation in Boston. The AJC’s Executive Committee, at the time composed of Mayer Sulzberger, Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, Cyrus Adler, Judah Magnes, Isadore Sobel and Cyrus Sulzberger, decided on this course of action during a meeting on October 8, 1908.⁵¹⁸ The Executive Committee delegated the task of “obtaining the facts in the case” to Lee M. Friedman, an AJC district member from Boston.⁵¹⁹ Friedman accepted the task and moved quickly: “Affidavits were taken, including that of the person alleged to have been insulted, and the whole evidence... was laid before the Secretary of the Navy.”⁵²⁰

In his letter to Wolf, Sulzberger also included a copy of a letter from Secretary Metcalf to the rabbi of the Boston synagogue indicating that his department was “gratified to learn that the story... appears to be without any foundation.”⁵²¹ The Secretary’s letter to the rabbi was subsequently released to the public in the hope that its wider distribution through the press would mitigate some of the damage that had been done by the attention drawn to what turned out to be a false story.

⁵¹⁷ Letter from Mayer Sulzberger to Simon Wolf, October 26, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 11.

⁵¹⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 8, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 12, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16446>.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁰ Letter from Mayer Sulzberger to Simon Wolf, October 26, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 11.

⁵²¹ Letter from V.H. Metcalf, Secretary of the Navy, to Rabbi Phineas Israeli, Temple Adath Jeshurn, October 15, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 11.

Sulzberger was unrestrained in his private criticism of how Wolf, acting on behalf of his organization, had responded to the Boston incident. Other prominent AJC leaders shared these views. According to Silver, “Marshall was candid about...[the] purpose [of this criticism], writing to Sulzberger that “the importance of this episode lies in the fact that it may possibly minimize Wolf’s opportunities for doing further mischief.”⁵²² Sulzberger’s letter to Wolf is an indictment of his conduct, but includes some insights into the kind of public advocacy that the AJC believed was in the best interest of American Jewry: “The proper course for a man of your position is to refrain from condemning until you know the facts, and even then the voluntary assumption of the role of accuser is neither necessary nor graceful.”⁵²³ Sulzberger notes that Wolf released false information to the American public that, in addition to being incorrect, also could be used to malign the patriotism of American Jews: “your guessing about a custom and then imputing it as an actual thing to a large body of the Jews of this country was, if anything, worse. Your experiences ought to have shown you that prejudice is easily aroused and that your function is to allay, not increase it.”⁵²⁴ Sulzberger acknowledged that Wolf was trying to mitigate the problem, but also explains why he, as the President of the AJC, felt compelled to chastise Wolf’s efforts:

Of course, you meant no harm, but you did harm and published it widely. It was my duty to complain as publicly... The American Jewish Committee has assumed the duty of protecting the Jewish name against unrighteous assault from any quarter. This duty it has endeavored as unostentatiously as possible to perform... When, however, any one, organization or individual, acts heedlessly and unwisely and produces mischief, neither admiration for high

⁵²² Matthew Mark Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 139.

⁵²³ Letter from Mayer Sulzberger to Simon Wolf, October 26, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 11.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

character nor gratitude for past services warrants our standing
mute.⁵²⁵

Some of this criticism by Sulzberger of Wolf's misstep reflects the fact that, during this period, the AJC was working to assert a leadership position over American Jewry. Sulzberger's criticism also reflects the evolving style of public advocacy that the founders of the AJC were trying to practice, one that, first and foremost, did not further aggravate any situation, and secondly, privileged harm reduction and long-term social acceptance. The AJC's approach was that minor incidents or provocations could be ignored or addressed quietly, because public advocacy on behalf of a vulnerably minority population was, and remains, fraught with potential risks of inflaming the situation. The AJC believed that if incidents, whether minor or broadly significant, were handled publically and poorly, the reputation of the entire community could be tarnished, exposing the community to greater public scrutiny and placing its social status under greater threat.

American Jews Seek the AJC's Advice or Intervention

As the American Jewish Committee's reputation grew among American Jewry, American Jews, and Jews in other countries as well, began writing to the AJC to bring problems to the organization's attention and to seek the its advice. During the early years of the organization, the Committee received a considerable amount of correspondence regarding situations or conduct that were believed to be harming the reputation of the American Jewish community.

Among the situations that the AJC confronted was the matter of how Jews were being represented or portrayed in theatrical productions. Potentially offensive representations of Jews on stage, performed by both Jewish and non-Jewish actors and comedians, was not a new

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

phenomenon in the United States, but it was not until these productions gained wider audiences and greater publicity during the early-twentieth century that Jewish leaders began to consider the potential social implications.⁵²⁶

Historian Esther Romeyn argues that the status insecurity of the Jewish establishment, and this community's anxiety about how Jewish immigrants were perceived by the majority of Americans, shaped these concerns:

As immigrant groups like the Irish and the Jews began to experience significant social mobility, "racial comics," with their lower-class antecedents and antics, confirmed boundaries of race and class that the socially mobile desperately sought to erase. With their exploitation of accents, malapropisms, cultural confusion, and breach of etiquette, they became a thorn in the side of those already more established in American society. Their collective self-image was taken hostage by a lower-class, burlesque stage persona, who not only did not conform to the codes of gentility, but seemed to throw the civilizing potential of the group as a whole into doubt.⁵²⁷

The racial caricatures and cultural stereotypes sensationalized in these productions were particularly problematic because, in the context of a society divided into black and white, these representations could potentially reinforce the perception that Jews and other minority communities were distinct, inferior, and unassimilable. Cultural production originating from within these communities, although both produced and patronized by these communities, could undermine their efforts to be accepted as white by patricians and mainstream white society, dominant groups who were already inclined to harbor disparaging views of new immigrant communities, including Catholics and Jews.

⁵²⁶ For a thorough discussion of representations of Jews in American productions, see: Esther Romeyn, *Street Scenes: Staging the Self in Immigrant New York, 1880-1924* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 187-212.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

In 1913, the AJC was asked to assist a group of local Jewish leaders in Chicago who had organized to protest how Jews were represented in theatrical productions. The Chicago leaders, which included Judge Hugo Pam, Professor Ernest Freund, Jacob Loeb, Congressman A.J. Sabath, and Illinois State Senator Samuel A. Ettelson, sought the AJC's help in preventing the staging of a play based on Montague Glass's "Potash and Perlmutter" short stories.

These stories, which centered on two Jewish immigrant businessmen, first appeared in the *New York Evening Post*, but were subsequently collected and published as a book titled *Potash and Perlmutter: Their CoPartnership Ventures and Adventures*.⁵²⁸ The two protagonists are Jews involved in the garment industry; they are caricatures, and their conversations are rendered in English using a unique dialect that includes a comic mix of strange phrases, bluster, and odd word contractions.

The Chicago-based leaders sought the AJC's assistance because they believed that the wider dissemination of caricatures of Jewish businessman would harm the reputation of the American Jewish community. Writing to Louis Marshall on behalf of the group of local Jewish leaders, Mollie Eda Osherman, the managing editor of the Jewish newspaper *Chicago Israelite*, emphasized the potential social implications of the play. She wrote: "'Potash and Perlmutter' as you may judge from the series in book form, contains much which incites race enmities and prejudice, and dramatized, will prove a monumental satire on Jewish commercial integrity."⁵²⁹

Osherman's group had already been lobbying Chicago newspapers to denounce the play, but, as the production was scheduling tour dates in other American cities, she was seeking the AJC's help in broadening their campaign. In particular, Osherman wanted the AJC to dissuade

⁵²⁸ Montague Glass, *Potash and Perlmutter: Their CoPartnership Ventures and Adventures* (Philadelphia: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1909).

⁵²⁹ Letter from Mollie Eda Osherman to Louis Marshall, July 13, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

American Jews, who were the majority of the audience for plays of this kind, from buying tickets to these productions: “We desire to invoke your loyal and consistent support to fight this evil by any means you consistently can to arouse the lethargic self-respect of the Jew, so that they will not lend their patronage to such humiliating “attractions.””⁵³⁰ The tone of Osherman’s letter illustrates her frustration that American Jews, by buying tickets to these productions, were abetting the defamation of their own community. The AJC had only been in operation for seven years, but Osherman was confident that the Committee was capable of exercising this kind of influence. She concluded her letter to Marshall by noting “our hearty thanks and warm appreciation in advance for any ‘machinery’ that may be set in motion through your interest.”⁵³¹

Marshall replied to Osherman the following week. He noted that he was sympathetic towards her group’s goals, but he also cautioned her about the potential consequences of their efforts. Marshall wrote: “We must however be careful lest we be regarded as hyper-sensitive. There can be no difference of opinion in regard to such cases where...the Jew is portrayed as dishonest, vulgar, and tricky, and has attributed to him qualities which render him the object of ridicule and contempt. Yet we must not insist that the Jew shall only be portrayed as an angelic creation.”⁵³²

The point that Marshall was attempting to make was his view that there is risk involved in protesting representations of Jews because not every slight deserves a response and any response might serve to either draw greater attention to the offense or, worse, lend credibility to the accusation. Marshall mentions, for example, Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, and

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² Letter from Louis Marshall to Miss Mollie Eda Osherman, July 24, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

states that he has “no patience” for people who object to this play’s representation of Jews.⁵³³

The implication here is that there is little to be gained from protesting a work that is regarded as part of the English canon, and that such protests only serve to make Jews appear ashamed of their history, insecure in their current homes, or overly sensitive about how their community is represented.

Marshall was of the view that Potash and Perlmutter was not so offensive as to warrant the kind of campaign Osherman and her colleagues were trying to organize: “I counsel you to proceed slowly, and deliberately; that you first satisfy yourself that the play is really offensive.”⁵³⁴ Marshall admitted that he had read a number of the short stories that were the source material for the play, and claimed only “one of them...was harmful in tone and content” (although he does not specify which).⁵³⁵ In general, he believed that the representation of Potash and Perlmutter showed them to be shrewd businessmen “who also possess amiable human traits...and are possessed of homely virtues which greatly preponderate over such eccentricities as are attributed to them.”⁵³⁶

Marshall also counselled against the campaign because he felt it could not succeed. He wrote to Osherman: “I always believe in choosing my own fighting ground, where I am strong and my opponent is weak—In my opinion in directing your batteries against Potash and Perlmutter you are attacking the ‘enemy’...where he is strongly entrenched, because the multitude of readers Jew and non-Jew who have read [the stories]...regard these men as very decent and agreeable friends, with whom they are delighted to spend an occasional hour.”⁵³⁷ The

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

majority of the Jewish audience were not offended by the stories, and, without the backing of the broader Jewish community, there was no hope of success.

The campaign could have also aggravated the intra-communal tension between establishment Jews, such as the leaders of the AJC and the members of the Chicago-based group, and the recent immigrants who were apparently not offended by the stories and were the principal audience for the production. Marshall felt the more suitable tactic was the exercise of quiet diplomacy. He offered to write the producers of the play to ask them “to avoid any episode or expressions which are likely to be misinterpreted.”⁵³⁸

Marshall did write to the producers, Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger, the following month. He warned them that a “campaign of education” was being organized to combat offensive representations of Jews on the stage, and he noted that it would be “sound business policy” to ensure that the Potash and Perlmutter production did not contain potentially offensive or derogatory material.⁵³⁹ Marshall wrote: “We assume that you would not consciously pander to those who are the enemies of our people, or do aught to pain those who take pride in their Jewishness. Consequently we ask you to see to it that the forthcoming play be carefully revised and blue-pencilled so as to avoid all episodes and expressions which are likely to be misinterpreted and which might tend to give rise to the impression that Jews are dishonest, tricky, vulgar, and a proper butt for ridicule.”⁵⁴⁰

Based on the correspondence that followed, it appears that Klaw and Erlanger did not appreciate Marshall’s attempt to interfere in their production. They replied to Marshall that they

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ Letter from Louis Marshall to Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger, August 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

had no control over the text of the play.⁵⁴¹ They also accused Marshall of hypocrisy for trying to impose a code of conduct on Jewish producers that he would not presume to impose on Jewish lawyers: “We agree with you in the sentiments expressed in your letter generally; but we are wondering if this same code of ethics applies to lawyers and what is the line of demarcation they draw with regard to taking cases that would reflect on Jews. We are reminded of this by the fact that your high standing as a lawyer might enable you to influence Jewish lawyers of lesser standing to take the fine sentiments expressed in your letter before us.”⁵⁴²

In his reply, Marshall reminded the producers that even if they claimed to have no control over the script, they were “nevertheless morally responsible for the character of the play.”⁵⁴³ He also dismissed their allegation of hypocrisy. He claimed that as a member of the legal profession, he “would apply a stricter rule to a lawyer than a layman.”⁵⁴⁴ He also dismissed the idea that profession was at all relevant in terms of defining a person’s duty to their own people. In his view, regardless of job or profession, the duty remained the same. Marshall wrote: “No man is more contemptible in my eyes than one who is recreant to the sense of obligation he owes his own people. This is especially my attitude to the Jew who so conducts his business or profession as to fan the flames of prejudice and to give occasion for invidious reflection upon the race from which he sprung.”⁵⁴⁵

The matter was resolved amicably, as Marshall was invited by A.H. Woods, another of the play’s producers, to attend a showing and offer suggestions on any material he felt was

⁵⁴¹ Letter from Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger to Louis Marshall, August 9, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ Letter from Louis Marshall to Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger, August 11, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

offensive and should be cut.⁵⁴⁶ Ultimately, *Potash and Perlmutter* was a hit that was adapted into a movie. Certainly there were Jews who were offended by the production, or were concerned about its potential impact on the reputation of American Jewry, but widespread condemnation of the play did not emerge from within the American Jewish community. Marshall himself wrote a letter to Barney Bernard, one of the lead actors, praising his performance. The letter, although suffused with praise, did contain a few suggestions.⁵⁴⁷

There were other examples of members of the Jewish community seeking the AJC's assistance in safeguarding the reputation of Jews. Concerns about the business behaviour of American Jews, and how this behaviour could be used to tarnish the reputation of the entire community, were frequently brought to the Committee's attention. For example, in 1922, the Committee received a letter from S.M. Pye, a Jewish businessman and resident of New York, complaining about the corrupt behaviour of young Jewish bankruptcy lawyers and warning about how this behaviour could affect the broader American public's perception and attitudes towards Jews. Pye wrote that he had seen dishonest practices from Jewish bankruptcy lawyers that were "so disgustingly rotten" that he did not know how to express his feelings: "It is the opinion of the writer that you gentlemen, who have done so much to save the name 'Jew,' should look into this matter and do something to again save the name from being disgraced. The young Jewish

⁵⁴⁶ Letter from Louis Marshall to Barney Bernard, August 21, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

⁵⁴⁷ Marshall suggested that a scene in which Potash casually implies that witnesses could be bribed to change their testimony should be removed because it reinforced an already widely held belief among anti-Semites that Jews were more inclined than others to commit this offense. Marshall also criticized how the play changed the character of Feldman from the original short stories from humorous into a villain. He also pointed out an error in the script, noting that prisoners about to be extradited from the United States were incarcerated at the Ludlow Street Jail, not "the Tombs" (City Prison) as mentioned in the play. See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Barney Bernard, August 21, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 25.

lawyers I have reference to should be in jail instead of driving around in their fancy cars which they have earned dishonestly.”⁵⁴⁸

In his letter, Pye provided a brief account of a specific example, of which he claimed to be a witness, in which a Jewish bankruptcy lawyer conspired with a client to cheat an Italian merchant out of fifteen hundred dollars. “If it were not for the fact that I am a Jew,” Pye wrote, “I would become a Jew-hater of the worst kind.”⁵⁴⁹ He noted that he was surprised that the incident did not escalate into a violent confrontation: “I am sure that nothing is more worthy of your attention than these conditions and sincerely hope that you will take this up.”⁵⁵⁰

Louis Marshall replied to Pye, thanking him for bringing this matter to the attention of the Committee, but explaining that addressing this problem was both beyond the financial means and outside of the mandate of the AJC. “It is not within the jurisdiction of the American Jewish Committee to deal with the morals of lawyers or merchants,” Marshall wrote. “If we attempted to take up such a subject...we would have to have the authority to supervise the moral, religious, and intellectual training of merchants and lawyers alike from childhood up.”⁵⁵¹ Marshall acknowledged that “abuses” did occur in the practice of bankruptcy law, but denied that they were disproportionately carried out by Jewish lawyers. He subscribed these abuses to the nature of the practice of bankruptcy law. In his view, misconduct was “largely due to the sordid phases of bankruptcy itself and largely induced by the dishonesty of bankrupt merchants...and creditors who do not hesitate to adopt methods which cannot bear investigation.”⁵⁵² Marshall advised Pye

⁵⁴⁸ Letter from S.M. Pye to the American Jewish Committee, November 23, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 8.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ Letter from Louis Marshall to S.M. Pye, November 25, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 8.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

that Bar Associations were in the best position to investigate misconduct, and had the mandate to punish.

Marshall also addressed the bad optics of communal leaders acknowledging their coreligionists' transgressions. Marshall stated that it would be "manifestly better" for these matters to be addressed by professional associations and regulatory bodies instead of communal leadership groups.⁵⁵³ The public exposure of dishonest business practices could have fed, and arguably did promote, stereotypes about Jews; however, it was beyond the mandate and resources of the AJC to intervene in regulating the activity of Jewish businessmen or Jews within the professions. Certainly the Committee's leaders would have preferred that no exposure be given to professional misconduct by Jews; however, they calculated that drawing further public attention to this issue by coordinating some kind of campaign of instruction in business ethics for Jewish merchants and professionals would only aggravate the problem.

The way the Committee responded to the requests for its help in the cases of the production of Potash and Perlmutter and Pye's allegations about Jewish bankruptcy lawyers are illustrative of the organization's approach to dealing with situations that, if given broader exposure, could potentially embarrass the Jewish community or harm the reputation of American Jews. The approach of the AJC was consistently directed at minimizing publicity. In the AJC's view, there was nothing to be gained from drawing attention to an intra-communal debate between establishment Jews and new immigrants over how Jews were represented on stage, and, similarly, there was nothing to be gained from Jewish leadership organizations acknowledging in any way that some Jewish lawyers were guilty of professional misconduct.

The Beilis Case

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

The murder trial of Mendel Beilis, which arose from an accusation of blood libel near Kiev, has been compared with the Dreyfus affair and the lynching of Leo Frank as significant events in the history of modern Jewish activism. The accusations against Beilis, Dreyfus, and Frank, although concerning very different criminal charges, escalated into what historian Albert S. Lindemann describes as “affairs.” According to Lindemann, “for a trial to become an affair it must have ideological implications. It must...develop into something more than a strictly legal issue of innocence or guilt. Participants in affairs see themselves as selflessly involved in a larger struggle, one that meshes into their general political convictions, into their view of the world.”⁵⁵⁴

Mendel Beilis found himself at the centre of an affair. “On March 25, 1911, the body of a 12-year-old boy was found in a cave near Kiev, his hands tied behind his back and 47 puncture wounds in his body.”⁵⁵⁵ According to historian Joel Berkowitz, the “combination of the murder’s grisly nature and its proximity to Passover led right-wing forces in Russia to dredge up the centuries-old charge of blood libel.”⁵⁵⁶ There was no evidence in the case except a lone witness’ report that a Jew had kidnapped the victim, Andrei Yushchinsky. Mendel Beilis, a Russian Jew who was the “foreman of a nearby brickyard,” was arrested four months later and charged with murder.⁵⁵⁷ In the months following his arrest and throughout his trial, Russian newspapers published numerous overtly anti-Semitic articles which used the blood libel accusation against Beilis to agitate ordinary Russians against Jews. “Over the next two and a half years, the

⁵⁵⁴ Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank, 1894-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

⁵⁵⁵ Joel Berkowitz, “The ‘Mendel Beilis Epidemic’ on the Yiddish Stage,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8 (2001): 199.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

proceedings against...Beilis would wind through a Kafkaesque maze culminating in his acquittal on November 10, 1913.”⁵⁵⁸

The AJC became involved in the Beilis affair, which the organization referred to internally as “the Beilis case,” only after his trial began to be widely discussed by the mainstream media in the United States. There is no record of the AJC becoming involved in the Beilis affair, or giving the case any attention, until November 8, 1913, almost two years after Beilis’ arrest, and only two days before the verdict in the case was delivered. Up until this point, the public outcry from Jewish leadership organizations surrounding this prosecution had been a European phenomenon, with German organizations, including the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, leading an effort to influence public opinion.⁵⁵⁹

As will be discussed further below, Mendel Beilis’ trial did garner the attention of Yiddish theatre companies and audiences in the United States, but the AJC did not address the affair until the organization began to consider the potential domestic repercussions of media reports on the trial and the expected guilty verdict. The AJC anticipated that a guilty verdict would precipitate another round of anti-Jewish violence in Russia. During a meeting on November 8, 1913, the AJC’s Executive Committee discussed a number of ways to respond to

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ Sulzberger reported to the AJC’s Executive Committee that “our German friends had been very efficient in stirring up indignations and had succeeded in creating a very favorable public opinion. In fact, they had intimated that they had channels of communication direct with the Czar. There were indications that the Emperor had lent his influence.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>. Other American Jewish organizations were also reluctant to draw attention to the Beilis case in the United States. Historian Esther L. Panitz notes that Simon Wolf, although actively involved in advocacy surrounding the Kishnieff pogroms, refrained from making public pronouncements about both the Dreyfus affair and the Beilis affair. In her view, Wolf’s decision to “distance himself from the Dreyfus and Beilis issues remains inexplicable. Wolf’s lack of active involvement is all the more difficult to understand in view of a decision taken in 1908 that B’nai B’rith and the Board of Delegates of the Union [of Hebrew Congregations] would be concerned with both domestic and foreign affairs that affected their coreligionists.” See: Esther L. Panitz, *Simon Wolf: Private Conscience and Public Image* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1987), 210

the case, including the coordination of “a very strenuous newspaper campaign which might eventually compel [the American government] to make official representations to the Russian government.”⁵⁶⁰ The tone of the meeting was pessimistic. Louis Marshall believed the Committee should “assume that a verdict of guilty would be delivered” when formulating its response, despite the fact that the AJC had received a report from the State Department that indicated that American diplomats were confident that Beilis would be acquitted.⁵⁶¹

Some of the AJC’s leaders were conflicted about how to respond. They were reluctant to draw excessive media attention to the case in the United States, but believed the Committee and American Jewry should not remain silent on the issue. Judah Magnes, for example, noted that “the Jews [in this country] have been very quiet in this case” and he believed that American Jews “ought to be given a chance to express themselves.”⁵⁶² Other AJC leaders counselled structuring an advocacy campaign based on public expressions from well-known writers combined with quietly lobbying Congress to intervene. Judge Sulzberger “suggested that a measure that would probably go further than anything else would be the publication of protests by leading literary men such as Israel Zangwill...in the nature of Zola’s ‘J’accuse.’”⁵⁶³

The idea of lobbying Congress to pass a resolution condemning the prosecution was also discussed by the Executive Committee but was rejected because of concerns that a resolution

⁵⁶⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

⁵⁶¹ According to the November 8, 1913 minutes, the AJC received this report through Herman Bernstein, the Committee’s new Secretary. Bernstein reported that during a visit to the State Department “a few days ago, he was told by John Bassett Moore that the State Department had intimations that Beilis would be acquitted.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

⁵⁶² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

could be misinterpreted by the American public and, further, would have no effect on the Russian government's policies. Sulzberger noted that "we do not want anything in the nature of a certificate that the Jews do not commit ritual murder."⁵⁶⁴ The AJC did not want to unintentionally lend credence to the blood libel canard by asking American lawmakers to make a public pronouncement on the subject. Instead, Cyrus Adler suggested that the Committee lobby to have Congress abrogate the extradition treaty between the United States and Russia on the grounds that the "Beilis case shows that Russian justice cannot be trusted and therefore we could not trust Russia in her demands to extradite her refugees to this country."⁵⁶⁵ Ultimately, the Executive Committee decided to recommend the establishment of a subcommittee to "deal with the subject of the Beilis case and the massacres that may be feared in consequence thereof in the event of conviction."⁵⁶⁶ Louis Marshall, who had only recently become the AJC's second President, was appointed to this subcommittee.

Although the Committee did not become involved until very near the end of the trial when it began to be discussed in American newspapers, individual members of the Committee initiated some efforts to ensure that accurate information was being relayed to the general public. For example, on October 15, 1913, Cyrus Alder wrote to George A. Waite, the Managing Editor of the Philadelphia *Evening Telegraph*, to complain about "two false statements" in the newspaper's reporting on the Beilis trial.⁵⁶⁷ Adler wanted the newspaper to correct the record that Beilis was not a Jewish "priest," and that his defense would be to deny the charges against him.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁷ Letter from Cyrus Adler to George A. Waite, Managing Editor, *Evening Telegraph*, Philadelphia, Pa., October 15, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 4, File 17.

In a column published a week earlier, the newspaper had noted that “the plea of defence will be that Beilis while aware that a human sacrifice was being made at his alter, was not the actual murderer.”⁵⁶⁸ Adler’s anger is easily discerned in the letter to the editor: “Every word of this statement is false.”⁵⁶⁹ He insisted that the *Evening Telegraph* investigate the source of its information on the trial, and he asked to be informed of the results of this investigation. This request was consistent with the Committee’s earlier efforts to lobby the Associated Press to investigate its sources of information on Russia and the wire service’s correspondents in that country. In private letters to managers of the Associated Press, Committee leaders repeatedly alleged that the wire service was being manipulated by agents of the Imperial Russian government to disseminate false information to the American people.⁵⁷⁰

As already noted, the AJC was pessimistic about the outcome of Beilis’ trial, but there is scarce evidence regarding the AJC’s response to the affair before the acquittal. The Committee’s concern for Beilis, and how his trial and the whole affair would be interpreted by the broader American public, in fact became more acute following Beilis’ acquittal. The trial got exposure through Jewish newspapers in the United States, so much so that, even before the verdict, Yiddish theatre companies in New York City were producing dramatization of Beilis’ ordeal. “Long before the trial ended, advertisements began to appear announcing dramatizations of the

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁰ The AJC believed that the Associated Press was getting its information exclusively from government sources or from sources controlled by the Russian government. See, for example: Letter from Jacob Schiff to Melville E. Stone, General Manager, Associated Press, December 30, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 21, File 5. The Associated Press denied the accusation and, further, accused the AJC of trying to disseminate false reports about outbreaks of pogroms. See: Letter from Melville E. Stone to Jacob H. Schiff, December 31, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 21, File 5. The Committee prepared a three-page report which identified instances when the Russian government may have been using the Associated Press to disseminate false information to the American public. See: “To Serve the Purposes of the Russian Government, They Deliberately Falsify, and so Mislead the American Public” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 21, File 5.

Beilis affair. These productions were first mounted in the smaller theaters of New York City, then moved to larger houses.”⁵⁷¹ Eventually, these productions toured other cities in both the United States and Canada. Beilis’ story “generated enough popularity to sustain six different Beilis plays in New York alone in November 1913, as well as numerous others in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Montreal, London, and elsewhere.”⁵⁷²

The AJC became further involved when, after his acquittal and release from custody, rumours began to spread that Beilis had agreed to come to the United States to appear in vaudeville productions about his story. The AJC was concerned that Beilis was being exploited by producers, but the leaders of the organization were also clearly weary about the optics of these rumoured stage appearances. Even though Beilis had been acquitted, the leaders of the AJC were concerned that the publicity around his appearances in the United States would only give greater exposure to the blood libel charge in America. They were eager to minimize public discussion of blood libel in the hope that less exposure would keep the charge on the margins of American opinion. They wanted the acquittal to be publically acknowledged, and then they wanted the story to fade from the attention of the general public.

Once the AJC heard the rumour that Beilis was possibly coming to the United States, the organization moved to “head off” the efforts of vaudeville producers to secure Beilis’ participation in their productions.⁵⁷³ Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, and Judge Sulzberger coordinated a plan to bribe Beilis not to come to the United States because “the effect [of the proposed stage appearances] would be to destroy the dignity with which Beilis has heretofore

⁵⁷¹ Berkowitz, 199.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵⁷³ Letter from Louis Marshall to Cyrus Sulzberger, December 29, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 4, File 17.

acted, and minimize the beneficial consequences of his acquittal.”⁵⁷⁴ They discussed possible ways to provide Beilis with enough money to make the stage contracts less attractive, and further, they wanted to urge him to relocate to Palestine as opposed to the United States.

In a letter to members of the AJC’s Executive Committee, Marshall summarized the steps he had already taken to address this issue, and described his thoughts on the best possible outcome. Marshall wrote that he had been in communication with the Hilfsverein, and that the German organization was cooperating with his efforts to lobby Beilis to reject any proposals from American vaudeville producers. James Simon, the President of the Hilfsverein, had reported that Beilis was close to accepting offers, and believed the only way to prevent this from happening was “to collect a fund of 100,000 Rubles, the income of which is to be devoted to Beilis and his family.”⁵⁷⁵ Simon asked the AJC to “make a collection for this purpose,” essentially requesting the AJC coordinate a philanthropic or fund raising campaign on Beilis’ behalf in the United States.⁵⁷⁶

Marshall, Schiff, and Sulzberger rejected this idea, but they moved forward with a different scheme to raise the necessary funds to ensure that Beilis would not appear in any stage productions about his story. In his letter to the members of the AJC’s Executive Committee, Marshall suggested that “under the circumstances, it might be advisable to appropriate up to \$5,000 out of our Emergency Fund toward a fund to consist of not less than \$15,000, the remainder of which is to be contributed by the Hilfsverein or by other European

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ The copy of the letter that is held in the file in the AJC’s archives is not addressed to a specific member of the Executive Committee. The letter begins with “Dear Friend.” See: Letter from Louis Marshall to members of the AJC’s Executive Committee, December 29, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 4, File 17.

⁵⁷⁶ Letter from Louis Marshall to members of the AJC’s Executive Committee, December 29, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 4, File 17.

organizations.”⁵⁷⁷ Marshall was very clear that if the AJC contributed to this fund, the organization would attach strict conditions to their donation: “the fund [is] to be applied for the benefit of Beilis, on condition only that he shall not come to the United States or permit himself to be otherwise exploited.”⁵⁷⁸

It must be noted that this was a novel and unprecedented use of the AJC’s emergency trust fund. The trust fund, which was created through an act of New York State legislatures a year earlier, had been intended to hold funds in trust to finance the AJC’s relief work in foreign countries.⁵⁷⁹ For example, in April 1913, the AJC had earmarked five thousand dollars from its emergency fund for relief work for Jewish refugees from the Balkan War.⁵⁸⁰ This was traditional relief work, including the provision of food, medical attention, and travel assistance. As will be shown through this study, after the Beilis affair, the AJC gradually expanded the definition of “emergency” to encompass not only calamities caused by war, natural disasters, and violent religious persecution, to include the need to finance responses to manifestations of anti-Jewish prejudice and anti-Semitic propaganda. By 1930, the AJC had earmarked the entire balance of the trust fund to finance the organization’s efforts to counter anti-Jewish propaganda.⁵⁸¹

At the time that Marshall sent his letter detailing how he wanted to deal with Beilis, the AJC’s Executive Committee had not had a meeting for more than six weeks. Marshall was eager

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ For a discussion of the establishment of the AJC’s Emergency Trust Fund, see: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 1, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16455>.

⁵⁸⁰ See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 20, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16455>.

⁵⁸¹ The decision to devote the balance of the Emergency Trust fund to finance efforts to counter anti-Jewish propaganda was made by the AJC’s Executive Committee on December 8, 1929. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 8, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed October 10, 2013.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16488>.

to have his plan, including the novel use of the AJC's emergency fund, endorsed by the other leaders of the organization. Isaac W. Bernheim telegraphed a reply to Marshall: "I heartily favor the expenditure of five thousand dollars for the purpose named in your esteemed letter."⁵⁸²

Other AJC leaders had misgivings about Marshall's proposal, but nevertheless acquiesced to an appropriation from the emergency fund. In his telegraphed reply to Marshall's letter, Harry Cutler expressed his concerns with the plan, but also acceded to the idea: "If in your judgement we have a right to divert any part of the emergency fund for the purpose indicated I consent notwithstanding the fact that purchasing the good conduct of this man through this method is abhorrent and deplorable to my mind[.] I presume however that of the two evils this is the lesser[.]"⁵⁸³ At a meeting held by the Executive Committee three weeks later, after some further discussion, the full leadership endorsed the plan.⁵⁸⁴

The implementation of Marshall's plan did not go smoothly. The effort to keep Mendel Beilis away from the United States, off the American stage, and financially solvent would require the attention of members of the Committee for the next eight years. After his acquittal, Beilis chose to relocate to Palestine. The AJC had some difficulty delivering the money to Beilis, and, as late as 1920, the organization was not sure that any of the money from the emergency fund that had been earmarked for Beilis had been successfully transferred.⁵⁸⁵ Beilis and his family

⁵⁸² Telegram from Isaac W. Bernheim to Louis Marshall, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 4, File 17. The date stamp on the copy of the telegram held in the AJC's archives has faded (or was improperly applied). The telegram was sent on either December 30, 1913 or December 31, 1913.

⁵⁸³ Telegram from Harry Cutler to Louis Marshall, December 30, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 4, File 17.

⁵⁸⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 18, 1914, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16457>.

⁵⁸⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 19, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

were destitute in Palestine, and he appealed to the AJC for the assistance he was promised. Beilis also requested assistance from other Jewish leadership organizations in both Europe and the United States.⁵⁸⁶

Harry Schneiderman, the AJC's Assistant Secretary, initiated an investigation to discover what had happened to the money promised to Beilis.⁵⁸⁷ Schneiderman ultimately concluded that Beilis had never received any funds from the Committee.⁵⁸⁸ In the meantime, the AJC received a cable from the Zionist Organization of America asking for seven thousand dollars from the Committee to "establish Beilis on a farm [in Palestine] on a self-supporting basis."⁵⁸⁹ The Committee declined to contribute, noting that it was "too large an amount to be expended out of relief funds for a single family" and in excess of what the AJC had promised in 1913.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁶ Beilis' appeals garnered the attention of Jewish activists and communal leaders on the East Side of New York. These leaders organized a coordinating committee and began to call for a mass meeting. When the AJC received word of their activities, Harry Schneiderman "was directed to inform this Committee of the action taken in [sic] behalf of Beilis by the [AJC's] Executive Committee." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 14, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>. Less than a month later, Schneiderman reported that the "Mendel Beilis Relief Committee" had already organized a benefit concert, which they would not cancel, but the relief committee promised that they would "not take any [further] steps without consulting the American Jewish Committee." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 11, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

⁵⁸⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 19, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

⁵⁸⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 16, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

⁵⁸⁹ The discussion of the proposal from the Zionist Organization of America is indexed in the minutes under the heading "miscellaneous." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 14, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

⁵⁹⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 14, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

The Committee debated using the money it had promised Beilis to establish a trust on his behalf through the Anglo Palestine Bank, but decided not to pursue this option.⁵⁹¹ Instead, the AJC arranged to transfer the money to an account at the Anglo Palestine Bank. This money also never made it to Beilis, because, while the leaders of the AJC were trying to decide what to do with the promised money, Beilis travelled to the United States, where he had family.⁵⁹² In March 1913, Beilis met with Cyrus Adler. During this meeting, he expressed his intention to settle permanently in the United States, find employment, and become an American citizen. Despite this decision being a clear breach of the conditions that Marshall had imposed, the AJC nevertheless honored its pledge.⁵⁹³

The decision to provide funds to Beilis to prevent him from appearing in American vaudeville productions was one of the more provocative actions the AJC took during the earliest years of the organization. As already noted, some of the organization's leaders were torn about the ethical merit of this decision. From the perspective of optics, the leaders of the AJC certainly would not have wanted this information to be made public. The seriousness with which the AJC treated the potential repercussions of Beilis' stage appearances reflects their anxiety about the charge of blood libel being imported into the American environment. They were prepared to take

⁵⁹¹ The Executive Committee debated attaching new conditions to this trust. The trust was to be "administered for the purpose of placing Beilis and his family on a self-supporting basis. The fund is not to be used for the payment of debts or for meeting the daily living expenses of the family but is to be considered as a capital investment to secure for Beilis a permanent livelihood." As noted, the AJC did not follow through with establishing a trust. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 25, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

⁵⁹² Through another investigation lead by Harry Schneiderman, the funds that had been transferred to Anglo Palestine were recovered. At the February 13, 1921 meeting of the AJC's Executive Committee, it was agreed that the recovered funds "should be held for payment to Beilis provided that he would settle in Palestine as originally promised." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 13, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>.

⁵⁹³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 13, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 19, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>.

somewhat drastic, and certainly unprecedented, measures to avoid the harm they believed these appearances might create. These measures were consistent with the AJC's preference for avoiding publicity. Where other organizations might have seized on the opportunity Beilis' acquittal presented to challenge the blood libel charge in public forums, the AJC deliberately chose to do everything it could to limit the media exposure and public debate on the substance and outcome of the Beilis affair.

The Ku Klux Klan and the Silent Treatment

The activities of white supremacists organizations are a social and political problem with a long history in the United States. In contemporary America, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is considered a marginal organization, although its status as a secret organization with a history of using violence to intimidate its opponents and terrorize communities means it remains a potentially dangerous threat. The contemporary KKK, however, is a much different organization than earlier incarnations of this hate group. "Historians of the Ku Klux Klan generally distinguish between three different Klans in US history. The first iteration of the Klan existed immediately following the [American] Civil War. This Reconstruction Klan was limited regionally to the South and was organized for the sole purpose of restoring the racial order the region had lost during the Civil War."⁵⁹⁴ This initial incarnation of the Klan survived until roughly 1871, after which "the Klan did not exist for roughly half a century."⁵⁹⁵ The KKK resurfaced in the early-twentieth century and was a strong force in American society and politics until the late-1920s. "Unlike the Reconstruction Klan, the 1920s KKK used a wide variety of tactics to increase its appeal, ranging from Prohibition enforcement to [campaigning for]

⁵⁹⁴ Michael Lewis and Jacqueline Serbu, "Kommemorating the Ku Klux Klan," *The Sociological Quarterly* 40 (1999): 142.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

immigration restriction to promotion of white Protestant Americanism.”⁵⁹⁶ During this period, the Klan also entered the political arena and actively supported Congressional candidates. Although many organizations opposed the activity of the KKK, through the early 1920s, the Klan continued “to gain political power. By 1923, at least seventy-five congressional representatives, as well as senators from Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, were said to owe their seats to the Klan.”⁵⁹⁷

The American Jewish Committee first considered how to respond to the activities of the KKK during a meeting of the Executive Committee held on December 10, 1922.⁵⁹⁸ The context in which the leaders of the AJC discussed the activities of the Klan is significant. Their discussion was indexed under the heading “Anti-Jewish Propaganda,” but the real reason the Committee’s leaders took up this issue was the recent public pronouncements made by Jewish leaders representing other American Jewish organizations about their intention to openly oppose the Klan’s activities and “make an open fight against the Ku Klux Klan”⁵⁹⁹ These declarations were connected to the ongoing efforts of Jewish leaders outside the small leadership circle of the AJC who were trying to build the reputation and public profile of the American Jewish Congress. By 1922, there was already a well-established, and often contentious, rivalry between the leaders and proponents of the Committee and the Congress, two of the three major American Jewish

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.* The third incarnation of the KKK is the contemporary Klan. “The Third Ku Klux Klan made its appearance around the beginning of the civil rights movement and still exists today. Originally in opposition to civil rights, the current Klans (there are many splinter groups that use the Klan name) still feature racism and anti-Semitism as their primary appeal.” See: Lewis and Serbu, 142.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 145. The KKK’s political reach extended to the sphere of Presidential politics in the United States. According to Lewis and Serbu, “At the 1924 Democratic National Convention, Klan leaders commanded enough votes to prevent the inclusion of an anti-Klan plank in the party platform, as well as to stop the nomination of the anti-Klan presidential candidate Al Smith.” See: Lewis and Serbu, 145.

⁵⁹⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 10, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 20, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

leadership organizations of the era. The AJC and the American Jewish Congress also competed with B'nai B'rith and its affiliate the Anti-Defamation League. It was both intercommunal rivalry and a difference of opinion about advocacy tactics that prompted the AJC to act.

On November 26, 1922, the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Congress held a convention in New York City,⁶⁰⁰ with 471 delegates representing 158 Jewish organizations in attendance. This convention was arranged to organize the New York City operations of the Congress movement, and resulted in the founding of a subsidiary body, the New York Council for the Jewish Congress. The American Jewish Committee did not participate. Without naming the AJC directly, the resolutions adopted during the convention, and the public pronouncements made following, called attention to the distinctions between the Congress movement and the AJC, emphasizing in particular that, in contrast to the Committee, the Congress was a fundamentally democratic movement.⁶⁰¹

During the opening address of the Congress' convention, Judge Aaron J. Levy, who was a Vice-President of the Congress and the Grand Master of the fraternal order B'rith Abraham, "attacked the Ku Klux Klan, which he denounced as a menace to American democracy."⁶⁰² The convention adopted three resolutions that defined its mandate. The first two emphasized the democratic character of the organization and its relationship to the broader Jewish Congress movement, including the efforts of Jewish leaders around the world to coordinate the

⁶⁰⁰ New York Council for the Jewish Congress Founded: Convention of New York Council of Jewish Organizations, November 26, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶⁰¹ A press account of the convention summarized the theme of the speeches made during the meeting: "All the problems we face, can be solved only by the Jews themselves and not by individuals for the Jews." See: New York Council for the Jewish Congress Founded: Convention of New York Council of Jewish Organizations, November 26, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶⁰² New York Council for the Jewish Congress Founded: Convention of New York Council of Jewish Organizations, November 26, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

establishment of a World Jewish Congress.⁶⁰³ The third and final resolution addressed specifically the KKK. The New York Council resolved to “manifest a protest against the Ku Klux Klan by a public resolution of organized Jews of New York.”⁶⁰⁴

As already noted, the KKK was gaining notoriety and political strength during the early-twentieth century. Until 1922, the AJC ignored these developments. When the AJC’s Executive Committee finally considered the activities of the KKK, this discussion was in response to the pronouncements made during the New York Council’s convention.⁶⁰⁵

During the December 10, 1922 AJC Executive Committee meeting, Louis Marshall reported that he had already written directly to Judge Levy to describe the potential consequences of Jewish organizations publically combatting the Klan.⁶⁰⁶ Marshall’s view, and the view that was ultimately adopted by the AJC as an organization, was that American Jews should avoid any action or statements which could bolster the perception that the KKK was acting only against American Jews or was only offensive to American Jews. The KKK should be defined as a general threat to American democracy, not a narrow threat to one minority.

⁶⁰³ The document refers to the World Jewish Congress as the “Jewish Worlds [sic] Congress.” See: New York Council for the Jewish Congress Founded: Convention of New York Council of Jewish Organizations, November 26, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶⁰⁴ New York Council for the Jewish Congress Founded: Convention of New York Council of Jewish Organizations, November 26, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶⁰⁵ A discussion of how to respond to the activities of the KKK was also added to the agenda of the AJC’s Executive Committee’s December 10, 1922 meeting because of a report that had been published in the Jewish Correspondence Bureau’s bulletin indicating that a local chapter of B’nai B’rith in Youngstown, Ohio was going to collaborate with the local chapter of the KKK to “devise” a “non-sectarian religious service to be used in public schools.” In a letter to Harry Schneiderman, Cyrus Adler copied the full report (which was only one paragraph) and suggested that “the whole question of the K.K.K.” should be discussed during the next AJC Executive Committee meeting. See: Letter from Cyrus Adler to Harry Schneiderman, December 5, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶⁰⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 10, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 20, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

Marshall's position reflected the reality of the KKK's ideology, and the breadth of its hostility towards a variety of different minority communities in the United States.

From the perspective of public relations, public advocacy, and political optics, Marshall's position was strategically prudent. The KKK was hostile towards other ethnic minority communities, particularly African Americans, and religious groups, including the huge population of Irish and Italian-American Catholics. The KKK also opposed the tolerant positions of moderate American Protestant groups. All of these communities were targeted by the Klan and, in Marshall's view, all of these communities should be responsible for publically combatting the KKK. In a letter to M.E. Lubin, Marshall wrote that "it would be a tremendous blunder for the Jews to accept the gauge of battle...Let us act, not as Jews, but as American citizens in all matters of this kind, and let those who naturally should take the leadership in fighting an insidious movement go to the front. We must not make of ourselves a buffer."⁶⁰⁷

Similarly, in a letter to Colonel Henry D. Lindsley, Marshall stated that he did not believe American Jewry was capable of effectively combatting the KKK: "the Jewish people as a race and as a religious body cannot be effective by themselves in a conflict against the Ku Klux Klan, and I for one will do all in my power to prevent the Jews as such from entering upon such a conflict."⁶⁰⁸ In the same letter to Lindsley, Marshall praised the advocacy of the Federation of the Churches of Christ in America, a Protestant leadership body, for its "effective action," and for having "repudiated the attitude of the Ku Klux Klan against those races and religions that are

⁶⁰⁷ Letter from Louis Marshall to M.E. Lubin, December 21, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶⁰⁸ Letter from Louis Marshall to Colonel Henry D. Lindsley, November 27, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

in the minority in this country.” Marshall described the Federation’s advocacy as “consistent with the highest patriotism.”⁶⁰⁹

The AJC was always concerned that behaviour attributed to American Jewry could potentially undermine the general public’s perception of the patriotism of American Jews. In the case of the KKK, however, a pragmatic consideration about the potential impact of Jewish advocacy was privileged over the public’s perception of American Jewish patriotism. The KKK of the 1920s was a powerful organization, but many individuals and organizations spoke out against the Klan. The patriotism of the Klan’s critics was questioned only by the Klan. Marshall was of the view, however, that the moment Jewish organizations declared their intention to fight the KKK, the publicity surrounding that announcement would lend greater legitimacy to the Klan and help the organization recruit more members. “You may rest assured,” Marshall wrote to Lubin, “that the immediate effect will be to increase the numbers of the Klan, because many of our enemies who otherwise would never think of joining the Klan would permit their animosity to the Jews to lead them into that organization.”⁶¹⁰

During the December 10, 1922 meeting, the AJC’s Executive Committee adopted a resolution that authorized Louis Marshall to compose “a letter advising the members of the Committee, the heads of various other Jewish organizations and the editors of Jewish newspapers and periodicals against making a Jewish issue of the Ku Klux Klan movement.”⁶¹¹ This was the second time in the sixteen-year history of the Committee that the organization had chosen to deliberately refrain from any action or public response to answer a direct threat or slander against

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁰ Letter from Louis Marshall to M.E. Lubin, December 21, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶¹¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 10, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 20, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

the American Jewish community because of concerns about how that response might shape public perception or be counterproductive.⁶¹² This tactic, which is sometimes described as the “silent treatment” or the “quarantine method,” became a mainstay of the AJC’s approach to public advocacy and communal defense.⁶¹³

The silent treatment approach is grounded in a consideration of optics and the avoidance of potential harm. The anti-Semitic rhetoric of the KKK was harmful and a provocation; however, the Committee judged that responding to it posed greater risks. Marshall was confident that if American Jews ignored the KKK, the organization would remain marginal among ordinary Americans: “If matters are permitted to be worked out in a normal way the Ku Klux Klan will die of inanition and of ridicule and contempt in a very short time.”⁶¹⁴

The AJC maintained its policy of not responding to the KKK throughout the 1920s, despite numerous further provocations and entreaties from American Jews and other leadership organizations to publically combat the Klan.⁶¹⁵ On at least two occasions, the AJC did use some

⁶¹² The AJC did not use the label “silent treatment” to describe this approach until the 1940s. Solomon Andhil Fineberg, the Director of the AJC’s Community Service Department, was the first AJC official to publically use of the term when he published an article, entitled “Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers: What to Do When the Demagogue Comes,” in the September 1946 issue of *Commentary*. (See: Solomon Andhil Fineberg, “Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers: What to Do When the Demagogue Comes,” *Commentary*, September 1946, 220-226.) Until the 1940s, the AJC used language such as “avoiding publicity” to describe this strategy. The first time the leaders of the AJC discussed avoiding publicity was in 1916 during a debate among themselves about whether to respond to an article in *Outlook* magazine by George S. Dougherty entitled “A Word About Criminals.” The article claimed that seventy-five percent of “pickpockets” in America were “either Jews or of Jewish descent.” The AJC decided that the article should be “entirely ignored...especially as any attempt to answer the charge would merely result in giving it greater publicity.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 15, 1916, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 30, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16462>.

⁶¹³ The “silent treatment” or the “quarantine method” and their significance in the history of the AJC’s public advocacy in the United States are discussed further in Chapter 9 of this study.

⁶¹⁴ Letter from Louis Marshall to M.E. Lubin, December 21, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4.

⁶¹⁵ The Committee declined to collaborate with both Colonel Henry D. Lindsley in his efforts to oppose the KKK. See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Colonel Henry D. Lindsley, November 27, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 4. In 1924, the Committee debated whether to support the efforts of R.B. Creager, the Texas Member of the Republican National Committee, to have an anti-Klan statement included in the Republican Party’s national platform. The Committee declined to

forms of quiet diplomacy to attempt to undermine the influence of the Klan. In 1924, Marshall wrote a private letter to President Calvin Coolidge and tried to persuade the President to make “a statement openly condemning the Klan.”⁶¹⁶ Marshall never reported to the Executive Committee that he had received a reply. It is worth noting that there were three candidates in the 1924 Presidential Election, and “only Calvin Coolidge chose not to condemn the Klan.”⁶¹⁷

A more cunning but still covert attempt by the AJC to damage the Klan occurred in May of 1923. Marshall reported to the AJC’s Executive Committee that he had received a letter from Daniel Alexander, the Committee’s local representative in Salt Lake City, Utah. Alexander’s letter contained a report about the activity of the Klan in Pocatello, Idaho. Alexander indicated that the Klan was very active in the city and “had openly threatened to expel Jews and Catholics.”⁶¹⁸ The letter mentioned that the leaders of the Pocatello Klan were all employees of the Union Pacific Railroad. During an Executive Committee meeting on May 27, 1923, Marshall revealed that he had discussed this matter with Lewis Strauss, an investment banker with deep ties to the railroad companies. Marshall reported that Strauss “had communicated with the officials of the Union Pacific Railroad who had promised to give the matter their prompt attention.”⁶¹⁹ It can be reasonably inferred that Marshall, through Strauss, was trying to get the local leaders of the Klan terminated from their employment with the Union Pacific. There is no

support Creager: “It was the opinion of the Committee that while Creager’s efforts are valuable, it would be unwise for Jews to take an active part in the movement.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 10, 1924, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 30, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16477>.

⁶¹⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 5, 1924, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 30, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16478>.

⁶¹⁷ Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 187

⁶¹⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on May 27, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 30, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16475>.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

further discussion of this event in the AJC's archives and no way to prove if the effort was successful. The episode demonstrates the breadth of the Committee's connections to the wealthiest strata of American society, and how the organization's leaders were sometimes prepared to utilize those connections rather than more overt responses to threats to the Jewish community.⁶²⁰

One notable exception to the Committee's policy of remaining silent about the activities and beliefs of the Klan occurred in 1923 following a speech given by Hiram Wesley Evans, the Imperial Wizard of the KKK, in Dallas, Texas. Evans had ascended to the Klan's leadership position less than a year earlier. His speech publically outlined the racist beliefs of the Klan and the organization's disparaging views of African Americans, Catholics, and Jews. Marshall was asked by the *New York World* to make a public statement in response to Evans' speech. He accepted the request for comment, using both humor and reasoned arguments to condemn the Klan and its beliefs.

Marshall's published reply opens with the following: "Hitherto I have regarded the Ku Klux Klan movement as so utterly ridiculous as to be undeserving of serious consideration. Now that the Imperial Wizard has openly defined...[the KKK's] program, it may perhaps be permissible to comment on it."⁶²¹ Marshall then proceeds to disparage the KKK's understanding of patriotism and American constitutional law. His statement also provides further insight into the principles that underlay the Committee's strategy of declining to openly fight the Klan.

Marshall wrote:

⁶²⁰ Naomi Cohen mentions this episode in *Not Free to Desist*. She describes the Committee's actions in this case as emblematic of the organization's public advocacy strategy. "In true Committee fashion," Cohen notes, "quiet pressure exerted in the right places was considered the proper procedure." See: Cohen, 136.

⁶²¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 17, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 30, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16476>.

It is not for the Negro or the Jew or the Catholic to join issue with any organization that entertains such abominable theories. It is for the American people as a whole... It is an insult to those of our citizens who are loyal to the fundamental principles of our Government to contemplate that a dogma of so monstrous a nature can be regarded by them otherwise than with detestation and contempt. I have such confidence in their sense of justice and fairness and in their genuine patriotism, that I feel it to be entirely appropriate to resume my former attitude of indifference towards the Ku Klux Klan and all its works.⁶²²

The AJC became increasingly committed to the silent treatment throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The organization was prepared to engage in forms of public advocacy, but, regarding hate groups, it was committed to avoiding publicity based on the principle that greater exposure could confer greater legitimacy upon these organizations. This emphasis on avoiding publicity oriented the Committee towards non-confrontational approaches to public advocacy, arguably leaving the AJC institutionally unprepared for the profound challenges that emerged during the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, the harshest criticism of the AJC does not center on its anti-democratic character or anti-Zionism, but rather condemns the organization's alleged passivity during the rise of the Nazi Party and the Holocaust.⁶²³ The way the AJC chose to respond to the KKK was consistent with the organization's communal defense and advocacy strategies. The plan was effective insofar as the campaign against the KKK was framed not as a Jewish question but as a broad national issue; however, it can be argued that an opportunity to publically confront bigotry was missed, along with all the lessons that might have been learned and applied in subsequent confrontations.

Representations of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

⁶²² *Ibid.*

⁶²³ Louis Harap has been among the strongest critics of the AJC's approaches to public advocacy. See, for example: Louis Harap, "The American Jewish Committee 'Fights' Anti-Semitism," *Jewish Life*, May 1948, 24-28.

One of the main sources of anti-Semitism in early-twentieth-century America was the collective guilt attributed to “the Jews” for their alleged role in the execution of Jesus Christ. The charge of deicide, and the pejorative label “Christ-Killer,” is arguably the most durable source of Christian anti-Semitism, and has been used throughout history to foment anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence in countries with Christian majorities.⁶²⁴ According to the Four Gospels, some of the culpability for Jesus’ death rests on the manoeuvrings of the Sanhedrin (Jewish high priests) and the protests of the Jewish mob that assembled before Pontius Pilate.⁶²⁵ Any retelling of the story of the crucifixion that includes or overemphasizes these elements is capable of fomenting Christian animosity towards Jews.⁶²⁶

In the early-twentieth century, American Jewish leaders were concerned that dramatizations of the events leading up to the execution of Jesus could lead to an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. As will be discussed further below, Jewish leaders were also concerned about how the Crucifixion was being taught to American children, and how those lessons would influence, in the long term, the relationship between American Christians and American Jews.

The release of Cecil B. DeMille’s film *The King of Kings* in 1927 and the arrival in the United States of German touring companies presenting large-scale, lavish dramatizations of Jesus’ death were events that elicited the attention of the leaders of the American Jewish

⁶²⁴ See: Avner Falk, *Anti-semitism: A History and Psychoanalysis of Contemporary Hatred* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 32.

⁶²⁵ See, for example: Matthew 27:11-26.

⁶²⁶ The more recent controversy and public debates that preceded the release of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* in 2004 illustrate the anxiety that dramatizations of the crucifixion distributed through forms of mass media continue to arouse among Jews and Jewish communal leaders around the world. See: Ron Perlgut, “*The Passion of the Christ* Six Years On: What Happened?,” *Metro: Media & Education Magazine* 1 (2010):116-123.

Committee.⁶²⁷ The potential for films, which could be viewed by thousands of people during a theatrical run, or live-action retellings, which sometimes included casts of more than one thousand actors and musicians and could be seen by stadium-sized audiences across the country, to arouse anti-Jewish sentiments among ordinary Americans was taken very seriously by the leaders of the AJC. The Committee developed strategies to minimize the potential impact on the growth of anti-Semitism in the United States of the wide release of *The King of Kings* and the touring productions of elaborate “passion plays.” Once again, in these efforts, the AJC emphasized quieter approaches in order to achieve its objectives.

Historian Yael Ohad-Karny notes that shortly after the release of *The King of Kings*, “Jews from across the...[United States] began expressing deep concern and feelings of insult.”⁶²⁸ They were fearful that a filmed biography of Jesus, because of the potential emotional impact of film as a medium, could dramatically intensify anti-Semitism in America. The controversy escalated to the point where angry denunciations of the film and warnings about its potential repercussions for American Jewry were being expressed in Jewish newspapers across the country. As the controversy escalated, and the film continued to premiere in different cities, American Jewish organizations sought to open back-channel negotiations with the film’s producers with the aim to either have changes made to the content of the film or, more

⁶²⁷ In some instances, showings of these productions were brought to the attention of the AJC’s leadership through correspondence from the Committee’s rank and file members distributed throughout the country or from unaffiliated American Jews who were concerned about how these productions would impact their relationships with their Christian neighbors. See, for example: Telegram from Henry M. Stern and Mortimer Adler to the American Jewish Committee, February 21, 1931, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶²⁸ Yael Ohad-Karny “‘Anticipating’ Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*: The Controversy over Cecil B. De Mille’s *The King of Kings*,” *Jewish History* 19 (2005): 195. Ohad-Karny’s contains an account of the B’nai B’rith and the ADL’s involvement in the negotiations which led to some changes being made to the content of the film. Please also note that Ohad-Karny spells De Mille’s last name with a space between the two words. His name is usually written without the space.

ambitiously, to stop its wider distribution in the United States.⁶²⁹ According to Ohad-Karny, American Jewish leaders, such as Louis Brandeis and Judah Magnes, “saw opposing the film as a personal responsibility; they needed to speak out in the name of Jews wherever they were.”⁶³⁰

Ohad-Karny studied the Jewish community’s response to DeMille’s film of the Christ Story, and his article about the controversy that surrounded the release of the film focusses on the work of leaders of B’nai B’rith and the ADL. He notes that “B’nai B’rith called for the film to be revised, a call that led, on January 5, 1928, to the two parties [B’nai B’rith and the film’s producers] signing an agreement, in which DeMille agreed to add a prologue explaining the historical context and to cut a particularly offensive part of the crucifixion scene.”⁶³¹ Before the negotiation of this agreement, in the wake of the agitation from Jewish newspapers, the producers of the film and leaders of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, organized a private screening of *The King of Kings* for an invited list of American Jewish leaders, scholars, and rabbis. “Several members of the [AJC’s] Executive Committee” attended the private screening.⁶³²

Ohad-Karny’s article does not mention the involvement of the AJC despite the fact that the Committee took credit publically for securing the agreement on revisions with the filmmakers. In the AJC’s Annual Report, when describing the organization’s role in the negotiations with the producers of *The King of Kings*, the AJC claimed that Louis Marshall had been the architect of the agreement.⁶³³ The last line of the AJC’s report mentions that “other

⁶²⁹ Ohad-Karny, 198.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.* It should be noted that by this point Judah Magnes had given up his leadership position within the AJC to protest the organization’s stance opposing the political aspirations of the Zionist movement.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶³² Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 2, 2014.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 347.

⁶³³ The Annual Report was published in the 1929 edition of the *The American Jewish Yearbook*.

bodies moved independently to bring about changes,” but no other Jewish organizations are mentioned by name.⁶³⁴

As the AJC consistently tried to present itself as the leading representative organization of American Jewry and the spokesmen of the community, and because B’nai B’rith and the AJC had a long-running rivalry, the Committee had a vested interest in perhaps embellishing its role in bringing about some changes to the content of the film. Correspondence available in the AJC’s archives makes it clear that the Committee was concerned about how the film could lead to an intensification of anti-Semitism. The correspondence reveals that the Committee chose to cultivate behind the scene contacts with the film’s producers and with film industry executives to moderate the inflammatory material presented in *The King of Kings*.⁶³⁵

In terms of content that was likely to provoke hostility towards Jews, the most significant problem with the film was the representation of Caiaphas, the high priest, who whispers “crucify him” into Pilate’s ear during Jesus’ trial. Scenes of the assembled Jewish mob chanting “crucify him” were similarly inflammatory. Ultimately, by virtue of the agreement negotiated between the film’s producers and Jewish leaders, both of these elements were toned down but not eliminated from the film. In its Annual Report, the AJC maintained that their leadership and intervention during this controversy had been valuable in the fight against anti-Semitism: “while your Committee is strongly convinced that the total suspension of the exhibition of this picture would be the most desirable solution of the difficulty...these modifications have at least accomplished

See: “Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee” in *The American Jewish Yearbook, Volume 31, 1929-1930* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1930), 335-395. Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 2, 2014.

⁶³⁴ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 2, 2014.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 347.

⁶³⁵ See, for example: Letter from Cyrus Adler to Harry Schneiderman, December 7, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 15, File 7.

the result of making the picture, unjust and offensive though it be, less liable to excite animosity against the Jewish people.”⁶³⁶

The AJC claimed the credit for bringing about the modifications to the film because the most significant changes that were ultimately made were put forward by its representative, Rabbi David de Sola Pool. Rabbi de Sola Pool had attended the private screening for Jewish leaders, and afterwards he submitted a short report to the AJC outlining suggested changes that could “eliminate features which most gratuitously and most openly foment anti-Jewish prejudice.”⁶³⁷ De Sola Pool suggested the addition of “verbal inserts” (by which he meant “intertitles” or short texts appearing on screen) into the film to provide greater historical context to the audience. The Rabbi believed these inserts should make it clear that Caiaphas “was unrepresentative of his people,” “not the chosen priest of the Jewish people but the corrupt political appointee of the Roman governor,” and “a degenerate perverter of the holy traditions of Jesus’ chosen people.”

The aim of these inserts was to distinguish the high priest from the masses of Jews and identify him as the chief villain in the story. De Sola Pool wanted the inserts to so “squarely” place the blame on Caiaphas “that even the tired business man and the flapper will appreciate the point.”⁶³⁸ The Rabbi also suggested that edits (or “cuts”) be made to the scenes of the chanting Jewish mob: “There is no reason for wantonly and repetitively dwelling on the scene of the mob

⁶³⁶ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 2, 2014.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 347.

⁶³⁷ The short report was composed in the form of a letter from the Rabbi to Louis Marshall. See: Letter from Rabbi David de Sola Pool to Louis Marshall, December 23, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 15, File 7.

⁶³⁸ Letter from Rabbi David de Sola Pool to Louis Marshall, December 23, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 15, File 7.

crying ‘Crucify him.’ A short and judicious cut... would help remove the impression, which is as false to history as it is to psychology, that the Jews of Jerusalem were a lynching mob.”⁶³⁹

The elements of the film that de Sola Pool found most offensive would have been noticed by other Jewish leaders who were present at the private screening (and probably by any Jew who watched the film). Based on the available records, it is difficult to judge if the credit that the AJC claimed for the changes to the film appropriately reflect the impact of the Committee’s intervention or was just posturing in the ongoing rivalry between the AJC and other elements of American Jewish leadership.

The Committee claimed the credit, but the organization itself recognized that the compromise with the producers had only been a modest success.⁶⁴⁰ Ohad-Karny notes that the “agreement did not restore quiet.”⁶⁴¹ Jewish newspapers continued to warn of the potential danger posed by the film as revised film prints toured the country. Ultimately, the cuts that were made to the film did not remove all the inflammatory material and, it must be noted, the film was a huge box office success.⁶⁴²

From the perspective of the history of the AJC’s involvement in public advocacy and communal defense, the significance of this episode lies in the Committee’s recognition of the potential impact of mass media to spread “anti-Jewish feeling,” and in its decision to address the

⁶³⁹ De Sola Pool’s report also briefly describes why his suggestions would make the scene better, not just less inflammatory: “[One] scene and no more of the excited mob, followed by Pilate’s washing his hands would be both dramatically finer and less likely to produce hatred and even the shedding of blood of Jews of our day.” See: Letter from Rabbi David de Sola Pool to Louis Marshall, December 23, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 15, File 7.

⁶⁴⁰ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 2, 2014.
http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 347.

⁶⁴¹ Ohad-Karny, 195.

⁶⁴² According to Ohad-Karny, the film “became the tenth most popular movie made in the United States during the 1920s (the third in 1927).” See: Ohad-Karny, 192. The *New York Times Film Review* claimed that, between 1927 and 1928, “800,000,000 people viewed the film around the world.” See: Ohad-Karny, 205n.

concern generated by the film *The King of Kings* through negotiations with content producers. Once again, this illustrates the AJC's commitment to a quiet approach to advocacy and communal defense. The significance of this episode also lies in the Committee's decision to accept a moderate outcome to the problem. The Committee was able to secure changes to the most inflammatory material, and persisted in the view that to agitate through public demonstrations for greater censorship, or the banning of the film, would have generated greater controversy and unwanted attention. The AJC's leaders claimed credit for a success, and, it must be noted, there were no reports of screenings leading to outbreaks of violence against Jews in the United States.

Concern by AJC leaders over dramatizations of the execution of Christ resurfaced several years after the release of *The King of Kings* when rumours began to circulate that American producers, including well-known Jewish producers, were planning to finance national tours of the Oberammergau and Freiburg Passion Plays in the United States. These large scale dramatizations of the final days of Jesus' life had been annually performed for centuries in Germany.⁶⁴³ The Oberammergau Passion Play, for example, was first staged in 1634, and since then, according to Avner Falk, "Jews have consistently been portrayed...as evil, bloodthirsty, murderous, and diabolical. It is [the Jews], not the Romans, who try, condemn, sentence to death, and executed Jesus" in the play.⁶⁴⁴ Beginning in the early-twentieth century, modified, scaled-down versions of the German passion plays, as well as domestically produced passion plays, began touring the United States. During this period, *Variety* and *Billboard* contained numerous

⁶⁴³ By the early-1920s, passion plays were being seen by hundreds of thousands every year in Germany, including some American tourists who travelled to Germany to attend the productions. See: "220,000 See Passion Play," *The Billboard*, September 2, 1922, 9.

⁶⁴⁴ Falk, 33.

announcements of upcoming American tours of both German and domestically produced passion plays.⁶⁴⁵

Although the passion plays that had been staged in the United States during the early-twentieth century were inflammatory against Jews, these productions did not generate any public expressions of concern from Jewish leaders until 1929 when a report published in *The Jewish Tribune* indicated that Otto H. Kahn, the German-born Jewish financier, and Morris Gest, an American Jew and theatrical producer, were planning to stage a full scale version of the Oberammergau Passion Play in America. The article stated that Kahn had made a special trip to Germany to personally arrange the American tour of the production. Upon publication of this story, Louis Marshall immediately became involved. Marshall sent a telegram to Kahn asking him to confirm or deny the rumour. Kahn replied he had “nothing to do with anybody’s plan to bring Oberammergau or any other passion play to America.”⁶⁴⁶

Kahn’s reply indicated that Marshall was free to publish this denial. As the rumour had generated significant controversy within American Jewry, it appears that Kahn was eager for Marshall to “set the public right” on his alleged role.⁶⁴⁷ Marshall gave the text of Kahn’s reply to *The Jewish Tribune*, which published it in full. In the reply, Kahn confirmed the rumour that Morris Gest was involved in staging the Freiburg Passion Play in America. The Freiburg production, which had been the family business of the Fassnacht family for almost two hundred years, and included one thousand actors and an orchestra of one hundred musicians, had already

⁶⁴⁵ See, for example: “‘Passion Play’ Players Here,” *Variety*, September 21, 1907, 2. See also: “‘Passion Play’ Players,” *Variety*, March 28, 1928, 5. See also: “Passion Play Bookings,” *The Billboard*, March 15, 1930, 7. The staging of passion plays was not an exclusively German phenomenon. Domestic productions were also staged in the United States during this period. See, for example: “Passion Play in Chicago,” *The Billboard*, January 31, 1925, 25. The Chicago-based cast included 350 actors, who rehearsed the production for more than a year.

⁶⁴⁶ “Kahn Denies Interest in Passion Play; Marshal Files Protest with Gest,” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

been touring in the mid-Western United States before Kahn's confirmation of Gest's involvement. The tour did not generate any protest from American Jewish groups until Gest's ties to the production were confirmed, which was a controversial connection because Gest was himself Jewish.

The controversy was heightened by further news that Gest planned to stage the production in New York City at the Hippodrome, a venue that could accommodate an audience of six thousand. The potential threat posed by a staging of the production so close to where the majority of American Jews lived aroused greater concern than the numerous productions which had toured through areas with relatively few Jewish residents. In the reply published in *The Jewish Tribune*, Otto Kahn stated that he had written to Morris Gest to protest his actions but had received no reply.

With a Jewish producer and a New York City venue, this production caused uproar within the American Jewish community. Jewish newspapers criticized Jewish participation in the production and, more broadly, warned about the potential consequences for American Jewry. For example, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism's Journal published a strong critique of Morris Gest and David Belasco, another Jewish producer who had been linked to the production: "Cannot something be done to curb the total irresponsibility of the these Jewish actor and producer folk who would, it seems, produce even anti-Semitic riot if it brought them publicity and profit."⁶⁴⁸ The same editorial warned about how the vivid depictions of the end of Jesus' life dramatized in the passion plays could provoke a potentially violent response from the audience: "The Passion Play has been known to arouse, by the very reason of the artistry and skill which

⁶⁴⁸ "Mr. Gest and Mr. Belasco, the S.A.J. Review," dated March 29, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

often go into its production, orgiastic hatred against the Jews.”⁶⁴⁹ The editorial also criticized the failure of Jewish leaders and ordinary American Jews to try and stop the production.

In response to the public outcry, Louis Marshall wrote directly to Morris Gest to protest the production and Gest’s involvement. The AJC also made an effort to get more information about the content of the Freiberg production. The Committee received a report written by Reverend Elias Newman, a Lutheran minister. Newman attended a showing of the Freiburg Passion Play in St. Paul’s, Minnesota, and compiled a report about the play’s content and potential impact on fostering anti-Semitism and efforts to build better relations between Christians and Jews in the United States. It is not clear for whom Newman created this brief report, although it is clear that it was compiled on behalf of a Christian organization or for a Christian audience.⁶⁵⁰ It is also unclear how the AJC managed to secure a copy. Neither Marshall’s letter to Gest nor Reverend Newman’s report were made public.

In his letter to Gest, Marshall asked for confirmation of his involvement in the production. Marshall stated: “I hope that this is not true, because I am confident that if this play is enacted it will, as plays of this kind always do, result in a recrudescence of anti-Semitism.”⁶⁵¹ Marshall’s letter also expressed concern that some Christians might be offended by the production as a “vulgarization of what they regard as sacred.”⁶⁵² He warned about the potential emotional power of passion plays and the how this might shape the attitudes of the audience. “The average theatregoer,” Marshall noted, “is emotional, does not possess an accurate historic

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁰ The report was likely compiled by Newman as part of his work with the The Zion Society for Israel in St. Paul’s, which was a proselytizing organization. Newman was born into a Jewish family but converted to Christianity.

⁶⁵¹ Letter from Mr. Marshall to Mr. Gest, April 2, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*

background, nor is he capable of differentiating between fact and fancy.”⁶⁵³ Marshall supports this assertion by mentioning that he was present at the private screening for Jewish leaders of *The King of Kings*, and recounted his own impressions about how audiences could react to the film: “I can very well understand from what I saw why it was that the immediate effect was to inspire hatred and detestation of the Jews of this day, of whom you are one, on the part of those unthinking people who were carried away by their own anger.”⁶⁵⁴ Marshall concluded by stating: “There are some subjects which are not for the stage, and nobody should know better than you that, whether this play is regarded as blasphemous or mischievous, it should never have been brought into an American environment. There are limitations even to what is called art.”⁶⁵⁵ The AJC’s President did not receive a reply from Gest.⁶⁵⁶

Reverend Elias Newman’s report on the staging of the Freiburg Passion Play in St. Paul’s was strongly critical of the content of the production. Newman objected to the representation of the crucifixion of Jesus as a contradiction of Christian doctrine and a false representation of history. Reverend Newman noted a number of errors in the content of the production: “I found it very largely a gross misrepresentation and caricature when compared with the New Testament account of our Lord’s passion.”⁶⁵⁷ He also identified a number of distortions in the play that he considered very serious and inflammatory against Jews, including the negative representation of

⁶⁵³ In his letter to Gest, Marshall references his own experiences growing up in Syracuse and, although he does not provide any specific examples, he mentions that anti-Semitic Easter sermons contributed to his mistreatment by his Christian classmates. See: Letter from Mr. Marshall to Mr. Gest, April 2, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁵⁴ In connection to the impact of *The King of Kings*, Marshall states in his letter that he received reports (“was informed of the comments”) about how audiences in different movie theatres responding to the film. See: Letter from Mr. Marshall to Mr. Gest, April 2, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁵⁵ Letter from Mr. Marshall to Mr. Gest, April 2, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁵⁶ Letter from Louis Marshall to David N. Mosessohn, April 8, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁵⁷ Report on the Passion Play by Rev. Elias Newman, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

the Sanhedrin, the positive representation of Pontius Pilate, and the fact that “Jewish characters recorded in the Gospel as friends of Jesus are neither seen nor heard on the stage.”⁶⁵⁸ Newman essentially described the production as blasphemous: “To my mind, the [Freiburg] Passion Play, instead of being a Scripture portrayal is a betrayal.”⁶⁵⁹ His account of the potential impact of the production emphasised that it could foster anti-Semitism in America, particularly if school aged children were exposed to the play. He concluded by stating that the Freiburg Passion Play “will not contribute towards a more or better Jewish appreciation of Christianity. It certainly will not be of much assistance in getting Christians to like Jews.”⁶⁶⁰

The AJC did decide to respond to the touring production of the Freiburg Passion Play; however, it chose a strategy that emphasized back-channel appeals to the producers or sponsors of the production over a campaign based on publicity or public outcry. Their strategy had some success but market forces had a greater effect on limiting the potential impact of the Freiburg Passion Play on the growth of anti-Semitism in the United States. In some cities, the production was a financial failure, especially in New York. A press account of the scheduled showings at the Hippodrome described the project as “ill-fated,” and shortly after it closed, Gest filed for bankruptcy.⁶⁶¹

The Freiburg Passion Play, however, continued to tour the United States. The AJC would be informed of scheduled showing by district members from areas across the country when local performances were publically announced. Instead of urging public protest against the performance, the AJC advised local Jewish leaders, including district members of the AJC and rabbis of nearby congregations, to meet with the local sponsors of the productions. According to

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶¹ “The Stage: Gest Free of Bankruptcy Will Pay \$600,000 Debts,” *The Billboard*, August 30, 1930, 14.

correspondence in the AJC's archives, "district members throughout the country [were] asked to watch for the appearance of this company with a view to endeavoring to prevent them from making engagements to produce their play."⁶⁶²

In many cases, the Freiburg Passion Play had been brought to a community by a local organization, including Church Groups and philanthropic organizations that sponsored the performances. The AJC "furnished Rabbis and others with literature" which they believed "helped [local leaders] in some cases to prevent the production."⁶⁶³ It is unclear what materials the AJC provided to local leaders, but correspondence between Morris Waldman, the AJC's Secretary, and local district members of the Committee indicates that, when meeting with the local sponsors, the Committee suggested that district members emphasize that the play contradicts Christian doctrine and was potentially dangerous to the security of local Jewish populations. In a telegram from Waldman to Edward Dato of Chicago, for example, Waldman mentioned Marshall's assessment that the play could "tend to revive anti-Semitism," and that Christian Minister John Haynes Holmes had maintained that the "play is silly gaudy melodramatic stuff a miserable perversion of the bible tale and base libel on Jews [and] that Christians not Jews should protest the production."⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶² Letter to George A. Newman, Unsigned, June 9, 1931, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ Telegram from Morris D. Waldman, Secretary of the American Jewish Committee, to Edward Dato, April 29, 1930, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11. Waldman referenced the same arguments from Marshall and Reverend John Haynes Holmes in a telegram to Nathan Cohn of Nashville, Tennessee, after the former wrote the AJC seeking advice about how to respond to the announcement of showings of the Freiburg Passion Play in his community. Waldman's telegram also mentioned that Kansas City's Chamber of Commerce declined to sponsor the production and that the showings had been prevented in other cities including Denver, Colorado. See: Telegram from Morris D. Waldman to Mr. Nathan Cohn, February 26, 1936, Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 9, 2014. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/F-74.PDF

The AJC's archives contain newspaper articles describing successful efforts to prevent productions of the Freiburg Passion Play, including lobbying carried out by a rabbi in Louisville, Kentucky.⁶⁶⁵ The archives also contain accounts of failed campaigns, including two occasions when the local sponsors agreed to cancel the performances then subsequently reversed their decision.⁶⁶⁶ There is also evidence of delegations of Jewish leaders persuading local sponsors that they should withdraw their support for the productions only to be disappointed when contractual obligations with venues and the production's managers made it impossible for the sponsors to cancel the performances.⁶⁶⁷ Finally, there is also evidence of cooperation between the AJC and B'nai B'rith's ADL in trying to persuade local sponsors of performances of the Freiburg Passion Play to withdraw their support.⁶⁶⁸ Both organizations adopted the strategy of quiet overtures to local sponsors and, despite the rivalry between the AJC and the ADL, the Secretaries of the two organizations coordinated these efforts.

As already noted, market forces had an impact on the potential influence of the American tour of the Freiburg Passion Play to intensify anti-Semitism in the United States. The production

⁶⁶⁵ "Rabbi Checks Effort of Passion Play to Invade Louisville Public Schools," copied from the *Jewish Daily Tribune*, Wednesday, February 5, 1930, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁶⁶ See: "Passion Play Will be Shown in Washington," and "Passion Play Not to Be Denied Use of Cincinnati Hall," American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁶⁷ In Nashville, Tennessee, for example, Nathan Cohn met with the local sponsors of the production, which was an "organization of women" that was staging the production as a philanthropic fundraiser for the benefit of the Nashville Old Women's Home. Cohn reported to Morris Waldman that the local leaders were able to persuade the Nashville sponsors of the dangers of the production. They only wished they had been informed about the potential problems sooner. In the presence of the Jewish delegation, the sponsors telephoned the production manager and "begged to be released from the contract." Cohn reported that the manager claimed that "things had gone too far and too much money had been spent for advertising...to permit them to release the women from the contract." Cohn assessed that the sponsors "were absolutely sincere, and if we had met them sooner, the Play would not have been given." He concludes by apologizing to Waldman for failing to stop the production: "Much regret our failure." See: Letter from Nathan Cohn to Mr. Morris D. Waldman, March 11, 1930, Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 9, 2014.
http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/F-74.PDF

⁶⁶⁸ Letter from I.M. Rubinow, Secretary of the ADL, to Morris D. Waldman, Secretary of the AJC, December 29, 1929, Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 9, 2014.
http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/freiburg3.pdf

was staged in cities throughout the East Coast and Mid-West, but it was not a theatrical sensation. In some cases, the production was a total failure and performances were cancelled due to low ticket sales.⁶⁶⁹ More importantly, the purported emotional response provoked by the production, which was a source of great concern for American Jewish leaders, did not materialize *en masse*. There is no evidence that the play had this kind of emotional impact on ordinary Americans. In fact, the AJC began receiving reports relatively early during the tour that audiences were not having an excessive emotional response to the production.⁶⁷⁰

The leaders of the AJC were afraid of the potential for the Freiburg Passion Play to incite anti-Jewish feeling, but their response was moderate. They declined to try to stop the production through judicial intervention or public protest, possibly because both recourses could have failed and certainly would have garnered criticisms as attempts to censor the arts or suppress public exhibitions of Christian religious beliefs. The quiet overture, in this case to local sponsors of the production, was a tactic that became a mainstay for the AJC in the fight against anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish incitement in the United States during the twentieth century.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ See: "Outdoors: Passion Play Closes," *Variety*, July 30, 1930, 107. See also: "'Passion Play' Broke," *Variety*, September 11, 1929, 58.

⁶⁷⁰ For example, Morris Waldman references a review by a Catholic writer who reported that "witnesses to the great spectacle of the ages left theater as cold and worldly as when they entered and that Passion Play... does not produce spiritual effect." See: Telegram from Morris D. Waldman, Secretary of the American Jewish Committee, to Edward Dato, April 29, 1930, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

⁶⁷¹ The AJC used the same tactic when a film distribution company, which also happened to be owned by American Jews, began distributing a silent film of a staging of the Freiburg Passion Play in movie theaters in the United States. Once again, showings were brought to the attention of the AJC through correspondence from local Jewish leaders after screenings were announced. The AJC asked for more information about how Jews were represented in the production and counselled local leaders to meet with theatre managers to discuss the potential dangers of the production. The AJC also received reports that the film, though containing caricatured portrayals of Jews, was not evoking an excessive emotional response from audience. They also received reports that interest in the film was limited. From the correspondence on the film in the AJC archives, it is clear that local Jewish leaders were reluctant to claim any credit when showings of the film were cancelled due to poor ticket sales. See: Letter from Philip L. Bernstein to Harry Schneiderman, March 21, 1931, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 16, File 11.

Similarly, the Committee used quiet overtures to address how the crucifixion, and Jewish involvement in the crucifixion, was described in text books. There was no way for the AJC to exercise any influence on how Jesus' death was described by Christian parents to their children; however, how this material was presented to children in public schools was another matter. In early 1928, Louis Marshall received a letter from Harry Bester, an insurance salesman, whose daughter was a public school student in New Jersey. Bester's letter expressed concern about how the crucifixion was presented in V.H. Hillyer's *A Child's History of the World*, his daughter's textbook.⁶⁷² Bester also included with the letter a copy of the section he found most troubling: "Pilate did not believe much in what the Jews said against Christ. It was a small matter to him...But he wanted to please the Jews, so he told them to go ahead and put Christ to death if they wanted to. So He was crucified."⁶⁷³

Marshall immediately replied. He thanked Bester for bringing this matter to his attention, and informed him that he intended to write directly to the publishers of Hillyer's book: "I am writing the publishers to take exception to the issuance of this kind of literature, which has a very pernicious effect when placed in the hands of children who are unable to discriminate between what is and what is not."⁶⁷⁴ On the same day, Marshall composed a lengthy letter of protest to W. Morgan Shuster, the President of the Century Company. The letter was a strong condemnation of the offending passages, and included criticism based on errors in history, errors in theology, and failure to appreciate the potential repercussions of the text.⁶⁷⁵ Marshall wrote: "To my mind the

⁶⁷² Letter from Harry Bester to Louis Marshall, January 23, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷³ Excerpt, Chapter 35 of V.M. Hillyer's *A Child's History of the World*, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷⁴ Letter from Louis Marshall to Harry Bester, January 23, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷⁵ In the letter to Shuster, Marshall dismantled Hillyer's account of the crucifixion: "But without getting into theology, let me call attention to the further fact that the Jews did not crucify Christ; that Pilate did not tell the Jews

passages to which I have referred are conducive to the creation of prejudice in the immature minds of children...Reading this excerpt...gives the impression to children, even to adults, that the Jews were cruel and murderous and actually crucified one whom the large majority of Americans revere.”⁶⁷⁶

Marshall received a reply from Shuster two weeks later.⁶⁷⁷ The letter indicates that Hillyer was already in the process of revising the offending sections, and included copies of correspondence between Hillyer, who in addition to being a textbook author was also the Head Master of the Calvert School in Baltimore, and Lyman B. Sturgis, the Century Company’s chief book editor, regarding changes to the text. Marshall was appreciative of how Shuster responded to his protest, and respected how the publisher had chosen to handle the matter.⁶⁷⁸ It must be noted that Marshall was not happy with the first round of Hillyer’s proposed changes to the text, but, ultimately, the passages were revised in a way that was acceptable to the AJC, including changes that clarified that only a certain faction of Jews called for Christ to be executed, and that it was the Romans, not the Jews, who actually carried out the execution.⁶⁷⁹

to put him to death if they desired to do so; that he was tried before Pilate and was condemned by him; that crucifixion was a form of execution which was unknown to Jewish jurisprudence, but was essentially a Roman form of punishment; that as a matter of fact capital punishment was at that time rarely put into effect by the Jews.” See: Letter from Louis Marshall to W. Morgan Shuster, January 23, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷⁶ Letter from Louis Marshall to W. Morgan Shuster, January 23, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷⁷ Letter from W. Morgan Shuster to Louis Marshall, February 14, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷⁸ Letter from Louis Marshall to Reverend Dr. H.G. Enelow, February 15, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19.

⁶⁷⁹ Letter from V. M. Hillyer to Lyman B. Sturgis, February 9, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 19. It took a considerable amount of correspondence between a number of parties, including rabbis, ministers, editors, publishers, and communal leaders to negotiate or shape the revisions that were ultimately made to the text book. For more, see the contents of Box 6, File 19 of the American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32.

Marshall's intervention concerning the content of *A Child's History of the World* was not the last attempt by leaders of the AJC to have more favorable (or less inflammatory) accounts of the role of Jews in Jesus' execution presented to the American people, particularly to American children in both public and religious schools.⁶⁸⁰ It was also not the last time the AJC tried to lobby publishers to remove offensive or inflammatory content from their products.⁶⁸¹ Beginning in 1930, the AJC began a long term project to study the content of Christian religious school text books from all denominations across the United States. The AJC commissioned Dr. H.S. Linfield, a rabbi, statistician, and director of the AJC's Bureau of Jewish Social Research, to "institute a preliminary inquiry into the pedagogic and liturgic [sic] literature of the various [Christian] denominations with a view to discovering aspersions and distorted references to the

⁶⁸⁰ Louis Marshall opposed the idea of trying to use constitutional litigation to prevent the reading of the Bible, including both the New and Old Testament, in public schools: "Personally I believe that it would not do our Jewish children a bit of harm to hear the important parts of the Bible read...Of course we must preserve religious liberty. We cannot permit our schools to be used by bigots and fanatics for denominational propaganda. We must not permit readings which give offense to the parents of Catholic or Jewish children. My thought is that some way should be found on which all interested persons can agree, whereby sound objections to the reading of certain portions of the Bible may be overcome and the advantage of familiarizing the youth of this country with the noblest ethical teachings that the world has yet known may be secured." See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Alfred Benjamin, October 6, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 10. In this letter, Marshall mentions the reading on Good Friday, which provides an account of the crucifixion of Jesus, as one of the objectionable passages of the Bible, and relays his own experience about how it felt to have to listen to this story as a young boy. Marshall's position on Bible readings in public schools contrasts sharply with the advocacy of other high profile Jewish organizations, including the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

⁶⁸¹ For example, in 1923, Louis Marshall contacted William J. Cox, the President of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, to complain about several revisions to the 1922 edition of the set. In particular, Marshall drew attention to the entry on "Poland," which includes a discussion of "the Jewish Question in Poland." Marshall found the entry to be "most offensive in tone and in every way contrary to the facts." Marshall chastises Cox for publishing errors and for failing to realize the implications of impugning the patriotism of a vulnerable minority community: "I did not suppose that the Encyclopedia would lend itself to partisan propaganda, and especially of such a nature as to threaten the safety, security, and happiness of several millions of people, who, so far as their character and patriotism is concerned, are in every way the equals of any part [sic] of the population of Poland...Kindly let me know what, if anything, can or will be done to minimize the injury that may be anticipated from the publication to which I have referred." Marshall also condemned the publication's hiring of Nicholas Jorga, an anti-Semite and professor at the University of Bucharest, to write the entry on "Roumania." See: Letter from Louis Marshall to William J. Cox, April 6, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 14. It was Harry Schneiderman who brought the offending passages in the Encyclopedia to Louis Marshall's attention. See: Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Louis Marshall, April 5, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 3, File 14.

Jews.”⁶⁸² The study was undertaken with the purpose of presenting the findings to school boards and church schools, and, hopefully, bring about curriculum reform. Morris Waldman described the project as an effort to “sterilize the soil of anti-Semitism,” meaning that, over the long term, anti-Semitism in the United States would decline because American children would not be regularly exposed to one of the most durable historical sources of antagonism towards Jews.⁶⁸³ The AJC’s leadership, including Julius Rosenwald, were enthusiastic about the project.

The preliminary inquiry, however, failed to uncover objectionable material. Dr. Linfield reported that “after a number of months...he had failed to discover any offensive references.”⁶⁸⁴ The leaders of the AJC were not satisfied that Linfield’s preliminary inquiry accurately reflected how Jewish participation in the execution of Jesus was being taught to American children. As a next step, the AJC secured subscriptions to several “Christian pedagogic journals with a view to keeping tab on the situation.”⁶⁸⁵ Again, no offensive or inflammatory material was uncovered.

The AJC did not abandon the project. Waldman arranged a meeting with Reverend Everett Clinchy, the founder of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, to get his opinion and support for the project. Harry Schneiderman, Waldman’s deputy, also attended the meeting. Clinchy reported that he was already in possession of objectionable material and that he believed that “it would be highly desirable for a study of this kind to be made.”⁶⁸⁶ The Reverend also believed that, after the results were compiled, school boards would not be “impervious to suggestions” regarding curriculum reform.⁶⁸⁷ At this point, consideration of the optics of the project entered the discussion. Waldman was concerned that exposure of the involvement of

⁶⁸² Letter from Morris Waldman to Cyrus Adler, May 22, 1930, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 12.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Jewish communal leaders in this type of research could cause significant harm, engendering hostility from Christian leaders, laymen, and the general public, and undermining the project's long-term objectives.

Waldman suggested to Clinchy that “some scholarly young Christian prosecute” the study under Clinchy’s direction, and that the AJC, as a silent partner, would finance the project.⁶⁸⁸ Waldman hoped that the AJC’s involvement would “not be disclosed.”⁶⁸⁹ From the perspective of optics, Waldman hoped that Clinchy’s organization would “appear to be doing this [study] on their own initiative.”⁶⁹⁰ In a letter to Cyrus Adler, Waldman expressed his enthusiasm for the project and optimism about its long-term impact: “I feel very keenly that in undertaking this, we have the opportunity of doing something of great and lasting benefit even though the benefit will not be realized in our generation. I have been amazed at times...at the misconceptions entertained by well-meaning non-Jews which can be traced to the Sunday school lessons of their childhood.”⁶⁹¹

Professor James V. Thompson, the Dean of the School of Religious Education at the Drew Theological Seminary in New Jersey, was charged with undertaking the project.⁶⁹² With the AJC’s financial support, Thompson’s work developed from narrowly studying Christian liturgical material to creating new educational material and studies of the effectiveness of religious pedagogical practices.⁶⁹³ The most significant achievements and innovations of

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹² Letter from Morris D. Waldman to the Members of the Executive Committee, April 1, 1935, Letter from Morris Waldman to Cyrus Adler, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 12.

⁶⁹³ For a short report written by Professor Thompson describing the nature of his studies, including a pilot project involving the use of educational materials created by the “Drew Research Group,” see: Copy of a Letter from Prof. James V. Thompson, Dean of School of Religious Education, Drew Theological Seminary to Morris D. Waldman,

Thompson's work occurred after the period covered by this study. The concern of AJC leaders about the optics of the project illustrates that the Committee recognized that, while they believed their goals were noble, concerns about the general public's perception of their efforts could not be dismissed.

In the AJC's work regarding the inflammatory material in Christian doctrine, including dramatic presentations of this material, the Committee chose quiet approaches over public agitation. The Committee's leaders privileged a long-term view, and took steps to ensure that their advocacy did not itself become a cause of further anti-Jewish incitement. They saw America as a permanent home for its Jewish citizens and considered both the short-term optics and multi-generational impact of their efforts.

“The words ‘Jew’ and ‘Communist’”

The alleged link between Jews and the spread of Communism was a significant concern for the leaders of the American Jewish Committee. In his book *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Party Elite*, Harvey E. Klehr notes that “the words ‘Jew’ and ‘communist’ have frequently been linked in the minds of the American public.”⁶⁹⁴ During the twentieth century, the association of Jews with the spread of Communism around the world, and the disproportionately prominent role Jews played in the leadership of Communists

March 21, 1935, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 12.

⁶⁹⁴ Harvey E. Klehr, *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Party Elite* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 37.

parties, including the American Communist Party, was a source of anti-Semitism in the United States that American Jewish leadership organizations felt compelled to counter.⁶⁹⁵

From a public relations perspective, any attempt to undermine the impression among the general public that Jews were closely connected with Communism was complicated by a number of inconvenient facts, not the least of which was the family background of Karl Marx. “The trouble with the accusation of Jewish Communism,” according to Arthur Hertzberg, “was that it had just sufficient truth in it to make the tale plausible to Jew-haters. Though Communism was never a strong force in America...Jews were very prominent in the movement.”⁶⁹⁶ American Jews, including Benjamin Gitlow, Bertram D. Wolfe, and William Weinstone, were among the foremost leaders of the Communist movement in the United States; however, Communist leaders of Jewish origin were even more prominent outside of the United States, most notably within the early leadership cadres of the Soviet Union. “Three of the six members of Lenin’s first Politburo—[Leon] Trotsky, [Lev] Kamenev, and [Grigory] Zinoviev—were of Jewish origin.”⁶⁹⁷

Jewish participation in both domestic and overseas Communist parties did not go unnoticed by the American people. American anti-Semites and proponents of immigration restrictions, including Henry Ford through the *Dearborn Independent*, emphasised the role of Jews in abetting the spread of Communism. They did so to further their own xenophobic or anti-Semitic agendas. The publication of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the United States exacerbated the American people’s association of Jews with radical movements and conspiracy theories. “The more common the notion of Communism-as-Jewish conspiracy became, the more

⁶⁹⁵ For an account of how American Jewish organizations responded to Communism and the Red Scare in the United States, see: Aviva Weingarten, *Jewish Organizations’ Response to Communism and to Senator McCarthy* (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

⁶⁹⁶ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: a History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 229

⁶⁹⁷ Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 30.

fervently organizations such as the American Jewish Committee...worked to dissociate Jews from Communism.”⁶⁹⁸ According to historian André Gerrits, the “myth of Jewish Communism reached such grand proportions...that despite the sensitive nature of the issue and the risks involved, the American Jewish Committee found it necessary to publically and officially denounce the idea of a Jewish world conspiracy.”⁶⁹⁹ In his *The Myth of Jewish Communism: A Historical Interpretation*, Gerrits provides a brief summary of the AJC’s decision to become more active in efforts to undermine the American public’s association of Jews with Communism. Gerrits notes that “the overrepresentation of Jews within the Communist Party of the United States would force the AJC to repeatedly return to the issue throughout the [1920s].”⁷⁰⁰

The leaders of the AJC first discussed developing a strategy to combat’s the public’s impression of a close association between Jews and Communism during a meeting of the Executive Committee on September 24, 1918.⁷⁰¹ This first discussion centered on how the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the ongoing Russian Civil War might impact the imperiled communities of Russian Jews caught on the frontlines of the fighting. The members of the Committee also discussed the likelihood that Russian Jewish communities could be targeted for reprisal attacks by reactionaries because of the perception among the Russian people that the Bolsheviks were led by Jews.

From the beginning, the AJC believed that developments in the Russian Civil War would shape how Jews around the world were perceived. The minutes of the Executive Committee’s

⁶⁹⁸ Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 63.

⁶⁹⁹ André Gerrits, *The Myth of Jewish Communism: A Historical Interpretation* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang S.A., 2009), 96. Gerrits provides only a brief, less than one page, account of the AJC’s decision to try to undermine the impression of a fundamental link between Jews and Communism. See: Gerrits, 96.

⁷⁰⁰ Gerrits, 96.

⁷⁰¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on September 24, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 7, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16466>.

meeting provide the following summary of the AJC's leaders' discussion: "[It] is doubtless true that the Jews of Russia as a body are not in sympathy with the present Bolsheviki regime. A large number of the conspicuous leaders of that Party are, however, undoubtedly Jews and known to be so throughout the world. This fact has given rise to the belief that the Jews of Russia are the head and front of the Bolsheviki movement, which belief is bound to react unfavorably against not only the Jews of Russia but also against Jews everywhere."⁷⁰² The Committee noted that a backlash against Jews was already taking shape in Russia: "Significant symptoms of this reaction can already be discerned."⁷⁰³ Although the leaders of the AJC were certainly concerned about the potential outbreak of another round of anti-Jewish violence in Russia, they were also anxious about how events in Russia would shape the American public's perception of American Jews. They discussed a number of options to counter the bad optics caused by the disproportionate number of Jews among communist leaders, including starting a "publicity campaign...in order to give the [American] public the facts about the Russian situation."⁷⁰⁴ The Committee also debated releasing a public statement that emphasized that "while some of the leaders of the Bolsheviki are Jews, the rank and file of the Jews of Russia are completely out of sympathy with the Bolshevik doctrines."⁷⁰⁵

At the end of this first discussion, the Executive Committee established a subcommittee composed of Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler, and Oscar Straus to formulate the organization's advocacy on this problematic issue. This "special committee" was also empowered to finance its work using money from the AJC's Emergency Trust Fund.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

During a meeting of the Executive Committee two months later, Adler reported on a conversation between himself and “several influential representatives of the press and other leaders of public opinion in Philadelphia.”⁷⁰⁷ These leaders advised Adler that something should be done to counter the impression of a connection between Jews and radicalism in the United States. Socialist groups had staged mass demonstrations in both Philadelphia and New York City during the previous month. Rumours were circulating that counter-protests were being organized, and Alder was warned “that political protest in a violent form against these radicals and that their identity with the Jews may become so apparent that a wave of anti-Jewish agitation may result.”⁷⁰⁸

Although there is no record of who Adler spoke with in Philadelphia, the conversation clearly left a strong impression on him. At the Executive Committee meeting on December 9, 1918, Adler “suggested that a decisive step should be taken by the Committee to clarify public opinion with regard to the relationship of the Jews to that species of radicalism...called Bolshevism.”⁷⁰⁹ During the meeting, Adler put forward a proposed draft of the statement: “[The] tenets of the Jewish faith and the traditions of Judaism are diametrically opposed to what appear to be the cardinal principles of Bolshevism namely, confiscation of private property, and the undermining of the sanctity of family life at[sic] the denial of individual liberty.”⁷¹⁰

The Executive Committee resolved to prepare a public statement along the lines suggested by Adler;⁷¹¹ however, the statement was not released until three months later. There is nothing in the AJC archives that explains why the organization’s leaders chose to delay the

⁷⁰⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 9, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 7, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16466>.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*

release, but they may have been waiting to issue the statement as a response to a high-profile provocation.

Ultimately, the statement was published in the aftermath of the appearance of Doctor George S. Simons, a Methodist Minister, before a special sub-committee of the United States Senate Judiciary Committee. The Senate sub-committee had been charged with investigating Bolshevism in both Russia and the United States. In his testimony, Simons highlighted the participation of Jews in the Bolshevik movement and leadership, and declared that there was a link between Jewish social and political activists on the East Side of Manhattan and the revolutionaries in Russia. Simons testified “that the Bolshevik movement in Russia was supported financially and morally by certain elements on the East Side of New York City.”⁷¹²

The AJC released its statement as a reply to Simons’ allegations. The statement was drafted by Marshall and appeared in the *New York Times* on February 15, 1919.⁷¹³ Marshall described Simons’ testimony as “ridiculous.”⁷¹⁴ The statement emphasised that Jewish doctrine cannot be reconciled with Communism, and that American Jews are patriotic, law abiding, and had distinguished themselves in military service. Marshall also dismissed the notion that the ancestry of prominent Communists leaders reflected in any way the character and patriotism of American Jews. Marshall wrote:

⁷¹² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 16, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16467>.

⁷¹³ Louis Marshall, “Says Mass of Jews Oppose Bolsheviki: Louis Marshall, Head of American Jewish Committee, Replies to Dr. Simons: East Side Not a Hotbed,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 1919, 16. A second statement, which was a different text but relied on the same arguments as *The New York Times* article, was released in the form of letter to the editor of the Morristown, New Jersey newspaper, *The Journeyman*. See: Louis Marshall, “Other Side of the Shield,” February 14, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 17.

⁷¹⁴ Louis Marshall, “Says Mass of Jews Oppose Bolsheviki: Louis Marshall, Head of American Jewish Committee, Replies to Dr. Simons: East Side Not a Hotbed,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 1919, 16.

I could go to Ossining [the site of the State Prison at Sing Sing] tomorrow and prepare from the records there a list of criminals who may happen to be of English, French, Italian, or Slavonik parentage or who may belong to the Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, or Catholic churches and seek to deduce from such lists conclusions derogatory of the nationality or of the church to which they belong with as much reason as Dr. Simons has to deduce from his list the conclusion which he is apparently seeking to inculcate.⁷¹⁵

In the public statement, the record of Jewish military service during the First World War was seized upon by Marshall as crucial evidence of the patriotism of American Jews. Marshall used the statement to announce that an honor roll of Jews who served in the American military during the First World War, including a list of those who had been killed in combat or been awarded medals, was in the process of being compiled: “I expect shortly to supply an authentic list of all the men who served under the colors, so as to present to our maligners irrefragable proof that the Jews have furnished in proportion to their numbers a larger quota to our military and naval forces than any other part of our population.”⁷¹⁶ As will be discussed in the Chapter 7 of this study, the compilation of this honor role was one of the largest and most expensive research projects that the AJC financed during the early history of the organization. The honor roll project was one of the first attempts by the AJC to expand the organization’s infrastructure beyond the Executive Committee, and its Secretary and Assistant Secretary, and to improve the organization’s ability to engage in effective public advocacy. The AJC began as a small group of leaders who personally carried out all the organization’s work but the scope of the responsibility they had taken on required more resources and more staff and, as will be seen, the organization gradually grew and reorganized to meet new challenges and launch new projects.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Marshall's public statement and the honor roll project were exceptions to the manner in which the first generation of AJC leaders preferred to combat the alleged connection between Jews and Communism. Their preference had been for quiet diplomacy and the silent treatment; greater discussion meant greater attention, and greater attention could lend credibility to the allegations. Numerous provocations were ignored, and, in comparison to the voluminous amounts of written materials that the AJC produced to further its agenda on other issues, the Committee published significantly less material designed to undermine the link between Jews and Communism before the 1930s.⁷¹⁷

It should be noted that, during this period, the general public's perception of Jews as Communists was a major concern of the Committee's leaders, but the AJC was arguably more preoccupied with publically countering the slanderous conspiracy theories expressed in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in which the link between Jews and the spread of Communism was only one aspect of a broader effort toward global hegemony. As will be discussed Chapter 7, the AJC's early forays into publishing books and pamphlets was influenced more by their concerns about the distribution of the *Protocols* than the supposed ties between Jews and Communism. It was not until the mid-1930s that the AJC felt the need to publically intervene more regularly and more broadly in an effort to disassociate Jews from Communism.⁷¹⁸ Between 1906 and 1929, however, the AJC used a number of different and quieter approaches to prevent

⁷¹⁷ During the period covered by this study, the AJC's Executive Committee only once decided to subsidize a publication that was specifically intended to repudiate the idea that Bolshevism was a Jewish movement. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 13, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>. It should be noted, however, that the material the organization produced to challenge the claims made in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* of an international Jewish conspiracy would have also served to undermine the link between Jews and Communism or Jews and Bolshevism.

⁷¹⁸ For a discussion of the factors which led the AJC to become more involved in trying to undermine the general public's association of Jews with Communism during the 1930s, see: Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 211-217.

the general American public from viewing Jews as Communists. The AJC always took this matter very seriously.⁷¹⁹

Although the AJC responded publically to Simons' allegations, the organization declined to respond to numerous other provocative statements that linked Jews with Communism or radicalism. For example, less than a year after the release of Marshall's statement, the Committee debated whether to publically challenge allegations that had first appeared in the *London Times* that described ties between American Jewish financiers and Leon Trotsky. Cyrus Adler was of the view that the Committee should challenge the *Times*' editor to reveal the source of this information. The Committee, however, declined to make that challenge. The minutes of the Executive Committee's meeting recorded that the AJC's leadership "deemed such action inadvisable" without providing any specifics as to the logic of this decision.⁷²⁰

Similarly, in early 1920, the McClure Newspaper Syndicate distributed an article entitled "Mopping up Bolshevism" by Major Robert Davis, a member of the American Red Cross' Commission on South Russia. In his article, Davis alleged that Bolshevism was a Jewish conspiracy designed to allow the Jewish minority in Russia to exploit the labor of the Russian majority. During the Executive Committee's discussion of this article, Harry Schneiderman warned that the article was potentially dangerous because it sought to convey the impression that

⁷¹⁹ Long before the organization's broader interventions during the 1930s, the AJC began gathering information that might someday be useful in its efforts to undermine the perception of a link between Jews and Communism. For example, the AJC's archives contains a copy of a forty-four page report prepared by a diplomat in the British Foreign Office on the question of why Jews were disproportionately prominent among revolutionary leaders. The archives contain no information as to how the AJC managed to get this copy. See: "Influence of Jews, as a whole, in Revolutionary Movements," January 17, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 17.

⁷²⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 16, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

Bolshevism was not only a “Russian problem [but] is really a Jewish problem.”⁷²¹ The AJC’s leadership declined to respond to the article.

The AJC’s concerns about avoiding publicity meant that the organization was deliberative about the number and nature of the public statements it made that aimed to negate the general public’s association of Jews with Communism. The organization did, however, employ quieter approaches to undermine this perception, making financial contributions to support the work of other advocacy groups, including a twenty-five thousand dollar donation in 1922 to a group called the Conference of the Members of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. This organization, which was headquartered in Paris, was established to restore democratic government in Russia.

In late 1921, the AJC received a letter from Paul N. Miliukoff soliciting funds for this organization to help it finance a publicity campaign to counter its opponents’ propaganda. Although many of the leaders of the AJC were very wealthy men, twenty-five thousand dollars was a substantial sum, particularly for a political donation. At the time, it was the largest single donation the Committee had ever considered, made more dramatic when juxtaposed against the AJC’s 1922 budget, which was only ten thousand dollars, and with the twenty-one thousand dollars the organization raised through fundraising that year.⁷²² The funds for the donation were appropriated from the organization’s Emergency Trust Fund.⁷²³

⁷²¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on March 4, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

⁷²² Fourteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1921_1922_7_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 364.

⁷²³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 11, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16472>.

The AJC's decision to donate to this group was not without internal controversy. Only a month after the leadership resolved to make the contribution, Julius Rosenwald moved that the matter be reopened.⁷²⁴ However, further discussion of the issue, during the February 12, 1922 meeting of the Executive Committee, did not resolve the issue.⁷²⁵ Based on the limited available evidence, it appears that Rosenwald and Judge Horace Stern, another member of the AJC's Executive Committee, were opposed to the donation.⁷²⁶ It was again discussed a month later when Marshall read letters from AJC leaders Henry Sliosberg and Claude G. Montefiore that urged the Committee to support the All-Russian Constituent Assembly's efforts.⁷²⁷ The issue was finally resolved in April 1922, when the leaders voted to proceed with the donation.⁷²⁸

It is not clear what the leaders of the AJC hoped to achieve through this substantial donation. Despite the unprecedented amount, the minutes of the leaders' deliberations provide no insight into why some members of the Committee wanted to support the efforts of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly or why at least two leaders were opposed. Theoretically, the restoration of democratic government in Russia could have improved conditions for Russian Jews; however, better conditions for Jews would not have inevitably followed. One possibility is that the leaders of the AJC believed that the fall of the communist regime would have eliminated

⁷²⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 14, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16473>.

⁷²⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 12, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16473>.

⁷²⁶ Judge Horace Stern introduced a separate motion to reconsider the donation during the February 12, 1922 meeting of the Executive Committee. Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 12, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16473>.

⁷²⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 12, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16473>.

⁷²⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 8, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16473>.

a key piece of propaganda used by anti-Semites to substantiate allegations of an international Jewish conspiracy to support radicalism or to control the world's governments or economies. There is no evidence to substantiate either of these theories as to why the AJC made this donation, but the substantial figure suggests that the leaders of the AJC at least believed that the All-Russian Constituent Assembly would have meaningfully furthered the Committee's agenda.

The AJC also collaborated with other Jewish organizations to ensure that public statements about Russia, or rebuttals to accusations of disproportionate Jewish radicalism, did not tarnish (or further tarnish) the American public's perception of the political views and patriotism of American Jews. Some Jewish organizations sought the Committee's advice before issuing public statements about the situation in Russia. For example, in May 1923, the Committee received letters from Rabbi E. N. Calisch, the President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and Rabbi Elias N. Solomon, the President of the United Synagogue of America, asking for the Committee's guidance in drafting a public statement about religious persecution in the Soviet Union, which in the early days of the Soviet Union was not limited to attacks against Russian Jews. Calisch and Solomon wanted their organizations to adopt resolutions and issue public statements "disavowing the allegation that Jewish influence in the Soviet Government [was] responsible" for the ongoing repression of all religions in the Soviet state.⁷²⁹

The leaders of the AJC supported Calisch and Solomon's idea, but the advice they provided reveals the Committee's understanding of optics. The minutes of the Executive Committee's meeting on May 27, 1923 record that the AJC's leaders resolved "that the

⁷²⁹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on May 27, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 9, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16475>.

Chairman advise both Rabbi Calisch and Rabbi Solomon [that] the Committee saw no objection to the adoption of a resolution protesting against the persecution of religious bodies in Russia but making no reference to the allegation of Jewish responsibility.”⁷³⁰

The AJC was trying to avoid any conflation of Jewish leadership and Communism or Jewish responsibility for religious persecution in the Soviet Union. All religious groups were being targeted in the Soviet Union, albeit in varying degrees, but, due to the disproportionate number of Jews among the Soviet leadership and the American public’s awareness of this inconvenient fact, there was risk in drawing the public’s attention to the background of the leaders who were allegedly responsible for any religious oppression. The message the leaders of the AJC wanted to convey was that religious persecution in the Soviet Union was wrong, as opposed to the message that Russian Jews were not responsible for religious persecution in the Soviet Union. The distinction between these two statements is crucial. The former conveyed a general condemnation that was fundamentally compatible with American constitutional law and mainstream American political culture; the latter was defensive in tone, and, further, there was publically available information about the background of Soviet leaders that could be used to rebut this proposition. The minutes of the meeting also record that Marshall was going to offer his help to Rabbis Calisch and Solomon in the drafting of their resolutions and public statements.

The seriousness with which the AJC treated the matter of the public associating Jews with Communism can also be seen in the way the organization responded to rumours about the involvement of American Jews in radical political movements. In October of 1919, the AJC received information about a rumour circulating through the State of Iowa that Russian Jewish peddlers were distributing Bolshevik and revolutionary literature to their customers. Herbert

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

Hirsch, an American-born Jew and resident of Mason City, Iowa, wrote to Julius Rosenwald and informed him that he had attended a meeting of a civic organization known the Greater Iowa Association during which the rumour was relayed in a speech to a crowd of more than five hundred.⁷³¹

Hirsch's letter conveyed that he was deeply concerned about the potential impact of this rumour and how it was being spread: "the Greater Iowa Association, one of the largest of its kind in the state, speaking to an audience of five hundred and up, in each town and city, on the same subject, will surely cause our Jewish people considerable embarrassment, and it will take years to stamp out the feeling that it will leave."⁷³² Hirsch also indicated that he was trying to secure copies of the literature that was allegedly being distributed by the peddlers.⁷³³

Stopping the guilt by association of Jews with Communism was a preoccupying concern of the leaders of the AJC; it shaped the organization's public advocacy, and therefore the AJC took the situation in Iowa very seriously. Rosenwald forwarded Hirsch's letter to the AJC's headquarters in New York, and Harry Schneiderman, the AJC's assistant secretary, wrote to Hirsch directly to get more information. In particular, Schneiderman was eager to know if Hirsch "had succeeded in securing any samples of this literature."⁷³⁴

⁷³¹ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Louis Rosenwald, October 28, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2. Hirsch appears to have made a mistake about Rosenwald's first name. Julius Rosenwald did receive the letter and forwarded it to the American Jewish Committee.

⁷³² In the same letter, Hirsch stated that he had also attended a meeting of the local Rotary Club during which the President of the local bank discussed the same rumour. See: Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Louis Rosenwald, October 28, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷³³ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Louis Rosenwald, October 28, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷³⁴ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Herbert Hirsch, November 7, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

Hirsch replied that he was, in essence, carrying out his own investigation into the matter. He had already contacted Woodworth Plum, the Secretary of the Greater Iowa Association, to find out where the organization got its information, and if the organization had any copies of the literature or knew the source. Hirsch concluded his letter to Schneiderman by stating that he hoped his work would “be of some benefit to you and that we can put a stop to this propaganda.”⁷³⁵

A month later, Hirsch wrote to Schneiderman to let him know that he had made no progress in his investigation. Plum and the Greater Iowa Association had not replied to his inquiries. The only change in the situation that he could report was that Chas. McNider, the President of the First National Bank of Mason City, who Hirsch had witnessed spreading the rumour, was now concerned that he was responsible for spreading false information and was also working to try and get copies of the literature.

In this update, Hirsch’s concern about the circulation of this rumour and frustration about not being able to secure copies of the literature is easily discerned: “Up to the present time we have received nothing and cannot understand why this literature hasn’t been sent to us.”⁷³⁶ Hirsch suggested that the AJC take up the matter directly. His implication was that a communal organization with the reputation of the AJC might have more success than a lone protester getting a response from the Greater Iowa Association.

⁷³⁵ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Harry Schneiderman, Assistant Secretary of the American Jewish Committee, November 11, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷³⁶ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Harry Schneiderman, December 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

Six days later, Schneiderman replied that the AJC was acting upon Hirsch's suggestion and taking steps to look further into the matter.⁷³⁷ Schneiderman, on behalf of the Committee, wrote directly to Woodworth Plum on December 23, 1919, noting that the AJC "had been informed by one of our friends" in Mason City about a rumour that Jewish peddlers were distributing propaganda was being relayed to large crowds during meetings of the Greater Iowa Association.⁷³⁸ The letter did not contain any accusations or demands for a retraction. Schneiderman explained that that the AJC "is very much interested in this subject because of frequent allegations which are made as to connection of Jews with the Bolshevist movement... We are exceedingly anxious to find out where this literature originates and who is responsible for its distribution."⁷³⁹ He asked Plum to either furnish the Committee with copies of the literature or identify the source.

In the meantime, Herbert Hirsch continued his efforts to track down copies of the literature allegedly being distributed in Iowa by Jewish peddlers. Hirsch wrote to Schneiderman on December 23, and was thankful that the AJC had agreed to look into the matter. He also reported that the rumour was continuing to spread in Iowa. Hirsch, who was a member of the Rotary Club, conveyed that he had heard the rumour discussed during four different meetings of that organization.⁷⁴⁰ Hirsch's letter to Schneiderman also relayed that, despite the absence of

⁷³⁷ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Herbert Hirsch, December 18, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2. This letter makes it clear that the AJC thought this situation was very serious from the moment the rumour was relayed to them. Schneiderman wrote: "I think that your suggestion that we take up direct with Mr. Woodworth Plum...the matter of securing the literature, is a good one. We had desired to do this but in view of the fact that you had expressed a willingness to secure the literature for us, we awaited the receipt of it from you. We are taking the matter today...and as soon as literature is received we will be glad to take further steps."

⁷³⁸ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Woodworth Plum, December 23, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Harry Schneiderman, December 23, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

evidence confirming the validity of the rumour, Hirsch believed it was possibly true: “I hope that if such is the case, we will be able to straighten out these Jewish boys who don’t know any better than to scatter out this propoganda which is a detriment to our state and nation.”⁷⁴¹

On December 26, 1919, Woodworth Plum replied to Harry Schneiderman’s request for more information. Plum recounted that his organization had only received one report about Jewish peddlers distributing “incendiary literature.”⁷⁴² The report came from a farmer in southwestern Iowa who claimed to have purchased the material from a Russian Jewish peddler. The farmer sent the material to the Greater Iowa Association, but Plum ignored Schneiderman’s request to furnish the AJC with copies. Plum also conveyed that his organization was actively collecting propoganda literature and had received “no further report of activities of Russian Jews in this state.”⁷⁴³ Plum promised to let Schneiderman know if his organization did collect any additional reports: “we will gladly communicate with you, because we appreciate full well that some of our most loyal and constructive Americans are Jews and we would not knowingly reflect upon their race.”⁷⁴⁴

Herbert Hirsch sent Schneiderman another update on the situation on December 30, 1919. From this correspondence, it is clear that Schneiderman’s letter to Plum had produced some results in terms of curbing the spread of the rumour. It was Hirsch’s impression that it was no longer being actively circulated by Plum or his organization. Hirsch also reported on a conversation between himself and Chas. McNider, in which the latter expressed regret that he had been disseminating the rumour. McNider claimed that it had been relayed to him by Plum

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴² Letter from Woodworth Plum, Secretary, Greater Iowa Association, to Harry Schneiderman, Assistant Secretary of the American Jewish Committee, December 26, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and Plum's assistant, H. E. Moss. Hirsch's assessment was that Plum and the Greater Iowa Association were now trying to distance themselves from the rumour in order to avoid having to answer for spreading false information: "I think that the Greater Iowa Association have started something that they cannot finish."⁷⁴⁵ He was happy that it seemed they were no longer actively spreading the rumour, but believed it had "done enough damage throughout the state to leave quite a bad impression for the Jewish people unless something is done to counteract it."⁷⁴⁶

There was additional correspondence between Hirsch and Schneiderman discussing whether the AJC should pressure Plum and his organization to publish a retraction or an apology. Publishing Plum's letter to Schneiderman was ruled out as a potential remedy because, despite the fact that it was "a virtual retraction of [Plum's] previous statement," it was felt that the letter was "not worded in a manner which would make it useful for [either Hirsch or the Committee] to make public."⁷⁴⁷

On January 6, 1920, Schneiderman wrote to Hirsch and specified that he "had been asked to ask your advice as to the best method of counteracting the report which has been spread throughout your state."⁷⁴⁸ Presumably, Schneiderman was forwarding this request to Hirsch on behalf of the AJC's Executive Committee.⁷⁴⁹ Hirsch replied that he was confident that the rumour was no longer being spread, but he was torn about whether the AJC should push for

⁷⁴⁵ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Harry Schneiderman, December 30, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁷ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Herbert Hirsch, January 6, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁹ In a letter to Hirsch, Schneiderman mentions that the Executive Committee of the AJC discussed the matter during the January 25, 1919 meeting; however, the minutes from this meeting do not record any mention of Iowa or reference any discussion about how to respond to the rumour. See: Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Herbert Hirsch, January 28, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2. See also: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 25, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed December 12, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

some kind of public remedy. The harm, however, had already been done, and Hirsch was torn because he wanted something to be done to “counteract the wrong,” but also believed that nothing should be done to draw further attention to the rumour. He wrote to Schneiderman: “I really believe that the less that is said the better it will be...If you think that we ought to forget about it, and try and live it down, same as we have thousands of other things that have been put at our door, I am willing to let it go at that.”⁷⁵⁰

Although there is no record of any discussion in the minutes, the AJC’s Executive Committee apparently addressed this matter during their meeting on January 25, 1920.⁷⁵¹ Schneiderman reported to Hirsch that the Committee did not feel that the organization should be publically involved. In their view, “any action taken should be local.”⁷⁵² He suggested Hirsch pursue “some sort of public recantation [from Plum] of his very mischievous statement and that this could be given wide publicity in the local papers throughout the state.”⁷⁵³ If this could not be secured, the Committee believed that the matter “should be allowed to rest,” provided there were no further reports that the rumour was being actively spread throughout the state by the Greater Iowa Association.⁷⁵⁴ Hirsch agreed with the Committee’s assessment and did not pursue any further public remedy on the issue.⁷⁵⁵

The AJC’s response to the rumour in Iowa illustrates a number of facets of the public advocacy strategies of the organization during its early history. The Committee viewed the guilt by association connection between Jews and Communism (or Jews and radicalism) as

⁷⁵⁰ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Harry Schneiderman, January 9, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷⁵¹ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Herbert Hirsch, January 28, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵ Letter from Herbert Hirsch to Harry Schneiderman, February 6, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 11, File 2.

sufficiently serious that even the circulation of a rumour in Iowa was treated as a matter of concern. The Committee responded to the problem, but it was prepared to delegate responsibility to a local representative, and it did not want to generate publicity by drawing the nation's attention to the issue. A fundamental facet of the AJC's approach to public advocacy was that, in contrast to other Jewish leadership organizations, the Committee was prepared to ignore some provocations or forgo pursuing public remedies and apologies if they thought further intervention would only cause more publicity and greater harm. In this case, the organization calculated that if the rumour was no longer being spread, nothing further should be done to counter the harm that had already been done.

The American Jewish Committee's efforts to undermine the American public's association of Jews with Communism escalated during the early years of the Cold War, in parallel to the escalating tension between East and West. Although the Committee became more active on this issue in the years following the period covered by this study, many of the organization's approaches to this issue, including the release of carefully worded public statements, quiet investigation of rumours, and deliberately declining to respond to some provocative statements, were developed and employed by the first generation of AJC leaders.

Conclusion

The examples of the AJC's early advocacy work discussed in this chapter illustrate both the breadth of the issues that concerned the organization's leaders and the variety of advocacy and communal defense tactics they were prepared to employ. The avoidance of publicity, ignoring some provocations, the calculated use of public statements, the emphasis on investigating problems, and the use of quiet diplomacy, were the organization's main stays during the early-twentieth century; however, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the

Committee was willing to depart from these tactics and employ more overt approaches to public advocacy and communal defense.

Chapter 5: Dearborn and Massena

Introduction

This chapter examines the Committee's response to two dramatic manifestations of anti-Semitism in the United States, the articles published in the *Dearborn Independent* and the blood libel in Massena, New York. The case studies included in Chapter 4 reveal the extent to which the AJC counselled restraint when confronted with anti-Semitic provocations, but, as will be seen, in some circumstances, the AJC was willing to deviate from its early more circumspect advocacy and apply more overt tactics in order to fight anti-Semitism and safeguard the reputation of the American Jewish community. Concerns about optics fundamentally shaped their responses to these incidents and arguably the organization's leadership made a number of serious miscalculations.

The Ford Apology

No study of the public advocacy and communal defense efforts of the American Jewish Committee would be complete without reference to Henry Ford's 1927 public apology for the anti-Semitic content of the *Dearborn Independent*. Securing Ford's apology was the most high profile domestic achievement of the first generation of AJC leaders, although, it must be noted, the sincerity of Ford's apology and its significance are controversial topics in the historiography on American Jewish leadership and in scholarship on the development of prohibitions against hate speech as a legal or juridical issue. The episode is among the most referenced and most

studied events in the history of early-twentieth-century Jewish activism and communal leadership in the United States.⁷⁵⁶

This section will describe the nature of the AJC's leaders' debates about if, and how, to respond to the newspaper articles Ford published in the *Dearborn Independent*, the context which influenced their deliberations, and which strategies they ultimately employed. As the discussion will reveal, the AJC did release a public statement rebutting the allegations made in Ford's newspaper, but, in lieu of answering each charge in each issue of the newspaper, the Committee began subsidizing the publication of books and pamphlets that were designed to combat the stereotypes and conspiracy theories being propagated through the *Dearborn Independent* and other sources, including the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This section of the Chapter will reveal how the public advocacy and communal defense efforts of the American Jewish Committee developed and were shaped by its experience confronting the anti-Semitism spawned by the *Dearborn Independent*.

Historian Howard M. Sachar describes the articles published in the *Dearborn Independent* as “the single profoundest shock [the Jews] had encountered in twentieth-century America.”⁷⁵⁷ The widespread dissemination of falsehoods and gross misrepresentations fundamentally impacted American Jewry sense of belonging and security in the United States. Seven years elapsed between the publication of the first anti-Semitic articles in the *Dearborn*

⁷⁵⁶ A significant amount of scholarship exists about the background to the Ford apology and its social, political, and legal significance. That scholarship will not be reviewed here in any detail because the focus of this study is on what the incident reveals about the motivations and public advocacy practices of the American Jewish Committee during the early-twentieth century. For more on the background and significance of the apology, See, for example: Robert S. Rifkind, “Confronting Anitsemittism in America: Louis Marshall and Henry Ford,” *American Jewish History* 94 (2008): 71-90. See also: Victoria Saker Woeste, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012). Naomi Cohen's account of the history of the AJC also includes numerous references to the organization's role in confronting the *Dearborn Independent* and securing the apology from Ford. See: Cohen, 129-137.

⁷⁵⁷ Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 315.

Independent and the release of Henry Ford's apology. During this time, the AJC sponsored the publication of numerous books and pamphlets as part of its efforts to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. These publications, including Herman Bernstein's *History of a Lie*, will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 7 of this study, which describes the development of the AJC's interest in publishing as a means of furthering the organization's social and political agenda.

The *Dearborn Independent*, a newspaper wholly owned by Henry Ford, purported to be a mass circulation daily newspaper. In reality, the tone of the material it published was characteristic of nineteenth century pamphlets, which expressed specific social and political views as opposed to providing objective accounts of current events.

The *Dearborn Independent* began releasing anti-Semitic articles in May of 1920. "The first two issues were on Marshall's desk almost immediately. The gravity of the situation," according to Robert Rifkind, "was clear to [Marshall]. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had recently surfaced in the United States, broadcasting its paranoid fantasy of a Jewish cabal orchestrating international banking, Bolshevism, and Zionism in a diabolic plot to take over the world."⁷⁵⁸ The articles in the *Dearborn Independent* "disseminated the main themes of this potent myth and domesticated it for an American audience."⁷⁵⁹

The articles were also released as a series of easily distributed pamphlets, under the title "The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem." The influence and coercive force of Ford's anti-Semitic publications were especially dangerous because he was one of the wealthiest

⁷⁵⁸ Rifkind, 72.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

and most respected businessmen in the United States; Ford had virtually unlimited financial resources, and further, the general public thought of him as an American hero.⁷⁶⁰

On June 3, 1920, Marshall wrote a personal letter to Henry Ford strongly objecting to the content of the *Dearborn Independent's* articles and asking Ford to retract and disavow these publications:

On behalf of my brethren I ask you from whom we had believed that justice might be expected whether these offensive articles have your sanction whether further publications of this nature are to be continued and whether you shall remain silent when your failure to disavow them will be regarded by the general public as an endorsement of them. Three million of deeply wounded Americans are awaiting your answer.

Two days later, Marshall received the following reply:

We regret the words in which you have seen fit to characterize the *Dearborn Independent's* articles. Your terms “insidious” “fabrications” “insinuation” “pernicious” “hatred” “prejudice” “libel” “insult” “humiliation” “obloquy” “mischief-making” we resent and deny. Your rhetoric is that of a Bolshevik orator. You mistake our intention. You misrepresent the tone of our articles. You evidently much mistake the persons whom you are addressing. Incidentally you cruelly overwork your most useful term which is “antizemitism” [sic]. These articles shall continue and we hope you will continue to read them and when you have attained a more tolerable state of mind we shall be glad to discuss them with you.⁷⁶¹

The telegram was not signed by Henry Ford, but, rather, by The Dearborn Publishing Company.

Marshall replied that he was going to infer from their telegram that the articles in the *Dearborn*

⁷⁶⁰ In addition to the articles published in the *Dearborn Independent*, a compilation of some of its anti-Semitic articles was also released in book form. See: *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*. The book edition of the articles contains no publisher's information but does indicate that it was released in November, 1920.

⁷⁶¹ The full texts of the letters and telegrams exchanged between Marshall and Ford (or between Marshall and the Dearborn Publishing Company) were printed in the AJC's Annual Report. See: Fourteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1921_1922_7_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See, pages 315-317.

Independent were endorsed by Henry Ford.⁷⁶² The AJC received no denial, and the organization had no further contact with Ford or the Dearborn Publishing Company for the next seven years. Ford would later claim that the articles had been published and the pamphlets distributed without his knowledge.

The AJC's Executive Committee convened a special meeting to discuss the *Dearborn Independent* on June 23, 1920.⁷⁶³ The purpose of the meeting was to decide "what steps, if any, are to be taken to counteract the evil effects of such propaganda."⁷⁶⁴ The minutes of the meeting record that there was a consensus of opinion among the leaders present "that the Ford articles themselves were not so serious except as evidence of a world wide movement."⁷⁶⁵ They saw the *Dearborn Independent's* articles and the publication of the *Protocols* as alarming evidence of an intensification of anti-Semitism. They would become more alarmed, and take stronger countermeasures, as the controversy unfolded over the next seven years.

For years the AJC's leaders had been anxious that an escalation of anti-Semitism was coming; now that it had arrived, they debated whether to shift from an advocacy posture that had been fundamentally based on preventing this escalation towards approaches that were designed to confront the threat to their community. The provocations of *Dearborn Independent* could have been countered aggressively, but, with a few exceptions, the AJC's leaders continued to adhere to moderate, more passive and less public responses.

⁷⁶² See: Fourteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1921_1922_7_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, pages 315-317.

⁷⁶³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on June 23, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

While the AJC's leaders agreed that anti-Semitism was escalating, the organization's leadership was divided about how to respond. Judge Irving Lehman and Jacob Schiff counselled restraint, arguing that, despite the *Dearborn Independent's* weekly circulation of seventy thousand, the articles "were not getting any wide publicity except in the Jewish press."⁷⁶⁶ Schiff argued that "a public defense at the present time might be undesirable and only lend further publicity to an unpleasant situation."⁷⁶⁷ During the leaders' discussions, Marshall mentioned that he had heard rumours of the impending wider distribution of the *Protocols* in the United States, but he did not advocate for a stronger, immediate public response.⁷⁶⁸

The AJC's leaders agreed that, for the moment, the best course of action was to begin "earnest preparation...to meet the larger and more wide spread attack" that they feared was forthcoming.⁷⁶⁹ They decided to begin collecting anti-Semitic literature and any rebuttals published in newspapers or released by other leadership organizations. By the time the text of Ford's apology was made public, the AJC had amassed a massive collection of materials, including "six thousand clippings from the general press...[and] thousands of clippings from the English-Jewish and Jewish press in other languages" from around the world.⁷⁷⁰

During the first meeting on the problem of the *Dearborn Independent*, the AJC's Executive Committee discussed the potential usefulness of statistics about Jewish military

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁸ In the minutes of the June 23, 1920, Marshall refers to the *Protocols* as "the Jewish Peril," which was the title of the first edition of an English translation of the *Protocols*. This first edition was produced by a British publisher but was distributed in United States. "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" was the subtitle of this first edition. See: *The Jewish Peril: Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd., 1920).

⁷⁶⁹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on June 23, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

⁷⁷⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on September 18, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16484>.

service during the First World War. The AJC was already funding a project dedicated to compiling an honor roll of American Jews who had fought during the First World War. The Committee's leadership believed that statistics on "the number of Jews who served in the various belligerent countries"⁷⁷¹ could be usefully cited to dispel allegations of an international Jewish conspiracy. Although the initial purpose of the honor roll was to recognize the patriotism of American Jews, the leadership thought that, because large number of Jews had served on both sides of the recent conflict, these facts could be circulated as evidence to counter the notion of a unified international Jewish conspiracy.

In their reaction to the articles in the *Dearborn Independent*, some Jewish newspapers had advocated that a boycott of the Ford Motor Company be organized. The AJC's leadership opposed this plan. Their concern was that a Jewish boycott of Ford might "boomerang and produce a counter boycott in which the Jews would greatly suffer."⁷⁷² The Committee decided that Marshall should write a confidential letter to the editors of Jewish newspapers "cautioning them against advising a boycott, [and] informing them that the whole subject was being carefully watched by" the AJC.⁷⁷³ For the moment, the Committee adopted a cautious approach but the leaders recognized that they should be prepared for a difficult and public confrontation with American anti-Semites, including one of the wealthiest, most respected men in the country.

The Executive Committee did not address the problem of the *Dearborn Independent* again until October 10, 1920.⁷⁷⁴ By this time, the AJC leaders estimated that the newspaper's

⁷⁷¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on June 23, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 10, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

circulation had increased to two-hundred-and-fifty thousand.⁷⁷⁵ The Committee discussed the fact that it was receiving letters from local Jewish communal leaders complaining about the content of the newspaper, including letters from leaders in Detroit, Baltimore, and Little Rock. During the meeting, Harry Schneiderman reported that he had been analyzing the content of the anti-Semitic articles, and had been able to verify that most of the references and quotations they contained came from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁷⁷⁶ The situation was clearly worsening, and the AJC's leaders resolved to establish a subcommittee to prepare "a reply to the *Protocols* presenting evidence to their spurious character, and to suggest methods of counteracting the propaganda."⁷⁷⁷ Tellingly, the leadership also resolved that no public action would be taken without the approval of the AJC's larger General Committee, which was scheduled to have its annual meeting the following month. This can be interpreted as evidence of both the seriousness and the caution with which the AJC's leaders approached the problem of the *Protocols* and the Ford-owned newspaper. During the early history of the organization, the AJC's leadership rarely felt the need to seek the approval of the larger General Committee which, it must be noted, only convened once a year.

At the end of the October 20 meeting of the Executive Committee, Marshall, Oscar Straus and Cyrus Adler were appointed to a new subcommittee that was tasked with formulating the AJC's strategy on countering the *Protocols*. The subcommittee presented its proposals to the Executive Committee a month later. The members of the subcommittee suggested the release of

⁷⁷⁵ At the time, the *Dearborn Independent* publically claimed it had 250,000 paid subscribers. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 10, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

⁷⁷⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 10, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

“a statement to the public emphatically repudiating the charge that Bolshevism is a Jewish movement and declaring that the so-called *Protocols* are a forgery.”⁷⁷⁸ Secondly, they suggested the release of a book “containing an extended argument” on the inaccuracy of the association of Jews with Communism and a more thorough debunking of the *Protocols*.⁷⁷⁹

Marshall had already prepared a draft text of the public statement, which he read to the other leaders. After a discussion, the AJC’s leaders decided that the statement should be considered by the organization’s General Committee, which was meeting the following day. The General Committee approved the statement and it was released to the public on December 1, 1920.⁷⁸⁰ The public statement, which was published in the *New York Times* and was subsequently released by the AJC as a sixteen-page pamphlet, challenged the notion that Jews were disproportionately leading Communist parties, and described the *Protocols* as a forgery whose origins could be traced to agents of the Czarist regime. The statement, which mentions the *Dearborn Independent* without specifically refuting any of the newspaper’s claims, also describes Henry Ford as “merely a dupe.”⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 13, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.* At the same Executive Committee meeting, the leaders of the AJC rejected the idea of asking American lawmakers to examine anti-Jewish propaganda through the convening of a congressional investigation. Marshall also reported that the AJC had received “offers of cooperation” regarding the campaign against anti-Jewish propaganda from the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the United Synagogue of America, and most importantly, from the Provisional Committee for an American Jewish Congress. In response, all of these organizations had been invited to send delegates to the AJC’s annual General Meeting, which was taking place the following day. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 13, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

⁷⁸⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

⁷⁸¹ See: “‘The Protocols’ Bolshevism and the Jews: Address to the American People,” published December 1, 1920 (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1921). A copy of the pamphlet can be found in the American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 17, File 16.

The Marshall-authored statement was a significant example of cooperation between Jewish leadership organizations representing constituencies from across the ideological, economic, and ecclesiastical divisions that characterized early-twentieth-century America Jewry. Marshall drafted the statement, but the published pamphlet was co-signed by the leaders of the Zionist Organization of America, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the United Synagogue of America, the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the United Orthodox Jewish Rabbis of America, and the Provisional Organization for American Jewish Congress.

During a meeting of the AJC's Executive Committee on December 12, 1920, the organization's leaders voted to appropriate ten thousand dollars from the Emergency Trust Fund to finance the distribution of two-hundred and fifty thousand copies of the public statement.⁷⁸² At the same meeting, they also voted to fund the research of Herman Bernstein, at a salary of one hundred dollars per week, who was already conducting an investigation into the sources of anti-Jewish propaganda.⁷⁸³ As will be discussed in Chapter 7, Bernstein's research would culminate with the publication of *History of a Lie*, one the first books whose publication was funded by the AJC.

In the aftermath of the release of the pamphlet version of the public statement, the AJC declined to make further direct public statements refuting the allegations made in the *Dearborn Independent* or other anti-Semitic publications. However, numerous other publications were

⁷⁸² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

⁷⁸³ Marshall had hired Bernstein without the prior approval of the other leaders of the AJC. The vote on December 12, 1920 was a retroactive approval of Marshall's action.

commissioned and released by the AJC. These publications, which included Cyrus Sulzberger's pamphlet "Is Immigration a Menace?" and Lee J. Levinger's *A Jewish Chaplain in France*, were designed to combat the spread of anti-Jewish prejudice, but the AJC consistently refrained from directly answering hate speech or accusations made against the Jewish community.

Marshall did, however, in another indirect approach, coordinate the release of condemnations of the *Dearborn Independent* by non-Jews. The AJC's President "organized a protest against the *Independent* by a hundred non-Jews, including Woodrow Wilson and William Howards Taft, and he was able to have the Federal Council of Churches denounce Ford."⁷⁸⁴ Marshall also relied on the strategy of quiet diplomacy. He met with President Warren G. Harding and asked for the President's help with the situation.⁷⁸⁵

After the release of the public statement, Marshall received invitations to make speeches and thus he had further opportunities to directly denounce Ford and the *Protocols*, but he declined these offers. Marshall wanted to maintain the Committee's reputation as a communal leadership organization, and he did not want the Committee to be thought of by the general public as a source of propaganda. For example, in late December 1920, Marshall declined an offer from the Jamestown, New York chapter of the Fraternal Order of Eagles to address their fourteen hundred members from the Eagle Temple platform. The invitation noted that the speech

⁷⁸⁴ Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 48.

⁷⁸⁵ Sachar, 316. Marshall and Harding met at the White House. During this meeting, Harding reported that he had already sent a representative to lobby Ford to stop publishing anti-Semitic content. There is some evidence that Harding's intervention had a positive impact. According to Sachar, in January 1922, "the *Dearborn Independent* suddenly ended its 'International Jew' series and shifted for the while to a more general exposé of banking." See: Sachar, 316.

would be given wide publicity throughout Western New York.⁷⁸⁶ In declining the offer, Marshall wrote:

While I greatly appreciate the invitation and the spirit which moves you to make it, permit me to say that the American Jewish Committee is not engaged in making propaganda, that the statement to which you refer, which appeared in the New York Times and other papers on December 1st, was the answer of the Jewish people of this country to the libels that have been published against them. It is our theory that nothing can be more injurious to the well-being of our country than to indulge in controversy on racial or religious lines, and that so far as the Jews are concerned, having made a public statement to their fellow-citizens answering their detractors, they do not intend to take the initiative in making the matter the subject of public debate. To do so would be to dignify what any fair minded citizen will at once recognize as an unworthy and disgraceful proceeding.⁷⁸⁷

Whatever the effect of the publication of the pamphlet of Marshall's public statement, it did not discourage Ford's newspaper. The *Dearborn Independent* continued to release provocative and anti-Semitic articles for the next seven years. Throughout this period, the Committee maintained its policy of refusing to enter into a public debate over the content of the newspaper's articles. "The Committee," according to Naomi Cohen, "refused to sanction any rash attack on Ford. It advised against a boycott, against attempts to ban the *Dearborn Independent* from public libraries, against investigative commissions, and against individual libel suits. The Committee, however, did not reflect the sentiment of the entire Jewish community, and others proceeded with [lawsuits] against Ford."⁷⁸⁸

In truth, the negotiations that ultimately brought about the release of Ford's apology for the articles in the *Dearborn Independent* had more to do with a series of libel lawsuits filed

⁷⁸⁶ Letter from Earnest Cawcroft to Louis Marshall, December 27, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 17, File 16.

⁷⁸⁷ Letter from Louis Marshall to Ernest Cawcroft, December 29, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 17, File 16.

⁷⁸⁸ Cohen, 134.

against Ford by individual Jews, Ford's own political ambitions, and the upcoming release of the Ford Model A, than with the intervention or advocacy of any American Jewish leadership organization. The lawsuits, in particular one filed by a Jewish lawyer named Aaron Sapiro that went to trial, threatened to both tarnish Ford's reputation and to mar the release of the Ford Motor Company's newest model.⁷⁸⁹ Sapiro's lawsuit "brought Ford's antisemitic diatribe into the public forum of the federal courts and put the substance of his allegations on national display."⁷⁹⁰ It was the embarrassment caused by the ongoing trial that ultimately moved Ford to seek some kind of reconciliation with American Jewry.⁷⁹¹

The AJC was able to publically claim the credit for bringing about the Ford apology because Ford's representatives approached Louis Marshall after Ford, on his own initiative, decided he no longer wanted to be associated with the views that were being disseminated through his newspaper. That Ford chose to approach the leader of the AJC is nevertheless significant because he could have reached out to the leaders of other major American Jewish leadership organizations. The overture to Marshall reflects the reputation and standing the AJC had established during the first twenty-five years of its history and Marshall's status among the major communal leaders of early-twentieth-century American Jewry.

During a meeting of the AJC's Executive Committee on September 18, 1927, Marshall reported on his negotiations with Ford's emissaries, Earl J. Davis and Joseph A. Palma, but the

⁷⁸⁹ For more on the libel lawsuits filed against Henry Ford, see: Mathew Mark Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 398-401. See also: Saker Woeste, 877-905, and Sachar, 315-319.

⁷⁹⁰ Saker Woeste, 878.

⁷⁹¹ For more on the press coverage of the Sapiro trial, see: Rudolph Alvarado and Sonya Alvarado, *Drawing Conclusions on Henry Ford* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 140-155

minutes record very few details about how the negotiations unfolded.⁷⁹² The AJC anticipated that the American public, and particularly American Jews, would be curious about how the apology came about, and Marshall released a public statement describing how the negotiations unfolded in the *American Jewish Yearbook* and in the pamphlet that the AJC published containing the text of Ford's apology.⁷⁹³

According to Marshall's account, Davis and Palma were introduced to him by former Congressman Nathan D. Perlman. Ford's emissaries indicated that Ford "had become satisfied that those whom he had put in charge of *The Dearborn Independent* had taken advantage of him by publishing the series of articles attacking the Jews... [that Ford] was convinced that all of the charges made against [the Jews], individually and collectively, are without foundation and unjust; and that he desired to know what could be done to put an end to the strained relations on the part of the Jews towards him."⁷⁹⁴ Marshall replied that "there must be a complete retraction of all the false charges made, a full apology and request for forgiveness, a discontinuance of the attacks which had been indulged in these publications...[and] a pledge that like publications would never again be made—in other words, that there must be full amends for the wrong done."⁷⁹⁵ Marshall's account indicates that, after further negotiations, Ford ultimately signed an apology that had been "previously repaired." The document was drafted by Louis Marshall.

The four-page apology was printed by the AJC in pamphlet form using funds from the organization's emergency trust fund, and fifty thousand copies were distributed throughout the

⁷⁹² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on September 18, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16484>.

⁷⁹³ See: "Statement by Mr. Marshall," in *The American Jewish Yearbook, Volume 29, 1927-1928* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927), 384. Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1927_1928_9_FordStatement.pdf.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 384-385.

United States.⁷⁹⁶ In the apology, Ford claims that he delegated responsibility for the editorial content of the *Dearborn Independent* to men he trusted because he was too busy attending to other matters. When, after seven years, he reviewed the content of his publication, he claimed to have been “deeply mortified” that the newspaper “had been made the medium for resurrecting exploded fictions, for giving currency to the so-called *Protocols*...which have been demonstrated...to be gross forgeries, and for contending that the Jews have been engaged in a conspiracy to control the capital and industries of the world, besides laying at their door many offenses against decency, public order and good morals.”⁷⁹⁷ Ford goes on to express shock at the content of the newspaper, apologize, ask for forgiveness, and promise that it will never happen again.⁷⁹⁸ The scholarship on the Ford apology overwhelmingly considers it to be disingenuous, prompted by political optics and “business calculations” rather than genuine remorse.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on September 18, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16484>.

⁷⁹⁷ See: “STATEMENT by HENRY FORD: Regarding Charges Against Jews Made in His Publications, The Dearborn Independent, and a Series of Pamphlets Entitled ‘The International Jew,’ Together With an Explanatory Statement by LOUIS MARSHALL, President of The American Jewish Committee, and His Reply to MR. FORD (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1927). Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/F-46.PDF.

⁷⁹⁸ While the AJC’s cooperation with Ford has been criticized because it allowed Ford to publically place the blame for the release of the anti-Semitic articles onto his subordinates, there is some evidence in the AJC’s archives that Ford followed through on his promise to help reduce the circulation of the pamphlets containing the articles. Ford wrote directly to a German publisher asking that translations of the pamphlets, which included his name, be discontinued. The publisher replied that he was disappointed by the request and asked for forty thousand Marks to compensate for the revenue that he would lose if he complied with Ford’s request. Ford asked Marshall’s advice about how to handle this situation. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 8, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16485>. Marshall advised Ford to reiterate his demand that the pamphlets not be distributed and refuse to pay compensation. Marshall and Ford met face to face on one occasion in Marshall’s law office in New York City. Marshall reported to the AJC’s Executive Committee that Ford had “assured him that he would continue to do everything in how [sic] power to counteract the evil effects of the propaganda which had been carried out in his name.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 12, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16485>.

⁷⁹⁹ Silver, 399. See also: Sachar, 318.

The American Jewish Committee, however, considered the Ford apology to be a major achievement. The leaders of the Executive Committee praised Marshall for “the tactful and dignified manner in which he conducted the negotiations with Ford’s representatives.”⁸⁰⁰ The most prominent anti-Semite in American history had publically disavowed his views, and simultaneously condemned as a forgery the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, one of the most significant sources of modern anti-Semitism.

Despite their own enthusiasm for their achievement, Marshall and the AJC have been criticized in recent scholarship on the Ford apology. Victoria Saker Woeste, for example, has noted that the AJC’s collaboration with Ford might have held back the development of the law of libel in the United States to include hate speech against racial and religious minority groups. According to this argument, an opportunity was missed to expand the scope of libel law beyond individual injury to include the defamation of entire groups. Saker Woeste also notes, however, that, with very few exceptions, the United States Supreme Court “has given speech expressing racial hatred essentially the same protection as ‘other speech that causes ordinary offense or anger.’”⁸⁰¹

Considerations about optics and potential impact shaped the AJC’s decision to enter into negotiations with Ford as opposed to releasing numerous responses to his attacks or actively participating in the lawsuits against him. As an organization, the AJC used litigation to further its social and political agenda; however, it must be noted that, in many instances, particularly during the organization’s early efforts in the arena of constitutional litigation, the AJC or its leaders were acting on behalf of other minority groups regarding issues that only peripherally concerned

⁸⁰⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on September 18, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 14, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16484>.

⁸⁰¹ Saker Woeste, 879.

the American Jewish community. In these instances, which involved questions about the scope of minority rights in the United States, the Committee was litigating only indirectly on behalf of Jewish interests. Louis Marshall, who in addition to his role in the AJC was also a board member of the NAACP, “litigated many of the benchmark civil rights cases of his generation.”⁸⁰² In responding to the *Dearborn Independent*, Marshall and the AJC chose to privilege securing an apology to the entire Jewish world over securing judicial rulings that individual Jews had been injured by Ford’s publications or a ruling that expanded the law of libel to encompass hate speech against minorities in the United States. Counter-propaganda, rebuttals, and legal recourses were recognized by the Committee as important tools in the fight against anti-Semitism but, in this case, Marshall and the AJC calculated that there was more to be gained through a public apology and a retraction than through pamphlets and litigation.

The Massena Affair

One extraordinary example that illustrates the AJC’s occasional willingness to publically and directly engage with both the media and public officials to prevent an intensification of anti-Jewish sentiments was the so-called “Massena Affair,” an accusation of blood libel against residents of the Jewish community in Massena, New York, a town on the border between Canada and the United States.⁸⁰³ On September 22, 1928, two days before Yom Kippur, Barbara Griffith, a four year old Christian girl, disappeared from her home in Massena. A search for the child, involving the town’s police department, the New York State Troopers, the Massena Fire

⁸⁰² Saker Woeste, 880n.

⁸⁰³ The accusation of blood libel that occurred at Massena, New York has received considerable attention in the historiography on American Jewry. See, for example: Saul S. Friedman, *The Incident at Massena: the blood libel in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1978). The designation of the incident as the “Massena Affair” is the terminology that the AJC used within the organization to describe the incident. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 10, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 6, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16486>.

Department, and local volunteers was initially unsuccessful. However, the child, who had become lost in the woods while looking for her seven year old brother, was found unharmed the following day.

Both local and national Jewish organizations became involved in this incident because, during the search for the girl, a New York State Trooper questioned a local Rabbi at the Massena police station about the practice of human sacrifice in Jewish rituals. Rabbi Berel Brennglass, of Massena's Congregation Adath Israel, was interviewed by Corporal H.M. McCann apparently, in connection with a rumour that Barbara Griffith had been kidnapped by local Jews to be sacrificed during a Yom Kippur ritual.⁸⁰⁴ It can be argued that the interrogation of the Rabbi was the result of a series of misunderstandings, shoddy police work, and poor judgment, as opposed to a manifestation of institutional (or institutionalized) anti-Semitism among the residents, law enforcement, and public officials of the town of Massena and the State of New York. While it is clear that some of the police officials involved in the search for the missing child were aware of the historical allegation of blood libel against the Jews, this awareness was not used as the basis

⁸⁰⁴ There is considerable variance in the accounts of the different people involved to explain the order of events which led to the interrogation of Rabbi Brennglass. For instance, the AJC received letters from members of Massena's Jewish community claiming that Brennglass had been ordered to report to the police station by the town's Mayor, W. Gilbert Hawes, and claiming that when the Rabbi arrived he was greeted by a shouting mob. See: Letter from Julius Frank to Louis Marshall, September 26, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. The version of events that appeared in some of the press accounts of the event claim that Mayor Hawes had "arranged" the meeting between the Rabbi and police and make no mention of any crowd in front of the police station. See: Press clipping "Marshal Blasts Story of 'Sacrifice' by Hebrews," October 3, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. Documents relating to this incident, including two signed affidavits and copies of third party correspondence, are on file in the AJC's archives. In one of the signed statements, Rabbi Brennglass recounts his version of the events that led to him being questioned by police and the questions he was asked. The Rabbi states that he "was called on Sunday, September 23rd 1928 by trooper H.M. McCann. He asked me to come to police headquarters. I went as directed." See: Statement Signed by Rev. B. Brennglass, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. The police report detailing the findings of an internal New York State Troopers investigation of the incident indicates that Brennglass voluntarily reported to the police station. See Summary Memorandum on Massena Police Complain Investigation addressed to Commanding Office, Troop "B" N.Y.S.T, Malone, N.Y., Subject: Joseph Stone, Massena, N.Y.,— Complaint, September 26, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

for a violent assault against the Jewish community of Massena. The immediate consequences of the events at Massena in 1928 are not comparable with the violence that followed similar allegations of ritual murder, such as what transpired in Velizh in the 1820s, Damascus and Rhodes in 1840, Kishnief in 1903, and Shiraz in 1910. One Rabbi and several members of Massena's Jewish community were questioned by the police, but there was no mob violence: no Jews were tortured or murdered nor was there any destruction of Jewish-owned property.

While there was no violence, the incident at Massena nevertheless provoked a serious response from local Jewish leaders in Massena and communal leaders of national Jewish organizations because of concerns about public perception and optics. When the questioning of Rabbi Brennglass was reported in the media, there was outrage among American Jews. Jewish communal leaders, conscious of the history of violence against Jewish communities predicated upon the blood libel charge, moved quickly to ensure that allegations of human sacrifice did not become the basis for the persecution of Jews in the United States.

Massena's local Jewish leaders shared these concerns, but they were also worried about the impact the incident would have on their relationships with their non-Jewish neighbors. Massena was a small town, and its Jewish community, although assimilated into the town's economy and local affairs, was, to a certain extent, a visible minority. In a summary of the incident, outlined in a signed statement in the AJC's archives, Jacob Shulkin, the President of Massena's Congregation Adath Israel, remarked that the incident had both local and national dimensions: "Now the rumor is broadcast that after questioning the rabbi the guilty became frightened and gave up the child. We feel we can not [sic] drop this case. We are strong in our

opinion that this is a national affair.”⁸⁰⁵ Shulkin was concerned that the discovery of the child unharmed was not being viewed as an exoneration of the Jewish community, and that the incident would create an enduring suspicion of the Jews of Massena as a local minority community and of American Jews generally across the country.

At the national level, Jewish leaders did not want to see allegations of blood libel become the basis for the persecution of Jews in the United States. They were particularly concerned about the potential legitimacy that might be conferred upon allegations of Jewish human sacrifices by the blood libel’s application as the basis for a kidnapping investigation. Although the Jewish population of the United States was overwhelmingly concentrated in East Coast American cities, there were small Jewish populations spread out across the entire country. The concern of national Jewish leaders, based on quite recent European and Middle Eastern historical precedents, was that the disappearance of every non-Jewish child could be used as a predicate for anti-Jewish violence anywhere in America.

After Rabbi Brennglass was questioned by Corporal H.M. McCann at the Massena police station, the Rabbi reported the incident to the lay leaders of his congregation. The shocked leaders filed an official complaint with the New York State Troopers.⁸⁰⁶ At the same time, they

⁸⁰⁵ Signed Statement of J. Shulkin, President of Congregation Adath Israel of Massena, N.Y., dated September 28, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸⁰⁶ It is not clear when members of Massena’s Jewish community filed the official complaint with the State Troopers; however, the complaint must have been made before Tuesday, September 25, 1928, because, on the afternoon of the 25th, a delegation of Massena’s municipal and law enforcement officials, including the Mayor, the Chief of Police, A.J. Hanmer, the town’s attorney, Corporal McCann, and Lieutenant Heim went to the Adath Israel synagogue to meet with Brennglass and the congregation’s lay leaders in the hopes of resolving the complaint and putting the matter to rest. Lieutenant Heim’s report, which was filed the following day, concludes with a brief summary of this meeting: “The matter was gone into very thoroughly over a period of two hours and we tried to explain to the Committee, the reason for asking this question, but the Committee seemed to take the attitude that this question was agitated by some organization to bring criticism on the Jewish church and it’s [sic] members in Massena, and several of them assured us that the matter was of world-wide significance. They advised us that they had reported the matter to their Attorney in New York City and would be guided by his advice. We offered them apologies and feel the matter is now closed.” See: Report by E.F Heim to Commanding Officer, Troop “B,”

also sought out advice from both the AJC and the American Jewish Congress about how they should respond, and, the Rabbi and the local leaders, retained Louis Marshall to act as their attorney.⁸⁰⁷

Both the AJC and the American Jewish Congress assumed leadership roles in responding to the incident, but the two organizations did not coordinate their efforts.⁸⁰⁸ The American Jewish Congress was the first to respond. On September 29, 1928, Rabbi Wise wrote to Mayor Hawes and Police Superintendent Warner and requested an internal investigation of the incident.⁸⁰⁹ Marshall, on behalf of the AJC, wrote to Hawes two days later and demanded a public apology and threatened legal action against the Mayor.

September 26, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸⁰⁷ Letter from J. Shulkin and Rabbi B. Brennglass to Louis Marshall, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. Shulkin and Brennglass note in the first paragraph of this letter that they reported the incident to the American Jewish Congress at the same time as they reported it to the AJC.

⁸⁰⁸ Prior to both Wise and Marshall's interventions, the New York State Troopers, based on the complaint lodged by local Jewish leaders in Massena, had already begun to investigate the incident and prepare for an administrative hearing. Lieutenant E.F. Heim of the State Troopers led the internal investigation. He compiled a two page report on the incident, which is dated September 26, 1928, three days after the questioning of the Rabbi. See: Report by E.F. Heim to Commanding Officer, Troop "B," September 26, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. The police report is only six paragraphs long; however, it does include some interesting findings that help explain the order of event that led to the questioning of Rabbi Brennglass. It should be noted, however, that it is possible that the police complaint report is a sanitized version of events. Among the reasons why Lieutenant Heim's report on the complaint investigation should be approached with a degree of skepticism is that the report was not the product of an independent inquiry. Secondly, despite the fact that dozens of law enforcement officials were involved in the search for Barbara Griffith, the report identifies only a single scapegoat for the blood libel accusation, Corporal H.M. McCann, the New York State Trooper who questioned Rabbi Brennglass. Finally, it is suspicious that the report makes no mention of the alleged involvement of the Mayor. Louis Marshall received a copy of Heim's report and, in a letter to Superintendent Warner, expressed doubts as to the transparency and breath of the investigation as well as the legitimacy of the report's conclusions. See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Major John A. Warner, Superintendent Division of State Police, Albany, N.Y., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸⁰⁹ Letter from W. Gilbert Hawes to Louis Marshall, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. This letter was a cover letter attached to a copy of Mayor Hawes's reply to Rabbi Wise that the Mayor forwarded to Marshall. Hawes' reply to Wise includes a summary of the internal investigation and administrative hearing and an apology. In the cover letter, Hawes notes that: "I assume that this statement fully covers the incident and is in keeping with the spirit of the suggestions made to me in your communication of October 1."

In responding to the blood libel charge and the interrogation of Rabbi Brennglass, American Jewry's two leading communal organizations both diverged from the approaches to public advocacy that normally characterized their efforts. On September 29, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the President of the American Jewish Congress, wrote to W. Gilbert Hawes, Massena's Mayor, and Major John A. Warner, the Superintendent of the New York State Troopers, and requested that the interrogation of Rabbi Brennglass be investigated internally by the State police. Marshall's response was bolder and significantly more public. Citing his position as President of the AJC, Marshall publically called for Mayor Hawes to either resign from office or make "an immediate and public written apology to the Jewish people."⁸¹⁰ Marshall also demanded to personally approve the text of Mayor Hawes' apology before publication. He stated that if the Mayor did not resign or make a sincere apology, he would initiate legal proceedings seeking to have Hawes removed from office for official misconduct.⁸¹¹

Massena was a rare instance in which Louis Marshall voiced his anger publically. Marshall's ire over this incident may have impacted his judgment as he arguably overreached and made some public relations errors in leading the AJC's response. In responding to the provocation, the American Jewish Congress pursued a significantly more moderate and quieter approach than the AJC under Marshall's leadership.

Wise's request for an internal investigation was not made public, whereas Marshall's letter demanding a public written apology and threatening legal action was published in newspapers. Marshall's letter also included a thorough refutation of the blood libel charge,

⁸¹⁰ Press clipping "Marshal Blasts Story of 'Sacrifice' by Hebrews," October 3, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸¹¹ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. W. Gilbert Hawes, Mayor of Massena, October 1, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 7, 2014. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. The text of the letter can be found on page 348 to page 351.

including a reference to Papal pronouncements condemning the accusation, numerous citations from the Bible which establish the prohibition on using blood in Jewish rituals, and a summary of the trial and acquittal in Russia of Mendel Beilis that featured testimony from European intellectuals debunking the blood libel against the Jews.⁸¹² Marshall ended his letter by stating that he would “wait for a few days for an indication” from the Mayor whether Hawes intended to comply with his requests.⁸¹³

While Marshall waited for a reply, Mayor Hawes and Police Superintendent John A. Warner moved quickly to resolve the matter by complying with Wise’s earlier request for a further investigation. In what proved to be a well-executed public relations and conflict resolution maneuver, Hawes and Warner rather shrewdly ignored Marshall’s threat and expedited the internal investigation of the incident. On the morning of October 4, Warner presided over an administrative hearing to scrutinize the actions of Corporal McCann during the kidnapping investigation and the questioning of Rabbi Brennglass.

Mayor Hawes and Massena’s attorney A.J. Hanmer were present at the hearing. Despite the fact that Marshall had been retained by members of Adath Israel, he was not invited to attend. Some of his clients, however, including Jacob Shulkin, were present, as were representatives of the American Jewish Congress, including Rabbi Wise, the Congress’ President, and three of the organization’s lawyers, Bernard G. Richards, Louis Lande, and George Gordon Battle.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹² The Beilis Affair is discussed in the previous chapter.

⁸¹³ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. W. Gilbert Hawes, Mayor of Massena, October 1, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 7, 2014. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. The text of the letter can be found on page 348 to page 351.

⁸¹⁴ Letter from J. Shulkin and Rabbi B. Brennglass to Louis Marshall, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

The hearing's findings matched those of the internal investigation led by Lieutenant Heim. Corporal McCann was blamed for the entire affair. After the hearing, Warner wrote New York State Governor Alfred E. Smith to summarize his findings: "I have severely reprimanded Corporal McCann and indefinitely suspended him for gross lack of discretion in the exercise of his duties and for conduct most unbecoming an officer."⁸¹⁵

Both McCann and Hawes issued apologies for the incident. Mayor Hawes' apology was released as a statement to the press. Corporal McCann's apology was shorter, and arguably more sincere, and was made in the form of a private letter to Rabbi Greenglass. McCann wrote:

I am writing to say that I regret more than I can tell you and am very, very sorry for my part in the incident at Massena. After the hearing today, I realize as I did not before, how wrong it was of me to request you to come to the Police Station... to be questioned concerning a rumor which I should have known to be absolutely false. I was terribly excited and fatigued at the time, having been on duty for many hours without food or rest. Otherwise, I would have thought of the consequence of such an act and would not have done what I did. I mean every word of this apology and I hope you will take it in the spirit in which it was written.⁸¹⁶

The text of Mayor Hawes' public apology, which was released as a statement to the press, included expressions of regret and an admission that he knew that the Rabbi was going to be questioned by police. The Mayor's apology, however, also included evasions and equivocations, and concluded by placing some of the blame for the Massena affair on the Jewish community

⁸¹⁵ Letter from John A. Warner, Superintendent New York State Troopers, to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸¹⁶ Letter from H.M. McCann to Rabbi Berel Brennglass, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

because of the publicity the interrogation of Rabbi Brennglass had received in the mainstream press.⁸¹⁷

Marshall was almost certainly deliberately not informed by Hawes and Warner of the administrative hearing. Given Marshall's threat to pursue legal action against the Mayor, it is not surprising that neither Hawes nor Warner informed him of the quickly arranged proceedings. Stephen Wise and the other representatives of the American Jewish Congress who were present at the hearing likely did not inform Marshall because of the rivalry that existed between their organization and the AJC.

It is significant that Marshall's clients said nothing to him until the proceedings had concluded. Marshall did not have any knowledge of the hearing until Jacob Shulkin and Rabbi Brennglass wrote him after it was concluded and informed him who was present and included copies of both Hawes' and McCann's apologies.⁸¹⁸ In their letter to Marshall, written only several hours after the administrative hearing and the suspension of Corporal McCann, Shulkin and Brennglass now downplayed the national implications of the blood libel accusation in Massena; instead, they emphasized the possible local implications of pursuing further redress. With a public apology from the Mayor secured and McCann punished, they concluded that, for the sake of social harmony and the security of their minority community, it was best to let the matter rest. "We wish to assure you that we desire to live in peace with our Christian neighbors in Massena," Shulkin and Brennglass wrote to Marshall. "We are entirely satisfied of the sincerity of Mayor Hawes' expression of regret, and we beg to call your attention to the enclosed

⁸¹⁷ Document Titled in handwriting "The Mayor's Statement," Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸¹⁸ At the time that Marshall received their letter, he was in a meeting in his office in New York City with two members of Massena's Jewish community who had also apparently not been told about the hearing. See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. Jacob Shulkin, President, Congregation Adath Israel, Massena, N.Y., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

letter of regret and apology to us by Corporal McCann.”⁸¹⁹ They knew, or should have known, that Marshall would be displeased about being excluded from the proceedings and about the text of the Mayor’s public apology. In his communications with Massena’s Jewish leaders and with the town’s municipal government throughout the affair, Marshall consistently stressed that the blood libel accusation was not only a narrow or local problem. Anticipating Marshall’s indignation, Shulkin and Brennglass ended their letter by emphasizing that the Jewish community of Massena, as a whole, was satisfied with the outcome of the hearing and did not want to pursue the matter any further: “In closing we wish to say that it is the unanimous sentiment of the Jews of Massena that deplorable as the incident was this is the best possible disposition of the matter and the incident should be regarded as closed.”⁸²⁰

Based on correspondence between Marshall and his clients in Massena, as well as correspondence between Marshall and members of the AJC and Superintendent Warner, it is fair to say that the President of the AJC was angered that he was not informed about the administrative hearing. It is also clear that while Marshall thought the indefinite suspension of McCann was the appropriate punishment, he also thought the text of Mayor’s Hawes public apology was inadequate. The language Marshall chose in his reply to Shulkin and Breenglass’ letter is measured, but it also clearly illustrates that he was upset to have been excluded from the proceedings, the manner in which he was excluded, and how the matter was concluded, including the drafting of apologies, without his intervention. Marshall wrote to Shulkin and Brennglass:

I am rather surprised that after you had enlisted my interest in this subject and requested my aid and advice...[that] you should have

⁸¹⁹ Letter from J. Shulkin and Rabbi B. Brenngalss to Louis Marshall, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

failed to communicate to me the fact that you had been summoned to the office of the Superintendent of the State Police, so that I might at least have been accorded the courtesy of availing myself of an opportunity to be present on that occasion. You appreciated from the very beginning that this was not a matter which concerned merely the Jews of Massena, but that every Jew throughout the world was affected. You also stated that I had been asked to represent the Jews of Massena. Yet you undertook without submission to me, to accept the apologies of the Mayor and the Corporal, disregarding the important condition that I had made in my letter to the Mayor that any apology that he might make should be in a form approved by me. You knew very well that resort to the courts was the very last thing that I desired... I have been active in Jewish life for fifty years, but never before have I received a letter [sic] like that signed by you... which in a most cavalier manner practically dismisses me from the case and decides an important proposition which in no manner concerns you. I refer to the question as to what the attitude of the Jewish people as a whole should be towards this episode.⁸²¹

Marshall's language was less restrained when he wrote to Superintendent Warner. His anger is easily discerned:

I am entirely satisfied with the fact that you have reprimanded Corporal McCann and have indefinitely suspended him for gross lack of discretion in the exercise of his duties and for conduct most unbecoming an officer. That was inevitable. My criticism is of the extraordinary manner in which this proceeding was rushed through immediately on the heels of the publication of my letter which indicated that enormity of the offense committed. While I do not pretend to be a great mathematician I am at least able to appreciate that 2 and 2 make 4. If you desire an explanation of this cryptic statement I can give it to you.⁸²²

Despite his anger and his clients' desire to move on from the incident, Marshall did not abandon the case. He began to work on the text of a second public apology that he hoped Mayor Hawes would sign.

⁸²¹ Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. Jacob Shulkin, President, Congregation Adath Israel, Massena, N.Y., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸²² Letter from Louis Marshall to Major John A. Warner, Superintendent Division of State Police, Albany, N.Y., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

The Mayor's apology had been readily accepted by Jewish leaders in Massena because they did not want to create a permanent rift between themselves and the majority of their neighbors. Mayor Hawes was a popular local politician who was currently serving his fifth term as the town's Mayor; four of the five times he had been elected unanimously.⁸²³ Marshall understood why the leaders of Massena's Jewish community were eager to move on, but he was always more concerned about the broader implications of the appearance of the blood libel in America. In a letter to Jacob Shulkin, Marshall acknowledged the local leaders concerns about the safety of their community in the aftermath of the affair; however, he also made it clear that, despite their concerns, he was not prepared to abandon his efforts:

You may rest assured that I shall do nothing which in any way will affect the comfort and serenity of your Congregation and of the Jews of Massena. The courage and good sense manifested by Rabbi Brennglass at the time when he was put upon the rack in a manner worthy only of a grand inquisitor of the Middle Ages, proved more of a protection to the Jews of Massena against acts of hostility than all the crawling sycophancy that may be exhibited by any individual Jews. Please convey my respects to the Rabbi, who has gained my admiration.⁸²⁴

Marshall had other, broader concerns than strong and prudent leadership of small Jewish communities or social harmony in one small town. The blood libel and violence against Jewish communities based on this accusation could not be allowed to be imported into America. In Marshall's view, it was appropriate for American Jewish leaders to more aggressively intervene to insure that accusations of this kind remained marginal and, if possible, unacceptable in public discourse. The blood libel would always remain a centerpiece of anti-Semitism, and anti-

⁸²³ Letter from W. Gilbert Hawes, Mayor of Massena, to Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, President of the American Jewish Congress, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸²⁴ Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. Jacob Shulkin, President, Congregation Adath Israel, Massena, N.Y., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

Semitism would always have to be resisted, but Marshall was hoping to use the publicity and fallout from the Massena affair as a step towards broadly suppressing the blood libel charge as a basis for suspicion against American Jews and as a predicate for anti-Jewish violence in the United States. He was also hoping to establish a deterrent effect whereby government and law enforcement officials, despite the hostility towards Jews that they might privately harbor, would feel constrained about citing anti-Semitic canards in public statements. Marshall's preoccupation with the language of Mayor Hawes' apology should be considered in this context.

The text of the Mayor's apology was fundamentally important for Marshall's purposes. Ideally, as with the text of Ford's apology, it would not only be a public apology, but also a refutation of the old allegations of Jewish human sacrifice and a significant precedent. Shaming one small town Mayor and a display of sincere contrition might serve to prevent public officials, at all levels of government, from citing the blood libel in public statements, and thus conferring legitimacy upon the old charge in the future. The text of Mayor Hawes' public apology that was accepted by the leaders of Massena's Jewish community could not be used to further Marshall's objectives. In private, Marshall would later describe the Mayor's statement as "ridiculous," and condemned the acceptance of the apology by Massena's Jewish leaders without consulting him as "inexcusable."⁸²⁵

Mayor Hawes' apology begins by stating that there were many rumours circulating in Massena about what had happened to Barbara Griffith, and that they were all being investigated by the police simultaneously. Hawes then mentions the arrival at the police station of a "Jewish young man named Shulkin" who "made several contradictory statements about the whereabouts of the child." Hawes links Shulkin's statements to the eventual questioning of Rabbi Brennglass:

⁸²⁵ Letter from Louis Marshall to Julius Frank, October 9, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

“His statements were such as to arouse suspicion and it was evident he had a deranged mind. As a result of the statements made by this young man, the local Rabbi was asked to call at the police station.” The Mayor asserts that he “did not send for the Rabbi,” but acknowledges that he knew the Rabbi was going to be questioned. He also states, however, that he knew nothing about the substance of the questions the Rabbi was going to be asked. The blood libel charge is never mentioned. The statement is clear that the Rabbi was offended by some of the questions he was asked, and viewed the questions as an insult to both his religion and his people, but, because the blood libel accusation is never discussed, the Mayor’s statement is vague as to why the Rabbi was offended.

For Marshall, the most troubling part of the statement was the closing sentence which minimizes the incident and blamed the Jewish community for the coverage of the controversy in the press. Hawes states: “So far as I know the incident is not generally known in Massena, and any publicity given the matter must come from The Jewish People.”⁸²⁶ The conclusion mischaracterizes the incident as a publicity embarrassment for the town because of the negative press coverage rather than an instance where bigotry and myth slandered a minority community and undermined or potentially hindered a serious police investigation. Further, the statement does not acknowledge that the basis for the questioning of the Rabbi was unreasonable, false, or grounded in prejudicial beliefs.

The flaws of Hawes’ public apology are not present in a private letter from the Mayor to Rabbi Stephen Wise in which Hawes acknowledges receipt of his request for a further investigation and provides an account of the administrative hearing concerning Corporal

⁸²⁶ Document Titled in handwriting “The Mayor’s Statement,” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. All the quotations in this paragraph are from the text of Mayor Hawes’ public statement.

McCann's questioning of Rabbi Brennglass. Instead of formally replying to Marshall's public demand for an apology, Mayor Hawes forwarded a copy of his letter to Stephen Wise to Louis Marshall. Hawes' letter to Wise offers a far more sincere apology, including powerful statements of regret and direct references to the blood libel charge.⁸²⁷ This letter was never made public.

Marshall was clearly angered and offended by the content of the Mayor's public apology, particularly the closing paragraph:

The apology of the Mayor is not at all what it should be...[T]he closing paragraph is couched in phrases which should be most offensive to a self-respecting Jew, especially when such expression comes from a man who only a week before had been guilty of the most serious offense ever perpetrated in this country upon the Jewish people, infinitely worse than anything that Henry Ford ever did. It sounds too much like a lecture and is utterly devoid of sincerity.⁸²⁸

Disregarding the wishes of Massena's Jewish leaders, Marshall prepared an alternative apology and planned to lobby Hawes to sign it; however, before Marshall submitted it to Hawes, the Mayor's apology and Marshall's October 1 public statement began to garner some coverage in the mainstream American press. The AJC's Annual Report notes that the "American press was quick to recognize the implications of the occurrence and it was made the subject of a number of editorial articles, all of them expressing indignation that the circulation of this slander should have emanated from public officials."⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ Letter from W. Gilbert Hawes, Mayor, to Dr. Stephen S. Wise, President of the American Jewish Congress, October 4, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸²⁸ Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. Jacob Shulkin, President, Congregation Adath Israel, Massena, N.Y., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

⁸²⁹ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 7, 2014. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See page 351.

Editorials, such as one that appeared in the *New York Sun* under the headline “Stamp Out This Fire!,” praised Marshall for securing the Mayor’s apology and for the detailed refutation of the blood libel that appeared in the AJC’s President’s public statement in which he had demanded Hawes apologize and threatened legal action:

As a leader among American Jews Louis Marshall cannot be too strongly commended for his vigorous letter to the Mayor of Massena...Until now...American common sense has prevented this grotesque libel from gaining credence here...Mr. Marshall has done wisely in dragging the case out into the daylight. This kind of thing is like fire in stubble, easily stamped out at first but hard to control once it gains headway.⁸³⁰

In the days after the publication of Hawes’ apology, Marshall and the AJC received numerous letters from American Jewish groups, fraternal organizations, and synagogues applauding Marshall for his leadership in dealing with the Massena affair and for securing the public apology from Mayor Hawes.⁸³¹ Marshall led the AJC’s response to the Massena affair. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the credit the AJC claimed and was given, the resolution of this incident was more directly the result of how the American Jewish Congress, under the leadership of Rabbi Stephen Wise, responded to the interrogation of Rabbi Brennglass.

As already suggested, Marshall’s anger over this incident may have led him to make a public relations error. His demand for an apology and his threat to have the courts remove the

⁸³⁰ The text of the *New York Sun* editorial “Stamp Out This Fire!” was reprinted in its entirety in the Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee. The Annual Report is available online in the AJC digital archives. See: Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 7, 2014. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. The editorial is reprinted on pages 351 and 352.

⁸³¹ See, for example: Letter from Harry S. Albert, Executive Director of the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Hebrew Association to the American-Jewish Committee, October 11, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20. Other letters praising Marshall and the AJC’s handling of the Massena affair, including correspondences from leaders of the Menorah Lodge No. 771 of the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith and Baltimore’s Har Zion Congregation, are available in American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

Mayor from office were arguably an overreaction, particularly because his threat was made publically. The fact that the two leading American Jewish organization's responded independently to this incident and did not coordinate their efforts created an opportunity for Hawes and Warner to simply bypass the more extreme demands of Marshall and the AJC. By quickly complying with Rabbi Wise's request for a further internal investigation, severely punishing Corporal McCann, and by issuing public apologies, Hawes and Warner lessened the potential public outcry that could have been generated if the Massena affair had resulted in a prolonged and public dispute between municipal and law enforcement officials and Jewish advocacy groups.

Although ultimately not pursued, from a public relations perspective, there were risks associated with Marshall's plan to pursue the matter further. Marshall and the AJC wanted a stronger statement from the Mayor; however, with a public apology now made, further protest could be characterized as vindictive and vengeful, as opposed to righteous and legitimate, and therefore the plan could seriously backfire.

Although the Massena affair was a significant episode in the history of anti-Semitism in the United States, the incident was only discussed once by the AJC's Executive Committee.⁸³² In the AJC's records on this incident, the extent to which the AJC's leadership minimized the involvement of the American Jewish Congress is noteworthy. The minutes of the AJC's November 10, 1928 Executive Committee meeting and the organization's Annual Report do not mention by name the American Jewish Congress or summarize the Congress' role in securing

⁸³² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 10, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 26, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16486>.

Hawes' apology. The minutes and the Annual Report mention that "other bodies intervened"⁸³³ and that "other bodies took action in this matter,"⁸³⁴ but the only organization that is directly referenced is the Commission on Good Will between Jews and Christians, which had issued a public statement condemning the revival of the blood libel in America.

After Mayor Hawes issued his apology, Marshall wanted to continue his efforts to secure a more just and contrite public apology from the Mayor, but the very positive public attention given to Marshall's letter and the Mayor's apology appears to have assuaged the AJC leader's anger. Although the Mayor's apology was flawed, Marshall calculated that further protest would be counterproductive. In a letter to Leo Wise, the publisher of *The American Israelite*, Marshall accepted that the fight over what transpired in Massena was over: "I heartily appreciate your very kind and generous letter regarding the Massena matter, as well as your expression of confidence in me. The subject was one of such a character that I thought that vigorous action was necessary, and the enemy surrendered without delay. An adequate written apology has been made."⁸³⁵ Marshall and the AJC, as well as the Jews of Massena, let the matter rest and moved on.

Conclusion

The articles in the *Dearborn Independent* and the blood libel in Massena were the two most serious domestic provocations the first generation of American Jewish Committee leaders

⁸³³ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 7, 2014.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 351.

⁸³⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 10, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 26, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16486>.

⁸³⁵ Letter from Louis Marshall to Leo Wise, Esq., October 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 14, File 20.

confronted.⁸³⁶ In the former, they adhered to many of the advocacy practices that characterized the early efforts of the organization; in the latter, Marshall's denunciation of Mayor Hawes was a significant departure from the AJC's preference for avoiding publicity and using quiet diplomacy.

In both cases, the AJC was able to publically claim credit for outcomes that arguably had more to do with the advocacy work of others. In the case of Ford, it was the media attention and public scrutiny generated through the libel suits that changed the situation. In Massena, it was the American Jewish Congress's Rabbi Wise whose moderate position and practice of quiet diplomacy ultimately brought about a resolution to the controversy.

These two dramatic incidents illustrate both the potential and limits of advocacy strategies based on avoiding publicity and quiet diplomacy. Ford could have been confronted directly, but to adopt such a strategy requires resources and an ability and willingness to educate the public and take on the risk of provoking some kind of backlash. Similarly, Massena could have been treated as the unfortunate consequence of poor decisions made by one ignorant law enforcement official. Although very serious because of the brutal history around the use of the blood libel as a predicate for anti-Jewish violence, an organization better equipped to publically describe the fallaciousness of the blood libel charge arguably would not have felt the need to take such a strong stand in response to an incident that did not result in any violence.

While these incidents were unfolding, the AJC was already beginning to develop its ability to employ more sophisticated approaches to public advocacy and shaping public opinion. It was in the ten years prior to the Ford apology that the Committee began to develop greater

⁸³⁶ As will be discussed further in Chapter 8, the AJC declined to take any public role in the aftermath of the lynching of Leo Frank, the most serious act of domestic anti-Semitic violence during the period covered by this study.

institutional infrastructure; however, it was not until almost twenty years after the Ford apology that the Committee matured into an organization that was willing to practice public advocacy using a variety of modern techniques, including the use of mass media. During the period covered by this study, the organization's leadership and staff remained very small, but the Committee gradually expanded its activities, requiring more attention from its busy leaders, more full-time staff to oversee specific projects, and greater resources to fund its operations. Although the most significant expansion of the organization occurred after the Second World War, the development of the Committee's advocacy infrastructure and the origins of the organization's transition towards the use mass media can be traced to the period covered by this study. As will be shown in the following two chapters, the institutions and internal bodies that would shape the Committee's exercise of public advocacy for the rest of the twentieth century were founded during the leadership tenures of Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall.

Chapter 6: Building the Infrastructure for Public Advocacy, Part I

Introduction

Today, the American Jewish Committee is a substantial organization with over 175,000 members,⁸³⁷ a staff of more than two hundred,⁸³⁸ more than a dozen departments,⁸³⁹ and an endowment with over 130 million dollars (US) in assets.⁸⁴⁰ The AJC has a ten-story corporate headquarters on East 56th Street in New York City, which houses its library and archives, and it operates twenty-two regional offices in major cities across the United States.⁸⁴¹ The organization is global, and maintains satellite offices and agencies in Berlin, Brussels, Hong Kong, Jerusalem,

⁸³⁷ Marianne Rachel Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, Brandeis University Press, 2007), ix.

⁸³⁸ At its peak in 2008, the Committee had 248 employees. In 2012, that number had been reduced to 227. See: Josh Nathan-Kazis, "AJC Turns Towards Israel, Global Advocacy: Century-Old Group Plans to Shift from Domestic Issues," *Forward*, December 17, 2012. The article is available online at: <http://forward.com/articles/167730/ajc-turns-towards-israel-global-advocacy/?p=all#ixzz2Pd0VgPUG>. Accessed February 5, 2015.

⁸³⁹ The American Jewish Committee has a national staff (which includes the organization's executives), a department of Resource Development, a department of Regional Offices, a department of Marketing and Strategic Communications, a Media Relations department, a Finance department, a Human Resources department, and a Law department with three in-house lawyers. The Committee also operates an Office of Government and International Affairs, a department of Interreligious and Intergroup Relations, Project Interchange (which, through yearly conventions in Israel, builds connections between international government, philanthropic, and private sector leaders and policy makers), their Young Leadership Program (known as "ACCESS"), the William Petschek Contemporary Jewish Life Department, the Dorothy and Julius Koppelman Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, and the Blaustein Center for Jewish Research.

⁸⁴⁰ For a complete breakdown of the AJC's finances, see: "American Jewish Committee and Affiliates: Consolidated Financial Statements and Schedule: December 31, 2013." The document, which was prepared by the accounting firm KPMG, is available on the AJC's website: <http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7Bf56f4495-cf69-45cb-a2d7-f8eca17198ee%7D/AJC%20-%202013%20AFS.PDF> Accessed February 5, 2015. A summary of the AJC's finances is also available in the organization's Annual Report. See: "Treasurer's Report" in AJC Annual Report 2013, page 24. The report is available online at: http://www.ajc.org/site/c.7oJILSPwFfJSG/b.9171861/k.9405/Annual_Report.htm. Accessed February 5, 2015. The American Jewish Committee survived the 2008 market crisis and the Bernie Madoff scandal unscathed. Other prominent Jewish leadership organizations were devastated by the crash and their association with Madoff. The American Jewish Congress had to suspend its operations and nearly had to fold entirely because of the financial damage it sustained as a result of the Madoff scandal. The Ponzi scheme cost the Congress 21 million dollars, roughly 87% of its 24 million dollar endowment. For more on the Congress' financial difficulties in the aftermath of the Madoff scandal, see: Anthony Weiss, "AJCongress Crippled by Madoff Scandal," *Forward*, January 8, 2009. The article is available online at: <http://forward.com/articles/14905/ajcongress-crippled-by-madoff-scandal/>. Accessed February 6, 2015.

⁸⁴¹ The Committee's regional offices are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Kansas City, Long Island, Los Angeles, Miami, Millburn (New Jersey), Palm Beach, Philadelphia, Sarasota, St. Louis, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Westchester.

New Delhi, Paris, Rome, São Paulo, and Tokyo.⁸⁴² Throughout the period covered by this study, however, the Committee was a very small organization. Before 1931, the AJC had fewer than three hundred dues-paying members, it did not have a large office or staff,⁸⁴³ and, as discussed in earlier chapters, it was directed by a very small leadership circle.⁸⁴⁴

As will be discussed in this chapter, the early leaders of the Committee slowly expanded the organization's operations and institutional infrastructure, but the most dramatic increases in membership, institutional growth, and fund raising occurred after 1930. "Dealing with the Nazi threat and the enormity of post-World War Two problems would cause [the AJC] to grow exponentially. Early meetings, however, had as few as half a dozen participants."⁸⁴⁵ In the early days, the members of the AJC's leadership both directed and administered the Committee's initiatives, including the organization's press bureau, publicity bureau, and research departments.

The Committee relied on the efforts, talents, and financial resources of its small group of leaders. "Expensive offices and salaries for employees were not an issue: the original New York City offices were modest, and the organization's general affairs were attended to successfully by one paid executive and three or four clerks."⁸⁴⁶ There was no paid professional staff. In addition to their own professional, philanthropic, and family responsibilities, the early leaders of the AJC oversaw the operation of the organization and its advocacy projects essentially in their "spare time."

Structurally, the Committee's mandate, agenda and tasks were divided among different subcommittees, including those on finance, fund raising, immigration (lobbying), and research

⁸⁴² The American Jewish Committee has satellite offices or representatives in Berlin, Brussels, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, New Delhi, Paris, Rome, São Paulo, and Tokyo.

⁸⁴³ Sanua, 8.

⁸⁴⁴ For more on the gradual expansion of the AJC's membership, see: Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 20.

⁸⁴⁵ Sanua, 8.

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

(the Statistical Committee). With so few leaders actively involved in managing the operations of the organization, there was considerable overlap in the membership of these critically important subcommittees, with leaders serving on several simultaneously.⁸⁴⁷ Notwithstanding that they were cautious about expanding the organization, hiring full-time staff, and establishing separate departments dedicated to specific tasks or projects, the founders and early leaders of the AJC conceived of the organization as an advocacy agency, and they recognized that, in order to further their agenda, they would need to plan and finance activities that would make it possible for them to influence public opinion.

From the beginning, the founders of the AJC recognized that efforts to influence public opinion by providing the general public with information would be an important part of their efforts. As discussed in the introduction of this study, the Committee was founded in the aftermath of a series of pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. The transcript of the 1906 conference that resulted in the founding of the organization illustrates the extent to which the AJC was created to help coordinate the American Jewish community's response to the ongoing calamity in Eastern Europe. Part of that response was a decision to make the general American public aware of the persecution experienced by Russian Jews and the ongoing violence. The goals of this campaign were to build public support to pressure the American government to do more to deter the Russian government from tolerating (or actually encouraging) anti-Jewish violence and, perhaps more importantly, to maintain open American immigration policies for

⁸⁴⁷ For example, in 1907, Louis Marshall served on the finance, press bureau, and immigration subcommittees; Cyrus Adler served on the immigration, statistical, and asylum in Consulates subcommittees; Morris Loeb was a member of the immigration and statistical subcommittees. Loeb was also the sole member of a subcommittee tasked with developing a "cable code" for the American Jewish Committee. For a summary of the membership of all new AJC subcommittees in 1907, see: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 1, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 17, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

refugees from the ongoing persecution. The founders understood that the organization would need to collect information, analyze information, and have the means to disseminate its findings.

The first “tentative plan for the organization of the Committee,” which was a draft of what later became the promulgated constitution of the AJC, included regulations relating to information collection and the management of publicity.⁸⁴⁸ It called for the setting up of an office in New York City “which shall collect and arrange and have at its disposal statistics and information on all subjects relating to the Jews which may be of importance.”⁸⁴⁹ The plan also noted that these statistics should be “constantly kept up to date.”⁸⁵⁰ Under article ten, which carried the heading “Publicity,” the plan called for the strict management of public statements made by members of the Committee, or in the name of the Committee; only the Chairman was empowered to act as a spokesperson for the Committee. The regulations authorized the Executive Committee, however, to empower other members of the organization to speak on its behalf “in cases of emergencies.”⁸⁵¹

The transcript of the conference that resulted in the founding of the Committee provides numerous insights about the deliberations of the AJC’s founders on a wide variety of issues, including the composition, objectives, and methods of the new organization. During the discussions at the conference about whether the Committee should endeavor to influence public opinion, there was an important exchange between Jacob Voorsanger⁸⁵² and Morris Loeb,⁸⁵³ two of the thirty-four delegates in attendance. The exchange is illustrative of the founders’ concerns

⁸⁴⁸ Minutes of the meeting of the American Jewish Committee’s General Committee held on November 11, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 9, 2013.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16441>.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵² Jacob Voorsanger was a Dutch-born, Reform movement Rabbi at San Francisco’s Temple Emanu-El.

⁸⁵³ Morris Loeb was an American-born, Harvard-educated chemist, and the son of Solomon Loeb, one of the founders of Kuhn, Loeb and Company.

about both influencing public opinion and managing the public's perception of the nature and legitimacy these efforts. The exchange illustrates the founders' understanding of both the importance of influencing public opinion and also of the potential risks and bad "optics" (in the sense discussed in the previous chapters) of any conspicuous advocacy efforts.

The exchange between Voorsanger and Loeb occurred during a discussion about how American press accounts of the persecution of Jews in Russia were inadequate or false, and were thus failing both to inform the American people of the calamity and to encourage outrage or protest from ordinary Americans. American Jews, including the Jewish establishment and the community of new immigrants, were well-informed about the state of affairs in Russia and Eastern Europe, but the AJC's founders believed that the broader American public's exposure to this issue was limited by the minimal, and in some cases, false or biased information being disseminated through the mainstream American press.⁸⁵⁴ The false or biased press coverage was seen by the founders of the Committee as an impediment to building public support for intercession by the American government to lobby the Czar's regime to stem the violence. "It is known to you all," Jacob Voorsanger stated, "that there are some countries from which it is difficult to get news, and yet the formation of a correct public opinion about affairs in those countries is desirable. One of the most important affairs of this Committee is to bring about the

⁸⁵⁴ As noted earlier in this study, the AJC had an ongoing feud or disagreement with the Associated Press. The AJC was consistent in arguing that the information the wire service was distributing was either insufficient, false, or tainted by the biased views of the Russian government. For example, in 1909, the AJC sent a letter to the directors of the Associated Press "protesting against the negligible quantity of news of Russian affairs, and specifically, the persecution of the Jews, which is published in the papers which are subscribers to the Associated Press." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 13, 1909, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 16, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16447>.

proper dissemination of this news.”⁸⁵⁵ Morris Loeb replied that the Committee should proceed with caution, noting that how any effort to influence public opinion was described would fundamentally impact how it was received by the general public: “You would not want to publish the fact that we propose to establish a news bureau, but you have the right to state that you shall do your best to contradict any incorrect reports.”⁸⁵⁶ Voorsanger replied: “What we suffer from in this country is ignorance of what is going on abroad. One of the functions of this Committee should be to educate the public—to give the people information as to what is going on abroad...And it therefore should be one of the functions of this Committee to get correct information and give it to the people.”⁸⁵⁷

This exchange and others during the November 11 founders’ conference reveals that the delegates were unclear about what they meant when referring to the “general public.” In some instances, the delegates were referring narrowly (and sometimes condescendingly) to the Jewish population of the United States, the majority of whom were recent immigrants. In other instances, the delegates use the term to refer to the opinions of the broader American people, irrespective of their religion. The delegates’ uncertainty about who was to be the Committee’s principal audience is less significant than the fact that the delegates recognized that public advocacy would be an important component of their work as a leadership and communal defense organization. There was an appreciation that the Committee’s mandate would not be limited to fundraising and relief work; their activities would include advocacy and efforts to shape public opinion both inside and outside the Jewish community. In eventual practice, the AJC did strive to

⁸⁵⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the American Jewish Committee’s General Committee held on November 11, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 9, 2013. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16441>.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

influence the political beliefs and attitudes of Americans of all faiths, and their advocacy work went well beyond the American Jewish community.

On the matter of shaping public opinion, immediately after the exchange between Loeb and Voorsanger, Louis Marshall intervened: “One of the great difficulties that we have encountered in the Russian question has been to instruct the conscience of the world. We have not had accurate information. Whatever the Associated Press has been allowed to filter into the press of this country has been published, and nothing more, and it is our duty to disseminate accurate information.”⁸⁵⁸ Another delegate, Dr. David Philipson,⁸⁵⁹ agreed with Marshall: “I think that not only the Jewish public should be informed. There are things going on in this country which the whole public should know.”⁸⁶⁰ By the end of the November 11 conference, the delegates were able to agree that some form of public advocacy, including efforts to circulate information to influence public opinion, would be within the mandate of the new organization. Near the end of the meeting, the delegates passed a broad resolution which empowered the new group’s Executive Committee to “at the earliest possible moment arrange for the dissemination of correct information touching Jewish affairs generally.”⁸⁶¹ All of the Committee’s efforts to influence public opinion, including the resources the AJC’s leaders devoted to building the organization’s ability to collect information, subsidize research projects, and engage in modern forms of public advocacy, developed from this initial mandate.

As discussed in previous chapters, the founders preferred to practice quiet diplomacy or the silent treatment, particularly in response to incidents of anti-Semitism, but they were also

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁹ David Philipson was an American-born Reform movement Rabbi at Bene Israel in Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸⁶⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the American Jewish Committee’s General Committee held on November 11, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 9, 2013.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16441>.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*

building an organization with the ability to engage in more active forms of advocacy on behalf of American Jews and world Jewry. This chapter will show that, while quiet approaches were the mainstay of the Committee during its early history, between 1906 and 1930, the organization was also developing and engaged in more active and modern forms of communal defense and public advocacy. This capacity to engage in modern forms of public advocacy, however, was in a nascent stage. As will be discussed below, it would take more than ten years for the practice of these approaches to mature, and at least another forty years of growth (and further domestic provocations and international calamities), before the Committee had established all the institutional infrastructure of modern public advocacy groups.

Successes and Failure and Early Initiatives and Institutions: the AJC's First Headquarters, the Statistics Bureau, the Washington Office, the Committee on Press Bureau, the Russia Correspondents, and the Turn to Publishing

Two weeks after the last of the formational conferences, during the first formal meeting of the AJC's Executive Committee, the organization's leadership made several important decisions that would develop the AJC's institutional infrastructure, including its capacity to both collect and disseminate information. The first gathering of the newly formed organization's leadership, which took place on November 25, 1906 and was held at Temple Emanu El, covered a great deal of ground. Among other decisions, the leaders: appointed new local members; elected Herbert Friedenwald to be the organization's first Secretary; decided where the Committee's headquarters would be established; voted to assume control and finance the operations of the United Hebrew Charities' Statistical Bureau; agreed to make the Statistical Bureau's resources available to the Jewish Publication Society and the *American Jewish Year Book*; and inaugurated a fundraising campaign to help the Jewish community of San Francisco

rebuild its institutions that had been damaged or destroyed in the recent earthquake and fire.⁸⁶²

Although the establishment of a press bureau had been one of the main institutional ambitions of the founders of the Committee, during this first meeting, discussion of the “matter of the dissemination of information was postponed.”⁸⁶³ As reflected in the founder’s concern about the public’s reaction to conspicuous advocacy efforts, and as will be discussed further below, the members of the Committee were encountering, and would continue to encounter, both organizational and ideological obstacles during its earliest attempts to define how the organization would interact with, and attempt to influence, the press.

During the first meeting of the Executive Committee, the AJC’s leaders “gratefully accepted” an offer from the trustees of the United Hebrew Charities (UHC) Building to set up the Committee’s first headquarters at the UHC “for the nominal rental of \$75, per annum.”⁸⁶⁴ A Statistical Bureau dedicated to gathering information about the American Jewish community was already in operation in the United Hebrew Charities Building, and the UHC trustees also offered to “place [this Bureau] at the disposal of the American Jewish Committee.”⁸⁶⁵ In response to this offer, the AJC’s Executive Committee appointed a subcommittee “to make arrangements to take over the [existing] Statistical Bureau,” and earmarked an annual budget of one thousand dollars to fund the Bureau’s operations.⁸⁶⁶ A year later, the AJC agreed to more than double their

⁸⁶² By September 9, 1907, the “San Francisco Fund” had raised almost twenty-five thousand dollars. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, “Appendix II, Report of Elias Michael, Treasurer, American Jewish Committee, San Francisco Fund,” American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 16, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁸⁶³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 25, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16442>.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

financial support for the Statistical Bureau and increased its annual contribution to \$2,200.00.⁸⁶⁷ The degree of their financial commitment, which represented about a quarter of the Committee's operational budget, reflected the founders' preoccupation with building the Committee's capacity to collect and organize information.⁸⁶⁸

During the November 25 seminal meeting, the Executive Committee also resolved to establish an AJC office in Washington, D.C. under the direction of Dr. Cyrus Adler, with an annual budget of fifteen hundred dollars. The Committee's founders had debated at length about where the Committee should be headquartered. From the perspective of demographics, it was clear that the organization should be based in New York City, whose still growing Jewish population was by far the largest in the country, and where of most of the Committee's leaders, including Louis Marshall, Judah Magnes, Cyrus Sulzberger, and Professor Morris Loeb, called home. However, from the perspectives of both claiming a national mandate and being able to engage with the federal government and lawmakers, the founders recognized that the organization would also need to establish itself in other American cities. The founders resolved that the "principal offices of this Committee shall be established in the City of New York, and there shall be established such other offices and agencies as the Committee or the Executive Committee may deem necessary from time to time."⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 9, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 16, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁸⁶⁸ For one of the earliest reports on the Committee finances, see: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, "Appendix I, Report of Elias Michael, Treasurer, American Jewish Committee, General Expense Fund," American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 16, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>. The AJC's total disbursements up until September 9, 1907, totaled \$8,417.35.

⁸⁶⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the American Jewish Committee's General Committee held on November 11, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 9, 2013. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16441>.

The minutes of the November 25, 1906 meeting contain very few details about the substance of the discussions that led to the decision to establish the Washington D.C. office. In order to be an effective lobby group, the Committee needed representatives in the capital; however, “obtaining information on Jewish matters at Washington” was the only grounds cited in the meeting’s minutes to justify the expense.⁸⁷⁰

Although the importance of a presence in Washington was recognized from a very early date, it actually took the Committee twelve years to establish an office in the nation’s capital. From the outset, the New York and Philadelphia based leaders of the Committee made frequent trips to the capital to meet with lawmakers, politicians, and diplomats, but the Committee did not open an office in Washington until 1918. For several years, the organization relied on Fulton Brylawski, a Washington D.C. based lawyer, to act as its representative in Washington.⁸⁷¹ As will be discussed in the following chapter, the Committee opened its Washington office in 1918 after the organization decided to subsidize the compiling of a list of American Jews who served in the First World War.⁸⁷²

⁸⁷⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 25, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16442>.

⁸⁷¹ Fulton Brylawski was appointed to be the AJC’s representative in Washington in 1914. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 7, 1914, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 6, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16458>. The leaders of the Committee appreciated Brylawski’s work on behalf of the organization. The Executive Committee noted that he “had been doing a great deal of work on behalf of the Committee as its Washington representative for which he had declined remuneration although this work was done at great personal sacrifices.” In 1918, when the Committee heard that Brylawski was getting married, the leadership established a subcommittee composed Cyrus Sulzberger and Colonel Harry Cutler to choose a wedding gift. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 13, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 6, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16465>.

⁸⁷² This office, which was set up in the Woodward Building, was dedicated to the honor roll project and was placed under the direction of Julian Leavitt, the director of this AJC-funded project. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 13, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 6, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16465>.

The delay in establishing a formal presence in Washington reflects the nature of the Committee in its formative period: it persisted as a very small New York based organization, led by very few, with minimal staff, and with a modest designated budget. Rather than reaching out to new members across the country, the AJC relied substantially on the connections, reputations, and resources, including the considerable financial resources, of its leadership circle. Those Jewish leaders' connections with political and commercial leaders in the United States were a crucial element of the organization's early efforts to further its social and political agenda, particularly during the Committee's campaigns to lobby against the imposition of new immigration restrictions and during the treaty abrogation campaign.

In terms of the ability to effectively disseminate information, the early leaders of the Committee were conflicted about how to use mass media to communicate their message to the broader American public. The Committee's founders had deliberated at length about how to define the relationship between the new organization and the media, particularly newspapers and the wire services that provided information to newspapers. The leaders recognized the usefulness of the media as means of disseminating information, but they were also alert to avoiding the bad optics of press manipulation and influence peddling. They wanted the organization to build its reputation as the leading representative organization of American Jewry as opposed to being perceived as a purveyor of Jewish propaganda.

On January 27, 1907, rejecting suggestions from the Jewish community, the Executive Committee decided that the AJC would not publish its own newspaper or magazine. Less than a week earlier, the Committee had received a letter from Henrietta Szold, of the Jewish Publication

Society, suggesting that the AJC finance a publication as its own.⁸⁷³ The Committee replied that they “did not consider it advisable to designate any publication as the organ of the Committee.”⁸⁷⁴ The AJC was willing to attach its name and seal to the pamphlets it published and some of the books that it sponsored, but for other publications, the organization preferred to maintain the impression that they were not in direct control of the content of the publication.⁸⁷⁵

During the January 27, 1907 meeting of the Executive, the AJC’s leaders also discussed a letter from Max Senior and David Philipson, both non-executive members of the AJC. In their letter, the two men suggested that the Committee establish a “Press Bureau to disseminate correct news of affairs in Russia.”⁸⁷⁶ Senior and Philipson were repeating some of the early deliberations of the founders of the AJC, including extensive debates that had occurred during the November 11, 1906 founder’s conference. A press bureau of some kind, dedicated to monitoring the media and attempting to influence newspaper coverage and editorial comment, had been one of the principal items discussed by the Committee’s founders when defining the objectives of the organization.

⁸⁷³ The minutes of the meeting indicate that Szold’s letter was dated January 23, 1907. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 27, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>. Szold would become famous for founding Hadassah, the worldwide Women’s Zionist organization.

⁸⁷⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 27, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>.

⁸⁷⁵ In 1945, the AJC began subsidizing the publication of *Commentary Magazine*. They did not designate *Commentary* as the official mouthpiece of the Committee. Their sponsorship of the publication was not a secret but the Committee continued to prefer to maintain the appearance of a separation between the editors of the magazine, who were in charge of making decisions about content, and the leaders of the advocacy group, who were financing the publication.

⁸⁷⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 27, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>.

Somewhat cautiously, the AJC leadership acted on Senior and Philipson's suggestion, and the Executive Committee passed the following resolution to explore how to establish a Press Bureau:

[I]t is the sense of this Committee that, for the prevention of massacres of Jews in Russia, no means can be considered so effective as the enlightenment of the people of the western world concerning real conditions in Russia, which have hitherto been systematically concealed or distorted by the power of the Russian Government; that to this end a Press Bureau should be established to gather and disseminate correct news of affairs in Russia...and that a Committee of three...be appointed to consider the best means to carry out the objects of this resolution, and especially to devise means for the distribution, through the press of the United States, of such news as may be gathered.⁸⁷⁷

Louis Marshall, the AJC's Secretary Herbert Friedenwald, and Leon Kamaiky, the publisher of the *Jewish Daily News*, were appointed to the committee of three. At the same meeting, the Executive Committee instructed Friedenwald to write to Dr. Paul Nathans, the President of Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, to ask what steps he and his organization had taken "to perfect a Press Bureau."⁸⁷⁸ Friedenwald was also instructed to inform Nathans that the AJC considered the creation of a Press Bureau to be "of the highest importance" and to inquire if the German organization was already involved in trying to disseminate information about anti-Jewish violence in Russia.⁸⁷⁹

On March 10, 1907, the AJC's Committee on Press Bureau reported that it had been in communication with Paul Nathans and that they had begun to independently collect information on the conditions of Russian Jews. The AJC's leaders discussed what to do with this information, including how to distribute it in the United States. Although the minutes of the March 10

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Executive Committee meeting provide very few details, they record that the AJC's leadership decided to form a subcommittee to seek out the cooperation of other organizations, including the Friends of Russian Freedom, to get their advice on how to gather more information and how to use a Press Bureau to distribute this information to both the delegates to the upcoming Hague Conference⁸⁸⁰ and, more broadly, to the American people.⁸⁸¹

A more thorough report from the Committee on Press Bureau was included as an addendum to the minutes of the March 10 Executive Committee meeting. In this report, the members of the Press Bureau Committee noted that there was "considerable dissatisfaction" with the details provided by Paul Nathans "respecting the steps he had taken to establish a Press Bureau in Berlin, and especially with regard to what he had done to procure the dissemination of information."⁸⁸² After expressing this dissatisfaction, the members of the committee outlined a three-point plan designed to "enlighten the American people."⁸⁸³

The first element of the plan called for articles to be written "of an educational character, descriptive of the existing political and educational institutions of the Russian people and of the characteristics of the Russian people in general."⁸⁸⁴ This element of the plan was the first expression of the Committee's ambition to produce content whose purpose would be to inform the broader American public. As will be seen, in its public advocacy work, the Committee would ultimately choose to prioritize the production of materials for distribution over efforts to influence the information being disseminated through wire services and newspapers.

⁸⁸⁰ The 1907 Hague Conference was organized to augment the agreements made during the 1899 Hague Conference on the laws of war ("the Hague Conventions").

⁸⁸¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 10, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>.

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

As a second element, the plan suggested that Jewish businessmen, the so-called “large advertisers” in cities across the country, be requested to approach newspaper editors “as individuals” and request that their publications “furnish more adequate information along definite lines” in their articles.⁸⁸⁵ This part of the plan was in essence a form of quiet diplomacy. The AJC was suggesting that Jewish businessmen use the leverage they possessed with newspapers (because of the money they spent on purchasing space for advertisements) to influence what was being published about the persecution of Russian Jews. The inclusion of this use of quiet diplomacy in the plan is significant because it could be described as an attempt to both manipulate the media and disguise that attempt by emphasizing that these efforts were to be undertaken at the behest of individual advertisers, as opposed to on behalf of the AJC or the American Jewish community.

It is not clear that the AJC ever formally implemented this element of the plan, nor is there evidence that the tactic had any impact. Frustration with the mainstream press, including media outlets that were owned or edited by American Jews, would be a constant irritant for the early leaders of the organization. The AJC was consistent in finding fault with the way American newspapers covered Jewish affairs, and world events concerning Jews, and this dissatisfaction contributed to the organization’s decision to become involved in publishing both books and pamphlets, but not a newspaper of its own.

The third element of the plan by the Committee on Press Bureau reiterated the organization’s ambition to establish a Press Bureau in the United States. No further details were given beyond the fact that the Committee had discussed who should lead the Press Bureau, and that there was consensus that it should be directed by someone “well informed about Russian

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

affairs.”⁸⁸⁶ George Kennan was among those discussed as possible directors, but it appears that no action was taken to offer him the position.⁸⁸⁷

The Press Bureau Committee’s Report indicates that the AJC was committed to establishing a Press Bureau based, at least in part, on the earlier experiences of some Executive Committee members of using the press to disseminate information. Cyrus Adler commented during the March 10 Executive Committee meeting that “he had frequently sent ‘copy’” to correspondents from the three largest wire services, and that, as a result, this information had ultimately been circulated to “three to four thousand” newspapers in the United States.⁸⁸⁸ Adler suggested that the AJC gather a list of useful reference books on Russia and begin compiling a list of potential titles for articles. The Committee could have these articles written on commission and then distributed to specific newspapers.⁸⁸⁹

The plan to commission the drafting of articles would later become an important aspect of the AJC’s involvement in publishing its own materials.⁸⁹⁰ The AJC’s leaders recognized from a very early stage in the development of the organization that exploiting the dependence of many American newspapers on wire services as sources of information on events around the world represented a potentially efficient means of reaching a large audience, but the AJC’s leaders also recognized some problems and pitfalls to using this approach to distribute information. One serious problem concerned disseminating information about anti-Jewish violence in Russia. In

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁰ The organization considered publishing articles on topics that they thought should be getting greater public and media exposure from a very early date. For example, during the Executive Committee’s meeting on October 6, 1907, the leadership discussed commissioning an article on the persecution of Jews in Romania. The leaders were explicit that the purpose of commissioning the writing of this article was to circulate the material throughout the country and bring the “situation before the public.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 25, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

particular, the leaders were concerned about how the wire services would handle situations in which the Russian government offered a version or interpretation of events that contrasted with the information being distributed by the AJC. For obvious reasons, the Committee placed no trust in the Russian Government, and the leadership had serious doubts about the accuracy of the information being transmitted by the wire services out of Russia, and subsequently reproduced or cited as accurate in thousands of American newspapers. With these concerns in mind, the Executive Committee members began to debate the idea of “procuring correspondents in Russia” to gather uncensored or unbiased information that would not be tainted by the intelligence and security services of the Czar’s regime.⁸⁹¹ The exact date is not clear from the available records, but, at some point in early 1907, the AJC’s Executive Committee appointed a subcommittee, consisting of Judah Magnes, Elias Wolf Lewin-Epstein, and Herbert Friedenwald, “to consider a correspondent in Russia.”⁸⁹²

The leaders’ debates about finding correspondents in Russia coincided with the Committee’s efforts to establish its own press bureau. These simultaneous efforts reflect the leadership’s ambition to develop the AJC’s capabilities to both gather and distribute information, but, as will be seen, the organization encountered difficulties during its attempts to realize both projects. There is a very limited amount of evidence, but the efforts to establish a press bureau did not go smoothly for two major reasons. First, while the leaders of the Committee wanted the organization to be able to exercise influence on how events in Russia were covered, they did not know how to accomplish this aim without drawing negative or antagonistic attention to their efforts. The founders of the AJC had expertise in numerous areas of advocacy, particularly in

⁸⁹¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 21, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*

law, academia, and politics, but none of the members of the Committee on Press Bureau had experience as press agents or publicists, and the leaders were not knowledgeable about the operation of a press bureau. Secondly, there was disagreement among the leadership about whether the organization actually needed a “publicity bureau” instead of a press bureau; the key distinguishing feature between the two institutions being that a publicity bureau would be more transparent about the advocacy nature of its work, which was to influence the substance of media coverage; a press bureau would purport to be more objective in reporting the truth of events. The press bureau envisioned by some of the AJC’s founders ideally would be able to influence press coverage to be favourable to Jewish interests. The press bureau that the leadership wanted to establish would have, in essence, been an adaption of quiet diplomacy, providing a means to lobby journalists and editors in addition to government officials and lawmakers.

During the October 7, 1907 meeting of the Executive Committee, Judah Magnes “suggested the appointments of a Committee on publicity, whose object should be to furnish information to the Press upon matters of interest to the Jews of this country.”⁸⁹³ The leaders of the Committee discussed the suggestion, and referred the matter to the Committee on Press Bureau. During the next meeting of the leadership, Louis Marshall reported “progress,”⁸⁹⁴ but no details are recorded in the minutes. Significantly, perhaps because it reveals the ambivalence of the leadership, the only detail recorded is that the title of the Committee on Press Bureau had been changed to the Committee on Press Bureau and Publicity.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁸⁹⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 9, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

The following month, the question of the press bureau or publicity bureau became part of the jurisdiction of the AJC's Statistical Committee, which was composed of Justice Nathan Bijur, Professor J.H. Hollander, Jacob Hollander, Professor Morris Loeb, and Cyrus Sulzberger. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the AJC's Statistical Committee was the nascent research department of the organization. Other than Herbert Friedenwald, who in his capacity as Secretary of the organization was ex-officio a member of every AJC subcommittee, there was no overlap in the composition of the Statistical Committee and the Press Bureau and Publicity Committee,⁸⁹⁶ and the minutes of the December 1, 1907 Executive Committee meeting record that it was "resolved to refer all matters respecting publication and kindred subjects, hitherto referred to the Press Bureau Committee to the Statistical Committee."⁸⁹⁷ After this resolution, the idea of establishing a press or publicity bureau stagnated.

The question of a press bureau was not revived for further discussion by the leadership for five years. In the interim, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the Committee concentrated on building its capacity to conduct independent research projects, and continued to exercise quiet diplomacy to further its agenda, especially during the early phases of the treaty abrogation campaign, and regarding its efforts to prevent the implementation of new immigration restrictions. While the leadership of the Committee was intermittently debating establishing a press or publicity bureau, the organization was, as previously noted, exploring options for securing better information about events in Russia, including the hiring of their own foreign

⁸⁹⁶ This was one of the few instances where Louis Marshall was on the outside of an internal decision-making body within the Committee. During the Executive Committee meeting on October 6, 1907, Louis Marshall introduced a motion to have the organization's Secretary regarded as an ex-officio member of every AJC subcommittee created by the Executive Committee. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁸⁹⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 1, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

correspondents. The idea of establishing a network of correspondents in Russia was suggested to the AJC by a Mr. A. Lubarsky in a letter he sent to the Committee dated April 11, 1907.⁸⁹⁸ On April 21, 1907, the AJC's Executive Committee appointed a subcommittee, consisting of Elias Wolf Lewin-Epstein, Joseph H. Cohen, Cyrus Sulzberger, Judah Magnes, and David H. Lieberman, to study Lubarsky's suggestions and confer directly with him about his suggestion.⁸⁹⁹

The proposal to secure independent correspondents in Russia was discussed at length during the May 29, 1907 meeting of the AJC's Executive Committee. The subcommittee appointed to meet with Lubarsky recommended that the AJC proceed with a plan to establish "direct communication with correspondents in Russia."⁹⁰⁰ The subcommittee also reported that Lubarsky had volunteered to travel to Russia the following month to recruit the AJC's correspondents. The plan called for Lubarsky to recruit correspondents for the AJC in six cities: Warsaw, Kiev, Odessa, Wilna (Vilna), St. Petersburg, and Moscow. Their duties would include keeping the AJC "informed of the condition of affairs in their respective districts, and to furnish, so far as possible, all information requested of them by the Committee."⁹⁰¹

The subcommittee overseeing the implementation of the plan to recruit correspondents in Russia made a progress report to the AJC's Executive Committee on October 7, 1907. According to the minutes, the reading of their report led to an "extended discussion" but no action was taken

⁸⁹⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 21, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on May 29, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 15, 2014.
<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16443>.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

and further discussion was deferred until the next meeting.⁹⁰² Although the minutes do not record any specifics about the leaders' discussions, based on subsequent events, it is apparent that some of the Committee's leaders must have had serious misgivings about sending Lubarsky to Russia to essentially recruit agents for the Committee.⁹⁰³

The issue of the Russia correspondents was discussed again by the Executive Committee the following month, but again no action was taken, and the minutes of their November 9, 1907 meeting record no details of the discussion.⁹⁰⁴ More than four months passed, and the question of hiring foreign correspondents did not come up again until the March 22, 1908 meeting of the Executive Committee, during which the "Committee on Russian Correspondents was discharged" without further comment.⁹⁰⁵ Lubarsky's plan to recruit foreign correspondents was abandoned by the Committee.

The idea of securing independent correspondents in Russia was an ambitious plan; however, it was fraught with risks. These included uncertainties about recruiting able and reliable correspondents in Russia and about the personal security of the correspondents themselves. Even if Lubarsky had been successful in recruiting the correspondents, the AJC would not have been able to guarantee the correspondents' security nor could the organization

⁹⁰² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 16, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁹⁰³ The question of recruiting correspondents in Russia was further discussed by the Executive Committee during their meeting on October 6, 1907. Again, few details about the deliberations are recorded in the records but the minutes of the meeting indicated that, after correspondence from the Hilfsverein and Lubarsky were read and further discussion, the question was "reconsidered, and the consideration of the subject of Foreign Correspondents was deferred until the next meeting of the Executive Committee." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 6, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 10, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁹⁰⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 9, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 25, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

⁹⁰⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 22, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed January 16, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16445>.

trust the accuracy of the news information the correspondents would be able to relay about events in Russia.

The leaders of the AJC wanted to both monitor the media and to influence the content and the tone (or slant) of newspaper coverage of events that were pivotal to Jewish interests, including prompting help for Russian Jews. Although this was their ambition, the leaders confronted the reality that to exercise this kind of influence required the practice of propaganda or the use of press agents, and the leadership did not want the AJC to be accused of engaging in attempts to manipulate the media. Allegations of this kind would have been counterproductive to the leaderships' aims, among which was to discourage allegations of Jewish influence over the mainstream press that, in turn, might foster anti-Semitism.

After the idea of correspondents in Russia and the press/publicity bureau plans were set aside, the organization pivoted to concentrating on using traditional quiet diplomacy to further its objectives. The *shadtlan* and *Hofjude* techniques of advocacy (discussed in previous chapters of this study) suited the early phases of the two most significant advocacy campaigns in which the organization was involved before the First World War. The Committee's two main objectives were first preventing the passing of new immigration restrictions and, second, promoting the treaty abrogation campaign. However, the traditional techniques were not enough, and, ultimately, influencing public opinion became an important aspect of both of these campaigns, and it was during these campaigns that the AJC began to produce its own materials to educate the American people.

Throughout these two major campaigns, the AJC continued to develop its advocacy infrastructure. Although unaided by a press bureau or foreign correspondents, the AJC did not abandon efforts to gather information on a wide variety of subjects important to the Jewish

community, to disseminate this information, and to offer interpretations of it to American politicians, American Jewry, and the broader American public. To gather information, the leaders of the Committee built their own research department. To disseminate that information, the organization turned away from newspapers and became involved in publishing books and pamphlets.

Publicity Reconsidered: The AJC's New Subcommittee on Publicity Bureau and the Treaty Abrogation Campaign

Even as the AJC emphasized the quiet lobbying of lawmakers and the publication of its own materials to further its agenda, the idea of establishing some kind of press or publicity bureau did not completely fade away. The AJC's subcommittee on Press and Publicity Bureau was never disbanded and, in 1911, Louis Marshall, the subcommittee's Chairman, and Jacob Schiff, revived discussions among the AJC's leadership about establishing an internal Publicity Bureau for the AJC.

Based on the records of the discussions, it appears that Louis Marshall's and Jacob Schiff's attendance at a political conference with President William Howard Taft prompted them to renew the AJC's leadership's interest in establishing a press or publicity bureau. The February 15, 1911 meeting at the White House, which was also attended by leaders of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and B'nai B'rith, had been arranged so that the leaders of American Jewry could lobby the President to abrogate an 1832 commercial treaty between Russia and the United States.

The campaign's aim was to persuade American lawmakers and the President to have the United States withdraw from the treaty on the grounds that Russia, by refusing to grant American Jews visas to travel into and through Russian territory, was in breach of the agreement. The

campaign began as a traditional exercise in quiet diplomacy, but it escalated into the AJC's first major public advocacy campaign.

After months of Jewish leaders quietly meeting with American lawmakers, representatives of President William Howard Taft's administration invited a delegation of Jewish leaders to meet with the President. For the Jewish delegation, the meeting ultimately was a failure: Taft was sympathetic to their goals and agreed that Russia was violating the terms of the treaty, but the President refused to support the abrogation campaign.⁹⁰⁶ The President's objections to the abrogation campaign were grounded in concerns about protecting American commercial investments in Russia, including safeguarding the large factories that the Singer Manufacturing Company and the McCormick Harvester Company had built in Russia

Jacob Schiff was angered by the President's refusal to support the abrogation campaign and, although the language of the record is nuanced and muted, there is evidence that Schiff may have lost his temper during the meeting with the President.⁹⁰⁷ In his report to the AJC's Executive Committee on the meeting with Taft, Louis Marshall wrote about Schiff's agitation:

⁹⁰⁶ Marshall wrote a detailed report on the meeting between the delegation of Jewish leaders and President Taft. Marshall noted that Taft agreed with their interpretation that Russia was violating the treaty but that the President also believed that commercial interests could not be discounted despite the breaches of the agreement: "He said that our position was correct; that this was discrimination against American citizens, and that our Government could not acquiesce..[but the President] felt that this was a matter which had a great many complications; that business interests of a very extensive character had been established in Russia in reliance upon the protection guaranteed in that treaty." [Emphasis in original]. Marshall also quoted how the President phrased his refusal to endorse the abrogation campaign: "You say, gentlemen, that you do not want to go to war with Russia. If you don't want to go to war, what good can abrogation of these treaties do? I cannot see that any good would be accomplished... It might leave us without any treaty and give rise to action on the part of Russia against our citizens, and we would have no treaty to fall back on. I would break the treaty, If [sic] I could feel sure that some good would be accomplished. I do not see my way clear to do so, and I am not prepared to break the treaty. I believe, however, that in time, we might accomplish something by diplomatic representations." Marshall also recorded his impression about how Taft handled the meeting with the Jewish delegation: "The President had a most unhappy half hour. He kept his equanimity and good humor throughout but it was evident that he was very uncomfortable." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹⁰⁷ Louis Marshall's report on the meeting with Taft describes an incident where Schiff, when asking the President to an issue a public statement supporting the abrogation campaign, is quoted as contradicting the President. Marshall

I never knew Mr. Schiff to be so much worked up over anything. He considers it to be the most vital question before the country to-day [sic] as far as the Jews are concerned. He realizes that we must make a fight all along the line, and that we must now initiate an elaborate campaign of education. He has expressed a strong desire for the immediate establishment of a publicity bureau with the best literary talent at the head, and has stated that the necessary funds will be forthcoming.⁹⁰⁸

After discussing Marshall's report, the AJC's Executive Committee resolved to appoint a new subcommittee "to arrange for the immediate establishment of a publicity bureau."⁹⁰⁹ Marshall, Schiff, Cyrus Alder, Julius Rosenwald, and A. Leo Weil, were appointed to this new subcommittee.

Another resolution passed during the same Executive Committee meeting reinforced the AJC's decision to try and influence public opinion to achieve the goals of the abrogation campaign. During the meeting, Cyrus Adler "pointed out that heretofore [the AJC] had attempted to secure the passport right through executive and diplomatic action."⁹¹⁰ Adler then stated that the Committee "had formally passed that stage, and that we have nothing to expect from Washington."⁹¹¹ Finally, Adler moved that "the Committee now endeavor to secure the righting of the passport matter by Congressional action and by informing the people of the United States of the facts with a view to influencing public opinion on the subject."⁹¹² Adler's motion was

describes Schiff as discussing this matter "very earnestly and very strongly." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹⁰⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹¹² *Ibid.*

approved by the Committee's leadership; he subsequently referred to this vote as "the adoption of the policy of public agitation."⁹¹³

Since the start of the abrogation campaign, the leaders of the Committee had been persistent in arguing that Russia's refusal to allow Jews holding American passports (some of whom were Russian-born American citizens) to travel freely through Russian territory was a violation of the terms of agreements between the two countries and a violation of the spirit of American constitutional law, which prohibited race and religion-based discrimination. The AJC was now committing to impress this argument on the minds and emotions of the American people by arguing that Russia's failure to abide by the terms of the treaty was a stain on "the honor of the nation."⁹¹⁴

It was in this context of planning and preparing for the public advocacy phase of the abrogation campaign that discussions about establishing an AJC publicity bureau were given renewed interest by the Committee's leadership. The new publicity bureau subcommittee, under Louis Marshall's direction, reported during the March 19, 1911 Executive Committee meeting

⁹¹³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹¹⁴ According to Marshall's report on the meeting with President Taft, the phrase "honor of the nation" was the language that Jacob Schiff used when describing to Taft the significance of Russia's treatment of Jews travelling on American passports. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>. There is evidence that the AJC was already preparing to become more active in terms on trying to influence public opinion before the adoption of Cyrus Adler's resolution. Even before the resolution was passed by the leadership, the Committee had already made arrangements to print and broadly distribute over thirty thousand copies of a speech made by Louis Marshall, entitled "Russia and the American Passport." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

that they had sought out the advice of both Samuel Strauss, the Editor of the *New York Globe*, and Adolph Ochs, the owner of the *New York Times*.⁹¹⁵

The Ochs and Strauss Debate

In his March 19, 1911 committee on publicity bureau report to the Executive Committee, Marshall provided no details about Ochs' advice, but he recounted that Strauss had suggested that the AJC "make use of some existing agency in the matter of distribution of news."⁹¹⁶ Strauss' suggestion was that, rather than develop its own bureau, the AJC could simply become a client of an existing press or publicity agency. Marshall reported that Strauss had declined an offer to directly participate in managing AJC's media relations but had "promised to send the Committee his suggestions at length."⁹¹⁷

Meanwhile, during the same meeting, the AJC's leadership also discussed the importance of finding better news sources on events in Russia. The plan of recruiting their own correspondents had been abandoned, but the Committee did not want to rely on wire services. In the leadership's view, the *Jewish Chronicle of London* appeared to have better Russian sources, and they decided "to find out what these sources are."⁹¹⁸ In this case, the leadership's motivation to gather better information was connected to a specific purpose. The Committee's leaders were contemplating a plan to compile a list of "concrete examples" of Russia's treaty violations with a view to publishing these examples in newspapers articles.⁹¹⁹ The publicity bureau subcommittee

⁹¹⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on March 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

was also empowered to “solicit the cooperation of Mr. [Adolf] Kraus of the B’nai B’rith.”⁹²⁰

Although B’nai B’rith was one the Committee’s major rivals, during the abrogation campaign, the two organizations adopted the same strategies and coordinated their efforts.⁹²¹

When the AJC’s Executive Committee met again the following month, both Samuel Strauss and Adolph Ochs were in attendance. Neither was officially connected to the AJC, but the two had been brought in “to confer with the Committee on the matter of the publicity bureau.”⁹²² During the meeting, Marshall reported that after a series of consultations with both Strauss and Ochs, Strauss had arranged several meetings for the members of the AJC’s publicity subcommittee with Atherton Bromwell, the President of the Century Syndicate. Marshall described the Century Syndicate as “a news distribution company;”⁹²³ however, in essence, the Century Syndicate was a commissioned third-party that, on behalf of its clients, lobbied newspapers and wire services to publish content that its clients considered favourable to their interests.⁹²⁴ This so-called news distribution company aimed to “shape” the news to “meet the needs of [its] clients,”⁹²⁵ and from the perspective of optics, the Century Syndicate, like the other

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹²¹ Although there were often contentious rivalries between the major American Jewish leadership organizations of the era, during the abrogation campaign, there was strong cooperation between the AJC, B’nai B’rith and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations [UAHC]. “The Committee,” according to Naomi Cohen, “widened its base of operations for the [abrogation] campaign. It invited the active cooperation of B’nai B’rith, particularly because of that body’s popular strength in the West, as well as the Board of Delegates of the UAHC. Petty disagreements popped up...but officially the three groups ran the campaign jointly. Besides gaining additional resources, [through this alliance] the Committee avoided any major challenge from within the Jewish community to its handling of the passport Question.” See: Cohen, 71.

⁹²² Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹²³ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁴ Among the Century Syndicate’s clients was the Royal Baking Power Company, which hired the group to help handle the negative press coverage and public fallout over the alleged dangers of eating benzoate in baking soda. See: Clayton A. Coppin and Jack High, *The Politics of Purity: Harvey Washington Wiley and the Origins of Federal Food Policy* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 126-127.

⁹²⁵ Coppin and High use this phrase to describe the activities of one particular Washington, D.C.-based press agent known as “Poker Bill,” but it is a fitting description of the nature of the activities of press agents, particularly during the early-twentieth century. Poker Bill’s actual name was William Wolf Smith. See: Coppin and High, 127.

press agencies of the era, created the facade of a separation between its clients and newspapers, thus minimizing the appearance of press manipulation. Marshall reported that Bromwell had tendered a proposal to have his company carry out the AJC's publicity and media relations work for an annual fee of fifteen thousand dollars.⁹²⁶

Bromwell's plan was discussed at length by the Committee's leadership on April 23, 1911, and there was a powerful debate between the owner of the *New York Times* and the editor of the *New York Globe*. Ochs spoke out against Bromwell's plan. According to the minutes, Ochs "feared that the success of the whole publicity campaign would be jeopardized if the Committee made use of a press agency."⁹²⁷ The bad optics of the strategy was Ochs' main concern. He noted that if "it were found out that the matter issued by the Committee was paid for to an agency, the articles sent out would soon be blacklisted and newspaper publishers would refuse to accept them."⁹²⁸ In Ochs' view, the "better plan would be for the Committee to engage the interest and services of men of standing...ask them to write articles, pay for them and then sell them to the papers. This would not only be a more straightforward way of doing things, but might become self-supporting."⁹²⁹ Beyond the potential economic benefits, concerns about optics were at the

⁹²⁶ The minutes of the meeting record that Bromwell also tendered a proposal that would have divided the Century Syndicate's fees into monthly instalments, as opposed to an annual retainer. In terms of paying for the campaign, Jacob Schiff reported to the other leaders of the Committee that twenty-five thousand dollars would be made available to finance these efforts. Schiff reported that fifteen thousand would be procured from funds left over from the Russian Relief Campaign, a fund raising campaign that Schiff had helped to lead three years before the founding of the AJC. Schiff also reported that the remaining ten thousand "had been assured from another source." The source is not named, but given Schiff's enthusiasm for the publicity campaign, his considerable wealth, and history of funding on his own accord initiatives on behalf of the entire American Jewish Community, it is reasonable to assume that he was offering to personally provide the balance of the financing for the campaign. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹²⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*

heart of Ochs' proposal. "The employment of a syndicate," Ochs argued, "smacks too much of promotion schemes of a disreputable character. It is better for the Committee to rely on the justice of the cause and eminent presentation of it for securing publicity."⁹³⁰

Strauss, however, defended the idea of hiring the Century Syndicate by drawing an analogy between the activities of press agencies and political lobbyists. He indicated that he had his own misgivings about the activities of press agencies but, in his view, there was no other way for the Committee to circulate information to influence the American people. "Even the best causes," Strauss argued, "occasionally need the services of the lobbyist to bring those causes to the attention of legislators."⁹³¹ Strauss clearly supported the goals of the abrogation campaign; he believed that it was of sufficient importance that the Committee could risk and withstand being accused of engaging in press manipulation and being labeled propagandist. "The campaign must be carried out systematically," he urged. "We must harp on the same string until American public opinion is educated on the subject."⁹³²

Strauss' comments during the meeting with the AJC's Executive Committee reveal that his support for using a press agency was motivated, at least in part, by the nature of the subject matter and the goals of the abrogation campaign. The AJC was trying to get American lawmakers to abrogate the treaty, and they needed the American public's support to secure the legislators' votes and the President's support; however, abrogation was only a means to an end for the Committee. An American withdrawal from its agreements with Russia was of symbolic

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*

⁹³² *Ibid.*

importance, as opposed to practical importance.⁹³³ The AJC knew that Russia would continue to discriminate against its own Jewish population and against American Jews seeking to travel to Russia, regardless of the status of the treaty obligations between Russia and the United States. However, the AJC had additional concerns and objectives.

During the abrogation campaign, the Committee used the fact that discrimination was being practiced by Russia against American passport holders, some of whom were American Jews, as a predicate to further other elements of the organization's political agenda. The Committee was trying to embarrass the Russian government, who purported to preside over a modernizing nation that was open to, and soliciting, international investment, and to encourage it to become a genuinely open society that did not discriminate against its Jewish citizens. Further, over the long term, the AJC's leadership envisioned the abrogation campaign as a first step to ending the discrimination Russia practiced against its Jewish citizens, including obliging them as a matter of law to live in the Pale of Settlement. This was the most ambitious and frankly far-fetched of the AJC's goals for the abrogation campaign, but there is a considerable amount of evidence that confirms that this long term goal was one of the justifications for their advocacy campaign.⁹³⁴

The issues involved in the abrogation campaign, and the breadth of the issues, were complicated, and they presented formidable challenges for the Committee in how and what to

⁹³³ Some AJC leaders were in fact worried that the abrogation campaign could backfire if the American public became more concerned about the potential economic consequences of breaking the treaty with Russia than with Russia's treatment of the few Americans who travelled to the country.

⁹³⁴ Louis Marshall was very clear about the long term goals of the abrogation campaign. "The result," he stated, "will be that [Russia] will soon recognize the folly of refusing to a portion of its own subjects the rights and privileges that it grants to the subjects of other countries. The ultimate result of the entire movement will be the opening of the Pale by the gradual grant of concessions to certain classes of Jewish business men and artisans." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

communicate to the American people, particularly because the Committee wished to avoid any backlash from the campaign that would reflect badly on the American Jewish community and world Jewry. In his support for using a press agency, Strauss believed that the goals of the campaign would not by themselves connect with the broader American public. He argued that the American people “do not care anything about passports.”⁹³⁵ Most Americans could not afford to travel; the majority did not have passports. Strauss thought that the Committee would need to describe their objectives using ideas and language that would actually resonate with the masses: “Our theme must be that there is discrimination being practiced against American citizens.”⁹³⁶ The Committee needed to convey to ordinary Americans that Russia was insulting or disrespecting their country; this was a theme that would resonate or connect with the broader American public. In his view, a press agency was in the best position to communicate this message to the broadest possible audience while simultaneously minimizing the fact the American Jews specifically were the foremost victims of Russia’s treaty violations and American Jewish leadership organizations were the main supporters and coordinators of the abrogation campaign.

The Aftermath of the Ochs and Strauss Debate and the Abrogation Campaign

The vigorous discussion during the April 23 Executive Committee meeting about the publicity campaign and the contracting of a press agency ended strangely. After Strauss concluded his remarks supporting the hiring of the Century Syndicate, Jacob Schiff simply “moved...that the entire matter be referred to Mr. Strauss and Mr. Ochs for consideration, and

⁹³⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹³⁶ *Ibid.*

that the Committee abide by their unanimous decision.”⁹³⁷ Schiff’s motion was approved by the AJC’s leadership.

In essence, the Executive Committee was handing over the power to decide on both the future of the AJC’s press and publicity bureau and the organization’s media relations strategies to two outsiders who had taken opposite sides of the debate. Admittedly, both Strauss and Ochs were experts in the field, but this level of deference to their expertise is surprising considering the significance of the advocacy strategies being debated, the stakes of the abrogation campaign, and the egos of the AJC’s leadership. These were not men who customarily handed over control of affairs that concerned them; they guarded their control over the AJC and its activities, and there are no other examples of the Committee’s leadership delegating this kind of decision-making power to outsiders during the early history of the organization.

It is noteworthy that nothing came of this transfer of power. According to the available records, there is no evidence that Strauss and Ochs came to a consensus nor made any further suggestions to the AJC’s leadership. Their involvement in the Committee’s leadership’s deliberations simply ended without further comment.

Although Straus and Ochs’ involvement went nowhere, in contrast to the earlier debates over the establishment of a press bureau, after the end of Strauss and Ochs’ debate, discussions among the leadership about how the Committee should approach its relationship with the media did not stagnate. The abrogation campaign was ongoing, and the AJC’s leadership made a number of significant decisions that shaped the organization’s advocacy and relationship with the media during the last phases of the abrogation campaign, and throughout the early-twentieth century. The AJC did not hire the Century Syndicate nor any other press agency; rather, the

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

organization maintained its subcommittee on publicity. But, as will be detailed in the following chapter, the subcommittee's work became closely intertwined with the Committee's burgeoning research department. Further, the AJC did establish an internal Press Bureau, although the Committee limited the mandate of the internal bureau to "collate all news items on Russian affairs and to distribute information to the American press."⁹³⁸ The AJC began distributing materials to newspapers and wire services. The leadership clearly hoped that on its own, this material would influence the nature of press coverage of events in Russia. They did not, however, implement a systematic campaign to lobby journalists and editors;⁹³⁹ instead, through their own new research department, they began creating materials that could be distributed to the general public to further the Committee's objectives. The Committee's leaders, most importantly Louis Marshall, also began releasing public statements to the press.

The AJC made decisive moves to become more involved in public advocacy, but the leadership was conscious of the optics of their efforts. Through speaking to the press and releasing their own materials, they were engaging in modern and public forms of communal defense and public advocacy. Quiet diplomacy and the silent treatment in response to anti-Semitism remained crucially important tools, but it was during the abrogation campaign that the Committee began to transition into a modern communal leadership and advocacy organization. From the seeds of an internal press bureau, a research department, publication projects, and press releases, overt forms of public advocacy were emerging.

⁹³⁸ Schachner, 33.

⁹³⁹ The leaders of the AJC maintained strong contacts with leading journalists and editors, including Samuel Strauss and Adolph Ochs. There can be no doubt that they tried as individuals to influence the nature of the media's coverage of events that concerned American Jews and world Jewry. It is beyond the scope of this study, however, to trace the potential impact of these individual efforts to persuade editors. In many cases, there may be no record of these efforts, as much of this form of quiet diplomacy would have been done during face to face meetings or private telephone calls. As an organization, the evidence suggests that the Committee pivoted away from focusing on influencing the press towards gathering its own information, doing its own research, and releasing its own materials in the form of books and pamphlets.

The abrogation campaign can also be distinguished for the growing sophistication of the AJC's communications strategies. As already noted, the issues underlying the abrogation campaign were complicated, and in adopting a policy of education and public agitation, the leaders of the AJC were conscientious and deliberate about the message they would try to impress on the broader American public. They sought to frame the passport affair as a matter of principle and of national honor, not as a Jewish issue. Their message was that Russia's discrimination against American passport holders was a violation of Russia's treaty obligations and an affront to the values of the American nation, and thus to all Americans, irrespective of their religious beliefs. In the future, this would become a pattern in the AJC's public advocacy. The leaders consistently aimed to "Americanize" issues by emphasizing that their positions and their advocacy was consistent with American ideals and values and in the best interest of all Americans, regardless of faith. During the abrogation campaign, the Committee sought to broaden the issue as much as possible by highlighting Russia's discrimination against Christians holding American passports. "To hammer home the thesis that theirs was an *American* cause, the Committee leaders recounted over and over how Russia refused visas to Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries."⁹⁴⁰

Abandoning its normally cautious approaches, during the final phases of the abrogation campaign, the AJC began to engage in numerous public advocacy measures to build public support for the United States to withdraw from the treaty with Russia. The AJC commissioned pamphlets and articles on the subject. It issued public statements in newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*. "When editorials or statements appeared which might have

⁹⁴⁰ Cohen, 67.

affected the cause adversely, the Committee prepared public rebuttals.”⁹⁴¹ The organization urged lawmakers and prominent public figures to make statements favouring abrogation.⁹⁴² The Committee’s leaders lobbied both the Republicans and Democrats to include pro-abrogation statements in their election platforms, and the leaders lobbied state legislatures to pass resolutions supporting the campaign. The organization even went so far as to coordinate public demonstrations and rallies, including one in New York City which featured speeches delivered by Woodrow Wilson and William Randolph Hearst.⁹⁴³

The abrogation campaign, which successfully culminated in 1911 with the United States notifying the Russian government that it was withdrawing from the 1832 treaty, was a major achievement for the AJC. The Committee unquestionably believed that the campaign was historically significant and, because the AJC had coordinated both the quiet diplomacy and public agitation that characterized the campaign, the organization’s leadership believed they deserved the credit for this success. “We have just passed,” Jacob Schiff stated, “through an episode which, in my opinion, is of greater importance than anything that has happened since civil rights were granted to the Jews under the first Napoleon, or since English Jews were admitted to Parliament. I do not think that, in our own time, the importance of this thing will be recognized.”⁹⁴⁴ Schiff’s statement is hyperbolic, but it must be regarded as reflecting the triumphalism of the AJC’s leadership, who for the first time in the short history of the

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁹⁴² For example, Hebert Friedenwald corresponded with the Reverend Charles H. Parkhurst, who “had expressed interest in the movement to abrogate the treaty and had written several articles on the subject for the New York Evening Journal.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on April 23, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

⁹⁴³ Cohen, 71.

⁹⁴⁴ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 25, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 26, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16452>.

organization, had set a definite political goal, devoted considerable resources to its achievement, and campaigned openly.

Lives were not saved by the abrogation campaign; it was a largely symbolic victory. Nevertheless, it was certainly a pivotal moment in the history of Jewish activism in the United States. According to Naomi Cohen, the Committee “only a handful in number but fired by strong passion, succeeded in arousing American public opinion and in forcing the hand of an antagonistic administration.”⁹⁴⁵ Cohen also argues, however, that, from the perspective of Jewish political activism, the campaign should not be considered as a major precedent. In her view, the AJC’s public advocacy on abrogation “was a single, self-contained episode...after successfully completing an open campaign where issues were aired, popular cooperation solicited, and political noses counted, the American Jewish Committee retreated into its shell of caution. Never again did it publically show the same degree of self-confidence.”⁹⁴⁶ It is true that, during the first twenty-five years of its history, the AJC did not engage in another public advocacy campaign with the same intensity and visibility as the abrogation campaign, and it is also true that, in the aftermath of this achievement, the Committee did revert to its emphasis on quiet diplomacy and the silent treatment; however, the organization did not renounce the strategies that it had successfully applied during the abrogation campaign, and Cohen understates the lasting significance of the advocacy strategies and institutional infrastructure that emerged during the early days of the Committee and which shaped its future public advocacy efforts. As will be seen in the following chapter, during the leadership tenure of Louis Marshall, by devoting considerable resources to the development of its own research department, and gradually

⁹⁴⁵ Cohen, 54.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

becoming more involved in publishing books and pamphlets, the AJC developed, refined, and practiced sophisticated public advocacy techniques.

Chapter 7: Building the Infrastructure for Public Advocacy, Part II: Research and Publications

Introduction

Between 1906 and 1929, the leaders of the American Jewish Committee resolutely built the organization's capacity to carry out research projects and to disseminate the findings of those projects to a broad audience.⁹⁴⁷ This chapter will show that, from the beginning of the organization's history, the AJC's mandate included efforts to influence public opinion, and from the outset, the Committee undertook a series of initiatives to develop its public advocacy infrastructure, to engage in independent research, to collaborate on research projects with other organizations (including other Jewish leadership organizations and the American government), and to release materials to edify the broader American public.

Among the AJC's leaders' first acts was to establish a subcommittee to develop a bureau of information and statistics for the AJC. The Committee established an internal Bureau of Information and Statistics at its founding in 1906. The AJC had substantial ambitions for the Statistics Bureau; it was envisioned as a means of influencing public opinion. "The American Jewish Committee strongly stressed 'enlightenment' as its proper function as defense agency."⁹⁴⁸ Statistics that were both accurate and perceived by the broader American public as free from bias were considered very useful as a means of influencing public opinion. This emphasis on

⁹⁴⁷ The American Jewish Committee Protocol of Meetings, February 3 and 4, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16438>. Publications had been among the topics discussed during the very first of the preliminary meetings of the founders of the AJC. Although the delegates at the first conference were not able to come to a consensus about the composition and mandate of any new proposed representative body for American Jewry, they were able to agree that the new organization would ultimately require a "Committee on Publication." According to the minutes, Jacob Schiff proposed the creation of this committee near the close of the conference and Cyrus Adler, Joseph Jacobs, Oscar Straus, and Cyrus Sulzberger were selected to form this committee. While this committee was formed during the first conference, it must be noted that the delegates did not define its mandate.

⁹⁴⁸ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 33.

empirical methods and the collection of data was characteristic of social reform organizations during the Progressive Era. The creation of the AJC's subcommittee inaugurated a commitment to conducting research and to investigating issues that were relevant to American Jewry.⁹⁴⁹ In terms of publications, also among the leaders' first decisions were providing financing and assuming editorial control over the *American Jewish Year Book*, an annual digest whose first seven volumes had been edited and published by the Jewish Publication Society of America.⁹⁵⁰

The first twenty-five years of the AJC's involvement in research and publishing was a period of experimentation. During the organization's early history, the AJC's leaders were exploring different ways of building, funding, and coordinating the organization's capacity to conduct research and influence public opinion by publishing materials. The case studies included in this chapter illustrate the ambitions of the AJC's early research projects, the breadth of the publications the organization sponsored, and the different arrangements the AJC employed to coordinate and fund these efforts. These examples also illustrate that there was a continuity of effort by the leaders of the AJC to engage in forms of modern public advocacy.

The Committee had many noteworthy early achievements, but it would not be until after the Second World War that the organization flourished as a research bureau, a sponsor of independent research, and as a publisher. "After the war," Marianne Sanua notes, "the library,

⁹⁴⁹ This subcommittee was established in response to an offer from the United Hebrew Charities to place their already existing Statistical Bureau under the control of the AJC. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 25, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16442>. In AJC sources, the Statistical Bureau is sometimes alternatively referred to as the Bureau of Jewish Statistics and as the Department of Information and Statistics of the American Jewish Committee.

⁹⁵⁰ The AJC's takeover of the *American Jewish Year Book* is discussed further in the following section of this chapter. The leaders of the AJC considered the takeover of the *Year Book* to be an important development in the early history of the AJC's research activities. For example, an internal AJC report highlighted the organization's first commitments towards building its research capacities by referencing the Executive Committee's earliest decisions about financing the *American Jewish Year Book*. See: "The American Jewish Committee and A Bureau of Jewish Statistics and Research," Undated Report, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 19.

research, and publications programs of the AJC were all enlarged and strengthened.”⁹⁵¹ The origins of these later and more substantial organizational innovations, advocacy campaigns, and research projects, including the establishment of the AJC’s Scientific Research Bureau, the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*, the Committee’s support for *Commentary Magazine*, and the AJC’s sponsorship of Kenneth Clark’s pioneering work on the psychological impact of racial segregation, followed in the wake of the efforts and precedents established by the Committee’s founders and its first generation of leaders.⁹⁵²

The founders’ concerns about optics, that is, how the AJC and the Jewish community would be viewed by the American public and by American politicians, influenced which projects the AJC chose to pursue and the extent to which the leaders dedicated the Committee’s financial resources to this form of advocacy. “Research was needed to reform, persuade, or arouse public opinion. Whether to refute or to advance issues concerning Jews, [the Committee] needed precise statistics and information on such subjects as racial classifications, Jewish military service...the number of Jewish criminals, and legal precedents for the abrogation of treaties or for U.S. intervention in foreign affairs.”⁹⁵³

Attempts were made during the early years to centralize the coordination of the AJC’s research projects and publications, but, as will be seen, in practice, these attempts to build the organization’s advocacy infrastructure, and engage in public advocacy, were haphazard in nature. An ambitious plan to consolidate all the research activities of the AJC under the jurisdiction of a single AJC “Bureau of Research” was devised sometime after the death of

⁹⁵¹ Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*, 29.

⁹⁵² Howard Sachar notes that, in the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, “the Supreme Court accepted the research of the black sociologist Kenneth Clark that segregation placed the stamp of inferiority on black children. Clark’s study had been commissioned by the American Jewish Committee.” See: Sachar, 803.

⁹⁵³ Sanua, 15.

professor Morris Loeb in 1912, but it was not until after the Second World War that the Committee was able to improve the efficiency and expand the scope of its research activities.

The first plan for the Bureau of Research called for the unified bureau to prepare the manuscript of the *American Jewish Year Book*, compile a directory of all Jewish organizations throughout the world, amass the reports and publications released by these groups, assemble a list of all Rabbis and Chazanim (Cantors), create a list of all Jewish communal workers, collect information from newspapers and magazine articles relevant to Jewish interests, and carry out “investigations of specific problems, two or more of which may be conducted at the same time.”⁹⁵⁴ During the period covered by this study, different AJC subcommittees, bureaus, leaders, staff members, and affiliate organizations were undertaking all of these activities without the advantage of a single internal body to supervise and coordinate these efforts.

The AJC’s founders had ambitious aspirations for the research arm of their organization; however, it was not until after the Second World War that the Committee was able to improve the efficiency and expand the scope of its research activities. The post-War reorganization of the AJC’s operations, including the apportioning of responsibilities for research and publications among a new set of subcommittees during the leadership tenure of John Slawson, facilitated the further development of the organizational structures that would ultimately shape the AJC’s advocacy work, research projects, and publications (including the use of other forms of mass media) for the remainder of the twentieth century.⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁵⁴ See: Plan for a Bureau of Research, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 19. The plan is undated, but it contains a proposal to name the new research bureau in honor of the late Professor Morris Loeb, who died in 1912. Based on the relatively low proposed budget figures for the new bureau outlined in the plan (“preliminary guarantee of Four Thousand Dollars”), the plan was likely drawn up shortly after Professor Loeb’s death.

⁹⁵⁵ Slawson’s plan for the reorganization of the AJC was first outlined and discussed by the Executive Committee on January 29, 1944. The process of reorganizing the Committee took several years to finalize. For example, during the first discussion of Slawson’s reorganization plan, there was no mention of an AJC research department or a specific

In common with Progressive Era philanthropists and social reformers, the founders of the AJC emphasized efficiency, but, in practice, they had difficulty consolidating control and structuring the organization's research activities. As noted above, the scope of their projects and the ability to organize and manage them was initially limited by their low budget and limited human resources. The small number of leaders actively involved in managing the operations of the AJC did not result in a streamlined organization nor prevent the establishment of internal institutions and research projects that had overlapping mandates. The founding of the statistics bureau and the takeover of the *American Jewish Year Book* were the earliest attempts to develop the organization's ability to conduct research and release publications to influence public opinion, but the founding of similar internal research-focussed institutions, including the founding of the AJC's Information Bureau in 1915, overlapped with these efforts.⁹⁵⁶

subcommittee that would be responsible for the Committee's research projects. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 29, 1944, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 10, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16551>.

⁹⁵⁶ The AJC established its own internal information bureau to collect and collate information about Jewish communities in the countries involved on both sides of World War I. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on June 30, 1915, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 10, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16459>. Even as the AJC continued devoting resources to funding separate statistic and information bureaus, its leaders were also actively involved in trying to fundraise for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), an independent wire service that developed an international network of correspondents, and published the *Jewish Daily Bulletin*. Although independent from the AJC, the JTA carried out a number of activities, most importantly the recruitment of foreign correspondents and the distribution of news stories to mainstream newspapers, which the AJC considered important to furthering the organization's social and political agenda. The leaders of the AJC were deeply invested in preserving the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, both of which experienced substantial financial difficulties. In a letter to Jacob Landau, the Managing Director of the Jewish Daily Bulletin, Louis Marshall wrote: "I have no hesitation in saying that if [the JTA and Jewish Daily Bulletin] did not exist it would become necessary for the [American Jewish] community to create a substitute possessing the same high qualities. With the disappearance of the present organization, that could only be done with much difficulty and at great expense. It is therefore the part of wisdom to support and preserve what we now possess." See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Jacob Landau, June 20, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 13, File 5. Members of the AJC, and family members of AJC founders and leaders, made substantial donations to the JTA in order to sustain the news agency. For example, a confidential audit of the JTA carried out by Morris Waldman and David M. Bressler in 1928, reveals that members of the Warburg, Schiff, Rosenwald, and Lehman families, donated twenty-one thousand dollars to the JTA in 1927. The sum of the donations from these families, all of which had close ties to the AJC, covered forty-two percent of the JTA's deficits for 1927. See: Confidential: Report to the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee by Messrs.

In order to both increase the AJC's Statistical Bureau's funding and to create the appearance of distance between the information compiled by the bureau and the Committee, in 1919, the AJC negotiated a merger between its Statistics Bureau and similar research bodies controlled by the Bureau of Philanthropic Research of New York City and the National Conference of Jewish Charities.⁹⁵⁷ This agreement resulted in the founding of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research (BJSR). The BJSR was technically an independent organization, but, as will be discussed further below, a great deal of its activities were coordinated and funded by the AJC.

The political goals of the AJC and its leaders' privileging of efficiency did not avert internal squabbles over how to structure and coordinate the Committee's activities. For example, the AJC's founders knew that they wanted the organization to be involved in publishing, but they debated whether jurisdiction over the Committee's publications should be within the purview of the subcommittee on Press Bureau or the Statistical Committee. In the event, responsibility over the AJC's publications was placed under the jurisdiction of the AJC's Statistical Committee, which was composed of Justice Nathan Bijur, Jacob Hollander, Professor Morris Loeb, and Cyrus Sulzberger.⁹⁵⁸ In practice, many of the publications that the organization chose to sponsor during the period covered by this study were discussed and approved by the Executive Committee during its regular meetings or were personally overseen and financed by individual

Morris D. Waldman and David M. Bressler on the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the Jewish Daily Bulletin, November 20, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 13, File 5.

⁹⁵⁷ See: "Extract from the 13th Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee," October 19, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁵⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 1, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

members of the Committee, including Jacob Schiff and Julius Rosenwald, at their own expense, and sometimes without the formal endorsement of the AJC.

Historian Marianne Sanua argues that the AJC “early established itself as a research bureau whose information was utilized by Jews and non-Jews alike.”⁹⁵⁹ As this chapter will show, although somewhat inefficient and disorderly, the AJC sponsored a great deal of research, and released a significant number of publications during the first twenty-five years of the organization’s history. Although historically significant for both their scope and breadth, gauging the impact of these projects and publications is less important than the fact that these efforts were undertaken at all; the Committee’s early initiatives laid the foundation for later and much more substantial, and unquestionably historically significant, work.

The American Jewish Year Book

The Jewish Publication Society of America (JPSA) began publishing the *American Jewish Year Book* in 1899, seven years before the founding of the American Jewish Committee. Cyrus Adler, one of the Committee’s founders and early leaders, was the *Year Book’s* founding editor. The early volumes contain Jewish calendars and summaries of important developments in the Jewish world. They also include lists of active Jewish organizations, and document the activities and leaders of American Jewish institutions, including synagogues, fraternal orders, and philanthropic organizations. The *Year Book* was distributed widely; American Jews could subscribe to the publication or access copies housed in libraries in synagogues, fraternal lodges, or charities.

⁹⁵⁹ Sanua, 15.

The AJC's Executive Committee resolved on May 30, 1907 that "the continuance of the American Jewish Yearbook was necessary for the work of the Committee."⁹⁶⁰ On the same day, the Executive Committee also resolved "to make arrangements to prepare the manuscript, the publication to be issued by the Jewish Publications Society of America as heretofore."⁹⁶¹ The AJC's financial commitment to the *Year Book*, and the transfer of editorial control of the publication from the JPSA to the AJC was part of the Committee's efforts to gather information about American Jewry, attain a leadership position over American Jewry, and exercise influence over the social and political agenda of the American Jewish community.⁹⁶²

The decision to assume editorial control over content while not publically claiming the credit for publishing the *Year Book* can be interpreted as reflecting the Committee's leadership's understanding of optics. It is possible that the AJC's leaders wanted to establish the pretense that the publication remained an organ of the JPSA, a separate organization and one which was less political (and divisive) within the American Jewish community than the AJC, and thereby depoliticize the *Year Book* to secure its legitimacy and influence among American Jews and the broader American public.

The AJC revealed more clearly that the nature of the relationship between the AJC and the Jewish Publication Society was as much editorial as it was financial in a resolution passed on October 6, 1907: "That the Executive Committee believes it a good policy that, in cooperation with other agencies or bodies as may be determined, the preparation of the material for such a

⁹⁶⁰ "The American Jewish Committee and A Bureau of Jewish Statistics and Research," Undated Report, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 19.

⁹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶² The JPSA was aware of the importance the Committee placed on the *Year Book*. In 1920, George Dobseavage, the Secretary of the JPSA, tried to leverage this concern to secure more funding for the project from the AJC. Writing to the Executive Committee, Dobseavage justified his request for additional financial support "in view of the Committee's special interest in the publication." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 10, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

Year Book should be undertaken, provided that the Jewish Publication Society of America would undertake its actual publication and distribution upon an understanding that the American Jewish Committee assume the entire cost of furnishing copy to the Publication Society.”⁹⁶³ Ultimately, the Committee chose to be transparent about its role in financing and compiling the annual volumes.⁹⁶⁴ Henrietta Szold, an editor with the JPSA who would later co-found Hadassah, edited the 1907 edition, the first volume of the *Year Book* published after the AJC’s leadership decided to finance the preparation of the publication. The following year, Herbert Friedenwald, the AJC’s Secretary, assumed the role of Editor. The title page of the 1908 edition of the *Year Book* indicates that Friedenwald was acting as editor “for the American Jewish Committee.”⁹⁶⁵ Friedenwald, or Harry Schneiderman, the AJC’s Assistant Secretary, oversaw the preparation of

⁹⁶³ “The American Jewish Committee and A Bureau of Jewish Statistics and Research,” Undated Report, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 19. The division of responsibility, whereby the AJC compiled the manuscript and provided the financing for the Jewish Publication Society to release the *Year Book* under the society’s publishing imprint, was reaffirmed by the AJC’s Executive Committee in 1911. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>. By 1913, the AJC was providing twenty-five hundred dollars a year to the Jewish Publication Society in order to finance the *Year Book*; this contribution accounted for approximately a quarter of the AJC’s annual expenditures. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on August 13, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

⁹⁶⁴ There was a gap between the AJC’s internal decision to finance the compilation of the *Year Book* and the acknowledgment of this decision publically. The 1907 edition of the *Year Book* does not mention the involvement of the AJC. The 1908 *Year Book* included a preface that explained that the AJC had “taken over” the compilation of the publication: “The American Jewish Committee being persuaded of the importance of the Year Book for the purpose of organizing the Jews of America into a compact whole and of its usefulness to its own organization, a joint arrangement has been entered into whereby the American Jewish Committee is responsible for the cost of the compilation of the book, and the Publication Society for its actual issuance.” This statement, however, can be criticized for minimizing the extent of the AJC’s oversight; the organization was not merely financing the *Year Book*; its leadership was making important decisions about content. For the full text of the preface, see: *The American Jewish Yearbook, vol. 10* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1908). Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1908_1909_2_Formatter.pdf.

⁹⁶⁵ *The American Jewish Yearbook, vol. 10* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1908). Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1908_1909_2_Formatter.pdf.

the *Year Book* on behalf of the Committee throughout most of the period covered by this study.⁹⁶⁶

The expense of subsidizing the *Year Book* was justified by the AJC's leadership on the grounds of efficiency. The information about the American Jewish community that was collected and organized in these volumes was information that the Committee believed it needed. "Even if the *Year Book* was not published," the AJC's leadership acknowledged that "the Committee would have to continue to collect this data for the sake of the efficiency of the work of the Committee."⁹⁶⁷ The leadership also expressly recognized that the annual publication was a means for the AJC to communicate with the American Jewish community, including informing American Jews about the organization's activities, and providing a forum for the AJC to exercise influence over the social and political beliefs and political agenda of American Jewry. The Executive Committee acknowledged that the *Year Book* "is a medium through which the Committee informs a large number of Jewish people of this country the work that it is doing."⁹⁶⁸

Beginning in 1908, the AJC published their Annual Reports, which described the Committee's achievements and its ambitions, in the *Year Book*.⁹⁶⁹ The Annual Reports, which

⁹⁶⁶ On several occasions during the period covered by this study, other editors with close ties to the AJC were charged with the editorship of the *Year Book*, including Samson Oppenheim, the Director of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, and Herman Bernstein, who would later become Secretary of the AJC. In all cases, the editors were designated on the cover pages as acting "for the American Jewish Committee."

⁹⁶⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on August 13, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>. The question of efficiency must be understood in the context of the AJC's leadership's debates about whether to establish, and how to fund, their own internal Statistical Bureau. In 1913, the AJC's leadership was hoping to scale back their support for the *Year Book* in order to earmark additional funds for the establishment and staffing of the AJC's Statistical Bureau.

⁹⁶⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on August 13, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 12, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

⁹⁶⁹ The AJC's First Annual Report was not published until 1908. The report indicates that it contains a summary of more than a year's worth of activities, covering from the founding of the AJC in November 1906 to June 1908. In comparison to later AJC Annual Reports, the first report contains a limited amount of information summarizing the activities of the leadership organization. Most of the report is the Committee's constitution and copies of

ranged in length from approximately thirty to one hundred pages, included lists of all leaders and district members of the AJC, short reports from the different AJC subcommittees, and correspondence between the AJC's leaders and prominent social and political figures from the United States and around the world. In the text of the Second Annual Report, the Committee began describing its activities using the introductory clause "your Committee" to convey a sense that the organization was acting on behalf of American Jewry.⁹⁷⁰ The Annual Reports, which were supplemented in each issue of the *Year Book* by other articles that the AJC commissioned and approved for publication, identified social and political issues that the Committee believed should be of concern to American Jews.

The compiling of the *Year Book* was viewed by the AJC's leadership as an aspect of both their research agenda and their capacity to communicate with American Jews and the broader American public. From the time that the AJC assumed control of preparing the manuscript, most of the work was delegated to the Statistical Committee and the AJC's Bureau of Statistics. This delegation of responsibility became a matter of contention during the negotiations that brought about the merger of the AJC's Statistical Bureau into the Bureau of Jewish Social Research (BJSR) in 1919.

correspondence between AJC leaders and politicians and diplomats. In terms of advocacy work, the report contains the following description under the heading "Miscellaneous Activities:" "Numerous other affairs were considered, and in many cases acted upon by the Executive Committee, but owing to their confidential nature or the fact that the matters involved have not yet been brought to a conclusion, the Committee deem it inadvisable to refer to them further at this time." See: Report of the American Jewish Committee, November, 1906 to June, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed June 5, 2013.
http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1908_1909_6_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. This statement can be found on page 18 of the report.

⁹⁷⁰ For example, "your Committee feels that however desirable co-operation among the Jewish organizations of Europe and this country may be, it cannot be achieved until the European organizations themselves devise an effective scheme of co-operation." See: Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, November 8, 1908, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015.
http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1909_1910_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 247.

The BJSR received a significant amount of its financing from the AJC, but it was technically a separate organization. The AJC's Executive Committee wanted to maintain oversight power over the preparation of the *Year Book* despite the fact that some of the work involved had been allocated to a separate organization. There were some among the AJC's leadership who were concerned that the merger would result in the AJC losing control over the content of the publication. As the merger negotiations were unfolding, Louis Marshall expressed that "he was firmly of the opinion that the Year Book should be kept under the control of the Committee."⁹⁷¹ Under the merger scheme, the AJC agreed to continue to finance the compilation of the *Year Book* and it also was agreed that the Committee would retain the responsibility of editing of it, and thus control content.⁹⁷²

The merger was significant because it resulted in the founding of a larger and well-funded organization dedicated to studying the Jewish community; however, with respect to the *Year Book*, there was no fundamental shift in the Committee's policy of maintaining control over the content of the publication. Using funds provided by the AJC, the BJSR, and specifically its Department of Information and Statistics, was tasked with compiling the statistics and lists that were an important part of the publication, but the Committee remained in control of drafting and

⁹⁷¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>.

⁹⁷² "Extract from the 13th Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee," October 19, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20. After the merger and the establishment of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, the Committee agreed to transfer responsibility for preparing the *Year Book* to the new Bureau for one year on a trial basis, but it must be noted that the Committee never relinquished editorial control over the its contents. The 1921 edition was prepared in the offices of the BJSR. The AJC financed the project, contributing five thousand dollars. This contribution was twice the amount the AJC had spent on previous editions of the *Year Book*. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on May 8, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>. The trial transfer of responsibility for compiling the *Year Book* was renewed the following year, with the AJC agreeing to maintain its funding commitments. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on September 26, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16474>.

approving the manuscript. The 1925 edition, for example, contained biographies and commemoratives on Rabbi Emil G. Hirsh of Chicago, Rabbi Martin A. Mayer of San Francisco, and Congressman Julius Kahn of California. This edition also included an article on “The Jews of Canada,” an article about the status of the Jewish community in Palestine, an article about Synagogue architecture in the United States, an article about the Jewish community in Chicago, a chronology of important events in American Jewish history, and a “selected list of books on Jewish subjects in the English language.” The AJC’s Executive Committee discussed and approved each of these additions.⁹⁷³

The AJC consistently maintained control over the content of the *Year Book*. “This Jewish almanac,” Marianne Sanua notes, “was of use not only to all Jewish communal organizations but to the general public as well.”⁹⁷⁴ The Committee used the publication to update the American Jewish community about important matters, including the abrogation campaign (or passport affair), documented instances of anti-Jewish discrimination, the negotiations with Henry Ford, and the conditions of their coreligionists across the country and around the world.⁹⁷⁵

The Committee was able to establish the reputation of the *Year Book* as an authoritative digest on the composition and social and religious institutions of the American Jewish community. The *Year Book*’s primary audience was American Jews; the Committee saw the publication as a means of fostering social cohesion among the disparate elements of American Jewry. As will be seen, other Committee initiatives more overtly attempted to influence the

⁹⁷³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 8, 1925 American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16479>.

⁹⁷⁴ Sanua, 15.

⁹⁷⁵ The *Year Book* regularly contained brief reports on small Jewish communities that had been largely (or entirely) cut off from contact with European and North American Jewish communities, including Ethiopian Jews (Falashas) and Yemeni Jews. The reports were included to help the AJC fundraise to provide aid to these largely impoverished communities.

attitudes of the broader American public, but the *Year Book* was significant because it influenced the development of the AJC's aspirations and capacity to carry out research and, was the Committee's first foray into publishing.⁹⁷⁶

The Bureau of Jewish Social Research and the Department of Information and Statistics

As already noted above, the Bureau of Jewish Social Research (BJSR) was formed in 1919 as the result of a merger negotiated between the AJC's Bureau of Jewish Statistics, the Bureau of Philanthropic Research of New York City, and the Field Bureau (research department) of the National Conference of Jewish Charities. The amalgamation was suggested by Felix Warburg, a member of the AJC's Executive Committee. At the time, the AJC was spending about twenty-five hundred dollars a year to fund the operations of the Committee's internal Statistics Bureau. Through the amalgamation, and through greater cooperation between the AJC and its proposed new research partners, Warburg hoped the budget for BJSR's statistical research on the Jewish community could be increased to fifty thousand dollars annually.⁹⁷⁷

The newly established BJSR was technically independent from the AJC. There was, however, considerable overlap in the leadership of the two organizations. For example, Cyrus Sulzberger and Felix Warburg were on the Executive Committees of both organizations. Morris

⁹⁷⁶ It is also important to note that there was no other annual publication of its kind. These editions can be treated as primary sources about the composition, concerns, and ambitions of twentieth-century American Jewry; they remain invaluable for historians of American Jewry.

⁹⁷⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 9, 1918 American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16466>. The AJC steadily increased its financial support for the BJSR throughout the tenure of the formal relationship between the two organizations. The AJC's financial support peaked in 1927, the last year of the agreement between the two organizations, with a commitment of \$8,500 dollars to fund the work of the BJSR. See: Twenty-First Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1928_1929_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 289.

Waldman and Cyrus Adler were also part of leadership of both organizations. Additionally, the AJC was one of the Bureau's principal sources of financial support.⁹⁷⁸

Although the AJC's Statistical Bureau was technically amalgamated into the BJRS, in practice the Committee's research infrastructure remained independent from the rest of the activities of the new organization. The AJC's infrastructure was set apart from the rest of the BJRS and designated as the Department of Information and Statistics of the BJRS. A 1919 AJC memorandum on the progress of the amalgamation of the three research bureaus refers to the resources that were previously controlled by the AJC as a "definite division of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research."⁹⁷⁹

The preparation of materials for the *Year Book* was the primary focus of the Department of Information and Statistics, but the Department was given a much broader mandate. The Department was envisioned as a significant research institution. Among the AJC's leaders' ambitions were for the Department to serve "as a central source of information upon social and communal question pertaining to Jewry;" "Making abstracts from all sources of significant facts of Jewish sociological interests;" "Providing important bibliographical service, reviewing books, and compiling reference lists of current articles of value in the interpretation of Jewish problems;" and, perhaps most significantly, "Preparing bulletins on Jewish questions of moment, for the enlightenment of public opinion."⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷⁸ In 1919, the AJC directly supplied the BJRS with \$7,500 in financing. The AJC's Annual Report mentions that a further fifteen thousand dollars to fund the BJRS was raised from other sources. Although they did not claim any credit, it is likely that some of this additional funding came from the wealthier leaders of the AJC in the form of direct donations to the BJRS. See: "Extract from the 13th Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee," October 19, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁷⁹ "Report to the American Jewish Committee upon the Progress of the Department of Information and Statistics of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research," October 15, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

At the time of its founding, the Department's resources were insufficient to meet all of these goals, but these were the stated aims of the institution. Hyman Kaplan, the Superintendent of the United Jewish Social Agencies of Cincinnati, was the Department's first director, and, initially, the Department had only three additional staff members: Rose Herzog, who was employed to read all English-language Jewish periodicals "to secure material for the American Jewish Year Book," Bertha Sherline, who was responsible for "bibliographic research," and secretary Ada Aneckstein, who also did "general information work."⁹⁸¹

By 1921, the Department had a new Director, Harry S. Linfield, who was both a rabbi ordained by the Hebrew Union College and a statistician with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. The Department continued to compile material for the *Year Book*, but, under Linfield's direction, they also began releasing a digest known as the "Summary of Matters of Jewish Interest." The Summary evolved into a monthly publication that included press releases from Jewish organizations in both the United States and internationally, news stories, and statistical analyses. In a memorandum to the AJC, Linfield provided the following description of the Summary:

The Summary of Events of Jewish Interests is not a newspaper. It is a collection of summaries of events of Jewish interests. We have before us the chief press-organs of the Jewish world, numerous press releases and reports of organizations, and private communications. Of these reports of events, we select for publication each month a number of items totalling an average of 12,000 words. These items, insofar as they are not based on first-hand sources, are verified as much as possible and summed up. Care is taken that our summary of event should have dates, places and names and should contain all the important steps in the development of the event in chronological order. Finally, the source on sources of the summary is scrupulously indicated in order to make it possible for the reader to judge for himself the value of the report of the event. The chief features of the

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

“Summary” in comparison with other publications... may be said to be the following: truthfulness, accuracy, fullness of statement, omission of hearsay statements and outright false statements, and the inclusion of “non-newsy” material; events considered by the ordinary newspapers as uninteresting or too complicated.⁹⁸²

By 1925, the Department was distributing twenty-five hundred copies of the Summary monthly around the world. In the United States, the Summary was circulated to a carefully selected audience. Of the approximately thirteen hundred copies that were distributed in the United States each month, 180 went to other leadership organizations, 107 to specially selected newspapers and periodicals, 603 to Rabbis, 284 to Jewish communal leaders, 138 to all members of the AJC, and 50 to “leading non-Jews.”⁹⁸³

The Summary was used to disseminate information, but it was also a means of tracking the activities of other Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally. After the circulation of the Summary was widened, Jewish organizations sent their press releases and public statements directly to the Department of Information and Statistics for publication in the monthly Summary. Samuel Goldsmith, the Director of the BJSR, believed the exchange of information facilitated through Linfield’s Department and the Summary was helping to secure better cooperation between Jewish organizations, and he was hopeful that greater funding from the AJC would help the Department expand its capacities as a research institution and enable it to release more material for general distribution.⁹⁸⁴

The AJC closely monitored the content of the Summary. For example, reflecting the legal acumen of the AJC’s leadership, the Executive Committee asked Linfield to include a disclaimer

⁹⁸² Report on the Department of Information and Statistics by H.S. Linfield, April 13, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁴ Letter from Samuel A. Goldsmith to Cyrus Adler, November 5, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

in each issue explaining that “items contained in the Summary are collected from the sources indicated in each instance but that the Bureau [of Jewish Social Research] does not assume any responsibility for their accuracy.”⁹⁸⁵ In 1921, Judge Lehman and Cyrus Sulzberger met with Goldsmith and Linfield to discuss ways to improve the publication; they also requested “that each issue of the Summary be submitted for correction” to Cyrus Adler, Cyrus Sulzberger, and Harry Schneiderman.⁹⁸⁶

Under Linfield’s leadership, the BJSR’s Department of Information and Statistics continued to evolve, despite its limited staff and budget. In 1922, the Department had been reorganized into six divisions: “(a) The collection of information, abstraction, and classification; (b) Publications; (c) Statistics; (d) Public and Press Information Service; (e) Reference Library; and (f) Year Book.” Only six staff members, including one who was employed as a full-time “reader” of Yiddish-language publications, were responsible for all of this activity.⁹⁸⁷

The preparation of materials for the *Year Book* remained a central responsibility of the Department, but the small office had taken on and been given several additional and substantial tasks. By 1925, the Department was running an Information Service “to answer inquiries and supply information, addresses, lists, and directories to Jewish organizations and institutions, and to persons for legitimate non-commercial use.”⁹⁸⁸ As part of building its capacity to prepare materials for the *Year Book* and to respond to inquiries for information, the Department

⁹⁸⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 11, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16472>.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁷ Letter from Samuel A. Goldsmith to Cyrus Adler, May 17, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁸⁸ Among the Information Service’s clients were Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Hilfsverein de Deutschen Juden. See: Report on the Department of Information and Statistics by H.S. Linfield, April 13, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

meticulously began collecting and collating information. This archives project, which included a “Dictionary File of Clippings” from newspapers around the world and a “Photograph File,” was organized using a card index. By 1925, there were more than ten thousand cards in the index.⁹⁸⁹ The Department was also contracted to work with the Federal Government on the 1926 Census of Religious bodies in the United States.⁹⁹⁰ Harry Linfield was designated a “United States Special Agent” of the Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, during his work on the project.⁹⁹¹

The relationship between the AJC, the BJSR, and the BJSR’s Department of Information of Statistics is difficult to definitively characterize. The amalgamation that brought about the establishment of the BJSR was publicized as the founding of an independent research institution whose mandate would include studying the American Jewish community and providing data that would help scholars and social workers to understand the growing community and furnish better aid and social programs. The Department of Information and Statistics’ independence, however, was notional; it was doing research for the AJC, while being both supervised and financed by the Committee.⁹⁹² For example, in 1927, shortly before the ties between the AJC and the BJSR were dissolved, Linfield prepared a report on the number of Jewish prisoners in New York State penal

⁹⁸⁹ Report on the Department of Information and Statistics by H.S. Linfield, April 13, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁹⁰ During the previous Census of Religious Bodies, which was conducted in 1916, the AJC had worked with the Bureau of Census to compile information on American Jewry. Naomi Cohen notes that the “Committee’s statistical machinery permitted it to cooperate with the government in the periodic censuses of religious bodies and, more importantly, to disseminate significant information to the general public.” See, Cohen, 34.

⁹⁹¹ Letter from H.S. Linfield to Harry Schneiderman, January 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20. The letter was composed on Department of Commerce stationary and Linfield’s signature line includes his Special Agent title.

⁹⁹² In its Annual Reports, the AJC was transparent about the close nature of the relationship between the Committee and the Bureau of Jewish Social Research. Beginning in 1920, the AJC’s Annual Reports, which were published in the *Year Book*, contained a “Report of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research.” The reports of the activities of the BJSR began with the line “To the Members of the American Jewish Committee: Gentlemen.” See, for example: Thirteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1920_1921_7_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 448.

institutions. The report had been prepared at the behest of Louis Marshall, who was seeking to rebut the widely held assumption that Jews were disproportionately involved in crime.⁹⁹³ The BJSR was technically an independent organization, but the AJC was a major financier. Internally, the Department of Information and Statistics was a branch of the BJSR, but it was principally financed by the AJC and doing work on its behalf. The AJC exercised a certain amount of editorial direction and supervision. Further, a great deal of the Department's work had previously been done by the AJC internally. Goldsmith, the BJSR's director, referred to the AJC as a "client"⁹⁹⁴ of the Department of Information and Statistics, but he also acknowledged that the

⁹⁹³ Marshall asked Harry Schneiderman to find out the percentage of Jewish criminals in New York. Schneiderman forwarded Marshall's request to Linfield. The timing of this request, and the correspondence generated by the request, however, raises some interesting questions. The relationship between the AJC and BJSR concluded at the end of 1927, following which Linfield was hired by the AJC to direct the Committee's Statistical Department. Throughout the tenure of the relationship with the BJSR, the Committee maintained an internal Statistical Bureau, which was overseen by the Statistical subcommittee, and which was later enlarged to become the Committee's Statistical Department. In his letter to Schneiderman, Marshall asked that the research on Jewish prisoners be referred to the Statistical Bureau, noting in the same letter that he had "serious doubts" about the usefulness of the AJC's Statistical Bureau. Schneiderman referred Marshall's request to Linfield, but Linfield was still with the Department of Information and Statistics at the time. This discrepancy could be the result of Marshall making an error in his letter to Schneiderman; Marshall suggested the inquiry be given to the Statistical Bureau, but it is possible he meant to indicate that it should be referred to Linfield at the BJSR's Department of Information. There are other examples in which AJC leaders mention the internal Statistical Bureau when they are really referring to the BJSR's Department or Information, and vice versa. Schneiderman's forwarding of Marshall's request to Linfield could also reveal the extent to which the AJC was comfortable asking a supposedly independent body to carry out research on the Committee's behalf. Lastly, when the request for the information on Jewish prisoners was made, AJC leaders were already aware that the relationship with the BJSR was coming to an end. Schneiderman may have asked Linfield to do the research because it was already known that Linfield would be formally joining the AJC's staff. See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Harry Schneiderman, November 22, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 18. See also: Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Louis Marshall, December 9, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 18. In the report, Linfield tried to examine the number of Jews in New York State Prisons, County Institutions, and New York City Jails. He was not able to come to a conclusion about the County Institutions, but for State Prisons and City Jails he concluded that the number of Jewish prisoners was proportionately less than the number of Jews in the population. For State Prisons, Jews made up 10.4 percent of the prison population, but accounted for 16.1 percent of the population of the State of New York. In New York City Jails, 19.3 percent of prisoners were Jews, but Jews constituted 26.8 percent of the city's population. See: Jewish Prisoners in the Penal Institutions in The State of New York, Memorandum by H.S. Linfield, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 18.

⁹⁹⁴ Letter from Samuel A. Goldsmith to Cyrus Adler, November 5, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

AJC's financial support covered "practically the entire expense of the Department."⁹⁹⁵ Thus, it is reasonable to include the Department of Information and Statistics as part of the AJC's advocacy infrastructure. The research projects the Department undertook, the information it collected and collated, the contacts that it maintained with Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and the publications it prepared helped further the AJC's social and political agenda.

The AJC's relationship with the BJSR on the preparation of the *Year Book* lasted less than ten years; in 1927, the partnership between the two organizations was dissolved.⁹⁹⁶ Neither the AJC's Annual Report nor the minutes of the Executive Committee's meetings reveal any explanation as to why the Committee chose to end this relationship. A desire to assume even greater power over the research done to prepare the *Year Book* and the steadily increasing budget of the AJC may be an explanation for the dissolution. By the late-1920s, Felix Warburg's increasingly generous contributions to the AJC meant that the Committee had sufficient financial resources to fund research internally, under their own auspices, and at their complete discretion.

After the relationship between the AJC and the BJSR was dissolved, the Committee hired Linfield to direct their Statistical Department. Along with Linfield, the AJC "took over the staff which had been doing this work" at the BJSR and integrated them into the Committee's expanded and reorganized Statistical Department.⁹⁹⁷ Although the AJC continued the practice of

⁹⁹⁵ Letter from Samuel A. Goldsmith to Cyrus Adler, May 17, 1922, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 20.

⁹⁹⁶ The Executive Committee minutes on this decision refer to the agreement as having been "terminated," but also state that "it has been mutually agreed that the present arrangement come to an end with the close of 1927." See: Twenty-First Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1928_1929_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 290.

⁹⁹⁷ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 13, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1929_1930_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 358.

collaborating on research projects with other organizations, including with the BJSR, the Committee maintained an internal capacity to carry out research projects and statistical analyses.

The Office of War Records

The most expensive research project that was financed by the American Jewish Committee during its first twenty-five years was the attempt to assemble statistics revealing the level of American Jewish participation in the First World War, and to compile an honor roll of Jews who served in all branches of the American armed services during the conflict. Work on this project began shortly after the United States entered the war, and was first conducted under the auspices of the AJC's Bureau of Statistics. In early 1919, the AJC established the "Office of War Records of the American Jewish Committee,"⁹⁹⁸ a separate department, that was devoted exclusively to this work.

Between 1919 and 1920, the AJC delegated more money to financing the Office of War Records than to all of its other research projects, advocacy work, and maintenance expenses combined. The project was so substantial that it was not included as a regular expense item in the organization's annual financial audits; for accounting purposes, the Office of War Records was treated as separate entity.⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁸ The War Records Office of the American Jewish Committee was alternatively referred to in some AJC reports and correspondence as the "Bureau of War Records," the "Office of War Records," and the "Office of War Statistics." In the minutes of some Executive Committee meetings, discussion of the project was indexed under the heading "War Service Statistics." See, for example: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16467>.

⁹⁹⁹ Between 1919 and 1921, the AJC spent \$115,000 dollars on the War Records projects. See: Letter from Cyrus Adler to Doctor Lee K. Frankel, March 21, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22. For the sake of comparison, the American Jewish Committee's total expenditures for 1922, including the expenses of maintaining the organization's headquarters, paying the Committee's employees, funding the publication of the *Year Book*, and supporting the Bureau of Jewish Social Research's Department of Information and Statistics, was only \$26,381.21. See: Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18,

The compilation of the honor roll was a collaboration between the AJC and the Jewish Board for Welfare Work in the United States Army and Navy, a coalition made up of representatives of fifteen different American Jewish leadership organizations that financed support services for Jewish service personnel in the American armed forces.¹⁰⁰⁰ Planning for the honor roll project began shortly after the United States entered the First World War in 1917. The AJC directed its internal Bureau of Statistics to gather information about the numbers of Jewish service personnel. At this earliest stage, this research was envisioned as part of larger effort to “prepare the material for a monograph on the Jews in the wars of the United States with special attention to the present war.”¹⁰⁰¹

In its Eleventh Annual Report, the Committee was vague about why they believed this information should be gathered : “Your Committee believes that an effort should be made to

2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1922_1923_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, pages 363-368. The decision to keep “an entirely separate account” of the financing of the “Office of War Statistics” was made during the January 12, 1919 Executive Committee meeting. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16467>.

¹⁰⁰⁰ The Jewish Board for Welfare Work in the United States Army and Navy was composed of representatives from the following Jewish organizations: Agudath ha-Rabbonim, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Council of Jewish Women, the Council or Y.M.H. and Kindred Associations, the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, the Independent Order of Brith Abraham, the Jewish Chautauqua Society, the Jewish Publication Society of America, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, the New York Board of Jewish Ministers, Order Brith Abraham, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and the United Synagogue of America. Notably absent from the list of cooperating Jewish organizations was the Federation of American Zionists and the American Jewish Congress. See: Eleventh Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_9_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 368. In addition to collaborating with the AJC on the honor roll project, the Welfare Board also worked with the AJC to lobby Congress to provide rabbis to see to the spiritual needs of Jewish service personnel deployed during the First World War.

¹⁰⁰¹ Eleventh Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_9_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 369. The Executive Committee on the Celebration of the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of Jews in the United States contributed \$1481.72 towards the AJC’s war records study. This contribution was made on the condition that the “American Jewish Committee undertake the publication of a book on ‘Jews in the Wars of the United States’ within a reasonable amount of time after the termination of the present war.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on September 24, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16466>.

collect and record as much statistical and other information with regard to the participation of Jews in the military and civilian activities of the United States in connection with the war as is possible to procure... Your Committee feels certain that the possession of adequate information of this character will be of interest to all Jews.”¹⁰⁰² Later, as will be seen, the AJC’s leaders were candid about the fact that they believed reliable statistics on Jewish participation in the American armed forces could be a powerful tool in the fight against anti-Semitism in the United States.

The AJC’s Bureau of Statistics was confronted with a difficult assignment. The information they were trying to procure was not easily available because, at the time, the American military did not register the religious affiliation of its officers and enlisted men.¹⁰⁰³ Even if the Bureau of Statistics could have accessed the War Department’s rolls listing the names of all service personnel, the members of the Bureau recognized that this list could not simply be examined with an eye towards identifying traditionally Jewish surnames. Julian Leavitt, who the AJC put in charge of the project, and who was later made director of the War Records Office, acknowledged that many American Jews “in the process of Americanization [had] changed their names” or sought “to conceal their racial and religious identity.”¹⁰⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰² Eleventh Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_9_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 369.

¹⁰⁰³ In a summary of the early phases of the War Record project, Julian Leavitt wrote: “For reasons too well known to be enumerated here, statistics of an entirely reliable nature bearing upon Jewish service in the wars of the United States had never been gathered ... But while the many advantages of such an undertaking were generally recognized, its difficulties were by no means underestimated. It was known that the official records of the army and navy make no note of religious affiliations.” See: Julian Leavitt, “The Collection of Jewish War Statistics,” in *The American Jewish Yearbook, Volume 20, 1918-1999* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1918), 103-104. Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_3_SpecialArticles.pdf.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Julian Leavitt, “The Collection of Jewish War Statistics,” in *The American Jewish Yearbook, Volume 20, 1918-1999* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1918), 104. Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_3_SpecialArticles.pdf.

Without the resource of useful military records, the AJC's internal bureau depended on information sent by representatives of the Jewish Welfare Board who were stationed on American bases and who were in forward positions overseas. The Board's representatives distributed Bibles and Jewish prayer books with cards inside that could be filled out by Jewish service personnel, identifying their name, their hometown, their unit, and their rank. The Board also "posted conspicuous notices" at military facilities advertising that an honor roll of Jewish service personnel was being compiled.¹⁰⁰⁵ The completed cards were then shipped back to the AJC's Statistics Bureau for processing and verification.

The overseas canvassing approach was very successful. By October 20, 1918, just prior to the end of the war, the Statistics Bureau had already received fifty-five thousand records.¹⁰⁰⁶ By the end of the year, they had received almost one hundred thousand.¹⁰⁰⁷

After the Armistice, the Committee's enthusiasm for the project to compile a list of Jewish military veterans continued and grew. The degree of the leaders' enthusiasm was reflected in the financial resources they were prepared to earmark for the project. In late 1918, Julian Leavitt was asked by Louis Marshall and Cyrus Adler to prepare a tentative proposal and budget for the completion of the honor roll by the end of 1920. Leavitt was told he could spend up to five thousand dollars a month over the next twelve months. This sixty-thousand dollar budget was a significant sum, and represented more than three times the annual expenditures of

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 20, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2016. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16466>.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 9, 1918, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2016. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16466>

the AJC during this period.¹⁰⁰⁸ Leavitt's proposal included the opening of a separate office, the hiring of thirty staff members to process and to verify the records that were continuing to be sent in by Jewish service personnel, and the financing of additional "field work" to track down and survey decommissioned personnel who had returned home.¹⁰⁰⁹ The Executive Committee approved Leavitt's proposal, inaugurating the AJC's Office of War Records.

One of the War Records Office's first undertakings was the release of a fifty-three page report outlining their preliminary findings, and describing the methods the office was using to gather additional records, verifying the records that had already been submitted, and outlining how they were tabulating estimates of the overall participation of American Jews in the war effort. The project was ongoing, but Leavitt estimated that a minimum of 150,000 American Jews had served during the war, and that it was possible that as many as 200,000 had served. According to these estimates, American Jews, who represented only three percent of the population of the United States, accounted for between four and five percent of the personnel in the American armed forces during the First World War.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16467>. According to the AJC's Eleventh Annual Report, the organization's total expenditures for 1919, not including the funds earmarked for the War Records Project, totaled \$16,768.85. See: Eleventh Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_9_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 387.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16467>. Also included in Leavitt's proposed budget was a substantial raise in his salary, from two hundred to four hundred dollars a month. During the Executive Committee meeting, Adler stated that he thought this increase was fair based on the amount of time that Leavitt would now be devoting exclusively to the War Records project.

¹⁰¹⁰ The War Record of American Jews: First Report of the Office of War Records, American Jewish Committee, January 1, 1919 (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1919). The report is available online in the AJC digital archives at: <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16321>. Accessed: March 20, 2015. The discussion of the early statistical estimates of Jewish participation in the war can be found on pages 9-12. The report also contains thirteen pages of material listing the names of American Jews who had been awarded commendations and, in some cases, providing brief summaries of their heroics.

As the newly-established War Records Office continued to process the cards that had been relayed through the Jewish Welfare Board, plans were also being developed to carry out “community surveys” to ensure that all American Jews who had served, been wounded, killed in action, or awarded commendations would be counted and recorded. At this stage, the AJC’s pronouncements about the project were becoming grander.¹⁰¹¹ An AJC report describing the ambitions of the community surveys stated that the honor roll “promises in its complete form to be the greatest monument in the history of American Jewry...The Jews of America recognize the full significance.”¹⁰¹² The potential importance of the completed figures in combatting the spread of anti-Semitism in the United States was not explicitly acknowledged, but the AJC’s leaders, based on early, preliminary tabulations, were confident that the breadth of Jewish contributions to the American war effort would reflect positively on the entire American Jewish Community: “Not only have the individual Jewish fighters acquitted themselves with honor and glory, but the

¹⁰¹¹ The AJC also began to publically describe why the project was historically significant. The Foreword for the plan for the “community surveys” includes the following justification for the effort and expense of compiling the honor role: “From the earliest history of the American Republic the Jews distinguished themselves by patriotic devotion and sacrifice. In the War of Independence, in the War of 1812, and in all subsequent wars in which America was engaged, Jewish men freely gave their lives and their fortunes for the cause of their beloved country. Yet, because no adequate record of these achievements was preserved by the contemporary generations, these facts are known but imperfectly today. Only the ardor and the labor of enthusiastic students of history have rescued them from total oblivion and neglect...When the United States entered the World War the American Jewish Committee resolved that this time no effort should be spared to preserve in permanent and authentic form the full story of Jewish service and sacrifice.” See: *The War Record of American Jews: Plans and Suggestions for the Organization of Community Surveys*, June 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22. Some significant works chronicling Jewish participation in the American armed forces had already been written. For example, in 1895, Simon Wolf published a book entitled *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*. See: Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia: Levytype Company, 1895). “Basically,” according to Sylvan Morris Dubow, Wolf’s work was “a directory of Jewish service men” and “it attempted to disprove the slanderous remarks about Jewish patriotism written by J.M. Rogers in the *North American Review*.” Dubow, however, strongly criticized Wolf’s scholarship: “Although when it first appeared, this work performed a valuable service by bringing attention to Jewish participation in the [American] Civil War, its value as a modern research tool is questionable. Military service researchers who use it as a starting point should not consider it a final authority, because it is both incomplete and very often inaccurate.” See: Sylvan Morris Dubow, “Identifying the Jewish Serviceman in the Civil War: A Re-appraisal of Simon Wolf’s *The American Jew As Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 59 (1970): 357.

¹⁰¹² *The War Record of American Jews: Plans and Suggestions for the Organization of Community Surveys*, June 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22.

Jews as a whole seem to have contributed a quota of fighters greatly in excess of their proportion of the general population.”¹⁰¹³ In terms of influencing how the broader American public viewed American Jewry, these early results were seen by the Committee’s leadership as potentially very useful. If accurate, these statistics could be cited by Jewish leaders to substantiate the patriotism of the American Jewish community and dispel racial stereotypes.

To secure as many records as possible, the Office of War Records paid for posters advertising that the honor roll was being compiled to be displayed in major American cities. Blank record cards were distributed to synagogues, religious schools, and public schools. Jewish organizations across the country, including Zionist societies and Jewish labor groups, were contacted and asked to provide the names of their members who had served. By January 1920, the War Records Office had amassed two-hundred thousand records.¹⁰¹⁴

It was, however, at this point that the project and Julian Leavitt, the project’s director, fell out of favor with some members of the AJC’s leadership. There was disappointment because, even with the War Records Office’s considerable budget and staff, the honor roll would not be completed by the end of 1920. Based on the correspondence between Leavitt and AJC leaders, as well as correspondence between AJC leaders about the project, it appears that a substantial misunderstanding developed about the ultimate goals of the War Records Office. The AJC was satisfied to have at its disposal reasonably reliable estimates about Jewish participation in the war. Although Leavitt was interested in compiling reliable estimates, he also advocated that the AJC should endeavor to compile an actual complete list of the names of all Jewish service personnel. Leavitt’s ambitions for the War Records Office were outstripping the considerable

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁴ Draft of Report, Office of War Records, January 25, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22.

resources that the AJC and the Jewish Welfare Board were prepared to devote to the project.¹⁰¹⁵

He made numerous requests for more funding and proposed a series of different ways to complete the honor roll, including hiring field workers to canvass the cities with the largest Jewish populations and lobbying for access to the official War Department records.

The AJC, however, had already spent over a hundred thousand dollars on the project, and the leadership gradually came to the realization that the costs of compiling the honor roll were beyond the Committee's means and, further, the statistics that had been compiled already served the intended purpose of the project, which was to demonstrate to the broader American public the disproportionately high level of Jewish contributions to the American war effort. Based on Leavitt's initial estimates, the leaders of the AJC were comfortable making public statements about the level of Jewish participation in the war.

The announcement in 1920 that the War Department was going to release a "dishonor roll" of the names of deserters provided Leavitt with an opportunity to press for the completion of his vision of the project. "I have no doubt," Leavitt wrote to Cyrus Adler, "that among these names there will be many Jewish names, as well as other foreign-sounding names which will be attributed, in many quarters, as Jewish. It seems to be particularly fortunate that we shall be in a position to offset, with indisputable evidence, any abusive generalizations...For every Jewish, or possibly Jewish, name that may appear on the dishonor roll, we shall have thousands on the honor roll."¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹⁵ By April 1920, the Office of War Records had taken on additional tasks beyond compiling the honor roll. The Office was collecting biographical questionnaires of American Jews who were officers or received accommodations, gathering news clippings about Jewish service personnel, and archiving "photographs, letters, diaries, pamphlets, and reprints." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 11, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

¹⁰¹⁶ Letter from Julian Leavitt to Cyrus Adler, March 1, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22.

The AJC and the Jewish Welfare Board continued to finance the project, but only on a month by month basis.¹⁰¹⁷ In April 1920, Leavitt submitted a progress report to the AJC's Executive Committee which concluded with an earnest request for the AJC and the Welfare Board to make a decision about the future financing for the project.¹⁰¹⁸ He estimated that it would cost a further sixty-seven thousand dollars to complete the honor roll.¹⁰¹⁹

The future of the War Records Office was discussed during the 1920 General Meeting of the AJC. The General Committee passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a subcommittee to study what it would cost to complete the honor roll and to evaluate whether this sum could and should be procured. Judge Irving Lehman, Cyrus Adler, and Harry L. Glucksman¹⁰²⁰ were appointed to the subcommittee that was created to study the issue. In late December 1920, Lehman reported to the AJC's Executive Committee that his group had concluded "that it would be advisable to discontinue the project."¹⁰²¹ The Executive Committee, however, rejected this opinion and voted to continue the project and confer with the Jewish Welfare Board to secure additional funding.¹⁰²²

After the Executive Committee's vote, Cyrus Adler, on behalf of both Lehman and Glucksman, sought out a second opinion about Leavitt's requested budget to complete the

¹⁰¹⁷ Based on the Committee's financial records, it appears that, beginning in January 1920, the Jewish Welfare Board began providing a five thousand dollar monthly subsidy for the War Records Office. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 25, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

¹⁰¹⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 11, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16469>.

¹⁰¹⁹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

¹⁰²⁰ Glucksman was the Jewish Welfare Board's representative on the subcommittee.

¹⁰²¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*

project as well as the methods Leavitt had used to compile his estimates of Jewish participation in the American armed service during the war. Adler wrote to Lee K. Frankel, the director of the United Hebrew Charities of New York, who also had a doctorate in Chemistry, and requested his advice: “since we are not statisticians, we would like to have an expert opinion both on the method of work so far as well as on the plan for completion. . . . It is the very strong wish of Judge Lehman and myself that you should do this for us.”¹⁰²³

Frankel agreed to examine the matter. Leavitt was informed that Frankel would be undertaking a review of the War Records Office, and was asked to submit a brief report to Frankel summarizing his methods and the results to date.¹⁰²⁴ In addition to Leavitt’s report, Frankel also met twice with Leavitt to discuss his work.

Frankel’s report on the War Records Office was harshly critical. He described 125,000 of the records that had already been filed by the Office as “useless.” Further, he recommended that the current research strategy be abandoned and that a “fresh start be made from the records of the War and Navy Department.”¹⁰²⁵ Leavitt was understandably upset. In a letter to Cyrus Adler, he rejected the criticisms and pointed out that Frankel’s alternative approach was unfeasible because the War Department and the Adjutant General had already denied requests by the AJC’s Office of War Records to examine the official files. He also emphasized that, even if they were granted permission to examine the military’s records, the same hurdles that led to the adoption of the canvassing approach would still make the adoption of Frankel’s strategy very difficult and very

¹⁰²³ Letter from Cyrus Adler to Doctor Lee K. Frankel, March 21, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22.

¹⁰²⁴ Memorandum Upon the Office of Jewish War Records, Submitted to Dr. Frankel, March 2, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 22.

¹⁰²⁵ Letter from Julian Leavitt to Cyrus Adler, May 16, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24.

expensive. There were more than four million records on file at the War Department, many of them were incomplete, and, in any event, they “bore no indication of Jewish affiliations.”¹⁰²⁶

Adler forwarded Frankel’s report and Leavitt’s rejoinder to Louis Marshall. Marshall replied that the exchange between Frankel and Leavitt “confirmed” his view that it was the AJC’s Executive Committee’s “duty to discontinue the [War Records] Bureau at once.”¹⁰²⁷

Marshall also revealed that he had his own serious doubts about statistical estimates and therefore the preliminary results that Leavitt had been relaying to the Executive Committee in his regular reports: “I have had a considerable experience with statisticians. I had one on the witness-stand yesterday on cross-examination. I am impressed that they only differ from one another in that, though they all guess, the reasoning processes of some are superior to those of others. So far as accuracy is concerned, it is not to be found in their vocabulary.”¹⁰²⁸

In subsequent correspondence with Adler, Marshall said he believed that the AJC had been misled by Leavitt and that, in hindsight, he was convinced that Leavitt had “either tackled a job which he was not capable of performing or...wilfully led [the AJC’s Executive Committee] into the belief that there would be no difficulty in accomplishing what we had in mind to do...I have lost confidence.”¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁷ Letter from Louis Marshall to Cyrus Adler, May 19, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁹ Letter from Louis Marshall to Cyrus Adler, June 27, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24. Marshall was as harsh as Frankel in his criticism of Leavitt. He wrote to Adler that Leavitt “should understand that the responsibility for whatever failure there has been rests exclusively upon him and not upon us, that we were liberal in the expenditure of funds and that we sought to comply with all his conditions, but that we have been reluctantly compelled to stop further expenditures because of our conviction that we are pouring our money into a rat-hole.” See: Letter from Louis Marshall to Cyrus Adler, June 27, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24.

After discussion with the Jewish Welfare Board, which was by now providing the majority of the funds that were continuing to finance the War Record Office on a month by month basis, the AJC resolved to discontinue the project.¹⁰³⁰ By August 1921, the offices had been closed, and the record cards placed into storage.¹⁰³¹

The War Records Office was by far the most expensive research project financed and directed by the AJC during the early history of the organization. The AJC and the Jewish Welfare Board spent at least \$115,000 on the project.¹⁰³² The size of this expenditure was unprecedented, but it can be argued that it was commensurate with the ambitions of the project. The AJC hoped to gather reliable statistics that could be cited to dispel entrenched and disparaging stereotypes about the martial abilities of Jews and the notion that American Jews did not contribute to the United States armed forces.¹⁰³³ In one of a series of letters that Julian Leavitt wrote to leaders of the AJC to try to save the War Records Office, he explicitly acknowledged the social and political goals of the honor roll project: “The work was undertaken as an instrument of defense...It was designed to prove, what we have always known, but what

¹⁰³⁰ Letter from Cyrus Adler to Julian Leavitt, May 29, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24.

¹⁰³¹ The records were first moved for safe storage to a vault in the Montefiore Home, a care facility established in 1884 by Jewish philanthropists for chronically ill patients in Norwood, the Bronx, New York. Some of the material was subsequently transferred to the American Jewish Historical Society.

¹⁰³² Letter from Julian Leavitt to Cyrus Adler, May 16, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24.

¹⁰³³ Albert I. Slomovitz argues that the source of this disparaging view of Jews lay in the general public’s perception of Jewish tribalism and the community’s history of substantial migrations. Jewish capacity for patriotic loyalty was questioned because of their perpetual status as outsiders in the countries where they lived. Comments published by well-known Americans that cast aspersions against the community’s record of military service, including those made by Mark Twain, also contributed to this perception. Slomovitz notes that prominent American Jewish leaders, including Rabbi Edward Calisch, Max J. Kolher, and Simon Wolf authored publications that tried to dispel this perception of Jewish participation in the Armed Forces. See: Albert I. Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 27-28.

the American public did not generally know, that in a time of national emergency the Jewish stock would prove itself the equal of any.”¹⁰³⁴

Although the AJC had substantial ambitions for the project, it was ultimately not a success. In the AJC’s 1922 Annual Report, the organization provided a brief summary of why the project had been discontinued, citing specifically that access to official records had been denied. The report also commended, perhaps only for the sake of appearances, the efforts of Julian Leavitt in leading the project: “Your Committee is unanimous in the belief that a most creditable piece of work has been done by the Office of Jewish War Records under the faithful and competent direction of Mr. Julian Leavitt, and that he has discharged his responsibility conscientiously and with great ability. We wish to place on record the Committee’s appreciation of his devotion to the task with which he was charged and for the efficiency with which he has conducted his office.”¹⁰³⁵

Ultimately, the AJC chose not to widely distribute the War Records Office’s findings. After 1923, there is no further record of any discussion of the War Records Office or the volume of material it had collected. Despite this project’s failings, the Committee remained eager to release something to the general American public that would highlight the contribution of American Jews to the war effort. To this end, in 1923, the Committee sponsored the publication of Rabbi Lee J. Levinger’s *A Jewish Chaplain France*. Levinger had served in the First World War as an Army Chaplain, at the rank of First Lieutenant. The AJC was transparent about why the organization had chosen to sponsor this publication: “Inasmuch as this book contained valuable

¹⁰³⁴ Letter from Julian Leavitt to Cyrus Adler, June 1, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 24.

¹⁰³⁵ Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 18, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1922_1923_8_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. The report on the War Records Office can be found on pages 357-358.

information with regard to the participation of American soldiers of the Jewish faith in the World War...your Committee believed that this book would be read with interest by the American public.”¹⁰³⁶ The AJC gifted copies of Levinger’s work to public libraries, public schools, and universities and colleges. As will be seen below, the sponsorship and distribution of Levinger’s work was consistent with one of the advocacy approaches that the first generation of AJC leaders relied on during the early history of the organization. In addition to sponsoring research, from an early date, the Committee began releasing books and pamphlets to further their social and political objectives.

The AJC as Publisher

By the 1950s, the AJC had a substantial publishing operation, commissioning and distributing new volumes, articles, and the results of Committee-sponsored research, every year. It was during the first twenty-five years of its history that the AJC made its first moves to become involved in book publishing. The works and studies discussed below including, *Immigration and Labor* (1913), *Jews in the Eastern Warn Zone* (1916), *The History of a Lie* (1921), *Israel und die Volker*(1922), *The Crucified Jew* (1927), *Juden und Judentum von heute* (1925), and *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (1931) illustrate the types of works the AJC chose to subsidize, publish, and distribute during its formative years. The Committee’s choices illustrate the organization’s earliest strategies about how to use publications to shape public opinion and advance the Committee’s social and political agenda.

The case studies of the AJC’s foray into book publishing discussed below reveal the organization’s ambitions to exercise influence and its understanding of optics. As will be seen,

¹⁰³⁶ Sixteenth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 20, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1923_1924_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 381.

the Committee's leaders carefully chose which works to sponsor; they anticipated potential sources of anti-Semitism, and they prepared replies in advance. The leaders considered how each author's connection to the Jewish community might impact the potential reception of the work by the general public. The case studies also illustrate that, as a matter of strategy, the Committee took a long-term view; it sponsored material that would be accessible to future leaders and molders of public opinion. As publishers, the early leaders of the AJC made pragmatic and strategic decisions.

Isaac A. Hourwich's *Immigration and Labor*

The first book that the AJC published was an extended version of the first pamphlet the organization released to influence public opinion. Long before the most intense battles over the passage of immigration restriction legislation, the AJC anticipated that the growing number of Jewish immigrants in the United States would not go unnoticed, and would generate a backlash from both American "nativists," who viewed Jews as racially inferior, unassimilable aliens, and American labor leaders, who believed immigrants, regardless of their faith and nation of origin, were driving down wages in the manufacturing sector, including the garment industry. In 1907, during its first year of operations, the AJC commissioned Isaac A. Hourwich, a Lithuanian-born economist, to prepare a pamphlet describing how immigration facilitated economic growth,¹⁰³⁷ and, in 1911, with American lawmakers seriously debating imposing immigration restrictions, the AJC commissioned Hourwich to expand the pamphlet into a book containing "an analysis of the Immigration Commission," a bipartisan special committee that had

¹⁰³⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 1, 1907, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16444>.

been empowered to study the impact of immigration on America's economy. The AJC also asked Hourwich to undertake and include in the book his own statistical analysis of the economic impact of immigration.¹⁰³⁸

Hourwich asked the AJC's Executive Committee for instructions about "the manner in which the book should be written."¹⁰³⁹ Specifically, he wanted to know if it "was to appear as the work of an individual student of the question or as the result of an investigation by an organization interested in the subject."¹⁰⁴⁰ The Executive Committee considered the optics of releasing the book without a named economist author but under the imprint of the Committee. In its view, it was "clearly inadvisable for such a book to be published under the name of the American Jewish Committee, but that it was not clear, on the other hand, that Dr. Hourwich's name as author would carry the desired weight."¹⁰⁴¹ The Committee debated the question and resolved to wait for the manuscript to be completed before deciding the matter.

In commissioning the work, the Committee instructed Hourwich that he was to proceed "upon the theory that [the book] is to be the work of an individual," but the Committee also imposed a series of conditions, including reserving ownership of the copyright of the book, and the right to "make such alterations of matter and form in the manuscript as are deemed desirable."¹⁰⁴² Hourwich accepted the conditions, and the following month appeared before the AJC's Executive Committee to submit a report on his findings and progress. During this meeting, Hourwich stated that "practically all the preliminary work was completed...[and] that

¹⁰³⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 11, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16452>.

¹⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*

he had begun to prepare the manuscript; he believed he could complete this in about two months' time."¹⁰⁴³

Hourwich, who at the time was an employee of the Census Bureau, also reported that he had requested a leave of absence from his job in order to focus on completing the book. The Committee's leadership imposed a deadline of February 1, 1912, but also voted to provide the author with a salary of eight dollars a day to compensate him for his lost salary during his leave.¹⁰⁴⁴ Hourwich's request for a leave of absence from the Census Bureau, however, was denied; consequently, he was not able to meet the February deadline.

Meanwhile, the so-called Burnett Bill, an immigration restriction act that also included the imposition of a literacy test for new immigrants, was moving through the United States Congress. The AJC felt they needed the findings outlined in Hourwich's book to rally American public opinion in opposition to the bill. During a trip to Washington D.C., Louis Marshall personally met with Hourwich and urged him to "hasten the completion of the work."¹⁰⁴⁵ Hourwich promised to finish the book by May. In the interim, the AJC secured a publisher for the work, G.P. Putnam's Sons, but, by October of 1912, the manuscript was still not ready for publication.

The heart of the argument of Hourwich's anticipated book was that immigration facilitated economic growth by ensuring a steady supply of new labor. The AJC was eager to gain a wider circulation for this argument because there was a labor shortage in parts of the United States, and immigration restriction legislation would only serve to make this shortage

¹⁰⁴³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 25, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16452>.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on May 12, 1912, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16453>.

more acute. Jacob Schiff argued that “Congress will be little disposed to pass the Bill in view of the growing scarcity of labor all over the country. Public opinion will oppose the restriction of immigration. What we need now is to get the public press to begin now to point out the absurdity of deliberately creating a labor famine.”¹⁰⁴⁶

As the manuscript of the book, which had originally been called *The Economic Aspects of Immigration* but was now titled *Immigration and Labor*, was still not ready for publication, Mayer Sulzberger proposed widely distributing the introductory chapter in pamphlet form. In his view, the first chapter “constituted a splendid summary of the work and of the results of the facts and reasonings [sic] in the book, and indicated that the proof of the dogmatic statements made could be found in the body of the book.”¹⁰⁴⁷ After some further discussion, the Executive Committee “resolved that 25,000 copies of the first chapter...be printed and be widely distributed by the publisher to the newspapers and in other quarters where it would do good.”¹⁰⁴⁸ During the same meeting, the leadership also voted to circulate 25,000 copies of a speech on immigration made by Cyrus Sulzberger, and the Committee appropriated two thousand dollars (as a loan) from the remnants of the Russian Relief Fund to finance the printing of both pamphlets.¹⁰⁴⁹

Finally, by January 1, 1913, the book had been published. Morris Waldman arranged for copies to be delivered to “all members of Congress, to the President [of the United States], to the

¹⁰⁴⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 12, 1912, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16454>.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

members of the Cabinet, to leading economists, to the press including scientific, economic and political science journals, and to many prominent public and state libraries.”¹⁰⁵⁰

The impact of the Hourwich’s book is difficult to assess. The Burnett Bill passed both houses of Congress in 1913, but, amid public uproar, was ultimately vetoed by President Woodrow Wilson. Three years later, however, virtually the same act was passed by Congress again; Wilson vetoed again, but, this time, his veto was overridden by American lawmakers and the literary test became American law. *Immigration and Labor* established an important precedent in the history of the AJC practices of public advocacy. In the future, the organization would continue to commission the writing and distribution of texts that they hoped would serve to sway public opinion.

Jews in the Eastern War Zone

Many of the Jewish communities of Russia and Eastern Europe had suffered through significant waves of violence for years. Before the outbreak of the First World War, this violence against Jewish communities emanated from what could be described as domestic sources, but the outbreak of the First World War placed many of the Jewish communities concentrated in the Pale of Settlement directly in between, and ultimately on the front line, of what was then the largest international conflict in history. Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, the AJC commissioned a study of how the war was affecting Jewish communities. The 130-page report, which was ultimately published in the form of a booklet that could be easily and

¹⁰⁵⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 1, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16455>.

inexpensively distributed by mail, was released on February 4, 1916 with the title *Jews in the Eastern War Zone*.¹⁰⁵¹

Since the establishment of the AJC, the organization had been closely monitoring the Jewish communities of Russia and Eastern Europe in order to expose the scale of the violence of the pogroms and publically shame the Russian government into ending the violence. These advocacy campaigns and this newly published book were also connected to the AJC's goal of maintaining liberal immigration policies in the United States to keep the country open to more Jewish immigrants. *Jews in the Eastern War Zone* was distributed by the AJC across the United States and internationally.¹⁰⁵² In what would become a pattern in the AJC's use of printed materials, the organization compiled a list of individuals considered "creators and leaders of public opinion," and mailed them copies of the report.¹⁰⁵³

These copies of the report were accompanied by a letter from Harry Schneiderman, the AJC's Assistant Secretary. In the letter, Schneiderman stressed the objectivity of the report: "Every essential statement of fact is based on evidence emanating from unprejudiced sources," the accuracy of which had "been verified beyond all reasonable doubt."¹⁰⁵⁴ As the AJC's hostility towards the Russian government, and Jacob Schiff's efforts on behalf of Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, were well known, Schneiderman emphasized that "all the evidence

¹⁰⁵¹ *The American Jewish Year Book 5677 (1916-17)*, ed. Cyrus Adler for the American Jewish Committee (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 93.

¹⁰⁵² The Committee appropriated five thousand dollars from the Emergency Trust Fund to finance the publication and distribution of twenty-five thousand copies of *Jews in the Eastern War Zone*. Judge Nathan Bijur personally contributed one hundred dollars to subsidize the project. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 13, 1916, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16461>.

¹⁰⁵³ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to recipients of *Jews in the Eastern War Zone*, February 1916, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 7.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

regarding Russia, is derived directly from Russian authority. None of the statements concerning that country comes from sources inimical to it.”¹⁰⁵⁵

The remainder of Schneiderman’s letter attempts to balance an idealistic tone with declarations that the AJC was a neutral organization and was not lobbying for American entry into the First World War:

This publication may be regarded as a message from its silent millions, to the people of America, and gives utterance to their protest against the cruelties and indignities to which their Jewish compatriots have been subjected. The report is not intended as a polemic or for partisan purposes, or to arouse prejudice. Its sole object is to appeal to human sympathy and to the conscience of the world in the cause of justice. It is issued by an organization that is bent on maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality as between the European belligerents, but nevertheless believes that to know the truth is never untimely. It is even more important to friends than to foes.¹⁰⁵⁶

The impact of *Jews in the Eastern War Zone* on American and international public opinion is difficult to assess; however, the distribution of the book did generate at least one interesting and positive development with respect to the security of the Jewish communities of Poland and the relationship between Jewish and Catholic leaders. Among the recipients of *Jews in the Eastern War Zone* was Pope Benedict XV. The copy of the report the AJC sent to the Pope was accompanied by a petition “praying him to exert his influence to ameliorate conditions in [the Eastern war zone], especially in Poland.”¹⁰⁵⁷ The AJC received a reply from the Holy See on February 9, 1916, which included a statement that the *American Jewish Year Book* described as “a virtual encyclical” that outlined “directions to the Catholic clergy of Poland, admonishing

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁷ *The American Jewish Year Book 5677 (1916-17)*, ed. Cyrus Adler for the American Jewish Committee (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 94.

them to use their best endeavors to put an end to persecution which has prevailed.”¹⁰⁵⁸ In April of 1916, the so-called “virtual encyclical” was also published in European and American newspapers.¹⁰⁵⁹

Herman Bernstein’s *The History of a Lie*

As part of the Committee’s strategy to combat the growth of anti-Semitism in the United States that was being abetted by the wider distribution of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the articles printed in the *Dearborn Independent*, in late-1920, Louis Marshall personally hired Herman Bernstein, a novelist and journalist who had gained some fame for publically exposing private correspondence between Kaiser Wilhelm II and Tsar Nicholas II, “to make various investigations in connection with...anti-Jewish propaganda.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Marshall reported to the AJC’s Executive Committee that he was paying Bernstein a salary of one hundred dollars a week, “it being understood that the arrangement is temporary.”¹⁰⁶¹ The leaders of the AJC believed that the *Protocols* were a forgery; Bernstein had been hired to investigate the sources of this propaganda.¹⁰⁶²

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>. Bernstein had exposed the pre-First World War correspondence between the two monarchs in his book *The Willy-Nicky Correspondence: Being the Secret and Intimate Telegrams Exchanged Between the Kaiser and the Tsar*. See: Herman Bernstein, *The Willy-Nicky Correspondence: Being the Secret and Intimate Telegrams Exchanged Between the Kaiser and the Tsar* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1918).

¹⁰⁶¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

¹⁰⁶² The AJC similarly conducted an investigation into who was printing the copies of the *Protocols* that were now circulating throughout the United States. A significant number of the early American editions of the *Protocols* were published by The Beckwith Company. In December 1920, the Executive Committee reported: “Investigation by the Employing Printers Association had shown that this is a new company and that it is understood ‘that the Knickerbocker Press is connected with them in some way, but to what extent they (we) were unable to ascertain.’”

In early January 1921, Bernstein reported to the AJC that he had made significant progress. He had “discovered two Russian books, one published in 1872 and the other in 1907” from which sections of the *Protocols* had been directly lifted (or plagiarized) without attribution.¹⁰⁶³ During the January 9, 1921 meeting of the AJC’s Executive Committee, the leadership discussed how to make this information public. No decision was made, but the minutes of the meeting convey the impression that the question of how to circulate Bernstein’s proof was being left to the discretion of Louis Marshall.¹⁰⁶⁴

While Marshall was deliberating how to distribute Bernstein’s findings, the author was quickly preparing a manuscript for a book detailing the results of his investigation. Only a month after the first update on his investigation was submitted to the Committee, Marshall reported that Bernstein had completed a book detailing his findings. Marshall told the organization’s leadership that Bernstein had been able to independently secure a publisher for his work. In these circumstances, the Committee “agreed to buy two thousand copies” and arrange for their distribution.¹⁰⁶⁵

The Knickerbocker Press is a subsidiary of G.P. Putnam’s Sons.” The results of this investigation are interesting for two reasons. Firstly, the AJC collaborated with Putnam’s on the release of materials the organization sponsored, including Isaac Hourwich’s *Immigration and Labor*. Secondly, there is no evidence in the AJC’s archives that the Committee used this pre-existing relationship to curb the printing and further distribution of the *Protocols* by a company that appeared to be a subsidiary of Putnam’s. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

¹⁰⁶³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 9, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ According to the meeting’s minutes, Marshall stated that “he is taking under advisement the question of the manner in which these discoveries could be made public.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 9, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 13, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>. During the same Executive Committee meeting, the AJC also agreed to buy “several thousand copies” of John Spargo’s *The Jew and American Ideals*. See: John Spargo, *The Jew and American Ideals* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921.) The AJC did not commission this project, but, in a repetition of what became a pattern in the organization’s involvement in distributing content, the

The following month, however, the leadership debated whether, by distributing these books, the organization was placing its reputation at risk. As already noted, the AJC did not want to be perceived as propagandists, and the leadership was receiving correspondence urging it to clarify to both its membership and the general public that the AJC “was not engaged in propaganda work, but in presenting indisputable facts which merit the public’s attention.”¹⁰⁶⁶ While they were certainly concerned about their reputation, the leaders of the AJC privileged releasing Bernstein’s discoveries. They did not think it was possible avoid giving the impression that the organization was disinterested in the growth of anti-Semitism that was being nurtured by the wider distribution of the *Protocols* and the general public’s acceptance of the forgery’s authenticity. By this point in its development as an advocacy organization, the AJC had accepted that the sponsorship and release of publications was within the organization’s mandate, consistent with the Committee’s social and political objectives, necessary to maintain the organizations credibility and influence, and worth any risk to its reputation.

In March of 1921, the Executive Committee appropriated five thousand dollars from the organization’s Emergency Trust Fund “for the purpose of defraying the expenses in connection with the combating of anti-Jewish propaganda.”¹⁰⁶⁷ This became a regular practice of the AJC: the Committee routinely appropriated money from the Emergency Trust Fund, which had been

AJC earmarked money to ensure that this work was available in university and college libraries. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on March 13, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>. At his own expense, Julius Rosenwald, the AJC’s Vice-President, purchased additional copies of Spargo’s book and Harry Schneiderman arranged for these copies to be gifted “to those libraries which had not received them from the Committee direct.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on October 9, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16472>.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on March 13, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16471>.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

created to fund overseas relief work, to finance the distribution of books and pamphlets in the United States.

Bernstein's book, which was released by J.S. Ogilvie Publishing with the title the *History of a Lie: "The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion," A Study*, was one of the AJC's most significant contributions to the ongoing efforts by Jewish advocacy groups around the world to discredit the *Protocols*.¹⁰⁶⁸ It made a lasting contribution; some of the evidence that is still used to debunk the *Protocols* was first uncovered and broadly disseminated as a result of Bernstein's AJC-sponsored investigation. Throughout Louis Marshall's tenure as the AJC's President, the Committee remained committed to ensuring Bernstein's book gained as wide a circulation as possible.¹⁰⁶⁹

Rabbi Josef Samuel Bloch's *Israel und die Volker*

In late 1921, the AJC received an unsolicited letter from Benjamin Harz, the director of Benjamin Harz Verlag, a German-language publishing house with offices in Berlin and Vienna.¹⁰⁷⁰ In the letter, Harz, who was Jewish, announced that he was shortly going to publish a book by Rabbi Josef Samuel Bloch entitled *Israel und die Volker*, which Harz translated into English as "Israel and the Peoples."¹⁰⁷¹ Harz explained that he believed this book would be of interest to the leaders of the AJC, because it could be useful in the fight against anti-Semitism in

¹⁰⁶⁸ Herman Bernstein, *The History of A Lie: "The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion," A Study* (New York: J.S. Ogilvie Publishing, 1921).

¹⁰⁶⁹ As late as 1927, Louis Marshall was subsidizing Bernstein's work on a revised edition of *The History of A Lie*, including the translation and incorporation into the text of further evidence which challenged the *Protocol's* authenticity. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 9, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16483>.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Letter from Benjamin Harz to the American Jewish Committee, December 14, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 3.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*

the United States. In the same letter, Harz proposed a series of contractual terms under which his publishing company and the AJC could collaborate on distributing an English translation of the book in the United States. Harz stated in his letter that he had already lined up a qualified translator in Berlin, whom he declined to name. He proposed printing and binding the books in Europe and then shipping them to America. That Harz approached the AJC with this offer says a great deal. It indicates that, by the early 1920s, the AJC had established for itself an international reputation for funding publications that were intended to combat anti-Semitism.

The author, Rabbi Bloch, in addition to his religious training, held a doctorate from the University of Zurich, and was a politician that had been elected three times to serve in the Austrian Chamber of Deputies. Bloch was, according to Harz, “well known over the world as a man who since more than 40 years stands in the first row fighting antisemitism.”¹⁰⁷² Harz was not exaggerating. Bloch did indeed have a significant history of participating in Jewish public advocacy in Europe. He had played a prominent role in the so-called Tiszaeszlár Affair, an accusation of blood libel against a group of Hungarian Jews that followed the disappearance of Eszter Solymosi, a fourteen-year old Christian girl, on April 1, 1882.¹⁰⁷³

The Tiszaeszlár Affair dragged on for fifteen months. There was widespread incitement against Hungarian Jews and periodic outbreaks of violence. The affair culminated with the trial of fifteen Hungarian Jews. Four were accused of murdering Solymosi, and the remainder were charged with either conspiring to assist in the murder or in helping to dispose of her body.

During the period leading up to the trial, August Rohling, a prominent anti-Semite and professor of Catholic theology at Prague University, offered to testify for the prosecution and

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷³ For background information of the Tiszaeszlár Affair see: Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank), 1894-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 40-57.

provide expert evidence under oath about Jewish rituals involving (or requiring) the spilling of the blood of Christian children.¹⁰⁷⁴ When news of Rohling's intention to testify became well known, Bloch attacked Rohling in a series of articles in which he suggested that Rohling would be committing perjury if he testified about his views on Jewish rituals. Ultimately, Rohling withdrew his offer to testify. The trial culminated with the acquittal of all the accused; however, the verdict precipitated further outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence in Hungary.

In his letter to the AJC, Harz cited Bloch's history as a leader in Jewish public advocacy, in particular Bloch's "victorious struggle against Rohling," and urged the leaders of the AJC to work with him on publishing and distributing an English translation of Bloch's book.¹⁰⁷⁵ As Harz expressed it, the new book would be a useful instrument of Jewish public advocacy because it "represents a very arsenal, out of which one may easily draw the arms for struggling against the calumnies and accusations brought forth against us."¹⁰⁷⁶ By "us," Harz meant world Jewry: "This book is containing not only an abundance of original researches apt to satisfy the learned man, but it is written such as to thoroughly instruct the public about the real nature of our law and tradition, pointing out the very moments that have caused all the offences and accusations against us."¹⁰⁷⁷ Harz emphasized that the book would not only enable Jews to defend themselves but, if translated into English, would also provide information that sympathetic gentiles could use to curb of Anti-Semitism "in the Anglo-Saxon world and especially in America."¹⁰⁷⁸

¹⁰⁷⁴ For more on the dispute between August Rohling and Josef Bloch see: Barnett Peretz Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question: Anti-Semitic Trials and the Press in the Early German Empire* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 190-204.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Letter from Benjamin Harz to the American Jewish Committee, December 14, 1921, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 3.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The AJC did not agree to Harz's terms and *Israel und die Volker* was published only in German in 1922. The AJC did not, however, entirely reject Harz's proposal. The Executive Committee agreed to buy five hundred copies of the German language edition of the book and distribute them as gifts to university and college libraries in the United States.¹⁰⁷⁹ All the editions that were gifted to libraries were preceded by a letter to each librarian signed by Louis Marshall. A copy of the form letter has been kept on file at the AJC archives:

You will receive in a few days by parcel post (or express) a copy of a noted work written by Dr. Joseph S. Bloch, entitled "Israel und die Volker." Unfortunately there has been as yet no English translation of the work. Nevertheless, it is believed that those who desire to learn the truth from dispassionate sources with regard to the many unfounded charges that have been made against the Jews, would embrace the opportunity to read this important literary contribution. It is based principally on the researches [sic] into the Talmud and other Jewish literature by Christian scholars, who were designated by a high judicial tribunal to give their expert testimony on the subject.

We trust that you will accept this volume as a gift and make it accessible to your readers. Believing that every fair-minded man is desirous of knowing the truth, the Committee of which I have the honor to be the President has concluded to place this book within the reach of thinking men, in order that, to some extent at least, the egregious libels that have been uttered against the people of the Book may be authoritatively refuted.¹⁰⁸⁰

Marshall's letter to the librarians is interesting in several respects. Firstly, in order to establish the dispassionate objectivity of the book's author and the intellectual merit of the book, Marshall neglects to mention that Bloch was a Rabbi and activist for Jewish causes; instead, he emphasizes that the work is based on investigations conducted by Christian scholars. Marshall's attempt to establish the objectivity of the work, however, is undermined by his vague reference

¹⁰⁷⁹ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Louis Marshall, March 19, 1923, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 3.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Letter from Louis Marshall to the Librarian of [blank], Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 3.

to a high judicial authority of some kind who apparently handpicked Christian scholars to study Jewish texts. Neither the participation of the Christian scholars nor the involvement of a “high judicial authority” was mentioned by Harz in his letter to the AJC.

Marshall’s letter to the librarians is also interesting in that it openly acknowledges that the AJC was aware that their gift would have only a limited impact in the fight against anti-Semitism. While Marshall acknowledged that the book’s impact would be minor, the letter does convey that he believed that there was advantage to be gained in the fight against anti-Semitism in the United States by making this book available to American intellectuals and university students. As already discussed, the AJC’s leaders employed both long-term and short-term strategies in their efforts to combat the spread of Anti-Semitism. The distribution of Bloch’s book was certainly part of a long term strategy which emphasized educating future leaders. Six years later, after a translation of the book into English had been made without any assistance from the AJC, the Committee agreed to buy and distribute five hundred copies of the English translation to college and university libraries.¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁸¹ Six years after the publication of *Israel und die Volker* in German, the potential usefulness of an English language edition of Bloch’s book was once again brought to the attention of the AJC and discussed by the organization’s Executive Committee during a meeting held on January 8, 1928. During the six years between Harz’s original offer and this meeting, the book had been translated into English under the title *Israel and the Nations* and Rabbi Bloch had passed away. The Rabbi’s estate was being managed by his brother Morris Bloch. In this capacity, in early 1928, Morris Bloch offered to sell English translations of his brother’s book to the AJC for two dollars a copy. The offer was discussed by the Executive Committee during a meeting held on January 8, 1928. The minutes of the meeting indicate that, while the members of the Executive Committee felt the two dollar charge was “moderate for a book of this size,” there was some concern that import duties and the costs of distributing the book would bring the cost up to three dollars per copy. The idea of the AJC purchasing the copyright to the book from Bloch’s estate was also discussed at this meeting, but the Executive Committee declined to make a decision on any of these matters. The minutes of the meeting indicate, however, that Harry Schneiderman, the Assistant Secretary of the AJC, “was directed to secure further information as to copyright and the cost of importing the book.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 8, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed June 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16485>. The matter was not discussed again until a meeting of the Executive Committee held almost four months later on April 1, 1928. During this meeting, Harry Schneiderman reported that Morris Bloch had revised his offer and was now willing to sell the AJC the book for one dollar a copy. Based on this information, the Executive Committee voted to purchase five hundred copies of the English translation and to distribute those copies once again as gifts to university and college libraries. The AJC’s

Max Hunterberg's *The Crucified Jew*

During its formative years, the AJC did not yet have the resources to fund the publication of all the books that were brought to the organization's attention by outsiders or promoted by its leadership. Although the AJC has the reputation of being a well-funded organization, in truth, in its formative years, it had limited resources. The records of the AJC reveal that because of its finite resources, the leaders of the organization had extensive debates about expending comparatively small sums to purchase and distribute books that served the organization's interests. While most of the AJC's members and the organization's leaders on the Executive Committee were successful or very wealthy men, through the 1930s, the financial resources of organization itself, although growing, were still modest, particularly when compared to the collective wealth of the organization's founders and leaders. While the AJC has the reputation of

leaders also decided that, in order to minimize the import duties, the copies of the book should be mailed directly by the publisher in Europe to the libraries in America. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on April 1, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed June 19, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16485>. The Executive Committee's decision, however, was not the end of the matter. Sometime after the meeting held on April 1, 1928, Morris Bloch travelled to America and had a meeting with Harry Schneiderman in New York. At the end of August 1931, Schneiderman's wrote a memorandum to the Morris Waldman, the AJC's Secretary, which contains a brief summary of his meeting with Bloch. The memorandum to Waldman indicates that the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings in January and April of 1928 had omitted some important details about Morris Bloch's revised offer to sell the English translation of his brother's book to the AJC for one dollar a copy. According to these notes, Morris Bloch had empowered Bernard Semel, an important leader within the Kehillah and a member of the AJC, to act as his agent in negotiating with the AJC's Executive Committee. Bloch had authorized Semel to inform the leaders of the AJC that he "would let the Committee have the books for any price it deemed proper." During his negotiations with the AJC, Semel was either not aware or did not appreciate that the printing costs for each copy were \$2.50, and that this cost did not include the expenses that had already been incurred by the publisher and the author's estate of having the book translated into English. After discussing this information with Waldman, Bloch asked if the Committee would be able to offer him more than one dollar per copy. The AJC's Executive Committee did not discuss this matter at any of its subsequent meetings. Before the matter was brought up again, Morris Bloch called Harry Schneiderman and "explained that his request for additional money for the books should not delay their distribution, for if the Committee should decide that it is not in position to appropriate more for this purpose, he will rest satisfied with its decision." The AJC's leaders did not formally take up the matter again. The original terms of the agreement remained in place. A list of five hundred recipients was compiled by the AJC, most likely by Waldman and Schneiderman, and the books were delivered as gifts. See: Memorandum for Mr. Waldman, August 31, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 3.

being well financed, during its first three decades, the AJC's leaders were always preoccupied with raising more funds, and continually debated the best ways to use those that were available. At times, individual members of the AJC would finance particular projects on their own initiative because the AJC itself did not have the funds available to subsidize the project or there was no consensus among the AJC's leaders about the merits or utility of the project.

One example of an individual AJC member intervening where the organization could not, or would not, occurred in 1928 when the AJC's leaders debated distributing Max Hunterberg's *The Crucified Jew*. Hunterberg, in common with many of those involved in Jewish public advocacy in the early-twentieth century, believed that the accusation of deicide against the Jews was a fundamental source, if not the fundamental source, of anti-Semitism. Throughout his career, Hunterberg's work was polemical; he sought to decisively undermine the widely-held belief that the Jews were responsible for the execution of Jesus Christ.

Hunterberg's book, which was ultimately titled *Jesus, The Crucified Jew*, was published by Bloch Publishing in 1927, with an initial publication run of fifteen hundred copies. The book did not sell well. By mid-1928 only two to three hundred copies had been sold or given away.¹⁰⁸² Sometime before May 1928, Hunterberg requested the assistance of the AJC in distributing his book. A letter from Harry Schneiderman to Julius Rosenwald, the President of Sears, Roebuck and Company and the AJC's Vice-President, shows that Hunterberg applied to the AJC for assistance after being personally urged to do so by Rosenwald.¹⁰⁸³

Hunterberg's book and its potential usefulness in the fight against anti-Semitism were discussed briefly at a meeting of the AJC's Executive Committee on May 13, 1928. At this

¹⁰⁸² Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Julius Rosenwald, June 6, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 6.

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*

meeting, Louis Marshall, the AJC's President, and Executive Committee member Max J. Kohler, a prominent lawyer and former District Attorney for the Southern District of New York, spoke out in favor of the book and its potential value in the fight against anti-Semitism.¹⁰⁸⁴

Nevertheless, the Executive Committee, citing a lack of funds, declined to provide Hunterberg with assistance distributing his work. However, "to show its interest and to encourage Mr. Hunterberg, the Committee did vote a contribution of \$50.00."¹⁰⁸⁵

After the vote at the May 13th meeting, Harry Schneiderman wrote to Julius Rosenwald to inform him of the Executive Committee's decision.¹⁰⁸⁶ In this letter, Schneiderman stated that he had met several times with Hunterberg, was impressed with him as "an out and out idealist," and personally shared Hunterberg's view that the charge of deicide was an essential source of anti-Semitism. Schneiderman also told Rosenwald that he believed it would be "very worthwhile" if the remaining copies of the initial publication run were distributed to "libraries of theological schools and seminaries, and among leading Christian ministers."¹⁰⁸⁷ Schneiderman also noted in his letter that he was aware that it was Rosenwald who had advised Hunterberg to request assistance from the AJC. Knowing that Rosenwald had expressed some interest in Hunterberg and his work, Schneiderman offered to personally coordinate an effort to distribute Hunterberg's book if Rosenwald would agree to underwrite the project: "If, dear Mr. Rosenwald, you feel like going into this thing, I shall be glad to attend to all the details, negotiating with the publisher for the remaining copies, making up a mailing list, having the books wrapped, addressed, and mailed."¹⁰⁸⁸

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Rosenwald agreed to finance the project. Based on Schneiderman's correspondence with Bloch Publishing, Rosenwald must have agreed to do so on the condition of anonymity. On September 5, 1928, Schneiderman wrote to the publisher: "I take pleasure in informing you that through the generosity of *an interested person*, I am in position to purchase for his account 850 copies of the book."¹⁰⁸⁹ By this time, Hunterberg was already working on revising his book in the hopes of publishing a second edition. Bloch Publishing was willing to publish the second edition if they were provided with a guarantee that five hundred copies would be purchased for a total of \$225.00. Schneiderman advised the publisher that they should proceed with publishing the second edition: "I am happy to be able to inform you that the same friend who has made possible the purchase of 850 copies of the first edition, has authorized me to say that he is willing to cover the guarantee."¹⁰⁹⁰ Despite the AJC Executive Committee's decision, the organization's Assistant Secretary took it upon himself to secure financing from another AJC leader and coordinate the distribution of Hunterberg's book. This episode is illustrative of an important aspect of the AJC's history. The Committee was an organization that was founded to coordinate American Jewish public advocacy. In practice, however, the men who led this organization did not always act through the Committee.

Jonas Kreppel's *Juden und Judentum von heute*

As the AJC's reputation for assisting with book distribution grew, the organization began receiving requests from writers asking for the organization's endorsement and assistance. The AJC took these requests seriously, and the leadership made calculated decisions about which

¹⁰⁸⁹ Letter from Harry Schneiderman to Bloch Publishing Company, September 5, 1928, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 6. [Emphasis added].

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

works they were prepared to sponsor. The leaders of the AJC were judicious and cautious about the assistance they provided to writers; publications that might have served to influence public opinion or further the AJC's objectives were rejected either because the AJC did not feel it could spare the funds or because the leadership discerned some flaw in the form or content of the work.¹⁰⁹¹

By way of illustration of the AJC's approach, in 1925, the Executive Committee considered subsidizing the translation and distribution of Dr. Jonas Kreppel's *Juden und Judentum von heute (Jews and Judaism Today)*. After the publication of his book in Vienna, Kreppel had sent a copy to Louis Marshall. Based on Marshall's references to the amount of correspondence he received from Kreppel, the author was quite eager to solicit the cooperation of the AJC in translating his book into English and publishing it in America.¹⁰⁹²

On August 3, 1925, Marshall wrote to Kreppel and told him that he had received his copy of the book but had been very busy and had only had the time to briefly examine the work. In this letter, Marshall offered Kreppel some hopeful encouragement: "The plan is excellent and

¹⁰⁹¹ The Executive Committee denied numerous requests for assistance from authors of non-fiction. Between 1906 and 1925, the Committee also received two requests to help distribute works of fiction. They declined to help in both instances. In 1925, the AJC declined to collaborate with Minton, Balch and Company in the publication of a novel by Elias Tobenkin. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 9, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16480>. In 1927, the AJC received a letter from Simon O. Pollock "suggesting the Committee undertake the publication of a translation of a Russian novel dealing with the pogroms in the Ukraine in 1919-1920." The book, entitled "The Crimson Book," was written by Sergei Ivanovitch Gusev-Orenburgsky. Pollock estimated that the rights to translate the book into English could be purchased from the author for \$2500, and estimated the cost of translating the work would be approximately three hundred dollars. The Executive Committee determined that the expense was too substantial for "a work of this kind, especially as it has been reported that other books on the same subject are in the course of preparation." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 9, 1927, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16483>. The early AJC was reluctant to support works of fiction; however, this trend did not continue throughout the twentieth century. By the 1950s, the AJC was actively supporting the production of works of fiction, including radio plays and short films.

¹⁰⁹² Letter from Louis Marshall to Doctor Kreppel, August 3, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 9.

gives more than a birdseye view of contemporary Judaism.”¹⁰⁹³ Marshall promised to study the book thoroughly and reply, but he was also uneasy about Kreppel’s requests because it was unclear what kind, and how much, assistance the author hoped to get from the AJC. Marshall wrote to Kreppel: “If your idea is that if the book is found to be useful and valuable that we shall recommend it to the public, then I can assure you that it will be cheerfully done. If you have anything more in mind I should like to be informed.”¹⁰⁹⁴

Kreppel replied to Marshall ten days later, and, while he did not directly ask for financial assistance, he made it clear that he hoped the AJC could help him publicize his work: “I have no great expectations, indeed, but I suppose that the gentlemen of the Executive Committee will acknowledge the moral duty of the leading jewish[sic] organization in America to promote such an enterprise in a suitable way.”¹⁰⁹⁵ Kreppel also noted in this letter that his book had garnered some attention in Europe from Jewish communities, institutions, and scientists; however, this was proving to be more of a financial burden than a blessing as many of the people or groups interested in the book requested half-priced or gratuitous copies, and Kreppel felt, in his own words, “induced to comply with their wishes.”¹⁰⁹⁶

Over the next three months, Kreppel wrote Marshall several times, but did not receive a reply until the beginning of September. Marshall explained that he had not replied because he had not yet an opportunity to discuss the book with the AJC’s Executive Committee, and, consequently, he had nothing to report.¹⁰⁹⁷ Marshall also took the opportunity to remind Kreppel

¹⁰⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁵ Letter from Regierungsrat J. Kreppel to Louis Marshall, August 13, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 9.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁷ Letter from Louis Marshall to Doctor Kreppel, September 1, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 9.

that he was “at liberty to get in touch with the various individual members [of the AJC] and endeavor to interest them.”¹⁰⁹⁸

By December 1925, Marshall had studied *Juden und Judentum von heute* more closely, and had brought it to the attention of the members of the AJC’s Executive Committee. In a letter dated December 3, 1925, Marshall informed Kreppel that the Executive Committee had discussed his requests for assistance, but had ultimately decided that the organization was not in a financial position to provide him with any assistance.¹⁰⁹⁹

In the same letter, Marshall provided some criticisms of the book which provide insight into why the leaders of the AJC declined to help Kreppel translate and distribute his work in America. Marshall was direct in his assessment: “It is my opinion that for a book of this kind to have any considerable sale in English-speaking countries, it would have to be prepared in an entirely different manner. I do not think that a translation of the book as it stands would be successful.”¹¹⁰⁰ Marshall concluded the letter by expressing regret that he was unable to provide Kreppel with any help.

The reference to the potential commercial prospects of Kreppel’s work is significant because it is unusual. Typically, when the Committee declined to provide their assistance to an author it was because they judged their project to be flawed or because the work promoted a view or interpretation of events or history that was inconsistent with the organization’s social and political agenda. For example, in 1913, the AJC declined to provide Dr. Liebmann Hersch, a demographer and statistician at the University of Geneva, with funds to translate and distribute his book *Le Juif Errant D’aujourd’hui (The Wandering Jew Today)*. The leadership “decided

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁹ Letter from Louis Marshall to Mr. Kreppel, December 3, 1925, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 9.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

that it would be inadvisable for the Committee [to undertake the translation and publication of Hersch's book] as we do not desire to make any special Jewish question out of the immigration problem."¹¹⁰¹ As already discussed, the AJC worked to preserve America's liberal immigration policies but the organization preferred to avoid emphasizing Jewish interest in maintaining these laws and policies.

The AJC was prepared to finance projects with the knowledge that they were funding the distribution of works that both furthered their interests and would otherwise not gain a wide circulation. The leadership was prepared to lose money (or expend money) to see these projects widely distributed. Some AJC-sponsored projects, including Hourwich's *Immigration and Labor*, generated small amounts of revenue for the AJC, but, in general, the organization raised money from its members to fund the organization's advocacy efforts.¹¹⁰² During the period covered by this study, the Committee was run by a number of very successful businessmen, but it was not a business. The concern for the commercial prospects of Kreppel's work is strange because the AJC routinely expended money to distribute books to libraries as gifts, knowing that the organization would never recover the costs it had accrued.

Hermann L. Strack's *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*

In their deliberations about which books to subsidize or distribute, the AJC's leaders were not blind to the potential significance of an author's religion. These discussions were not

¹¹⁰¹ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

¹¹⁰² For example, on November 8, 1913, Morris Waldman reported to the Executive Committee that the organization had recently received royalties amounting to \$419.34 from Putnam's for sales of Hourwich's *Immigration and Labor*. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

centered on the objectivity or abilities of the scholars themselves; rather, the chief concern of the AJC's leadership was the optics of both the work and how any assistance the Committee might provide would impact the reception of the work. Within the AJC leadership, there were some who strongly believed that the distribution of books by Christian scholars would be more useful to the cause of curbing anti-Semitism. They believed that if the author were both an accredited scholar and Christian, their work could have a more significant impact on shaping the views of non-Jews in the United States. Christian scholars making arguments and presenting evidence that undermined conspiratorial accusations against the Jews, or that was sympathetic to Jewish equality, minority rights, and the plight of Jewish communities, could not, in the view of the Committee, be as easily dismissed as propaganda.

The greater potential usefulness of the work of Christian scholars was an important feature of the AJC's deliberations when the Executive Committee decided to commission a translation and find a publisher for Hermann L. Strack's *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Strack, a German Protestant and professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages at the University of Berlin, was a prolific and highly regarded scholar. His *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* was originally published in Germany in 1877, but Strack updated his work and substantially revised his book throughout his life. A second edition was published in 1894, a third in 1900, a fourth in 1908, and a fifth in 1920, two years before the author's death. In 1923, Alexander Marx, a German-born professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, reviewed the final German-language edition of Strack's books and concluded that there "is no other book

similar in scope and value to Strack's volume and the author is justified in his statement that there is no scholar who will not find this volume very helpful."¹¹⁰³

Shortly after Strack's death in 1922, Louis Marshall, on his own initiative, purchased the rights to publish an English translation of the fifth edition of the book from Strack's widow.¹¹⁰⁴ The AJC's Executive Committee then "agreed to have the book translated into English and to secure its publication in order that this scientific exposition of the content and spirit of the Talmud and Midrash by a renowned Christian scholar would be accessible to students in English-speaking countries and also available in the event of attempts to use the Talmud as the basis for anti-Jewish propaganda."¹¹⁰⁵ This concern about preventing the Talmud or Midrash being used to foment anti-Semitism can be understood in the context of the publication of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and its wide distribution in the United States. Jewish leaders were concerned that anti-Semitic propaganda could create the impression among the general public that the Hebrew-language books closely studied by observant Jews were hiding malevolent religious rituals and political conspiracies. The fear was that these books would be misconstrued as evidence of a Jewish conspiracy similar to the one described in the *Protocols*. The Committee's leaders' thought that a Christian scholar's description of these sacred texts would dispel the impression that there was something sinister in them.

The decision to publish a translation of Strack's book is interesting because it shows that the AJC anticipated the potential exploitation of Jewish liturgy as a source of anti-Semitic propaganda and took steps to ensure the organization had a reply ready. The AJC commissioned

¹¹⁰³ Alexander Marx, "Strack's Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 13 (1923): 352.

¹¹⁰⁴ Extracts from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on April 1, 1928, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 10.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Max L. Margolis, a professor at Dropsie College, to translate Strack's book into English and submitted this translation to the Macmillan Company for publication.¹¹⁰⁶ In April 1928, the Macmillan Company offered to publish the English translation, but only on the condition that the publication was subsidized in some form by the AJC.

The Macmillan Company proposed two different arrangements to the AJC. Under the first, the AJC would provide the publishing company with three thousand dollars to be used to finance the initial publication of the book. In exchange, the Committee would receive a fifteen percent royalty for the first thousand copies sold, and a twenty percent royalty on any additional sales. The publisher proposed setting the price of the book at six dollars per copy. Under the second proposed arrangement, Macmillan would finance the publication, but the AJC would agree in advance to purchase a thousand copies of the book for \$3.60 a copy. Under this arrangement, the Committee itself would be responsible for distributing or selling the first thousand copies of the book at whatever price it chose. In exchange for this guarantee, the Macmillan Company would provide the AJC with a ten percent royalty for any other copies of the book sold by the publisher. At a meeting of the Executive Committee on April 1, 1928, both proposed arrangements were discussed but no decision was made.¹¹⁰⁷

The two arrangements were discussed again at a meeting of the Executive Committee held on May 13, 1928. According to the minutes of this meeting, "it was the sense of those present that the offer did not appear to be altogether favorable."¹¹⁰⁸ The Executive Committee

¹¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁸ Extracts from the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on May 13, 1928, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 10.

rejected both plans, but the leadership also decided that they should not abandon the effort to find a publisher to distribute the English translation of Strack's book.

At the May 13th meeting, the Executive Committee delegated the effort to find another publisher to the AJC's Committee on Information and Publications, which was Chaired by Lewis L. Strauss, and made up of Lee K. Frankel, Herman Bernstein, Alexander Marx, and Cyrus Adler, who would become the AJC's third President after the death of Louis Marshall. The participation of both Marx and Adler on the AJC's Committee on Information and Publications would prove to be important. The AJC's attempts to find a publisher for *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* dragged on for three more years. Ultimately, the AJC was unable to find a mainstream publishing house to work with; instead, the AJC decided to collaborate with the Jewish Publication Society of America (JPSA).

The JPSA was founded in Philadelphia in 1888, almost twenty years before the AJC. Since the founding of the AJC, the relationship between the AJC and JPSA had been very close, and there was overlap in the leadership of the two organizations. Alexander Marx and Max L. Margolis, the translator of Strack's book, were both members of the JPSA's Publication Committee. In 1928, Cyrus Adler was the Chairman of both the JPSA's Publication Committee and the AJC's Executive Committee. By the time the English translation of the book was finally published in 1931, Adler was President of the AJC and a Trustee of the JPSA.

On December 21, 1931, Julius Grodinsky, the JPSA's Secretary wrote Morris Waldman, the AJC's Secretary, and confirmed that the JPSA was going to publish the English translation of Strack's book. Grodinsky noted that the JPSA had agreed to publish the book because the organization believed that it would prove to "be very valuable in serving the purpose which I know the American Jewish Committee had in mind of presenting the Talmud in the proper way

by a Christian scholar.”¹¹⁰⁹ The AJC believed that because the book had not been written by a Jew but rather by a German-born Protestant, the work would claim more credibility if it was ever needed to disprove accusations of a Jewish conspiracy.

Given the leadership’s concern about importance of the author’s religion for enhancing the credibility of the work, it is noteworthy that the plan to have the book released by the Jewish Publication Society, an organization that was clearly linked to Jewish communal leadership organizations, was not seen as a possible impediment to its use in fighting anti-Semitism. The impact of the publication of Strack’s book in furthering the AJC’s agenda or suppressing anti-Semitism is difficult to gauge; however, Strack’s work was and remains a very significant work of scholarship. According to Edward A. Goldman, since the book “first appeared in translation in 1931, it has been the premier reference volume in English for all those who wish to wade into the sea of rabbinic scholarship.”¹¹¹⁰

The AJC as Pamphleteer

Generally speaking, the publishing efforts of the AJC, and the books that the early leaders of the Committee chose to support, were not intended for a general audience. The AJC’s publishing efforts were expensive. There was no revenue in distributing books as gifts to college, university, and public libraries, and the influence of these works was, at best, modest. In contrast, it was through the distribution of pamphlets, which were written for a general audience and relatively inexpensive to print and distribute, that the AJC sought to influence the attitudes of the broader American public.

¹¹⁰⁹ Letter from Julius Grodinsky to Morris D. Waldman, December 21 1931, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 5, File 10.

¹¹¹⁰ Edward A. Goldman, “Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash by H.L. Strack; G. Stemberger; Marcus Bockmuehl,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (1996): 144.

During the first twenty-five years of its history, the American Jewish Committee subsidized the distribution of dozens of pamphlets, regularly printing tens of thousands of copies to ensure the broadest possible audience. The pamphlets were connected to the most prominent issues that comprised the organization's early agenda, including preventing the passing of new immigration restrictions, promoting the abrogation campaign, and combatting the spread of anti-Semitism in the United States.

Beginning with Isaac Hourwich's pro-immigration pamphlet, the AJC used pamphlets to try and influence the course of public debates and the deliberations of American lawmakers about immigration reform. In 1910, the Committee released a pamphlet entitled "Recommendations Respecting Revision of the Immigration Laws and Regulations," delivering copies to the lawmakers on the Dillingham Immigration Commission, and printing one thousand additional copies.¹¹¹¹ Two years later, during the height of the legislative debates about imposing a literacy test for new immigrants, the AJC widely distributed a pamphlet entitled "Injustice of the Literacy Test."¹¹¹² In 1913, the Committee resolved to release in pamphlet form an article written by Max J. Kohler, entitled "The Immigration Problem and the Right of Asylum of the

¹¹¹¹ "Recommendations Respecting Revision of the Immigration Laws and Regulations" was the product of a collaboration between the AJC and the Board of Delegates and B'nai B'rith. The text that would become the pamphlet was written at the behest of the Immigration Commission, who had requested that the AJC furnish its members with the Committee's "views on the subject of immigration." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on September 26, 1910, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16450>.

¹¹¹² From the AJC's records, it is unclear how many copies of this pamphlet were distributed. The AJC spent \$119.18 printing copies of the pamphlet. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on May 12, 1912, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16453>. In 1913, the AJC considered republishing English journalist and Anglo-Jewish leader Lucien Wolf's pamphlet "The Legal Sufferings of the Jews in Russia." A subcommittee consisting of Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and Oscar Straus was empowered to confer with Wolf to make the arrangements but the AJC ultimately did not re-release Wolf's work. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on January 1, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16455>.

Persecuted.”¹¹¹³ Perhaps to curry favor with lawmakers, after the 1914 Congressional Elections, the AJC had ten thousand copies of a speech made by Senator James A. Reed of Missouri on the subject of immigration reform printed and distributed throughout the country.¹¹¹⁴

The rallying of American public opinion through pamphlets was an important component of the late stages of the AJC’s treaty abrogation campaign. For example, in 1911, the AJC arranged for twenty-five thousand copies of a speech by Louis Marshall entitled “Russia and the American Passport,” which was delivered at the annual conference of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation, to be widely distributed among journalists and “members of political organizations.”¹¹¹⁵ The distribution of Marshall’s speech, which provided an account of Russia’s discrimination against American passport-holders, including Jews and Catholic priests, was subsidized with the remaining capital from the 250th Anniversary of Jewish Settlement in the

¹¹¹³ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

¹¹¹⁴ The Executive Committee considered Senator Reed’s speech to be by far “the best speech made during the recent debates.” The AJC also established a subcommittee consisting of Cyrus Sulzberger, Harry Cutler and Judge Julian Mack “to prepare material for circulation among the members of the incoming Congress dealing with the subject of immigration.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on March 7, 1915, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16459>. Senator Reed subsequently wrote to the AJC to thank the organization “for distributing his speech on the immigration question, and stating that he was receiving many letters approving his stand on that issue.” See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on May 9, 1915, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16459>. In early 1914, the Committee had declined to subsidize the release in pamphlet form a speech made by Congressman Walter M. Chandler on the Jews of Rumania. The release of this pamphlet was proposed by the Congressman, and was envisioned as a fiscal collaboration between himself and the AJC. The Committee declined the offer because the organization’s estimated share of the cost of the publication, fifteen hundred dollars, was beyond what the AJC had available in its accounts and the leadership did not feel it was appropriate, in this case, to use money from the Emergency Trust Fund. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on January 18, 1914, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16457>.

¹¹¹⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

United States Celebration Fund.¹¹¹⁶ Ultimately, the AJC released thirty-five thousand copies of Marshall's speech, and the organization credited the publication of this pamphlet with helping to secure positive editorial comment in American newspapers and the passage of six resolutions in State Legislatures condemning Russia's behavior.¹¹¹⁷

The Committee's decision to actively try to prevent a further intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States strongly influenced the organization's use of pamphlets to reach a broad audience. For example, to combat the public perception that Jewish immigrants were exclusively settling in large American cities, in 1912, the AJC funded the distribution of a reprinting of "The Agricultural Activities of Jews in America," which had originally appeared as an AJC-commissioned article in the 1912 edition of the *American Jewish Year Book*. Ten thousand copies were distributed to "agricultural colleges and schools, to farmers' institutes, granges, agricultural journals, the United States Department of Agriculture, and to the various Departments of Agriculture of the various States."¹¹¹⁸

Most significantly, after the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* gained wide circulation in the United States, the AJC's General Committee passed a resolution during the organization's Annual Meeting authorizing Louis Marshall to release a public statement to refute the allegations made in the *Protocols* and identify the work as a forgery. Marshall's statement, which was released as a sixteen-page pamphlet entitled "The Protocols' Bolshevism and the Jews: Address

¹¹¹⁶ The text of Marshall's speech was also mailed to religious leaders. The AJC received a reply from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Scranton which indicated that he was surprised to learn from the pamphlet that "Catholic priests in general are prohibited from entering Russia." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

¹¹¹⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on February March 19, 1911, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16451>.

¹¹¹⁸ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 13, 1912, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16454>.

to the American Public,” was the most expensive and widely distributed pamphlet produced by the AJC during the early history of the organization.

The text of the pamphlet includes a summary of the results of Herman Bernstein’s investigation into the source materials of the *Protocols*, a refutation of the allegation that Jews were disproportionately Communists, and an earnest expression of the loyalty of American Jews to the United States. Marshall wrote:

The Protocols are a base forgery. There has never been an organization of Jews known as The Elders of Zion... There has never existed a secret or other Jewish body organized for any purpose such as that implied in The Protocols. The Jewish people have never dreamed of a Jewish dictatorship, of a destruction of religion, of an interference with industrial property, or an overthrow of civilization. The Jews have never conspired with the Freemasons, or with any other body, for any purpose... The great mass of the Jews were hampered in every way in their efforts to earn a livelihood. Far from desiring to govern the world, they were content with the opportunity to live. Numerically they constitute less than one per cent of the population of the Earth; and more than one-half of them are on the verge of starvation. The suggestion that, in their feebleness, they have been planning in secret conclave to seize absolute power and to dominate the ninety-nine per cent of non-Jews upon the globe is a ridiculous invention... We have an abiding confidence in the spirit of justice and fairness that permeates the true American, and we are satisfied that our fellow-citizens will not permit the campaign of slander and libel that has been launched against us to go unreprieved... Let not hatred and misunderstanding arise where peace and harmony, unity and brotherliness, are required to perpetuate all that America represents and to enable all men to know that within her wide boundaries there is no room for injustice and intolerance.¹¹¹⁹

¹¹¹⁹ ““The Protocols’ Bolshevism and the Jews: Address to the American Public,” American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 17, File 16.

The Committee appropriated ten thousand dollars from the Emergency Trust Fund to finance the distribution of a quarter of a million copies of Marshall's address across the United States.¹¹²⁰

Beginning during the period covered by this study, the American Jewish Committee was actively involved in using pamphlets to influence American public opinion. The substantial resources that were devoted to financing these publications during the early history of the AJC, however, pales in comparison to later commitments. During the twentieth century, the AJC released pamphlets addressing social and political issues as varied as the fight for civil liberties and civil rights, the separation between church and state, race relations in the United States, and the Middle East conflict. The resources that were devoted to pamphlets by the early leaders of the AJC were the precedent for the organization's later use of other forms of mass media, including, magazines, comics, radio, film, and television. It was during the early history of the Committee that the organization began to build the capacity to generate these forms of content, including conducting research, and became resolved to use more than quiet diplomacy to further its social and political agenda.

Conclusion

The first twenty-five years of the American Jewish Committee were crucially important to the subsequent development of the organization's advocacy infrastructure and its later research projects and applications of mass media. Those later and significantly more well-known projects, including *Commentary Magazine*, the AJC's social issues films, and the organization's patronage of Theodor Adorno and Kenneth Clark, can be described both as the maturation of the

¹¹²⁰ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on December 12, 1920, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16470>.

Committee's earliest strategies to influence public opinion and as expansions of earlier efforts to engage in research and generate and release content to both narrow and broad audiences. The takeover of the *American Jewish Year Book*, the evolution and expansion of the Committee's research infrastructure, the War Records project, the sponsorship of books, and the wide distribution of pamphlets were the earliest manifestations of the organization's aspiration to influence public opinion and generate content that could be effectively used to achieve this aim. These efforts were significant because they further indicate that the organization had moved away from the advocacy approaches that had been initially applied by the founders of the organization and that were historically practiced by Jewish communal leaders. The books published by the Committee reached only a modest audience but they were part of an active strategy to edify a potentially influential segment of the general population, the future leaders of the country. The organization's pamphlets were more ambitious and represent a more immediate effort to further the Committee's social and political interest and respond publically to threats the American Jewish community faced. In all cases, the books and pamphlets constitute a shift away from quiet diplomacy towards public advocacy, from the judicious exercise of influence towards the practice of propaganda. As this chapter shows, even as the AJC moved away from relying on quiet diplomacy, its leaders were consistently cautious about the optics of their efforts. They chose their publications carefully.

Chapter 8: Activism through the Courts

The AJC's Early Applications of Juridical Means

During the November 1906 founders' conference that led to the establishment of the American Jewish Committee, there was a great deal of discussion among the delegates about "civil rights" and "religious rights." These terms were used repeatedly in the debates about defining the proposed organization's mandate. Doctor Lewis N. Dembitz, for example, stated: "The whole thing is the protection of our rights, to protect against the invasion of the rights of the Jews in this or any other country."¹¹²¹ Some of these discussions centered on whether the Committee would be concerned only for the rights of American Jews or would it also extend its mandate to protecting and enhancing the rights of Jews in foreign countries. The fear was that an extended mandate ran the risk of the organization incurring accusations of having dual loyalty or of undiplomatically meddling in the domestic politics of foreign countries, or worse, of being unpatriotic. The founders were concerned that they and their coreligionists not be viewed as outsiders in American society. The language that the AJC's founders ultimately chose for the organization's constitution includes as one of its objectives simply "to prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews." As discussed in earlier chapters, in practice, the AJC's efforts to protect the civil and religious rights of Jews had a large international component.¹¹²²

¹¹²¹ Minutes of the meeting of the American Jewish Committee's General Committee held on November 11, 1906, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 5, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16441>.

¹¹²² Although it will not be discussed in this chapter, through its support for the building of international law, minority rights treaties, and global governance institutions (including the League of Nations and the World Court), the early leaders of the Committee worked to establish better social and political conditions and legal protections for imperiled Jewish communities outside of the United States. Some of AJC's leaders, including Louis Marshall, supported the League of Nations because they believed that the international institution would be crucially important to enforcing the minority rights protections that they had help to negotiate into the agreements made at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. While they supported this international institution, they were also conscious about publically expressing this support before the peace treaty, and thus American participation in the League, had been ratified by American lawmakers. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting

This chapter, however, will focus on the organization's domestic efforts and describe how the early leaders of the Committee began to use the American legal system to define and protect the rights of Jews and other minority communities in the United States.

In America, during the first twenty-five years of the AJC's history, the Committee gradually became more inclined to use juridical means (judicial review of administrative action and constitutional test cases) to challenge immigration restrictions and to further its aim of protecting the civil and religious rights of American Jews. The legal strategies the leaders chose illuminate the character of the Committee because, in many cases, its strategies reflected its founders' concerns about optics, that is, about how the Jewish community would be perceived by the public and the leadership's preoccupation with avoiding the general public's scrutiny of the Jewish community or the perception that Jews were in some way different or apart from American society. As the discussion below will reveal, whenever possible, the Committee preferred to broaden social and political issues, framing them as "American questions" as opposed to "Jewish questions." As a result, a great deal of the legal activism carried out by leaders of the AJC was not directly coordinated through the Committee; often this work was done independently, as part of the private legal practice of some of the lawyers who were members of the Committee, or through the leaders' support of special interest groups representing other minority communities in the United States, including, most prominently, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). For example, the AJC,

held on October 12, 1919, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 17, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16468>. Similarly, the AJC supported the World Court and American participation in the World Court as a means of enhancing and enforcing the protections for ethnic and religious minorities that were included in the Paris agreements. On November 16, 1924, the AJC's Executive Committee "resolved that the American Jewish Committee favor the entrance of the United States in the World Court. Mr. Marshall agreed to draw up a memorandum for the information of the members of the Committee in order to enable them to take local action." See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 16, 1924, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed February 17, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16478>.

and prominent Committee leaders, made financial contributions to the NAACP; Louis Marshall was a board member of the organization, and he acted on the NAACP's behalf in a number of court cases.¹¹²³

Among the founders and early leaders of the AJC were a number of lawyers and judges, including Louis Marshall, Julian Mack, Nathan Bijur, and Max J. Kohler. The organization's far more activist and substantial intervention in the arena of litigation concerning questions of constitutional rights and protections occurred after the Second World War, but the use of public interest litigation as an approach to public advocacy began with, and can be traced back to, the activities of some of the AJC's leaders and founders during the period covered by this study. In adopting litigation-based tactics, the AJC was following a path set by other special interests groups in the United States, but the Committee's traditional concerns about optics and its leaders' reluctance to draw conspicuous attention to the social and political interests of American Jewry restrained how, in its formative years, the AJC chose to use the American justice system in the organization's public advocacy.

In the early history of the AJC's use of juridical means, Max J. Kohler and Louis Marshall were by far the most important figures. Kohler, a former District Attorney, led the Committee's efforts to use juridical means to review the decisions of immigration officials, and constrain the strict or arbitrary enforcement of restrictive immigration laws. He had begun his career acting on behalf of the government, but later he shifted his practice towards the protection of individual rights, including the rights of immigrant aliens who were not yet American citizens. Kohler was doing this kind of legal work on behalf of immigrant communities before the

¹¹²³ For more on the role of Jewish lawyers, including Louis Marshall, in advocating in American Courts on behalf of the rights of African Americans, see: David Levering Lewis, "Parallels and Divergences: Assimilationist Strategies of the Afro-American and Jewish Elites from 1910 to the Early 1930s," *The Journal of American History* 71 (1984): 543-564.

founding of the AJC. For example, in 1904, he represented the Chinese Charitable and Benevolent Association of New York in several so-called “Chinese Exclusion cases,” which involved challenging immigration restrictions that specifically targeted Chinese-born immigrants.¹¹²⁴ According to Irvin Lehman, Kohler “had the vision to see in aliens, properly admitted to this country, the citizens who must, in the future, uphold its ideals. Where there was injustice to an alien, he saw justice withheld from a future citizen.”¹¹²⁵

Louis Marshall was one of the most prominent lawyers of his generation; although the majority of his practice concerned corporate and commercial law, Marshall is considered among the most important trial attorneys and civil rights litigators in American legal history. Marshall worked independently, through special interest groups, and under the banner of the American Jewish Committee, to use American Courts to protect and defend the rights of aliens and minority communities in the United States. “As a consummate jurist,” Mark A. Raider argues, “Marshall strove above all for fair application of the law. When circumstances beyond his control made that impossible, as in the case of much of the [immigration] restrictionist legislation passed by the U.S. Congress...he used his legal expertise to help minimize the

¹¹²⁴ Samuel Krislov, “The Amicus Curiae Brief: From Friendship to Advocacy,” *The Yale Law Journal* 72 (1963): 707. Kohler submitted an amicus brief to the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Ah How (alias Louis Ah How) v. United States*, 193 U.S. 65 (1904).

¹¹²⁵ Irvin Lehman, “Max J. Kohler [Obituary],” in *The American Jewish Yearbook, Volume 37, 1935-1936* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1935), 22. Accessed through the American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 22, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1935_1936_3_SpecialArticles.pdf. According to Lehman, Kohler’s involvement in immigration cases reflected his concerns about the vulnerability of aliens because, in contrast to American citizens, their rights were not explicitly protected by the Constitution: “Indeed, the consequences of injustice to an alien might be more disastrous than the consequences of injustice to a citizen, for citizens can, at times, protect themselves against injustice through the exercise of their political rights, while aliens can appeal only to the courts for the protection of their civil rights. For these reasons, Mr. Kohler undertook, in a number of important cases, voluntarily and without expectation of personal reward, the duty of instituting proceedings which served to clarify our law as to the rights of immigrants and aliens. Indeed, his contribution to the development of that branch of our law stands out as unique.” See: Lehman, 22.

harshest aspects of the government's statutes."¹¹²⁶ Marshall's legal work would inure to the benefit not only of his clients, but also to the legal and religious rights of the Jewish community in the United States and other minority communities.

In his article "'Vigilantibus Non Dormientibus:' The Judicial Activism of Louis Marshall," Raider describes Marshall as a "champion of minority rights."¹¹²⁷ Although Marshall was a famous trial attorney, a great deal of the judicial activism ascribed to him took place outside of the court room in the form of political lobbying, including Marshall's efforts to persuade lawmakers to pass civil rights legislation that included provisions barring religious discrimination. With reference to the 1913 New York State Civil Rights Act, for example, Jeffrey Gurock notes that Marshall was instrumental in both drafting the legislation and lobbying for its ratification.¹¹²⁸ These efforts, although not strictly speaking part of a litigation approach to public advocacy, did help develop a legal structure for prohibiting discrimination, and prescribed sanctions and legal remedies to protect civil rights. It is important to note that, during this period, discrimination against Jews and other minority groups was legal in the United States; it was widely practiced and had diverse manifestations in employment, housing, and education. Marshall's legislative lobbying was also consistent, according to Oscar Handlin, with Marshall's beliefs about how the law should function to shape and regulate society: "Justice, he felt,

¹¹²⁶ Mark A. Raider, "'Vigilantibus Non Dormientibus:' The Judicial Activism of Louis Marshall," *Jewish Social Studies* 14 (2007): 44.

¹¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹¹²⁸ For an account of Marshall's role in drafting and lobbying for the implementation of this legislation, see: Jeffrey Gurock, "The 1913 New York Civil Rights Act," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 1 (1976): 93-120. After the enactment of this law, the Committee began to track violations of the new legislation. American Jews would write to the Committee reporting violations, including hotel advertisements that contained anti-Semitic material or that indicated that Jews were not permitted to stay at these establishments. When these reports were received by the AJC, the Committee would write to the businesses to let them know they were violating the law. The AJC's leadership was pleased with how this strategy was working: "In every case the terms of the act have been brought home to the offenders, and they have uniformly destroyed their illegal letter-heads and folders and abandoned their advertisements, and conformed to the law." See: Eight Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 26, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1915_1916_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See, page 372.

depended upon the consistency of an established body of rules which gave men a dependable framework within which they could act and which limited the authority of the state over their persons and property.”¹¹²⁹

Marshall’s application of juridical means (law making in the court room through judicial rulings or in the statehouses through lobbying) was often done at his own initiative, without the supervision of the AJC, input from other Committee leaders, discussion among the organization’s leadership, or financial assistance from the AJC, although the Committee was obviously aware of his activities. Marshall’s contribution to various civil rights cases and his lobbying campaigns are well documented by his biographers as well as civil rights historians, historians of American Jewry, and American legal historians.¹¹³⁰ The absence of AJC records describing these endeavours indicates that, in many instances, Marshall was not carrying out this work under the auspices of the AJC but, rather, in parallel to the advocacy efforts he was leading on behalf of American Jewry through the Committee.

Marshall did a great deal of this work outside his role as President of the AJC but, the Committee did itself begin developing and using a litigation approach to public advocacy shortly after the founding of the organization, and Marshall was a leading figure in the AJC’s application of this form of public advocacy. The Committee followed Marshall’s lead and adopted similar approaches to public interest litigation as a means to secure its objectives, and these efforts progressively increased after the Committee’s formative years.

¹¹²⁹ Oscar Handlin, “Introduction” in *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty, Vol 2*, ed. Charles Reznikoff (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), xvii. Mark A. Raider also uses this quote to summarize Marshall’s views on law and justice. See: Raider, 42.

¹¹³⁰ See, for example, the collection: *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty*, ed. Charles Reznikoff, Volumes 1 and 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957). See also: Morton Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall: Defender of Jewish Rights* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965).

The early efforts of Kohler and Marshall established the model for the AJC's later attempts to use juridical means to further the Committee's social and political agenda. In the application of these civil rights activism techniques, the leaders of the AJC were not innovators; court challenges to the constitutionality of legislation, appeals for review of the power, scope of discretion, and the decisions of regulatory or administrative bodies, and the submission of *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs, had been features of American jurisprudence long before the founding of the AJC.

The *amicus* brief is a unique tool in public interest litigation. It allows parties who have no legal standing in court actions but are interested in, and may be impacted by the ruling to intervene to formally submit arguments and opinions (in written form) for the consideration of the Judges deciding the case. Organizations representing special interests, including other minority communities as well as commercial interests such as the insurance industry and the railroads, submitted *amicus* briefs to the Supreme Court, and State and lower Federal Courts, long before the AJC adopted this tactic.¹¹³¹

The AJC's early modest judicial activism is somewhat surprising given the considerable legal expertise among the organization's first generation of leaders. Because of their professional experience, the AJC's leaders were in an excellent position to use their legal knowledge and skills for political purposes and on behalf of the American Jewish community, but, in the United States, courts are a public forum and the leadership in the early years was reticent to draw

¹¹³¹ According to Joseph D. Kearney and Thomas W. Merrill, "the first recorded appearance of an *amicus curiae* in the Supreme Court [of the United States] occurred in 1821, see *Green v. Biddle*, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.) 1 (1823), which perhaps not coincidentally was the first year the Court accepted written briefs for filing." See: Joseph D. Kearney and Thomas W. Merrill, "The Influence of *Amicus Curiae* Briefs on the Supreme Court," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 148 (2000): 744n. For an account of the history of *amicus curiae* briefs in American jurisprudence, see: Samuel Krislov, "The American Curiae Brief: From Friendship to Advocacy," *The Yale Law Journal* 72 (1963): 694-721.

attention to the organization's efforts.¹¹³² It was consistent with their preference to avoid publicity that, during the period covered by this study, and well into the twentieth century, the AJC chose to intervene in legal cases and court challenges in which Jews were not directly involved but which concerned the rights of other minorities in the United States, particularly African-Americans.

Some of the most important early leaders of the AJC were highly experienced jurists and litigators. They understood American law, and from the perspective of strategy, understood how the power of American courts to interpret and strike down legislation could be used to further the social and political interests of the Committee and American Jewry. As in their use of other advocacy techniques, in the use of juridical means, the AJC was cautious and deliberate; they considered the optics, risks, and potential impact of their direct interventions.

The AJC made a strategic decision not to use litigation to fight anti-Semitic expression in the United States. The adoption of this strategy is best exemplified by how the AJC chose to respond to Henry Ford and the articles published by the *Dearborn Independent*. The pamphlet discussed in Chapter 7 of this study, which was drafted by Marshall and widely distributed by the Committee across the United States, was the AJC's only public pronouncement on the Ford-sponsored propaganda until, six years later, when the organization announced that Ford had apologized. The AJC deliberately remained on the periphery of attempts by individual American Jews and other American Jewish organization to combat anti-Semitism using court proceedings and the law of libel.

¹¹³² The leaders of the AJC were willing to go Court to legitimize their use of funds that had been raised before the founding of the organization, during earlier fundraising campaigns or relief efforts on behalf of imperiled or impoverished Jewish communities in Russia and Eastern Europe. These matters were legal formalities and in conformity with the law. For example, in 1912, the AJC successfully applied to have the balance of the funds in the Russian Relief Fund transferred to their control. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on October 13, 1912, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16454>.

Similarly, where Jews were directly involved in legal proceedings, including criminal proceedings tainted by anti-Semitism, the early leaders of the Committee were very cautious about publically involving the organization.¹¹³³ In the 1913 Leo Frank case, in which Frank was convicted of raping and killing a thirteen-year old girl employed in the factory he managed in Georgia, for example, Louis Marshall acted on behalf of Frank for his appeal from the trial conviction, but the AJC was not officially involved in the case, which the Jewish community believed was motivated by anti-Semitism. Mark Raider describes the Frank appeal as “Marshall’s most notable courtroom failure...Frank was later lynched by an angry white mob. In retrospect, it is painfully obvious that Marshall’s determined and forceful counsel was no match

¹¹³³ This reluctance was also exemplified by how the AJC responded to “The Rosenbluth Affair,” a six year criminal investigation in which Robert Rosenbluth, an American-born Jew, Yale graduate, First World War veteran, and serving U.S. Army Captain, was falsely accused of having murdered his superior officer, Major Alexander P. Cronkhite. On October 25, 1918, Major Cronkhite accidentally shot himself while his unit was on a training exercise at Camp Lewis in Washington State. Rosenbluth and the Company’s surgeon arrived at the scene shortly after the accident. They tried to save the Major but he died in Rosenbluth’s arms. Initially, both United States Army and Washington State investigators cleared Rosenbluth of any wrongdoing. Two years later, based on witness testimony that was likely obtained under duress, Federal prosecutors charged Rosenbluth with murder. The affair garnered significant media attention from both the mainstream and Jewish press in the United States. The AJC stayed out of the fray, which was consistent with the organization’s longstanding aversion to drawing attention to incidents that might be used by anti-Semites to tarnish the reputation of the entire American Jewish community. There were, however, public relations errors and missteps during the affair. Felix Warburg, an important and extraordinarily wealthy AJC leader, on his own initiative, paid Rosenbluth’s forty thousand dollar bail. When this fact became public, the *Dearborn Independent* published an article alleging that wealthy Jews were trying to subvert the American justice system, and linked this activity to the newspaper’s wider allegations of an international Jewish conspiracy. Louis Marshall worked with Rosenbluth’s defense team, and, ultimately, six years after the accidental death, and four years after he was charged with murder, the prosecutors dropped the case against Rosenbluth. After Rosenbluth was publically exonerated, the AJC sought to gain publicity and wider public recognition that the charges against the Jewish Captain had been dropped. Marshall published an article describing the circumstances of the incident, the biased investigation and mistreatment of key witnesses, the public controversy over the affair, and Rosenbluth’s exoneration in the *New York Times*. With only mixed success, the AJC also made efforts to have Marshall’s article reprinted in newspapers across the United States. See, for example: Letter from Sol Meyer to Harry Schneiderman, October 24, 1924, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 14. See also: Letter from E. Rosenberg to Harry Schneiderman, October 29, 1924, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 14. The AJC was successful in having Marshall’s article reprinted in *The Indianapolis Star*. See: “Details of Rosenbluth Case: Famous in U.S. Court Annals,” November 4, 1924, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 18, File 14. For a detailed account of the Rosenbluth Affair, see: Rosemary R. Davies, “The Rosenberg Affair,” *Forest History* 14 (1970): 17-26.

for the lawlessness and racist extremism of Atlanta, Georgia, in the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan.”¹¹³⁴

The minutes of the AJC’s Executive Committee meetings indicate that the organization’s leadership was, in common with the majority of American Jews, following the Frank case closely, but they chose not to organize demonstrations against, or make public pronouncements and release media statements about Frank’s arrest (which was based on very limited evidence), the anti-Jewish prejudice evinced by law enforcement officials and prosecutors, or the anti-Semitic agitation in Southern newspapers that arguably tainted the jury pool and made it impossible for Frank to get a fair trial in Georgia. Notwithstanding these provocations, on November 8, 1913, the AJC’s Executive Committee formally resolved to “take no action with respect to the Frank case.”¹¹³⁵ This decision, which remains controversial, reflected the AJC’s advocacy strategies and practices during this period. They preferred that, as much as possible, the trial remain a local story and did not want to draw national attention and media coverage to the case. In the Committee’s view, although the prosecution of Frank was motivated by anti-Semitism, this was a case against an individual. American Jewry as a community was not implicated in the case and, as Naomi Cohen notes, the AJC “skirted issues affecting individuals or limited numbers of Jews; in some cases it sought to divest the issue of any Jewish label. Accordingly, although Louis Marshall served as counsel for Leo Frank, the Committee refused to act *as an organization*, insisting upon treating the case as a travesty of justice of concern to all Americans irrespective of religion.”¹¹³⁶

¹¹³⁴ Raider, 43.

¹¹³⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 8, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 25, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16456>.

¹¹³⁶ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 29.

After Frank was lynched, the AJC's only official involvement in the affair concerned optics: that is, minimizing the adverse impressions and perceptions of the American public about the affair. When the AJC learned that movie footage of the lynching existed, it intervened to stop the footage from being circulated. The Committee's records do not indicate how this was accomplished. Photographs of the lynching, nevertheless, did gain a wide circulation, including publication in newspapers and in the form of postcards. Marshall himself "requested that the family of Leo M. Frank...avoid any publicity in connection with the funeral of the young man, and the Jews of Brooklyn to avoid a demonstration."¹¹³⁷

In response to the lynching, the AJC began to compile evidence against *The Jeffersonian*, one of the newspapers that had published inflammatory anti-Jewish material during the Frank trial, in the hope of persuading the Attorney General and the Solicitor of the Post-Office Department to ban the distribution of the newspaper through the mail.¹¹³⁸ The Committee also considered establishing an internal subcommittee to consider what could be accomplished by lobbying for legislation to ensure that "the denial of due process of law exemplified in the Frank case" was never repeated.¹¹³⁹ In the long term, the Frank case was significant for the AJC because it both revealed the extent of the intensification of anti-Semitism in early-twentieth-century America (which the Committee's leaders had long feared and were working to avert) and

¹¹³⁷ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on September 20, 1915, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 25, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16460>.

¹¹³⁸ Three years earlier, the AJC's Executive Committee had briefly debated lobbying the New York State legislatures to pass legislation that would bar the circulation of materials containing anti-Semitic expressions in the mail. The idea was suggested by Jacob Schiff. Louis Marshall replied that the Civil Rights legislation that he had been trying to move through the two State houses for the previous three years, if enacted, would bar the distribution of advertisements that included discriminatory and defamatory statements. See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on November 9, 1912, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 27, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16454>.

¹¹³⁹ See: Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's Executive Committee meeting held on September 20, 1915, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 25, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16460>.

encouraged or incited the organization towards using juridical means to protect American Jewry and advance the social and political interests of the community.¹¹⁴⁰

For civil and constitutional rights cases, the AJC's filing of *amicus* briefs increased over time, and at the same time as other ethnic interest groups, including other Jewish groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, expanded their use of this approach to communal defense and public advocacy. Despite the experience and level of legal expertise among the first generation of AJC leaders, under Louis Marshall's leadership, the Committee's judicial activism was in a nascent state, and it was not until after the Second World War that the Committee became a leading organization in American civil rights and public interest litigation.

During the period covered by this study, the AJC directly intervened using an *amicus* brief in only one case adjudicated before the Supreme Court of the United States. That case, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, involved the constitutionality of a State of Oregon law which mandated that all children attend public schools, effectively outlawing private schools in the state including parochial or religious schools.¹¹⁴¹ As will be discussed further below, the American Jewish community had a clear interest in the ruling. The AJC intervened on behalf of Catholic parents who wanted to continue to send their children to parochial schools in the State. The case offered the AJC an opportunity to exercise influence on an important judicial ruling about the

¹¹⁴⁰ Raider describes the Frank case as "critical to crafting an American Jewish strategy for combating antisemitism in the twentieth century." See: Raider, 43. While individual Jews and the Anti-Defamation League were prepared to fight anti-Semitism in the Courts, the AJC was developing and exercising juridical approaches to reinforce the protection of minority rights. The distinction between the two approaches is critical. The former emphasizes deterrence by seeking to punish speech. This is risky from the perspective of optics because freedom of speech is among the most cherished rights protected under American constitutional law. The latter approach seeks to instill, through rights which have been clearly defined by the courts, social conditions in which antagonistic or intolerant expressions, although legally protected, would be greeted by the general population as inconsistent with American ideals and as affronts to other rights, including freedom of religion, that are entrenched in United States Constitution.

¹¹⁴¹ *Pierce, Governor of Oregon, et al. v. Society of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925).

rights of religious minorities in the United States without drawing much attention to Jewish concerns or how the ruling would impact the American Jewish community.

The Immigration Cases

From its earliest days, the American Jewish Committee turned to the courts as a means to advance the individual interests of Jews and its own mandate to advance the interests of the larger Jewish community. The AJC's earliest involvement in legal actions concerned the interpretation of American immigration laws and the discretion exercised by immigration officials in choosing to admit or deport new immigrants. Within three years of the organization's founding, AJC members were actively involved in trying to use American Courts to review the decisions of immigration officials in individual cases.

The hostility of some immigration officials towards the so-called "new immigrants," which included Russian Jews, Eastern European Orthodox Christians, and Irish and Italian Catholics, predated the intense public disputes and legislative debates about the imposition of new immigration restrictions in the United States. Although the AJC would eventually become involved in a series of public relations, education campaigns, and lobbying efforts designed to influence immigration regulations to be more favourable for immigrants, in the years before the rise of the broader public debate and the imposition of new immigration laws during the 1910s and 1920s, the AJC attempted to use juridical means to prevent Jews from being arbitrarily and unfairly denied entry to the United States.

Ellis Island, New York was the port of entry for the overwhelming majority of new immigrants, including the steadily increasing number of Russian and Eastern European Jews who were trying to resettle in the United States. The scale of immigration during this period, with often more than a thousand people arriving in New York daily, necessitated the

establishment of substantial infrastructure on Ellis Island to evaluate and process the new arrivals, including medical evaluation boards and boards of inquiry, which were empowered under existing immigration legislation to make decisions about who was allowed to stay and who would be deported.

William Williams, the Commissioner of Immigration of Ellis Island, oversaw a quasi-judicial apparatus that, in practice, exercised sole discretion on questions of admittance. “The decisions of boards of inquiry could be appealed to the commissioners and even to the Department of Commerce and Labor, which housed the [Federal] Immigration Bureau, but the sheer volume of appeals elicited only cursory attention in Washington. Since those who interpreted and administered the law made the final judgement, the fate of immigrants at Ellis Island rested in the hands of the faceless immigrant inspectors and Williams.”¹¹⁴² The AJC’s earliest interventions in immigration cases attempted to degrade the power of immigration officials and the sometimes arbitrary nature of their decisions. At this time, appeals of these decisions were possible under the relevant immigration legislation, which had been written in 1832, and lawyers representing the AJC sought to invoke these review mechanisms on behalf of small numbers of excluded immigrants.

For example, in “July 1909, Max Kohler and Abram Elkus...drew up a legal brief, ‘In the Matter of Hersh Skuratowski,’ which argued on behalf of four Russian Jews whose deportation had been ordered by the [Ellis Island] board of inquiry.”¹¹⁴³ Through this brief, Kohler and Elkus attempted to transform the commissioners’ decisions about these four Jewish immigrants into a test case about the discretionary power of immigration officials. The brief covered a great deal of legal ground, including Williams’ unsanctioned imposition of the equivalent of a head tax

¹¹⁴² Naomi W. Cohen, “Commissioner Williams and the Jews,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 61 (2009): 102.

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 106.

because he required new immigrants to have at least ten dollars in their possession. “The brief charged that Williams had exceeded his powers by requiring the fee, first because he was usurping a legislative power and second, because Congress had not required a fee of the immigrants. The brief also contended that the immigrants had been denied a fair hearing before the board of inquiry, an administrative rather than judicial body, thus abridging their right to due process under the law.”¹¹⁴⁴

Cunningly, before Kohler and Elkus had the opportunity to be heard in a Federal Court, the immigration authorities simply reversed their deportation orders. “The four Jews were spared, and since the constitutional question was now mute, a chance for a judicial ruling... was lost. Kohler and Elkus were invited, however, to submit the brief and a list of suggested reforms to... [Charles] Nagel,” the Secretary of Immigration and Commerce.¹¹⁴⁵ The AJC paid for their brief to be printed essentially as a short run pamphlet. The Committee printed a hundred copies of the brief to distribute to lawmakers, members of the AJC, and other immigrant rights activists.¹¹⁴⁶

Over the next twenty years, Kohler and Marshall became involved in a series of further legal challenges to the discretionary power of immigration officials, including, among others, *Commissioner of Immigration Port of New York v. Gottlieb*,¹¹⁴⁷ and *Luria v. United States*.¹¹⁴⁸

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁶ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee’s Executive Committee meeting held on November 13, 1909, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 24, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=16448>. The AJC included a summary of the situation on Ellis Island and Kohler and Elkus’ efforts in the organization’s Annual Report. See: Third Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 26, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1910_1911_8_AJCAAnnualReport.pdf. See, pages 344-349.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Commissioner of Immigration Port of New York v. Gottlieb*, 265 U.S. 221 (1924). The case “concerned the wife and infant son of Solomon Gottlieb, the rabbi of a synagogue in New York City, who originally sought admission to the United States in December 1921. When the family sought to follow Solomon, it was discovered that the quota for immigrants from Palestine had already been filled, and a board of inquiry at Ellis Island denied them entry.” See: Raider, 49.

The Committee's leadership followed closely and supported these efforts; summaries of the cases and descriptions of the AJC's involvement and aims were included in the organization's Annual Reports.¹¹⁴⁹

Through these cases, Kohler and Marshall sought to use litigation to establish that immigrants were entitled to due process during deportation and naturalization proceedings. They also sought to clarify the limits of the decision-making power (discretion) of immigration officials. Finally, they used these cases to try to establish that the decisions of immigration tribunals and naturalization proceedings in district courts were subject to judicial review, thus establishing a clear right to an appeal to a higher court. The AJC's early involvement in immigration litigation culminated with Marshall's successful appearance before the Supreme Court in *Tutun v. United States*,¹¹⁵⁰ which established an individual's right to appeal the decision of a district court in a naturalization proceeding.¹¹⁵¹

The *Tutun* decision was a significant ruling in the history of administrative law in the United States, but it had no appreciable impact in terms of the American Jewish Committee's efforts to maintain liberal immigration policies. Before the ruling had been handed down in 1926, the United States Congress had already enacted a series of restrictive measures under new immigration laws in both 1917 and 1924. Among these new controls on immigration was the imposition of a quota system that substantially reduced the number of people, regardless of religion or birth country, who could legally resettle in the United States each year.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Luria v. United States*, 231 U.S. 9 (1913).

¹¹⁴⁹ See, for example: Twentieth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed April 26, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1927_1928_10_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. See, pages 395-398.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Tutun v. United States*, 270 U.S. 568 (1926).

¹¹⁵¹ For an analysis of Marshall's arguments before the Supreme Court and a description of the legal significance of the ruling, see: Raider, 52-53.

In comparison to the scope of the judicial advocacy that was later practiced by the AJC on civil and minority rights questions, the organization's early efforts to clarify and restrict the discretionary power of immigration officials had significantly narrower social and political implications. The AJC's involvement in the immigration cases, however, was historically significant because it reveals that the organization, from an early stage, was oriented towards using juridical means to further its objectives.

Group Defamation and “The Canada Libel Case”

As open expressions of anti-Semitism became increasingly common in the United States in the years leading up to the First World War, a rift emerged among American Jewish leaders about how to counter this problem. As discussed in earlier chapters, the American Jewish Committee, in contrast to the Anti-Defamation League, made a deliberate decision not to use Courts to press libel claims against anti-Semites. “The AJC’s policy of not litigating anti-Semitic insults,” according to Victoria Saker Woeste, “was predicated on the assumption that the best way for Jews to demonstrate their fitness for citizenship was to avoid the instrumental use of law to challenge anti-Semitic defamation; to do so was to attack freedom of expression, an integral aspect of constitutional democracy.”¹¹⁵²

The adoption of this strategy by the Committee was also based on the lawyers among the organization's leadership's understanding of the law of libel in the United States. At this time, there were no laws against hate speech (or group libel).¹¹⁵³ In order for an individual to sustain a

¹¹⁵² Victoria Saker Woeste, “Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920-1929,” *The Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 905.

¹¹⁵³ In several states, including New York, there were in fact Civil Rights laws which proscribed group defamation but only in a very narrow sense. The 1913 New York Civil Rights Act, which had been drafted by Louis Marshall, prohibited hotels from barring Jews or advertising that Jews were not permitted as guests. Seven states passed similar laws but the scope of these prohibitions, while acknowledging that the reputation of groups could be harmed by general statements, had never been tried and Marshall and the AJC were not interested in mounting a test case to

suit for libel, the plaintiff had to be specifically named or mentioned in the inflammatory material, and the plaintiff had to establish that the published statements were “both false and malicious.”¹¹⁵⁴ The absence of prohibitions against general statements that defamed entire ethnic or religious groups, in addition to the nation’s well-entrenched reverence for freedom of speech under the First Amendment, meant that American Courts were a difficult arena in which to seek redress if a person had not been specifically mentioned and slandered. Even if a person was named, the plaintiff’s burden was to prove both the falseness of the statement and how he or she was harmed by the statement, and there were high legal thresholds for both elements of the wrongdoing.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the AJC’s strategy not to sue anti-Semites became controversial within the American Jewish community when the *Dearborn Independent* began to publish anti-Semitic content, including versions of the conspiratorial accusations contained in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. When the Henry Ford-sponsored articles were initially released, Louis Marshall contemplated initiating legal action against Ford and the newspaper, but he was persuaded by other AJC leaders to adhere to the organization’s established policy of refraining from using litigation to confront anti-Semites.¹¹⁵⁵

determine (or expand through judicial ruling) the reach of this legislation. See: Saker Woeste, 887. Additionally, in practice, the New York law was difficult to effectively enforce. Jeffrey Gurock notes that resort and hotel owners found ways to circumvent the legislation (by declaring themselves to be “private clubs” as opposed to “places of accommodation”), and the civil penalties imposed on violators were not sufficient to deter discrimination against Jews: “The abuses of the law remained essentially unchecked until 1945, when the New York State Supreme Court of Appeals reversed the traditional approach towards civil rights legislation and opted for a liberal construction of the law.” See: Jeffrey Gurock, “The 1913 New York Civil Rights Act,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 1 (1976): 111-112.

¹¹⁵⁴ Saker Woeste, 887.

¹¹⁵⁵ For a discussion of how Marshall initially reacted to the articles in the *Dearborn Independent*, see: Saker Woeste, 886-887. According to Saker Woeste, “Marshall abandoned the idea of suing Ford once it became apparent that no one else in the AJC supported such a move.” See: Saker Woeste, 887.

Individual American Jews, however, were not subject to the Committee's policies, and a few initiated legal proceedings against Ford and his newspaper. Although the AJC did not officially become involved in any of these cases, Samuel Untermyer, one of Marshall's partners in his private law practice, represented Herman Bernstein, a writer and employee of the AJC, in a libel action against Ford. The proceedings initiated against Ford, including Bernstein's, floundered. Only one case, that brought by Aaron Sapiro, went to trial and it ended in a mistrial.

It should be noted that in both the Bernstein and Sapiro cases, articles published in the *Dearborn Independent* had specifically mentioned them by name, and the authors alleged that the two men were part of different Jewish-led conspiracies. Accordingly, in neither of these cases were the plaintiffs trying to substantiate their libel claims based on general statements about Jews; they were seeking redress because they personally had been publically maligned in widely-published materials. Marshall's negotiations with representatives of Ford that brought about the publication of Ford's apology arguably undercut the active cases that had been filed against Ford and his newspaper; following the publication of the apology, the outstanding cases were either withdrawn or settled, and an opportunity to clarify (or establish) prohibitions against hate speech was lost.

During this formative period of the AJC, group libel or prohibitions against hate speech simply did not exist in the United States. The AJC made a pragmatic and public relations decision not to initiate legal actions that were likely to be lost before the courts, and, further, the leaders felt that the legal challenges would just garner more publicity for the defendant anti-Semites, giving them a public platform to disseminate their views. From the perspective of the AJC, there was no effective means of bringing a winnable action before the courts and there was no legislation whose interpretation could be expanded through judicial ruling to include

prohibitions or punishments for publishing statements that slandered entire minority communities.

In truth, at that time and to this day, the First Amendment's protection of free speech fosters a legal system that makes libel claims difficult to win, especially if the plaintiff is not specifically named, cannot easily prove that the statements are false, and cannot easily demonstrate that the statements caused him or her specific harm. Moreover, the law of libel has several defences or privileges that favour freedom of expression and that discourage claimants.

The AJC and Marshall did, however, become involved in *Ortenberg v. Plamondon*,¹¹⁵⁶ an ultimately successful group libel case that was argued outside the United States, in the Province of Québec.¹¹⁵⁷ In May 1913, Samuel W. Jacobs, a Canadian Jewish lawyer and community leader, wrote to the AJC to seek their assistance in an action he had filed in Québec City.

Jacobs was representing Benjamin Ortenberg and Louis Lazarovitch, two practicing Jews, small businessmen, and Québec City residents, in a libel case against René Leduc, the publisher of *La Parole Libre*, an anti-Semitic newsletter, and Joseph Edouard Plamondon, a notary who had made speeches expressing his anti-Semitic beliefs. One of Plamondon's speeches, which was delivered in front of an audience made up of members of a Catholic youth group, "sparked a series of attacks in the anti-Semitic press, the boycott of Jewish businesses, and the assault of several Jews in the streets."¹¹⁵⁸ In neither the newsletter nor the speeches were Ortenberg or Lazarovitch specifically named. The written material and oral statements that were the basis of their suit were reprises of general condemnations made against Jews that were

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ortenberg v. Plamondon*, 14 D.L.R. 549 (1913); *Ortenberg v. Plamondon* (1915), 24 B.R. 69, 385.

¹¹⁵⁷ The AJC indexed their correspondence on this case under the heading "Canada Libel Case." See: American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁵⁸ Joshua D. MacFadyen, "'Nip the Noxious Growth in the Bud:' *Ortenberg v. Plamondon* and the Roots of Canadian Anti-Hate Activism," *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études Juives Canadiennes* 12 (2004): 73.

regularly repeated by French-Canadian Catholic clergy and in the works of prominent French anti-Semites such as Édouard Drumont and Abbé Maximilian de Lamarque.

On May 12, 1913 Jacobs wrote to Harry Friedenwald, an AJC member who lived in Baltimore, Maryland, to apprise him of the upcoming trial and to ask for help. In this letter, Jacobs acknowledged that the libel action he had filed was part of a broader political strategy. The boycott against Jewish-owned businesses in Québec City had dramatically impacted his clients' businesses,¹¹⁵⁹ but they were only seeking five hundred dollars in damages;¹¹⁶⁰ the trial was, in fact, a means to further a social and political end.

The proceedings had been initiated as part of a campaign being led by Canadian Jewish leaders to curb the spread of anti-Semitic materials in the country and, in particular, in Québec, where the majority of Canadian Jews resided in Montreal, and where anti-Semitism was nurtured by the entrenched social and political influence of the Catholic Church over the majority of the populace. "The community in Canada intends, if possible," Jacobs wrote, "to put an end, once and for all, to the publication of matter such as this, and the object of the present proceedings is

¹¹⁵⁹ Jacobs estimated that his clients' revenues had been "cut in two as a result of the publication of the libel." See: Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 31, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶⁰ In a letter to Louis Marshall, Jacobs acknowledged that he had deliberately chosen, as part of his legal and political strategy, to seek only five hundred dollars in damages. The boycott of Jewish businesses in Québec City had substantially reduced his clients' revenues, but seeking only this sum in damages meant that the case would proceed as a bench trial, without a jury. Jacobs calculated that he had a better chance of persuading one Superior Court Judge (who had been appointed by the Canadian Federal Government) to rule in his clients' favor than twelve ordinary Québécois. Jacobs wrote: "we felt our chances of success in Quebec with a jury were very remote, inasmuch as the defendant would have the right to name six French speaking Roman Catholic gentlemen, while the plaintiff would have the right to name six English speaking men, and there would no doubt have been a disagreement." See: Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 27, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5. In an earlier letter to Louis Marshall, Jacobs indicated that he felt fortunate that the case would be decided by Mr. Justice Albert Malouin: "We had the good fortune to be before an excellent Judge, of the High Court, who gave us a patient hearing, and who, we are satisfied, will render a judgment which will be quite fair to us." See: Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 24, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

for that purpose.”¹¹⁶¹ In his letter to Friedenwald, Jacobs included copies of both his clients’ and the defendants’ pleadings.¹¹⁶² The trial was scheduled to begin in two days; the matter was urgent, so Jacobs also sent Friedenwald a telegram:

My firm is acting in libel case against defendant who has circulated statements to the effect that Jews are the enemies of the faith honor lives and well being of their Christian fellow citizens that Jews are thieves corrupters of women assassins of Christian children investigators of revolutions and that they have done these things wherever they lived and will attempt to do the same in the Province of Quebec as soon as they are sufficiently powerful also that Jews offer sacrifice to G-d by shedding blood of non-Jews.¹¹⁶³

The AJC, through Friedenwald, had developed a good relationship with Cardinal James Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore. Jacobs was hoping that Friedenwald would ask Gibbons to draft a statement that could be read to the court during the trial: “Knowing that his Eminence...is actuated by kindly feelings towards our race, as expressed on many public occasions, we thought that a statement from him...would have an important bearing on the trial and I thought at the last moment of getting in touch with you in order to enlist your assistance to obtain this declaration.”¹¹⁶⁴ At this time, the Catholic Church possessed considerable political

¹¹⁶¹ Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Dr. Harry Friedenwald, May 12, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶² The defendant’s brief included the following statement: “The establishment of Jews in Christian countries has always raised and still raises grave political, religious, and social problems, in view of the unconquerable antagonism which exists between the beliefs and mentalities of the Christians and the Jews, respectively. The latter always consider themselves the people of G-d. For them, Christ is an idol, and the Christians are idolators [sic], and infidels, whose exploitation is for the Jew a highly meritorious work. Everywhere they have gone, they remain isolated, form a colony apart, are always adorers of the golden calf, and have no other occupation than to drain money from Christians, and to increase their own capital by usury, stock jobbing, and trading. Christian people have always considered the presence of Jews among them as a social danger, and have submitted them to rigorous laws, considered necessary to prevent them from despoiling and tyrannising over Christians.” See: Defendant’ Plea in *Ortenberg vs. Leduc*, Superior Court, Québec No. 784, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶³ Telegram from S.W. Jacobs to Dr. Harry Friedenwald, May 12, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶⁴ Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Dr. Harry Friedenwald, May 12, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5. American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

power and social influence in Québec. Jacobs hoped to adduce as evidence a statement from the Archbishop to substantiate the argument that the defendant's anti-Semitic statements were false, and were acknowledged to be false by high ranking leaders of the Catholic Church.

Friedenwald sent a telegram to the AJC's headquarters in New York apprising them of the situation.¹¹⁶⁵ He also sent a reply telegram to Jacobs informing him that he had referred the matter to the Committee's leadership in New York. The following day, the AJC telegraphed a reply to Jacobs: "Time too short to send authoritative repudiation of indefinite charges...Ritual murder or blood accusation repudiated in papal bulls by Popes Innocent Fourth, Gregory Tenth, Martin Fifth, Paul Third. See Jewish Encyclopedia Volume three page two sixty six."¹¹⁶⁶

On the same day, Harry Schneiderman, the AJC's acting secretary, also sent Jacobs a letter explaining the Committee's reluctance to become involved in the case: "It appears to us that the other charges referred to in your telegram are so absurd and medieval, that it would be ridiculous even to notice them."¹¹⁶⁷ Schneiderman's telegram was consistent with the AJC's policy of declining to litigate against anti-Semites and the organization's desire to avoid offering anti-Semites opportunities to widely disseminate their views through the media attention that the coverage of a trial might generate.¹¹⁶⁸ This reply was, of course, of no help to Jacobs as he and

¹¹⁶⁵ Telegram from Harry Friedenwald to American Jewish Committee, May 13, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶⁶ Telegram from American Jewish Committee to S.S.W. Jacobs, May 13, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶⁷ Letter from Harry Schneiderman, Acting Secretary, to S.S.W. Jacobs, May 14, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶⁸ Jacobs replied to Schneiderman in a letter addressed to the entire leadership of the AJC. He agreed that the accusations made against the Jewish community were absurd, and agreed that, under different circumstances, they ought to be simply ignored; however, he disagreed with the contention that the silent treatment was the appropriate response in this case: "You observe quite rightly that the mediaeval charges such as those referred to are absurd, and that no notice ought to be taken of them, but when I tell you that the small body of Jews resident in Quebec City have been seriously damaged by the public utterances of men occupying positions of some prominence, resulting in bodily attacks on the streets, and the stoning of the windows of their synagogue, you will understand that it was high time for something to be done." In the same letter, Jacobs also thanked the Committee for giving the case their attention. This statement of appreciation was likely a formality of courtesy as, up to this point, the Committee had,

his clients were already committed to pressing a libel suit based on the repeated public expression and publication of some of the traditional allegations made against Jews. The trial opened the following day in Québec City.

Peculiarly, Jacobs' initial request for the AJC's help was not put in front of Louis Marshall. It is not clear how this happened, but, nine days after the trial opened, Marshall wrote to Jacobs and apologized for not getting involved: "I regret very much that I had not learned about this matter sooner."¹¹⁶⁹ At this time, Marshall was under the mistaken impression that the start of the trial had been delayed until June 15.¹¹⁷⁰ He offered to secure for Jacobs a statement from Cardinal John Murphy Farley, the Archbishop of New York, which could be read to the Court and "which would answer your purposes."¹¹⁷¹ Ultimately, Jacobs introduced an article written by Cardinal Farley that had been published in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as evidence that the allegations made against the Jews were false and had been recognized as such in a series of papal bulls.¹¹⁷²

Over the next month, Jacobs and Marshall exchanged a series of letters in which the two lawyers discussed the state of the law of libel in Canada and in the United States, the legal strategy Jacobs had chosen, and why Marshall had been reluctant to use this approach in

in fact, given the case very little attention beyond replying to Jacobs' letters and telegrams: "It is a matter of great pleasure indeed to us in Canada that your powerful Committee is showing interest in this question, and the Quebec community, especially, feels under a deep debt of obligation to you for the communication so far had from you showing your interest." See: Letter from S.W. Jacobs to The American Jewish Committee, May 16, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁶⁹ Letter from Louis Marshall to S.M.[sic] Jacobs, May 23, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷⁰ In a letter to the AJC, Jacobs had indicated that he was trying to secure a postponement of the opening of the trial. He later wrote that he was unable to get the postponement because the defendants would not agree to the delay. See: Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 24, 1913, May 14, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷¹ Letter from Louis Marshall to S.M.[sic] Jacobs, May 23, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷² Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 24, 1913, May 14, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

America.¹¹⁷³ Early in this exchange, Jacobs indicated that he felt his case was “of sufficient importance” that, if he were to lose at first instance, he would “appeal to a higher court.”¹¹⁷⁴

Marshall sent Jacobs a summary he had compiled of American judicial rulings in libel cases that might be useful.¹¹⁷⁵ In some of these examples, general defamatory statements against groups were ruled libelous because the disparaged group was so small that general statements still impacted their reputations and caused them harm despite the fact that they were not specifically mentioned by name.¹¹⁷⁶

Jacobs was confident that Justice Albert Malouin of the Superior Court of Québec would “find a way to condemn the defendants,” but, nevertheless, he lost the case at first instance.¹¹⁷⁷ Just as Marshall had feared, Justice Malouin ruled that “the plaintiff, being neither named nor specifically indicated, ha[d] no recourse civilly against the defendant.”¹¹⁷⁸ Justice Malouin dismissed the action with costs. On appeal, however, Malouin’s decision was reversed.

¹¹⁷³ In a letter to Jacobs, Marshall summarized that he thought the litigation approach to countering group libel would be ineffective because of the nature of law of libel: “I have feared all along that the weakness of your case lies in the fact that the publication of which your client complains is not directed at him individually, but at the class of which he is a member...It is the general rule, in the United States at least, that where the defamatory matter has no specific personal application and is so general that no individual damages can be presumed, and the class referred to is so numerous that great vexation and oppression might grow out of a multiplicity of suits, no private suit can be maintained.” See: Letter from Louis Marshall to S.W. Jacobs, May 29, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷⁴ Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 24, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷⁵ Marshall had a photographic memory. After attending Columbia University Law School, according to Jonathan D. Sarna, Marshall was “long recalled as a prodigy who could rattle off cases, complete with precise citations and page numbers, when called upon in class.” See: Jonathan D. Sarna, “Two Jewish Lawyers Named Louis,” *American Jewish History* 94 (2008): 3.

¹¹⁷⁶ For example, one of the cases Marshall cited in his letter to Jacobs was *Maybee v. Fisk*, 42 Barb., 326. In this case, the statement “your boys have stolen my corn” uttered to the father of three boys was found to be libelous against the father’s eldest son despite the fact that his two younger brothers were in fact guilty of stealing the corn. See: Letter from Louis Marshall to S.W. Jacobs, May 29, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷⁷ Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 31, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Ortenberg v. Plamondon*, 1914 CarswellQue 40, 24 B.R. 385, 24 B.R. 69, at para. 13.

The logic of the Québec Court of Appeal’s decision was consistent with the American rulings that Marshall had summarized in his letter to Jacobs. At the time of the trial, the Jewish population of Québec City was very small; it was comprised of less than seventy families. In his speeches, Plamondon made general statements against the Jews of Québec City. The appellate Court ruled that this group of people was small enough to be encompassed and injured by his general anti-Semitic statements. Justice Henry George Carroll, writing on behalf of a five judge panel that included the province’s Chief Justice, Sir Horace Archambeault, ruled: “I am of opinion that [the Jewish community of Québec] are sufficiently designated, that the plaintiff was included in this slander, that he has been injured in his sentiments and in his well-being, and that he ought to obtain judgment.”¹¹⁷⁹ Plamondon was fined fifty dollars; Leduc, only twenty-five. Economically, the fines imposed were insignificant. The ruling was far more meaningful as a symbolic victory. The *Ortenberg* appeal has been described “as an important step in Canada’s journey towards hate propaganda legislation.”¹¹⁸⁰

Jacobs thanked Marshall and the AJC for their attention to, and assistance with, the case. He specifically thanked Marshall for “the citations referring to the Jewish libel case.”¹¹⁸¹ The *Ortenberg* decision was a significant ruling in the history of Canadian law, but Jacobs’ success on appeal did not change the AJC’s policies regarding the use of litigation to combat anti-Semitism in the United States. During the period covered by this study, the AJC did not collaborate with the Anti-Defamation League in that organization’s mission to use a litigation approach to combat anti-Semitic expression in the United States.

¹¹⁷⁹ Alexander Brown, *Hate Speech Law: A Philosophical Examination* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 31.

¹¹⁸⁰ MacFadyen, 73.

¹¹⁸¹ Letter from S.W. Jacobs to Louis Marshall, May 31, 1913, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 6, File 5. In the same letter, Jacobs noted that despite the fact that Québec was “governed by the French Civil Law,” he would still be “permitted to cite English and American authorities,” by which he meant judicial decisions, because “there is little difference between the French law and the English in matters of libel.” It is reasonable to assume that by using the term “English” law

The *Society of Sisters* Brief and the AJC as “Friend of the Court”

As noted earlier in this chapter, during the period covered by this study, the American Jewish Committee submitted only one *amicus curiae* brief to the Supreme Court of the United States. The brief, filed on behalf of the appellee in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*,¹¹⁸² supported the decision of the lower District Court to impose an injunction restraining the Governor and Oregon state officials from enforcing a ban on private schools.

The ban on private schools was not an initiative of the State legislatures; rather, it had been enacted through a referendum. On November 7, 1922, voters in the State of Oregon “had passed by initiative an act which required all children of school age to attend a public school.”¹¹⁸³ According to Clarence J. Karier, there “could be no mistake; both the intent and the effect of this act was to abolish the parochial schools in the state of Oregon.”¹¹⁸⁴ The appeal to the Supreme Court was significant because it had potentially important ramifications for education policy across the country.

The American Jewish community had a clear interest in the *Society of Sisters* case. Across the country, Jewish parents wanted to ensure that their children could attend Jewish schools. These institutions, which were often heavily subsidized through philanthropic donations, were considered fundamentally important to the preservation of Jewish cultural heritage and religious practice in the United States. *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* offered the AJC an opportunity to help clarify the rights of parents to send their children to parochial schools, but

Jacobs was referring to English Common Law, which was the legal foundation of the American justice system and the justice system of every Canadian province except Québec. The justice system in Québec is rooted in the French Civil Law and Civil Code.

¹¹⁸² *Pierce, Governor of Oregon, et al. v. Society of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925).

¹¹⁸³ Clarence J. Karier, *The Individual, Society and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 371.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

because the case involved Catholic parents, the AJC could also avoid (or more likely minimize) public discussion of American Jewry's interest in what was, at the time, a contentious national debate over mandatory public education, civic instruction, and the role of universal child education in fostering social cohesion among a large, steadily growing, and heterogeneous population.

Louis Marshall drafted and signed the AJC's *Society of Sisters amicus* brief. Mark Raider notes that "Marshall's arguments were nearly always a synthesis of information and data concerned with social and economic problems in addition to matters of law and fact."¹¹⁸⁵ The twenty page document is argumentative; many of Marshall's claims are grounded in emotional language. In identifying the significance of the case, for example, Marshall's rhetoric is forceful. "Fundamentally," he wrote, "the questions in these cases are: May liberty to teach and to learn be restricted? Shall such liberty be dependent on the will of the majority? Shall such majority be permitted to dictate to parents and to children where and by whom instruction shall be given?"¹¹⁸⁶ Marshall is equally forceful in identifying the potential implications if the lower court's injunction against the enforcement of the ballot measure were removed: "If such power can be asserted, then it will lead inevitably to the stifling of thought. If the will of a temporary majority may thus control, then it is conceivable that it may prohibit the teaching of science, of the classics, of modern languages and literature, of art, and of nature study."¹¹⁸⁷ Marshall's brief in this case is certainly polemical and, with the exception of data or any statistical analyses, contains the elements that Raider describes as the quintessential features of Marshall's courtroom

¹¹⁸⁵ Raider, 47.

¹¹⁸⁶ Brief of the American Jewish Committee for *Walter M. Peirce v. The Society of Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary*, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 1, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/pierce.CV01.pdf. See: page 8.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Presciently, Marshall predicted that "A majority might reach the conclusion that the teaching of Darwinian theory...should be prohibited." See: page 8.

advocacy. “Marshall focussed his brief...around the issue of individual rights under the Constitution.”¹¹⁸⁸ In Marshall’s view, the referendum-passed initiative, if allowed to come into force, would have had the effect of suppressing parents’ rights to teach their religion to their children by limiting the venues where that education could be given. Marshall describes this limitation as an infringement upon the parents’ “right of selection.”¹¹⁸⁹

The legislation is clearly calculated to confer upon the public schools a monopoly of education. That necessarily would tend to the suppression of all religious instruction, the importance of which cannot be minimized. Under our system of government the State is powerless, as it should be, to give religious instruction. That is a right and a duty that rests upon parents, upon churches and synagogues. If private, parochial and denominational schools are, however, to be deprived of the right to educate the children, and the parents are forbidden to send their children to such schools, then we shall be in precisely the same situation as that which now exists in Russia. There it is forbidden to give religious instruction of any kind to children until they reach the age of eighteen years.¹¹⁹⁰

In the remainder of the brief, Marshall includes a discussion of how the ban on parochial schools clashes with previously enacted Oregon State laws,¹¹⁹¹ and attacks each of the seven arguments that the appellants submitted in their pleadings. The brief contains no references to sociological research, only Marshall’s opinions about how religious and sectarian schools, rather than obstruct civic instruction, in fact promote social cohesion:

The assimilation, so-called, of our foreign born citizens is advanced rather than retarded by the private, parochial and religious schools. It is in such schools as these...that special efforts are made not only to educate the foreign born citizen, but the immigrant...and it may be said without exaggeration that our foreign born citizens frequently have a better understanding of the principles of our

¹¹⁸⁸ Sarna, 13.

¹¹⁸⁹ Brief of the American Jewish Committee for *Walter M. Peirce v. The Society of Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary*, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 1, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/pierce.CV01.pdf. See: page 9. Earlier in the brief, Marshall refers to this as “the right to choose the medium whereby an education is to be received.” See: page, 5.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

government than is possessed by many of our native born citizens. They have better opportunity to appreciate the differences between our form of government and that prevailing in the countries in which they were born, and they devote themselves with greater intensity to an understanding of those principles than is the case with many a descendant of the elder population.¹¹⁹²

The brief concludes with a discussion about how the ban on parochial schools should be seen as a form of intolerance, contrary to American ideals and American law.

In the ruling in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, the Supreme Court of the United States affirmed the lower court's ruling; however, the decision did not center on the freedom of religion. The Court ruled that Oregon's ban on private schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment's prohibition "against state action impairing life, liberty, or property interests."¹¹⁹³ In a unanimous decision, the Court ruled that the "act requiring children to attend only public primary schools [was] not reasonably related to a legitimate state purpose because children could be adequately educated in private, as well as public schools."¹¹⁹⁴ Secondly, the Court found that "the act unreasonably interferes with the liberty of parents to direct the education of their children."¹¹⁹⁵

Although the decision turned on an interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, the ruling was crucially important to religious schools in the United States; in effect, it established a legal protection for these institutions. Seventy-five years after the ruling, the U.S. Department of Education presented the AJC with a "Certificate of Appreciation" to recognize the "significant contribution" the organization made to the case.¹¹⁹⁶

¹¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹⁹³ Perry A. Zirkel, Sharon Nalbone Richardson, and Steven S. Goldberg, *A Digest of Supreme Court Decisions Affecting Education* (Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 2001), 27.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁶ See: "Certificate of Appreciation Presented to The American Jewish Committee," American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 1, 2015. http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/F-64.PDF.

The Committee's use of a litigation approach to public advocacy did not escalate until the middle of the twentieth century.¹¹⁹⁷ By the mid-1950s, the AJC was a significant actor in civil rights litigation, submitting *amicus* briefs in cases dealing with issues as varied and as contentious as restrictive covenants,¹¹⁹⁸ school prayer,¹¹⁹⁹ discrimination,¹²⁰⁰ and racial segregation.¹²⁰¹ In these later applications of juridical means, the AJC collaborated with other

¹¹⁹⁷ The AJC's internal debate about how, and if, to become more involved in using a litigation approach in the organization's public advocacy was summarized in a 1948 internal confidential memo, which described the AJC's involvement in constitutional test cases up to that point and considered the optics of escalating the Committee's involvement in litigation. By this point, the Committee was referring to the organization's use of litigation in its advocacy as "Social Action." See: "An Examination of the Action Program of the Legal and Civil Affairs Committee," American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 11, 2015. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15403>.

¹¹⁹⁸ The AJC submitted an *amicus* brief favoring the abolishment of restrictive covenants in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948).

¹¹⁹⁹ The AJC filed a brief opposing the practice of "release time," where public school students were given the option of taking religious instruction in public school facilities during regular schools hours, in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948). The organization filed an *amicus* brief in *Engel v. Vitale*, 370, U.S. 421 (1962), which banned prayer in public schools. Similarly, the AJC filed a brief in *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), which prohibited Bible reading in public schools.

¹²⁰⁰ The AJC filed a brief in *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950), arguing for the petitioner Marion Sweatt, an African-American law student who was petitioning for the right to be admitted to the all-white University of Texas Law School. In compliance with the "separate but equal doctrine" the State of Texas had founded a separate law school for African-American students to accommodate Sweatt but he refused to enroll in the newly established law school. The ruling was an important forerunner to the *Brown* decision four years later.

¹²⁰¹ For a discussion of the AJC's later use of *amicus* briefs see: Naomi W. Cohen, "Friends in Court: An American-Jewish Response to Antisemitism," in *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Response*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1987), 313-332. In terms of the organization's advocacy through the Courts, the AJC is most famous for its role in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), the Supreme Court ruling which overturned State laws mandating racial segregation in public schools. On the day that the Court released its judgement, the AJC released the following statement to the media: "The American Jewish Committee welcomes the unanimous decisions of the United States Supreme Court (in the school desegregation cases) as a forthright expression of this country's determination to continue to translate democratic principles into realities. In the midst of the free world's struggle against the forces of totalitarianism, America has once again demonstrated that democratic practices must constantly be invigorated. Therein lies the essence and the strength of the democratic spirit for all the world to see. The decision is of transcendent importance because it strikes down the legal fictions which up to now have often frustrated true equality of opportunity in America. For, as we pointed out in the brief we filed in the U.S. Supreme Court in these cases: 'The unchallenged finding (of the Court below) that segregation irreparably damages the child lifts (these cases) out of the murky realm of speculation on the issue of equality of facilities, into the area of certainty that segregation and equality cannot co-exist. That which is unequal in fact cannot be equal in law.' Others who joined with the American Jewish Committee in filing the brief were the American Civil Liberties Union, the America Ethical Union, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Japanese American Citizens League and the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice. All Americans should take comfort in the Court's ruling that there are no degrees or limitations of equality of opportunity based on differences of race or creed. We join in expressing the hope that the transition from segregation to desegregation will be marked by the good sense for which the American people are known and by their peaceable compliance with the Court's decree." See: "For Immediate Release," Press statement published by the American Jewish Committee, May 18,

Jewish organizations, sometimes filing joint briefs with the Anti-Defamation League, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the American Jewish Congress.¹²⁰² The Committee also increasingly collaborated with other sectarian and non-sectarian interests groups and civil rights organizations, including the Catholic Legal Society, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,¹²⁰³ People for the American Way,¹²⁰⁴ Americans United for the Separation of Church and State,¹²⁰⁵ and the American Civil Liberties Union.¹²⁰⁶ *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* was the seed of what grew to be a major contribution of the AJC.

Litigation and juridical means can be used as tools in public advocacy and communal defense. In the United States, litigation has been used by a variety of special interest groups to complement other more populist approaches to influencing social and political change. “Court cases where Jews appear as litigants, sponsors, or friends of the court are,” Naomi Cohen argues, “instructive indices to the totality of the Jewish condition at any time.”¹²⁰⁷ Cohen also argues that “when the setting and arguments of a particular case are contrasted with those of another case in a different period, developments and changes within the larger [Jewish] community can be more easily discerned.”¹²⁰⁸ This chapter illustrates that, in its approaches to public advocacy and communal defense, the AJC was from an early date attempting to utilize juridical means to further the organization’s agenda.

1954, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 3, 2015.

http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajc_data/files/525.pdf.

¹²⁰² Melissa Rogers, “Religious Advocacy by American Religious Institutions: A History,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Church and State in the United States*, ed. Derek H. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 113.

¹²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹²⁰⁷ Naomi W. Cohen, “‘*Shaare Tefila Congregation v. Cobb*’: A New Departure in American Jewish Defense?,” *Jewish History* 3 (1988): 96.

¹²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

These early attempts are significant in and of themselves because of what they accomplished and because they reveal the breadth of strategies employed by the first generation of Committee leaders. These efforts were models for the organization's later use of litigation in its advocacy. In comparison to the AJC's initial applications of juridical means, the organization's later activism in public interest litigation suggests an advocacy organization (and minority community) that was significantly more comfortable in its social and political environment; comfortable enough to use a widely covered public forum (the Supreme Court) to advance legal arguments and positions on contentious social and political issues that were in some instances outside mainstream opinion in the United States. The AJC's uses of juridical means described in this chapter were more cautious and discrete, and were shaped by the organization's emphasis on avoiding publicity and drawing attention to American Jewry and its aim to prevent controversial social and political issues from being described as Jewish issues. Later Committee leaders were more willing to advocate on behalf of American Jewry and other minority communities openly, more comfortable with the attention and criticism that these actions would generate, and less afraid of the potential consequences for the organization and the community it purported to represent.

Chapter 9: The Continuities of the AJC's Public Advocacy

The death of Louis Marshall at the age of seventy in 1929 was a defining moment in the history of the American Jewish Committee, and more broadly, in the history of American Jewry. The period between 1915 and 1929 has been described in the historiography on American Jewry as the era of “Marshall law.” “The term ‘Marshall law,’ Mathew Mark Silver notes, “was the English Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill’s epigrammatic tribute to the extraordinary authority enjoyed by Louis Marshall in American Jewish affairs, particularly in the 1920s, following the death of Jacob Schiff.”¹²⁰⁹ Given the emergence of new leaders and new Jewish organizations that challenged Marshall’s standing among American Jews, including Louis Brandeis, the American Jewish Congress Movement, and the American branch of the Zionist movement, Zangwill’s description is more poetic than representative; however, the scope of Marshall’s influence over the Committee in its formative years is difficult to overstate. He was the source of much of what was to follow. The Committee was by no means a “one man” (or “one person”) operation, but Marshall was, even before he assumed the role of President, the most significant figure in shaping the Committee’s agenda and in developing the techniques that the organization used to further its social and political objectives during its early history. As noted throughout this study, Marshall often acted alone, without consulting other AJC leaders. Naomi Cohen notes that the AJC’s Executive Committee “met to hear Marshall report on what he had done between meetings; and to the public at large he and the American Jewish Committee became one and the same.”¹²¹⁰ As the previous chapters have shown, Marshall’s experience from his legal career and his beliefs about public advocacy and communal defense, were developed and used during his

¹²⁰⁹ Mathew Mark Silver, *Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 381.

¹²¹⁰ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 29.

leadership of the AJC and his ideas would fundamentally shape the approaches of the Committee to public advocacy.

Throughout this study, the argument has been made that, in contrast to the conventional view presented in much of the historiography on the AJC, which was that during its early history the organization was passive and committed to quiet approaches to public advocacy, the reality was that the Committee was slowly but assuredly developing a new and vibrant approach. The conventional view of the AJC is that it did not adopt the practices and advocacy techniques of modern leadership organizations and interest groups until after the Second World War. This study has shown, however, that, long before the Second World War, the AJC made conspicuous attempts to influence public opinion, and it developed the institutional infrastructure to support those efforts. Further, the use of these techniques in the early years, the strategies which underlay them, and the internal infrastructure that supported its campaigns, shaped the AJC's later advocacy. There is a historical continuity in the blend of quiet diplomacy and public advocacy used by the AJC from its foundation in 1906 and its later, more conspicuous campaigns on behalf of American Jewry and minority communities in the United States. The AJC became more committed to the transparent use of public advocacy after the period covered by this study but those later campaigns grew from the lessons learned from the organization's earlier efforts.

As this chapter will show, the continuity of the public advocacy of the American Jewish Committee from its formative years to until the 1950s is revealed by two internal analyses prepared by AJC staff after the end of Marshall's leadership. Shortly after Marshall's death, the AJC produced a significant policy paper that summarized the organization's objectives and identified the public advocacy techniques the Committee would use to realize these aims. Similarly, shortly after the Second World War, the Committee produced a series of policy papers

and reports that restated the organization's mandate and described the advocacy methods it was prepared to employ. Brief examinations of these documents illustrate the extent to which there was historical continuity between the earliest advocacy techniques employed by the AJC and the organization's subsequent efforts. These documents from the 1930s and 1940s illustrate the aims and methods of the AJC, detail the breadth of its strategies, and reveal the extent to which the organization's later campaigns were indebted to, or extensions of, the public advocacy approaches adopted by the first generation of AJC leaders.

“Memorandum on A Larger Program for the Defense of the Position of the Jew in the United States”

Between 1930 and 1934, the Committee composed a policy paper entitled “Memorandum on A Larger Program for the Defense of the Position of the Jew in the United States.”¹²¹¹ This policy statement was compiled shortly after the death of Louis Marshall and during the leadership tenure of Cyrus Adler, another of the founders of the organization, who succeeded Marshall as the AJC's President. The sixteen-page collection of suggestions and reports is a comprehensive description of the public advocacy techniques and resources the AJC was prepared to use to further its social and political objectives. Quiet approaches to public advocacy are not even mentioned in the documents. It was probably taken as a given that the AJC would continue to use quiet diplomacy, but it is telling that within a year of Marshall's death, the Committee's leaders began compiling an inventory of more conspicuous forms of public advocacy.

¹²¹¹ “Memorandum on A Larger Program form the Defense of the Position of the Jew in the United States,” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21. The memorandum is undated but the year 1932 along with a question mark has been written by hand on the front page of the archived copy held in the AJC's library; however, based on information contained within the memorandum, it is possible that it was written as late as 1934.

Reflecting the context in which they were written, the memorandums evince a strong concern for the rise of authoritarian regimes in Europe. They describe how the Jewish position in the United States can be further secured by promoting democracy: “Our program is based upon the belief that the civil and religious rights of the Jews are dependent upon the maintenance of our democratic form of government and our democratic institutions; that we can best help maintain those rights by fortifying in every way the adherence to the fundamentals of democracy.”¹²¹² The documents are forthright in stating that public advocacy and attempts to influence public opinion or educate the general public were crucial components of the AJC’s work. The memorandum notes “that the specific actions relative to educating the public on the truth about the Jews must be integrated with the major task of maintaining peaceful relations between the various groups composing our population.”¹²¹³ It endorses “the utilization of every instrument of publicity” and the “subsidization of special devices” to reach and influence the general public.¹²¹⁴

The program described in these memorandums is comprehensive. They demonstrate a greater enthusiasm for the use of public advocacy than would have been openly endorsed or practiced during the period covered by this study. The documents also support the adoption of tactics that were not used by the founders of the Committee, but they call for the maintenance and expansion of practices employed by the first generation of Committee leaders. For example, one report suggests that the organization continue to monitor the American and foreign press and continue to translate and archive materials that may be usefully cited to sway public opinion. The

¹²¹² “Memorandum on A Larger Program form the Defense of the Position of the Jew in the United States,” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21.

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

memorandum suggest that the AJC build upon established practices and calls for the “study of trends in developments in the press, radio, films, schools, etc., which are adaptable for our general program of education in democracy.”¹²¹⁵ Further, the memorandum endorses the continued printing and distribution of literature and other written materials and includes a list of seventeen publications, including works by Charles A. Beard, Franz Boas, and Heinrich Mann, which the AJC had already committed to disseminating. The plan endorsed the distribution of literature despite the fact that the impact of these materials could not be measured: “While this method cannot...be accurately gauged, it remains an essential part of our program to combat the flood of violent anti-Semitic literature in book and leaflet form that is making its way throughout the country.”¹²¹⁶ As discussed in Chapter 7 of this study, the founders of the AJC released numerous publications knowing that their impact could not be measured but in the hope that, in the long run, they would be influential. All these techniques, including the expanded use of publicity, further research, and the use of new forms of mass media, are reiterations and broadenings of the public advocacy techniques employed by the first generation of AJC leaders.

By the time this collection of documents was written, the AJC had already become much more comfortable with openly engaging in public advocacy. The tactic of deliberately ignoring some provocations is not mentioned in the documents; neither do they include any discussion of the use of juridical means or further interventions in public interest and civil rights litigation, although the Committee had already gained some experience in resorting to the courtroom to advance a cause. The use of the silent treatment, quiet diplomacy and juridical means obviously had not been abandoned by the AJC, but the breath of the means the Committee was prepared to

¹²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁶ Program for the Forthcoming Year, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21.

use at this point in its history indicates that the organization was now more committed to the transparent use of public advocacy, advertising, public speakers, press agencies, and mass media to influence public opinion and further its agenda.¹²¹⁷ Only a few years after the death of Louis Marshall, the AJC had already subsidized the production of its first short film, “Toward Unity,” had sponsored essay and art contests to “obtain good suggestions, good copy, and good art work” to support its campaigns, and was openly supporting the establishment of a new national holiday, “Brotherhood Day.”¹²¹⁸ One report noted that all the activities endorsed by the AJC’s program required “the expenditures of large sums of money.”¹²¹⁹ The organization recognized that “the effectiveness of this planned endeavor to educate public opinion will be measured entirely by the sums made available.”¹²²⁰ By this point, the Committee was spending more than fifty thousand dollars a year on its public advocacy work.¹²²¹ With the exception of the financial resources that the Committee had devoted to distributing Marshall’s pamphlet on the Ford apology and the huge expense of the compilation of the World War I honor roll, this figure represented a substantial increase in the AJC’s commitment to public advocacy, but it was an expansion, not a radical new initiative for the organization which, as earlier chapters have noted, had already developed the infrastructure for these types of public advocacy campaigns.

¹²¹⁷ In terms of the Committee’s research infrastructure, in order to monitor the activities of anti-Semitic organizations, the AJC debated securing the services of “a competent detective agency.” See: “Memorandum on A Larger Program form the Defense of the Position of the Jew in the United States,” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21.

¹²¹⁸ Program for the Forthcoming Year, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21.

¹²¹⁹ “Memorandum on A Larger Program form the Defense of the Position of the Jew in the United States,” Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21.

¹²²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²²¹ Summary of Expenses, Undated, American Jewish Committee Archives, General Correspondence Papers, Series II: Subject Files, 1906-32, Box 1, File 21.

The Post Second World War Policy Papers

After the Second World War, the American Jewish Committee compiled another series of policy papers to reiterate the organization's mandate and methods. This second compilation of the Committee's approaches to public advocacy is perhaps more noteworthy than the collection of documents that comprised the "Larger Program Memorandum" because it included an attempt to encourage the American Jewish community to embrace the AJC's strategies. This is significant because the AJC had traditionally promoted itself as the representative body of American Jewry, but the elitist leadership had not sought to include directly the majority of American Jews as participants in its various approaches. As noted in Chapter 3 of this study, this attitude caused significant intra-communal antagonism. By the mid-1940s, partly because of competition from other American Jewish organizations, the AJC was looking to enhance its legitimacy by directly involving American Jews in its campaigns.

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, the AJC had long been using a strategy known as the "silent treatment" (or the "quarantine method") to respond to domestic anti-Semitism. The heart of this strategy was to refuse to respond to some provocations because there was nothing to be gained through engagement. In the formative years of the organization, there was also the view that responding to some anti-Semitic provocations simply provided more public and media exposure for anti-Semites and their beliefs. After the Second World War, the Committee organized a campaign to encourage American Jewry to adopt this strategy.

The historical context of this effort to co-ordinate the community's reaction to anti-Semitism is significant.¹²²² The campaign occurred during increased scrutiny of the American

¹²²² During the 1940s, the American Jewish community was far better organized than it had been during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. The Russian and Eastern European immigrant community was well organized and somewhat more unified, but many of the intra-communal conflicts that existed before the First and Second

Jewish community because of concerns about the rise of Communism and during a period where public expression of anti-Semitic beliefs through mass media were becoming increasingly common and vitriolic.¹²²³ The Committee was eager to contain the damage caused by this eruption of anti-Semitic fervor in the United States.¹²²⁴

The AJC's effort to propagate the silent treatment began with the September 1946 issue of *Commentary*, which included an article written by Solomon Andhil Fineberg, the Director of the AJC's Community Service Department. His article was titled "Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers: What to Do When the Demagogue Comes,"¹²²⁵ and it concentrated on arguments against the effectiveness of mass demonstrations to combat anti-Semitism. The article was the first public discussion of the tactics of the silent or quarantine treatment, and it was written to explain, justify, and popularize the approach among the American Jewish community.¹²²⁶ At the

World Wars continued to divide American Jewry. Class and denominational divisions remained impediments to social cohesion and united political action. The ambitions of the Zionist movement and quarrels over who should lead and speak for the community continued to divide American Jewry during this period.

¹²²³ Public speeches by anti-Semites such as Gerald K. Smith, an American clergyman and political organizer, and radio broadcast by commentators such as Upton Close, Father Charles E. Coughlin, and Robert H. Williams, contained overtly anti-Semitic allegations and outraged American Jewry. The explicit anti-Semitism of public speakers and radio commentators stimulated a debate among American Jews about how to respond to this threat.

¹²²⁴ The AJC established an internal "Committee on Overt Anti-Semitism" to monitor the rise of anti-Semitic expression in the United States and coordinate the AJC's response. It was this committee that decided to promote the use of the silent treatment to the mass of American Jewry. See: Memorandum to: Staff Members of AJC, April 7, 1947, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

¹²²⁵ Solomon Andhil Fineberg, "Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers: What to Do When the Demagogue Comes," *Commentary*, September 1946, 220-226.

¹²²⁶ Protest and demonstrations, although legal, carried great risk from a public relations perspective. In his article, Fineberg cites the rise to prominence of Gerald K. Smith that followed the demonstrations against him in order to illustrate these risks, which include not only building the reputation of anti-Semites but also simultaneously tarnishing the reputation of American Jews. The protesters who picketed Smith's public appearances were trying to denounce Smith, but the angry crowds that gathered outside the venues required police intervention to control the uproar which, on some occasions, resulted in the cancellation of Smith's address. These incidents resulted in negative media coverage of the American Jewish community. The press accounts inferred that Jews were seeking to infringe upon Smith's freedom of speech and often included references to the participation of Jewish labor leaders in these demonstrations, thereby drawing a link between Jews and communism. The media coverage allowed Smith to promote himself as a victim of Jewish persecution and gave him greater public exposure. Fineberg notes that: "Counterdemonstrations give Smith claim to police protection, and he is even able to pose as a defender of the right

same time as the publication of Fineberg's article, the AJC also released an illustrated pamphlet with the title "What to Do When the Rabble-Rouser Comes to Town" to encourage American Jews to adopt this tactic.¹²²⁷

It is worth noting, however, that the Committee's attempt to popularize the silent treatment with the majority of American Jews was an elitist and undemocratic campaign. Motivated by concerns that herald back to its formative years about how the Jewish community would be perceived by the majority of Americans if they engaged in mass political protests, the Committee wanted American Jews to refrain from engaging with anti-Semites and with agitators while the AJC's leadership took the lead through quiet diplomacy and the judicious use of public advocacy to combat anti-Semitism on the community's behalf.¹²²⁸

The Committee called its approach the silent treatment, but an analysis of the internal documents that summarize the tactics that the AJC included in this approach reveals that this

of free speech. And it is over this issue that some of the people who loathe him most have to side with him, believing that the right of people to speak and to hear is one of the basic safeguards of American democracy." See: Fineberg, 221.

¹²²⁷ See: "What to Do When the Rabble-Rouser Comes to Town [illustrated pamphlet]," American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed May 13, 2015.

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15432>.

¹²²⁸ The Committee's attempt to convince American Jews to embrace this approach, however, caused significant intra-communal tension. Fineberg's article generated enough comment and criticism within the American Jewish community that, two months later, *Commentary*, which was closely associated with the AJC, published "two dissenting opinions" opposing Fineberg's arguments in the November 1946 issue of the magazine.¹²²⁸ The two dissents were written by Irwin Lee Glatstein, a Professor at the University of Oklahoma, and Irving Howe, then a writer and editor of the weekly *Labor Action*. Both dissents described the silent treatment as undemocratic and attacked Fineberg for failing to recognize the political and emotional value of mass public action. See: Irwin Lee Glatstein, Irving Howe, and Solomon Andhil Fineberg, "How to Fight Rabble-Rousers? A Discussion," *Commentary*, November 1946, 460-466. Glatstein's dissent was titled "Against 'Silent Treatment.'" Howe's was titled "The Value of Mass Action." Fineberg was given an opportunity to answer their arguments in a reply in the same issue titled "Fight on the Real Battle-Line." The more active approach to the rise of anti-Semitic orators, which was favored by both Glatstein and Howe, urged exposing anti-Semites through public protest. This approach recognized that anti-Semitism provoked emotional responses among American Jews. In his critique of the tactics outlined by Fineberg in "Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers," Irwin Lee Glatstein argued that "No one who has worked inside the Jewish community for any time can be unfamiliar with the disgust that so many Jews, particularly younger ones, feel towards this 'hush-hush' policy... And no one who has worked within the Jewish community can be unaware of the demoralization resulting from this disgust." See: Irwin Lee Glatstein, "Against 'Silent Treatment,'" *Commentary*, November 1946, 461.

form of public advocacy included and employed the more conspicuous techniques developed by the founders of the organization. These documents, which were written outside the time period covered by this study, present a clear and succinct summary of the public advocacy approaches that the AJC had been developing and using since its founding. They also demonstrate that there was continuity in the AJC's practice of using both quiet diplomacy and forms of public advocacy.

In an AJC memorandum entitled "The Rationale of the Quarantine Treatment," Fineberg identified "eight proposals," which he argued constitute the silent treatment. This memorandum was not just an internal AJC communication because Fineberg wrote it with the intention of having it widely distributed to local Jewish leaders across the United States in an effort to coordinate Jewish political advocacy in the country.¹²²⁹

Fineberg's "eight proposals" were not eight separate public relations and advocacy tactics because many of them are interrelated and reinforce one another. Proposal 2, 3 and 6 refer specifically to the elements of the strategy that privilege silence over confrontation. It is important to note that Fineberg and the AJC did not view the silent treatment as passive or pusillanimous; in their view, refusing to respond to hate speech or scurrilous allegations was strategic. "Silent treatment," Fineberg wrote, "does not mean supineness."¹²³⁰ The organization was certainly aware that elements of the American Jewish community deeply resented the silent

¹²²⁹ The Rationale of Quarantine Treatment, Undated, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>. "The Rationale of the Quarantine Treatment" contains a postscript which states that "Additional copies of this memorandum (up to 100 for each community) will be furnished on request."

¹²³⁰ Confidential Memorandum on G.L.K. Smith and Upton Close, Undated, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

treatment and dismissed it as cowardly. Over the course of the AJC's promotion of this approach, they changed the name they used to describe it from the silent treatment to the quarantine method because they recognized that the latter implied greater agency, while the former denoted inaction.¹²³¹

In the Committee's view, at all times concerns about public perception should guide the community's response. Fineberg advises Jewish leaders and activists to refrain from public demonstrations, protest, and condemnations in the press because they give greater public exposure to their opponents and, as will be discussed further below, could harm the community's reputation. He states that "Picketing of meetings should never be used" and cautions that the distribution of leaflets during protests is both "utterly wasteful and may cause fights."¹²³² These proposals also contain warnings about the potential adverse public relations consequences of being perceived by the broader public as attempting to disrupt free speech and of encouraging the growth in prestige of anti-Semites when confrontations between their supporters and Jewish protesters are covered by the press. These proposals are a continuation of the Committee's early leaders' concerns about optics, about how the Jewish community was being perceived by other American citizens, and about providing greater exposure to anti-Semites and their beliefs.

Proposals 1, 5, and 6 concentrate on the collection and effective distribution of

¹²³¹ Fineberg wrote another memorandum suggesting the name change for the approach. He wrote that opponents of the silent treatment "have taken advantage...of the negative, passive implications of the word 'silent.' They have made it synonymous with 'ignoring' and have wrongfully but nonetheless effectively made it appear that persons practicing the silent treatment are in favor of inaction. I, therefore, urge that we abandon the use of the term 'silent treatment' and that hereafter we speak of the technique as the "QUARENTINE TREATMENT." See: Memorandum: Quarantine Treatment, September 3, 1947, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

¹²³² The Rationale of Quarantine Treatment, Undated, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

information. According to Fineberg, “No rabble-rouser, however insignificant should be ignored.”¹²³³ Instead of public condemnation and protest, however, the sensible response is to investigate the situation quietly. Fineberg specifically mentions both the AJC and the Anti-Defamation League as the organizations that are best equipped to gather information on anti-Semites or anti-Semitic organizations. He undoubtedly made this recommendation because, at the time that he was writing, both organizations had matured into high-profile special interest and public advocacy groups, and had invested significant resources into developing their information gathering and investigative infrastructure. Former rivals, the AJC and the ADL were by this point formally cooperating in a series of efforts to combat anti-Semitism and reinforce laws protecting minority rights in the United States. With respect to the argument of this study, it is significant to note that the information gathering and its dissemination endorsed by Fineberg was a continuation of projects started in the formative years of the AJC. During the time period covered by this dissertation, the AJC was developing its abilities to collect and disseminate information. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, during the early history of the organization, the AJC’s leaders were already relying on the gathering of information and the calculated dissemination of that information as a public advocacy tool.

From its earliest days, the AJC employed different forms of mass media to influence public opinion and social and political attitudes. This study focused on a period before the advent of most of the modern means of mass communication, and during the period between 1906 and 1929, as discussed in Chapter 7, the AJC concentrated on the publication of books and pamphlets as the best means of influencing public opinion. The deliberations of the organization’s leaders during this period laid the foundation for significantly more dramatic applications of mass media

¹²³³ *Ibid.*

as a tool for public education and public advocacy by the AJC. From the beginning, the AJC was involved in using mass media to influence public opinion, and as new forms of mass media proliferated during the twentieth century, the organization eagerly embraced the new means of reaching and influencing the views and beliefs of mass audiences.¹²³⁴

In his fifth proposal, Fineberg recommends that the information collected by the organization or through its research projects should be distributed to the “media of communication and molders of public opinion.”¹²³⁵ This aspect of the strategy relies on the perceived neutrality of the media as a potential public advocacy asset. Undeniably, this is an antiquated view of the media, particularly from the perspective of today’s cynicism about the objectivity of contemporary news coverage. Although bias has always tainted aspects of media coverage, arguably, in earlier eras, the public had greater faith in the truth of what was being reported to them. In any event, the emphasis on information gathering and overtures to journalists and prominent public officials is consistent with the AJC’s long standing preference for controlled quiet diplomacy. An internal and confidential AJC memorandum is more explicit on the use of quiet diplomacy in modern public advocacy and as an aspect of the silent treatment than Fineberg’s description in his eight proposals. According to this memorandum, the silent treatment “does not preclude approaches to the owners of meeting halls to acquaint them with the rabble-rousers background.”¹²³⁶ From the founding of the organization, the leaders of the AJC employed the technique of quiet approaches to “strategic persons,” including journalists,

¹²³⁴ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 193-264.

¹²³⁵ The Rationale of Quarantine Treatment, Undated, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the “Quarantine Treatment” for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC’s Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

¹²³⁶ Confidential Memorandum on G.L.K. Smith and Upton Close, Undated, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the “Quarantine Treatment” for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC’s Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

publishers, politicians, and educators in many different contexts as a means of curbing anti-Semitism or furthering the organization's social and political agenda.¹²³⁷ They practiced this technique during the early history of the organization and continued to rely on it even as the organization became more engaged in public advocacy and public interest litigation during the twentieth century.

Proposals 4 and 8 of Fineberg's summary of the silent treatment address efforts to influence the social and political attitudes of the American public. "Public education," according to Fineberg, "should continue at all times."¹²³⁸ This aspect of the silent treatment is idealist in terms of the promotion of liberal, tolerant and democratic values; however, it is also not genuinely silent because, although the majority of American Jews were being asked to remain quiet and to repress their desire to respond to accusations made against their community, this was designed to allow a central elitist leadership body to provide a response on their behalf through the calculated release of materials and media statements or tactful approaches to "strategic persons," that is, patricians and influential members of the American public, including journalists, business leaders, and politicians.

Finally, Fineberg's proposal 7 briefly describes how legal recourses, including the quiet lobbying of justice officials to invoke existing "breach of the peace and inciting to riot statutes" was also an integral component of the silent treatment. "Public cooperation," by which Fineberg

¹²³⁷ Fineberg used the term "strategic persons" in a letter to an unnamed editor that is on file in the AJC's digital archives. See: Letter from S. Andhil Fineberg, April 17, 1947, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

¹²³⁸ The Rationale of Quarantine Treatment, Undated, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

meant the cooperation of law enforcement, “should be assured.”¹²³⁹ The inclusion of this proposal within the premises or tactics of the silent treatment is significant because it reflects the AJC’s established practice of utilizing the American judicial system to further the organization’s communal defense agenda. Controversially, attempts to censor anti-Semitic publications and speech were a feature of early-twentieth-century Jewish communal activism. “The American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League had from their inceptions campaigned for censorship of anti-Semitic literature and speech.”¹²⁴⁰ As discussed in Chapters 2 and 8 of this study, the AJC also tried on several occasions to invoke existing statutes, including prohibitions on the distribution of offensive material through the mail, to suppress anti-Semitic media. The use of this approach by the organization, however, was rare and unsuccessful. In terms of the application of juridical approaches to protecting the rights of the Jewish community and fighting anti-Semitism, the AJC adopted a litigation approach from an early date. Initially, as discussed in Chapter 8, their utilization of the Courts to further their agenda was modest but, slowly and progressively, the AJC increased its use of this approach.

Beyond questions of effectiveness and potential repercussions, the tactics that are included by Fineberg within the silent treatment are significant because they reflect the anxieties of the early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment and the divisions that characterized American Jewry. There is elitism at the heart of the silent treatment. It can be argued that, fundamentally, the strategy reflects the concerns of the American Jewish establishment, and later the first generation of Eastern European immigrants who joined the professional, middle, and upper middle classes, that the behavior of impoverished, religiously

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁰ Clive Webb, *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 193.

traditional, or politically radicalized Jews would tarnish their reputation and threaten their social status. Paternalism, as well as overriding concerns about optics and how American Jewry was perceived, underlay the advocacy of the AJC.

Another memorandum by Fineberg written for AJC staff illustrates the extent to which anxiety, and arguably a sense of superiority, continued to shape the communal defense and public advocacy policies and practices of the AJC well into the twentieth century and long after the end of the largest waves of Eastern European and Russian immigration. Fineberg wrote:

While it is impossible to provide all Jews with a good public relations sense which will make them aware of the hurtful factors that are involved in certain public statements, and while even a majority may believe that any adverse publicity given a rabble-rouser is to their advantage, it is the duty of those entrusted with the defense of the good name of the Jew, to serve the best interests of the Jews in any and every circumstance. Their judgment should be based upon a far more mature and critical understanding of publicity than is available to the average layman.¹²⁴¹

Some of the AJC's approaches were undemocratic and suited the interests and advocacy preferences of the wealthiest and most politically conservative segments of American Jewry. This reflects the origins of the AJC, which as discussed in Chapter 3, were rooted in the anxiety and status insecurity of the early-twentieth-century American Jewish establishment. Strictly from a public relations and advocacy point of view, however, the silent treatment had a number of positive attributes beyond denying anti-Semites free publicity. It was certainly a sophisticated approach that, as outlined by Fineberg and demonstrated by the numerous case studies included in this dissertation, sought to use a variety of techniques to exercise influence and assuage the status insecurity of a vulnerable minority community. It can be argued that the approach is also

¹²⁴¹ To: Staff Members of AJC, Memorandum by S. Andhil Fineberg, April 7, 1947, in HVQ, AJC Subject Files Collection. Correspondence and reports on the "Quarantine Treatment" for dealing with extremists advocated by S. Andhil Fineberg, director of AJC's Community Service Department, American Jewish Committee Archives: Digital Archives. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/FileViewer.aspx?id=15431>.

idealistic and optimistic. The emphasis on public education is based on the belief that if people have to be taught to hate then they can also be taught to be tolerant. The approach is flexible because it allows for a number of different types of responses depending on the situation, and it is conservative and realistic because there is recognition that not every battle can or should be fought. These optimistic, albeit patronizing views and practices were developed in the formative years of the Committee and continued to be employed by subsequent generations of the organization's leadership.

The public advocacy work of the AJC from its founding through the 1950s illustrates a series of continuities that both shaped and defined the activities of the organization. There was the continuity of anxiety and status insecurity among the leadership. During the formative period, this anxiety stemmed from how the rapidly growing immigrant community, including the poor, religious, and politically radical, would be perceived by the majority of Americans. In later years, the "red scares" and increasingly common public expression of anti-Semitic views would continue to be sources of concern for American Jewish leaders and the community as a whole. As demonstrated by the attempt to popularize the quarantine method, the later advocacy of the AJC illustrates continuity in terms of elites attempting to assert a leadership position over the community they purported to represent. The effort to assert some control over the political aspirations of the American Jewish community reflects another continuity in the history of the organization's advocacy, the emphasis on optics and managing how American Jewry was perceived by the majority. Even as the organization became more engaged in overt efforts to shape public opinion, consideration of how those efforts would be perceived by the general public shaped their work and the activities they sponsored. As revealed by both Fineberg's memoranda and the examples discussed in this study, there was also continuity in terms of the

breadth of approaches the organization used to further its social and political objectives. They consistently sought to build connections or rely on pre-existing relationships in their quiet diplomacy; they invested considerable resources to carry out research; they used different forms of media to disseminate information; and they understood the rule of law and integrated political lobbying and public interest litigation into their advocacy.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

From its founding in 1906, the American Jewish Committee sought to exercise influence, including asserting a leadership position over American Jewry, guiding government policy, and shaping public opinion. This dissertation examined the organization's earliest efforts to develop the ways and means to exercise influence. At the heart of this dissertation is the argument that the early activism of the AJC has been inadequately and sometimes wrongly described in the historiography on the organization. The conventional interpretation of the Committee and its activities does not adequately capture the nature of the Committee's early advocacy work or its connection to the advocacy strategies employed by older European Jewish leadership organizations.

In contrast to much of the historiography on the AJC, this study reveals that the Committee and its leaders were more than just modern iterations of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* traditions of Jewish public advocacy. They certainly practiced the quiet diplomacy that defined much of the history of Jewish communal activism in the Diaspora, but they were not just ambassadors who enjoyed the confidence of political leaders or who possessed access to the ruling class. As noted throughout this dissertation, the techniques the Committee used to further its social and political agenda were diverse and sophisticated and characteristic of modern special interest groups.¹²⁴²

¹²⁴² Ultimately, it may be impossible to gauge the impact of the advocacy work of special interest groups. As noted earlier in this study, attempts to assess the effects of their activities on the outcome of policy and legislative debates have been made and their conclusions have been strongly criticized. Assessing the influence of these groups on the opinions espoused (or privately held) by individuals or the broader American public poses even greater challenges. The activities of the AJC described in this study are part of a tradition in American Jewish leadership in which community leaders and leadership bodies have consistently demonstrated a concern for how the Jewish community was perceived by the broader American public. This concern reflects both the pattern of Jewish history, in which differential treatment and displacement (or outright expulsions) are prominent themes, and the status insecurity acutely experienced by vulnerable minority communities. It may be impossible to authentically gauge the impact of these concerns and the diverse public advocacy efforts that were undertaken by American Jewish leaders as a result

This dissertation reveals that the AJC's leadership was preoccupied with the optics of how its activities would be perceived by the American public. Its leaders considered the implications and potential consequences of their actions and how those actions would be perceived by the broader American public. They reflected on how their advocacy on behalf of American Jewry would be interpreted and reflect upon the community as a whole.

During the period covered by this study, the AJC was involved in numerous campaigns on behalf of both American Jews and imperilled Jewish communities around the world. As the previous chapters reveal, its leaders were at the forefront of efforts to provide relief to persecuted Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe. However, in the United States, the nature of the AJC's advocacy was different from the activities that its leaders sponsored overseas, and its work differed from the efforts of other contemporaneous American Jewish organizations. The AJC was not a charity or a fraternal order, and it was not among the American Jewish organizations that provided financial assistance or social services to new immigrants.

Successful in America and motivated and informed by the often ill-fated Jewish historical experience as a vulnerable minority and outsider community in Europe, domestically, the Committee's leaders focussed on preventing an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. The AJC's founders, many of whom were born in Germany during the nineteenth

of these anxieties. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center in July of 2014 found that Jews were "the most warmly regarded religious group in America." This was the finding of only one poll, the result of a survey of only 3,217 Americans, but it is nevertheless revelatory. Today, it is often stated that anti-Semitism is intensifying. The causes of this intensification are unique from earlier increases in anti-Semitism and it is beyond the scope of this study to trace and explain this social and political trend. It is significant to note, however, that the United States has not experienced the same intensification. Although its impact cannot be measured, it is reasonable to suggest that strong communal leadership and the longstanding concern about how the community was perceived have contributed to the acceptance of Jews in America, and the social status and security of American Jewry. See: "Pew Survey: Jews most popular religious group in U.S.," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 16, 2014. Accessed May 13, 2015. <http://www.jta.org/2014/07/16/news-opinion/united-states/pew-survey-jews-most-popular-religious-group-in-u-s>. The complete results of the poll are available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/07/16/how-americans-feel-about-religious-groups/>. Accessed May 13, 2015.

century, had first-hand experience trying to balance preserving their cultural and religious identity while acculturating into, and being accepted by, a majority Christian population.

During an era of unprecedented immigration, rather than charitable work, some of which they did privately, the elites who led the Committee lobbied to maintain the United States' liberal immigration policies. They supported both materially and in principle attempts to encourage the acculturation of their newly-arrived coreligionists, and they used public advocacy to respond to some of the allegations made against Jews and the Jewish community. Significantly and tellingly, the founding leaders of the AJC declined to respond to some provocations because they purposefully adopted a strategy that denied their opponents more public attention and media exposure.

As described throughout this study, the Committee took a long-term view about the impact of its work, and it used a variety of public advocacy techniques to foster a society, culture, and legal system that was more tolerant of ethnic and religious difference. The AJC promoted a society where all citizens, regardless of faith, enjoyed the same rights, privileges, and status. It invested heavily in information-gathering and in establishing an infrastructure that reflected this long-term approach to advancing the interests of the Jewish community.

As discussed in the introduction to this study, the Committee's activities can be seen as manifestations of the "cult of synthesis," one of the most prominent themes in the historiography on American Jewry. The Committee's programs and campaigns were conscious efforts to present or represent Jews as patriotic Americans who could acculturate into the white mainstream and to portray Judaism as consistent with American values. The organization's most noteworthy and well-known early achievements, including, for example, the treaty abrogation campaign,

centered on establishing that American Jews were loyal Americans entitled to the same protections as all other Americans.

The AJC's efforts can also be connected to "American exceptionalism," one of the other major themes in the historiography on American Jewry. Although Jewish communities have thrived in other modern democratic societies, the Jewish experience in America was unquestionably exceptional and the community's leadership organizations, including the AJC, and the level of social and political engagement of its leaders, including the founders of the AJC, helped make this success possible.

The AJC's advocacy approaches were variations of techniques first used by older European Jewish advocacy groups but adapted by the Committee's leaders to address the concerns and anxieties of the American Jewish establishment during a period of unprecedented Jewish immigration into the United States. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, the Committee's public relations, public advocacy, fundraising, leadership structure, and legal strategies had been variously practiced by the Committee's nineteenth-century European forerunners. These older organizations, including the British Board of Deputies, the Centralverein, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, had been employing versions of these tactics long before the AJC was founded; however, the AJC was the first Jewish organization to use some of these tactics in the United States and, as the case studies included in this dissertation show, the AJC's leadership tailored these approaches to suit the unique social conditions, entrenched racial hierarchy, and political circumstances of early-twentieth-century America and according to their understanding of the threats the American Jewish community faced.

The ambitious goals the AJC pursued and the strategies it adopted were unquestionably indebted to the work and approaches of European Jewish communal leadership organizations,

including the reliance on wealthy and elite leadership evinced by the British Board of Deputies under Moses Montefiore. The AJC utilized the cautious and calculated rhetoric of the British Board of Deputies, the Centralverein, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Like these earlier-founded organizations, the AJC demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of how the language they used to communicate their message would impact the reception of that message.

With the exception of several high-profile missteps, such as the Massena incident described in Chapter 5, the AJC carefully managed its public statements. Similarly, in common with the Board, the Alliance, and the nineteenth-century German organizations, the AJC emphasized acculturation. It encouraged Jews not to live apart from the majority, and it advocated that in their participation in gentile society, local and national politics, the professions, the economy, and the arts, Jews should enjoy the same rights and status as their fellow citizens. Like their European colleagues, the leaders of the AJC believed that through participation in the institutions and economy of the majority society, Jews would gain acceptance and inclusion. Although some of the leadership of these European and American organizations were no longer practicing Jews, they understood Jewish history, valued Jewish cultural particularism, and believed in freedom of religion. These leaders had no tolerance for separatism. Their vision of the future of the Jews emphasized full participation in the civic and economic systems of their homelands and citizenship over faith. These leaders often-criticized opposition to the aspirations of the Zionist movement was rooted in their antagonism towards the idea that the Jews constituted a separate people or nation. In privileging citizenship over faith, they saw the assertion of Jewish peoplehood (or nationality or distinct race) as a threat to their acceptance and inclusion by the majority.

The context in which the founders and early leaders of the AJC attempted to exercise influence shaped the strategies they used and the goals they pursued in America. They had enjoyed enormous success in the United States; the founders of the AJC were the patricians of an establishment community that had maintained some of its religious traditions while simultaneously integrating with the majority population. They came from a community relatively few in number, and, in essence, they were an invisible minority. As noted in Chapter 3, the arrival of over one million new Jewish immigrants in the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century presented this already established community of American Jews with numerous challenges, including how to manage the general public's reaction to the conspicuous enlargement (and ongoing growth) of an immigrant, minority population. The AJC's leaders confronted the fact that while most Americans had never met or had regular contact with Jews, they already had some anti-Semitic views, or possessed hostility towards Jews for their alleged complicity in the execution of Jesus Christ.

The AJC's leaders, motivated by insecurity over their own social status, by the historical legacy of dispossession and mass expulsions of Jewish populations, and by the media exposure of the social problems experienced by impoverished new Jewish immigrants, sought to exercise control over their coreligionists and to manage how new Jewish immigrants would be perceived by the majority of Americans. Although paternalism underlay much of the AJC's efforts, like the *landsmanshaftn* and larger organizations such as B'nai B'rith, the Baron de Hirsh Fund, and the Jewish Colonization Association, the leaders of the AJC were conscientious about their responsibility to their coreligionists. Although not purely altruistic, the Committee's leaders believed they had a duty to protect their fellow Jews. They earmarked considerable financial resources and devoted themselves to improving their coreligionists' conditions by making the

society in which they lived more tolerant. The AJC was not a democratic organization. The nobleness of its cause does not negate the fact that its leaders were acting on their own initiative, without democratic legitimacy and, at times, contrary to the opinions of the mass of the minority population that they purported to represent.

The leaders of the AJC were attempting to influence, but, in turn, they were being influenced by the views of the enlarged American Jewish community. As already noted, early-twentieth-century American Jewry was a deeply divided community. The AJC had rivalries with other Jewish organizations, and, while the AJC claimed to speak on behalf of the whole community, it was an elite organization, and it could not profess any elected mandate from the Jewish community. The fractious nature of the American Jewish population at the turn of the century, including the wide range of political beliefs espoused by some new immigrants, influenced the AJC's founders to establish the organization and shaped their approaches to public advocacy.

Initially, the organization embraced quiet diplomacy as its primary tactic because it was consistent with Jewish historical practice and, perhaps more importantly, this form of advocacy served to further the organization's goal of minimizing public and media scrutiny of the American Jewish community. In adopting this tactic, the Committee's leaders were simply continuing to do what they had done before the founding of the AJC. They used their substantial commercial and professional connections to set up meetings with political leaders to lobby them on behalf of Jewish interests.

Any campaign to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States, however, required means of exercising influence on a significantly wider scale. Quiet diplomacy was incapable of swaying public opinion and, as this study has shown, from a very early date, the

AJC began to experiment with different approaches to public advocacy and to build the organizational infrastructure required to coordinate the kinds of campaigns that could effectively respond to anti-Semitism. As noted above, however, the AJC also refrained from responding to some provocations. Its silence in response to threats to its community has been strongly criticized, but it is important to note that the leadership's reticence to respond publically was purposeful and strategic and, as the numerous case studies included in this dissertation show, the organization was often silent, but it was never inactive. Even as it allowed aspersions against American Jewry to go unanswered (and encouraged American Jews and other Jewish organizations to also refrain from entering the fray), the Committee was building its capacity to engage in modern public advocacy and to be ready for the occasions where anti-Semitic provocations could not just be ignored.

The examples of the AJC's early advocacy work discussed in Chapter 4 of this study illustrate both the breadth of the issues that concerned the organization's leaders and the variety of advocacy and communal defense tactics they were prepared to employ. While their responses may not have been dramatic or overt, the case studies included in Chapter 4 illustrate that the AJC was not passive about potential threats to the reputation of American Jewry. The case studies reveal, for example, that before determining whether a response was warranted, the Committee's leaders diligently investigated the veracity of a report that a soldier in uniform had been barred from entering a synagogue because the story, if true, could be used to tarnish the reputation of the whole community. The organization also counselled American Jews about how to respond to allegations that Jews were engaged in corrupt business practices, and the Committee closely monitored instances where Jews and Judaism were conflated with communism. The Committee considered how the depiction of Jews in theatrical productions

would affect the broader public's perception of the community. The leaders weighed the potential impact of media coverage of blood libel trials in foreign countries, and the AJC sought to minimize the adverse effects of the coverage on how Jews were perceived in America. Similarly, the AJC's leaders scrutinized theatrical presentations and filmed dramatizations of the crucifixion in order to minimize how their content would impact the security of the American Jewish community. They lobbied publishers to have books with anti-Semitic content, including school text books, revised or removed from circulation. They were as outraged as other segments of American Jewry about the rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan but, out of concern for optics and consideration of the potential social and political risks, the Committee counselled restraint.

The avoidance of publicity, ignoring some provocations, the calculated use of public statements, the emphasis on investigating problems, and the use of quiet diplomacy, were the organization's main stays during the early-twentieth century. The Committee was, however, willing to depart from these approaches, and their forays into publishing set precedents for later, and more substantial, attempts to use mass media to shape public opinion and to combat the spread of anti-Semitism.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Committee's response to two dramatic manifestations of anti-Semitism in the United States, the blood libel in Massena, New York, and the articles published in the *Dearborn Independent*, show that the organization was willing, in some circumstances, to depart from its more circumspect advocacy and to employ more overt tactics to fight anti-Semitism and to safeguard the reputation of the American Jewish community.

Although the AJC was given a great deal of credit for containing the potential damage from the Massena incident, this credit was largely undeserved, and, but for the intervention of Stephen Wise, Louis Marshall's threats to remove the Mayor from office could have caused

significant harm. The incident, nevertheless, shows that even in its early days the AJC was prepared to act conspicuously. In the case of the *Dearborn Independent*, the Committee deliberately made few public statements to respond to the newspaper's scurrilous articles, but the affair motivated the organization to begin to build its capacity to engage in public advocacy. In the end, through negotiations that were initiated by representatives of Henry Ford, Louis Marshall was able to secure a public apology from Ford and, in the form of an easily distributable pamphlet, the AJC circulated the apology widely throughout the United States. The discussion of the Ford apology and the blood libel incident in Massena, New York included in this study reveal that, far from relying on quiet diplomacy, the AJC used the strategic release of public statements to mitigate the potential impact of Ford's propaganda and the wider public discussion of the blood libel charge in the American press.¹²⁴³

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, even as the AJC continued to use quiet diplomacy to achieve its aims, the organization was already building the institutional infrastructure to move beyond quiet diplomacy and to employ modern means of public advocacy and communal defense. They made several attempts to establish internal press and publicity bureaus and considered recruiting their own press correspondents in Russia. Chapter 6 details the various schemes the AJC experimented with to reorganize and augment the organization's capacity to carry out research, follow media coverage of current events, and influence how those events

¹²⁴³ This is not to say that in either of these cases the use of public statements was well executed by the Committee. The decision to refrain from responding to the majority of Ford's conspiratorial accusations meant that these charges went largely unanswered, and were therefore allowed to spread unchecked, for years. The extent of the harm is impossible to quantify; Ford was a highly respected public figure in the United States and his newspaper was a widely distributed publication. In the case of the blood libel in Massena, as argued in chapter 5, there is evidence that Louis Marshall made several miscalculations in how he led the AJC's public response to the incident. His demand for an apology and public threat to seek Mayor Hawes' removal from office was arguably an overreaction and, in the event, the American Jewish Congress' leadership's more moderate request for an investigation of the incident diffused the situation, limiting the press exposure and prolonged public discussion of an incident that the AJC would typically have preferred been given as little media attention as possible.

were covered. The leaders of the AJC sought the advice of press and publicity experts, including Samuel Strauss and Adolph Ochs, about how to sculpt more aggressive public advocacy approaches.

In its public advocacy, the organization was most assertive between 1911 and 1913, during the treaty abrogation campaign. This campaign was unique for the scale of the AJC's use of public and overt approaches to public advocacy, including the coordination of mass public demonstrations. During the period covered by this study, the Committee did not engage in another public advocacy campaign of the same scale as the abrogation campaign; however, this unprecedented success was another turning point in the early history of the organization. As described in Chapters 6 and 7, all the developments that followed, including the expansion of the AJC's research infrastructure, the War Records project, the sponsorship of books, and the distribution of pamphlets were attempts by the Committee to influence public opinion.

In common with the expansion of its use of public advocacy techniques, the AJC's adoption of juridical approaches to further its aims illustrates that the organization was, from an early date, involved in activities that were beyond the scope of the traditions of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude*. The discussion in Chapter 8 of the Committee's earliest involvement in public interest litigation reveals that the AJC's leadership recognized that courts offered minority communities a mechanism to effect dramatic social and political change. The leadership's concerns about optics and the perception of their community can also be discerned in the fact that they supported litigation initiated by other minority communities, particularly African-Americans. As much as possible, they did not want to draw the public's attention to the Jewish community's interest in defining and reinforcing minority rights and protections under American law, but they used *amicus curiae* briefs to contribute to the campaign and participate in the process.

The first twenty-five years of the American Jewish Committee were crucially important to the subsequent development of the organization's advocacy infrastructure, its sponsorship of academic research, its release of publications, its involvement in public interest litigation, and its applications of mass media to influence public opinion. In the case studies included in this dissertation, there are numerous lessons about how minority communities can act (and have acted) through political lobbying, public statements, the press, mass media, and the courts to protect themselves and shape the culture and society into which they are acculturating.

Certainly the founders and early leaders of the AJC preferred quieter approaches to influencing government policy and practices, but they also recognized that public opinion could not be ignored and could be usefully marshalled to further elements of the organization's agenda, including the Committee's efforts to prevent an intensification of anti-Semitism in the United States. "Backstairs" or "backroom" or "quiet" diplomacy was the organization's predominant approach in its early years, but, as this study shows, this technique cannot be said to encompass the wide variety of activities and public advocacy approaches developed and employed by the Committee during the leadership tenures of Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall.

The founders and early leaders of the Committee conceived of themselves as "stewards" of their community.¹²⁴⁴ The ethos that brought about the establishment of the organization was a perpetuation of the *shtadlan* and *Hofjude* traditions of Jewish public advocacy and communal defense; however, while the organization was founded upon the idea that the discreet intervention of leading Jewish public figures was a highly effective means of defending the American Jewish community, this study has shown that the Committee was, from an early date, developing and using more public forms of advocacy and integrating these approaches into their

¹²⁴⁴ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 38 and 98.

campaigns on behalf of American Jewry. Throughout the twentieth century, the AJC expanded upon the efforts and public advocacy innovations of its founders and first generation of leaders.

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