

**A Voice Behind the Headlines: The Public Relations of the Canadian Jewish Congress  
during World War II**

by

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B.A., Hons. The University of British Columbia (Okanagan), 2018

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES  
(History)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
(Vancouver)

April 2021

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the degree of Master of Arts  
in History

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the public relations campaigns of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) during World War II within the framework of agenda setting theory. As the voice of Canadian Jewry, the CJC implemented a sophisticated public relations strategy that brought attention to their causes in the non-Jewish press. From September 1939, the CJC capitalized on the patriotic atmosphere fostered by the war and the Canadian government. In a data-driven publicity campaign that would last the war, the CJC systematically both encouraged and tracked war efforts among Canadian Jews to fuel patriotic stories about Jews that improved their reputation. After it became clear in the summer of 1942 that the Nazis had begun exterminating Jews in Occupied Europe, the CJC started an awareness campaign in the non-Jewish press. Congress organized a mass rally in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg that leveraged their patriotic reputation and brought both immediate and lasting coverage of Jewish extermination. By the spring of 1943, Congress believed they could persuade Canadians to rescue a number of refugees. To prevent an antisemitic backlash, they worked behind the scenes with their ally, the Canadian National Committee for Refugees (CNCR) and the activist professor, Watson Thomson, on a press campaign that convinced both the public and Canadian government that Canada needed to rescue refugees in the name of common humanity.

## **Lay Summary**

This thesis examines the strategic public relations campaigns of the Canadian Jewish Congress in the non-Jewish press during World War II. It argues that they successfully maneuvered to get their patriotic war efforts published in newspapers. To get news about Jewish extermination in the press, they organized rallies in several Canadian cities. They combined a message of continued support for the war with the facts of Jewish extermination and received extensive press coverage. Later, they secretly worked with their allies on a press campaign that convinced the Canadian government to accept several hundred refugees.

## **Preface**

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Nathan Lucky.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my co-supervisors, Professor Richard Menkis and Professor Heidi Tworek. Together, they helped me develop my ideas through probing questions and challenging conversations. Their feedback on drafts made each version stronger than I thought it could be. As mentors in graduate school, I could not have hoped for better. Thank you to Professor Michel Ducharme, who kindly agreed to be my third committee member and gave me great feedback on proposals. Thanks to Catherine, who proofread the final version.

Thanks to my writing group, Jihyun Shin, Yeonjoo Kim, Yeeun Kim, and Borke Obada. Jihyun, I've been lucky to have TA'd with you for two years and to call you a good friend.

Thanks to my cohort, all of whom read the earliest iterations of this thesis. A special thanks to Eben, Banu, Nila, and Mercedes. Eben, your noble spirit has embiggened our friendship since my first day on campus. I look forward to many more campaigns together. Banu, the world will never know another roommate of your calibre again. You helped me turn vague ideas into an action plan. As always, I'll see you on Saturday. Nila, you've been my advisor in matters of the heart. Your counsel in difficult times made a difference and I'll always remember our summer of fun. Mercedes, I could listen to your stories all day, and I can't wait for more. Thank you for your generosity.

Ryan, I wouldn't want to put up posters with anyone else. Our walks around campus were a bright spot in a grueling semester.

Tianpei, lets get soju again soon.

Janara, your enthusiasm and joyful attitude made me start writing in the evening. Thank you.

Yee Rem, you have supported me with encouragement, kindness, and love. I'll never forget how lucky I've been.



*For Patricia Lucky*

## Introduction

“Public Relations work is part and parcel of the Canadian Jewish Congress in that all that the Congress does, is, in fact, public relations work.”

- A.B. Bennett, President, Central Division of the Canadian Jewish Congress<sup>1</sup>

On November 23, 1938, two weeks after *Kristallnacht*, Prime Minister Mackenzie King met a delegation of Canadian Jewish leaders, including Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) officers. The group pleaded with the government to take in a significant number of refugees. It was impossible, King and his Minister of Immigration, Thomas Crerar, said. Their constituents would not stand for it. To change their minds, they must first change public opinion.<sup>2</sup> Before long, public relations were central to the CJC’s work.

The CJC formed in 1919 to allow Canadian Jewry to “speak with one voice.” They advocated for Jewish rights in Palestine and Canada, fought antisemitism, and assisted thousands of post-World War I Jewish immigrants.<sup>3</sup> While the CJC became dormant after 1919, antisemitism in Canada, accelerated by the rise of Nazism in Germany, led to its rejuvenation in 1934. Other Jewish organizations also formed during the interwar period. Smaller but prominent groups like the Jewish Labour Committee (JLC) formed in 1936 and represented democratic socialists and Communist unionists. Smaller still, the Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union (ICOR), created in 1924, represented non-Zionists affiliated with the Communism movement.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, more

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<sup>1</sup> National Executive Minutes, CJC, May 31, 1942, National Executive Committee, Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada (JHCWC), Canadian Jewish Congress Collection (CJCC), Volume 14, Reel M-5462, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa.

<sup>2</sup> Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2013), 42-43.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will: An Organizational History of Jewish Toronto, 1933-1948* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*, 188; for more on ICOR, see Henry Felix Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur: Birobidzhan and the Canadian Jewish Communist Movement, 1924-1951* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008).

than any other Jewish group, the CJC had the ear of officials in Ottawa – even if many were reluctant listeners – and could generate more press than any other Jewish organization. They did not speak for everyone, but they spoke the loudest. World War II tested their ability to advocate for both Canadian Jews and persecuted Jews in Europe.

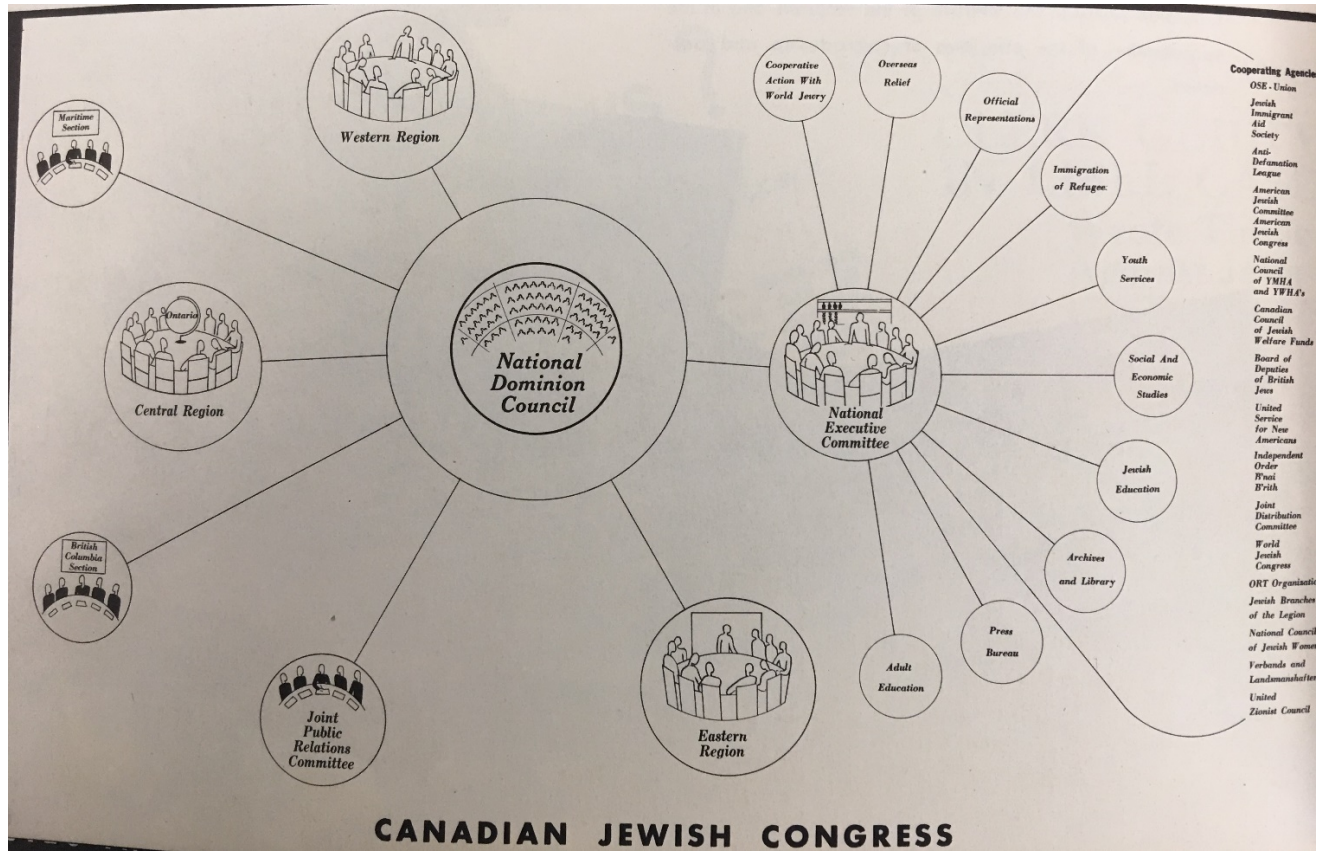
The CJC operated as a national organization headquartered in Montreal with several regional divisions with offices in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. At the organization's centre was the National Dominion Council of democratically elected representatives from each region (see figure 1). The National Executive Committee, and its several sub-committees, determined policy on issues that concerned the Jewish community and coordinated with the CJC's major regional branches: the Eastern, Central, and Western divisions.<sup>5</sup> By 1944, both the Maritimes and British Columbia branches formed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Tribute to a Partner in Mercy," File 1, Box 20, CJC DB 1, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>6</sup> Letter, H.M. Caiserman to Louis Rosenberg, October 26, 1944, Vancouver War Efforts Committee, 1941-1944, F16, JHC 280, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

Figure 1. Visual Representation of the CJC organization. From, "Tribute to a Partner in Mercy," File 1, Box 20, CJC DB 1, ADCJA, Montreal.



In September 1939, the CJC faced an internal and external crisis. From within, the Jewish community was under attack. Accusations of shirking their duty appeared in the press. From without, the crisis their coreligionists faced in Europe accelerated. In response, the CJC created a National Emergency Committee. Two sub-committees, the Military Committee (later War Efforts Committee) and Committee of Information and Public Relations (later National Joint Public Relations Committee) worked in tandem to achieve the CJC's goals. The war accelerated their public relations efforts to change the perception of Jews amongst the non-Jewish public by emphasizing their patriotism and loyalty to Canada and dedication to the war effort. After the systematic extermination of European Jewry became clear, they harnessed their improved reputation and brought attention to Jewish persecution in the non-Jewish press. When the opportunity to admit

refugees into Canada presented itself, they and their allies mounted a campaign that heightened coverage in the press and pushed the Canadian government to admit refugees.

This thesis re-evaluates the CJC. Historians have doubted its priorities, abilities, and results during World War II since the 1982 ground-breaking work by Harold Troper and Irving Abella, *None is too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*. The CJC did not have overwhelming successes. How could they? Constrained as they were by antisemitism, the war, and their status as a small minority in Canada. There was no revolutionary change in government immigration policy. Compared to other countries, Canada took in few refugees. One study argued the CJC prioritized patriotism over concern for Jews in Europe.<sup>7</sup> Examining familiar histories of the CJC through a new lens, the lens of public relations, allows us to see where they succeeded. They excelled in making themselves heard. Their ability to gain positive press for their patriotic efforts not only improved the reputation of Canadian Jews but gave them credibility when they warned Canadians about Jewish extermination in Europe. The press listened to them. While Canada admitted few refugees, the Iberian refugees who arrived in 1944 did so after the press convinced the government to act. Who convinced the press? The CJC, though few knew they were behind it. Their public relations strategy was the reason behind these successes.

To explain and understand the CJC's public relations strategy and the reactions to it, the theory of agenda setting developed by Maxwell McCombs, David Weaver, and Donald Shaw is a useful framework. Hundreds of studies on agenda setting theory have shown a strong correlation between news media coverage of a topic and its subsequent importance to public discussion. In other words, "the agenda of the news media becomes, to a considerable degree, the agenda of the

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<sup>7</sup> Max Beer, "What Else Could We Have Done?: The Montreal Jewish Community, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Jewish Press and the Holocaust," Master's Thesis, Concordia University, 2006

public.”<sup>8</sup> Three important elements of agenda setting theory will be applied to this study: object salience, object attributes, and object comprehension. Object salience is how far a topic gains attention in the media. Object attributes are the various characteristics applied to a topic (event, person, issue, etc.) in the media. Together, object salience and attributes lead to comprehension, which is not only the readership knowing information but understanding its implications, “the step that Walter Lippman described as the pictures in our heads.”<sup>9</sup> During the war, we will see the CJC’s strategy used these elements in combination in their public opinion campaigns. They increased their reputation through the attributes of loyalty, patriotism, and dedication to Canada and the war effort, which they later used to increase the salience of Jewish persecution in the press and followed with a campaign to increase the comprehension of Canadians on the refugee issue so they would be moved to action.

How could the CJC “set the agenda?” After all, the CJC was not ‘the media.’ To understand how, we must answer the question, posed by Judy Vanslyke Turk: “if media content influences public opinion, then who or what influences media content?”<sup>10</sup> To a significant degree, the answer is news releases from official organizations and public relations firms. Karen Miller Russell and Margot Opdycke Lamme define public relations as the “high strategic intent” of an individual or group in combination with the “freedom to choose.”<sup>11</sup> This is not the same as propaganda, whose goal is “adherence and obedience” and seeks to “limit freedom of choice.”<sup>12</sup> One study examined two decades of *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage from the 1950s and 1960s and discovered

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<sup>8</sup> Maxwell McCombs. *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), chapter 1, Kindle edition.

<sup>9</sup> McCombs, *Setting the Agenda*, Chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> Judy Vanslyke Turk, “Information and Subsidies Influence,” *Public Relations Review* 11, no. 3 (1985): 11, [https://doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1016/S0363-8111\(85\)80078-3](https://doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1016/S0363-8111(85)80078-3).

<sup>11</sup> Karen Miller Russell and Margot Opdycke Lamme, “Theorizing Public Relations History: The Roles of Strategic Intent and Human Agency,” *Public Relations Review* 42 (2016): 745. <https://doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.04.002>.

<sup>12</sup> Maureen Taylor and Michael L. Kent, “Dialogic Engagement: Clarifying Foundational Concepts,” *Journal of Public Relations Research* 26 no. 5 (2014): 389, DOI:10.1080/1062726X.2014.956106.

that they based nearly 20 percent of their content on releases from organizations and public relations firms.<sup>13</sup> This thesis shows public relations content was already developing in the press during World War Two. A more recent study found 17 percent of stories in the *Guardian*, *The Times*, *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, and the biggest broadcasters in the United Kingdom were based “mainly or wholly” on public relations material.<sup>14</sup> What agenda gains prominence is also determined in part by individual newspapers.

Some newspapers have more influence than others. A study of *New York Times* coverage showed large newspapers set the agenda of smaller papers, other media, and the public.<sup>15</sup> Canada did not have national newspapers that dominated like the *New York Times*, though some papers exerted more influence than others. There were 97 daily papers in French or English in late September 1938 with a total circulation of 2,126,244, or one paper for every 5.2 people.<sup>16</sup> The largest papers in 1938 were the liberal *Toronto Daily Star*, and its weekly version, the *Star Weekly*, with circulations 227,145 and 332,024, respectively. The *Star Weekly* reached 200,000 people outside of Toronto each week. After them, the conservative *Globe and Mail* had the third-highest circulation and reached 164,729 daily readers in 1941. While not as high, the *Winnipeg Free Press* had a circulation of 72,706 and a reputation for journalistic integrity.<sup>17</sup> In 1938, 83 of the 97 dailies subscribed to *Canadian Press (CP)*, the Canadian news agency that acted as a clearing house for domestic news and provider of foreign news to newspapers.<sup>18</sup> As Gene Allen argues, during the war, *CP* became an essential government partner that engendered patriotism and raised morale – goals that overlapped with the CJC.<sup>19</sup> With

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<sup>13</sup> Leon Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of News-making* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973), 121 in McCombs. *Setting the Agenda*.

<sup>14</sup> Justin Lewis, Andrew Williams & Bob Franklin, “A COMPROMISED FOURTH ESTATE?” *Journalism Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008): 7, DOI: 10.1080/14616700701767974.

<sup>15</sup> McCombs. *Setting the Agenda*, Chapter 2.

<sup>16</sup> Carlton McNaught, *Canada Gets the News* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1940), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Timothy Balzer, *The Information Front: The Canadian Army and News Management during the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>18</sup> McNaught, *Canada Gets the News*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Gene Allen, *Making News National: A History of Canadian Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 180.

the CJC Central Division in Toronto and the Western Division in Winnipeg, the CJC had access to the largest and most respected dailies in the country as well as an office of *CP*. All became useful in setting their agenda.

Setting the agenda, however, was a challenge. After Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, antisemitic content became more prominent in the press, especially in Quebec. The Nazi Party's *Foreign Press Service* was a conduit for antisemitic and anti-Bolshevik literature into Canada, supplying Canadian fascist movements with free literature and translations of the most antisemitic German paper, *Der Stürmer*, which railed against the Jewish control of banks and the press. They also enlisted German Canadians and Nazi sympathizers to proselytize Nazi ideology.<sup>20</sup> The most notorious Canadian antisemite of this period, Adrien Arcand, published and edited several newspapers in Quebec. CJC General Secretary, H.M. Caiserman, captured the difference between antisemitism before and after 1933 when he noted that antisemitism changed from "sporadic" to "organized activities sponsored by national organizations directed by professional agents of Nazi Germany."<sup>21</sup>

Antisemitism existed across Canada before 1933 and continued to express itself in what Caiserman called "day-to-day antisemitism."<sup>22</sup> Employment discrimination was widespread. Employers often required the religious affiliation, nationality, and ethnicity on applications or specified that only Gentiles or Christians should apply. Louis Rosenberg, a statistician and demographer, claimed that Jewish applicants needed to be "ten times as good" compared to Gentiles. In healthcare, hospitals rarely hired Jewish staff. National corporations usually hired one or

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<sup>20</sup> Jonathan F. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 62-63.

<sup>21</sup> Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Antisemitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>22</sup> "Report of the Executive Secretary, Central Division, Canadian Jewish Congress, January 21-23, 1939," 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly Conference, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.



two Jews for appearances' sake.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes, day-to-day antisemitism turned violent. Swastika Clubs, gangs of young men primarily in Toronto, harassed and assaulted Jews in the streets and often prevented their entry to beaches they deemed off-limits.<sup>24</sup> In the summer of 1933, the gangs incited an antisemitic riot at the Christie Pits baseball field that grew to 10,000 people.<sup>25</sup>

Government immigration policy was officially antisemitic. New research by Justin Comartin has challenged the historical consensus that Canada had a “closed door” policy towards Jews, arguing that out of the reduced numbers of immigrants Canada did accept, Jews made up a larger percentage than previously.<sup>26</sup> His argument is unconvincing because it does not place this within the context of the almost unbending policy towards Jews in their most desperate hour. Moreover, immigration officials stated explicitly in their correspondence that they discriminated against Jews, but that it was justified in their views. Going by Comartin’s numbers, 8,787 Jewish refugees arrived in Canada from 1933 to 1945.<sup>27</sup> Most South American countries had admitted more Jews by 1939.<sup>28</sup> These low numbers were due to new immigration policies from 1924 that permitted immigrant farmers and few others.<sup>29</sup> In 1930, new legislation specified British and American farmers. If preferred ethnic groups could not be found, Central and northern Europeans would do, but “Jews, Blacks, and Orientals” were the least desirable.<sup>30</sup> This policy was not only due to the Great

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<sup>23</sup> Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 304.

<sup>24</sup> Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1975), Chapter 4, Kindle Edition.

<sup>25</sup> Cyril Levitt and William Shaffir, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987).

<sup>26</sup> Justin Comartin, “Opening Closed Doors: Revisiting the Canadian Immigration Record (1933-1945),” *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes*, 24 (2016): 80.

<sup>27</sup> Comartin, “Opening Closed Doors,” 82.

<sup>28</sup> Watson Thomson, “I Accuse: Revealing the Facts of Man’s Inhumanity to Man,” 20 (Winnipeg: Contemporary Publishers, 1943), File 2, Box 5, Watson Thomson Papers, University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections (UBC RBSC), Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>29</sup> Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 127.

<sup>30</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is too Many*, 5-6.

Depression – it preceded it – but fears of ‘mongrelization’ and a belief that Jews were overwhelmingly communists and would descend on Canadian cities if permitted.<sup>31</sup>

Given these challenges, what could the CJC do? Public relations was one of its most powerful tools against antisemitism. The Joint Public Relations Committee (JPRC) set the CJC’s public relations standards in each division as well as nationally. The JPRC was a combined effort of Congress and B’nai Brith. By this point, B’nai Brith was an international fraternal Jewish organization focused on philanthropy, lobbying for Jewish rights, and founded the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 1913.<sup>32</sup> At first, it was a relationship of convenience – the CJC could boost the poorly-funded lodges in eastern Canada while the established international organization could lend the CJC name recognition. Despite a large overlap in membership, B’nai Brith resisted cooperation with Congress for years as it saw anti-defamation work as solely their responsibility. The organization also favoured quiet diplomacy, but had slowly changed strategies after the Nazi’s brand of antisemitism proved resilient to their efforts. Together, they could achieve more than they could apart.<sup>33</sup> Their primary concern was information gathering and distribution to the (mostly) non-Jewish press. They wanted to know what non-Jews wrote about Jews and the reception to their own media releases. They “established contact with every periodical in the country, with the news agencies, with radio stations, with government information departments.”<sup>34</sup> By the winter of 1942, the Western, Central, and Eastern divisions tracked news stories about Jews in the press with the *CP News Clipping*.<sup>35</sup> This gave them a picture of how the press and public perceived Jews as well as

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<sup>31</sup> Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990), 186.

<sup>32</sup> Harvey Berk, Mel Berwin, and Alan Shefman, "B'Nai B'Rith" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 13-18. Vol. 4. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. *Gale eBooks*. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587503196/GVRL?u=ubcolumbia&sid=GVRL&xid=675c8952>.

<sup>33</sup> Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*, 112-113; 135-136.

<sup>34</sup> Letter, unsigned to dear friend, May 4, 1944, Publicity, Correspondence, 1944, Volume 14, MG28 v 101, Reel M-5462, JHCWC CJCC, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, L.W. Housely to Gurston Allen, “Canadian Press Clipping Service,” September 12, 1941, File 1b, Box 16, DA 18.1, War Efforts Committee, CJCC, Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives (ADCJA), Montreal.

causes important to the CJC and how that changed after their interventions. After Congress named Hayes national executive director in 1942, he became heavily involved in public relations work.

Historians who have written on Canadian responses to the Holocaust have almost unanimously concluded that, outside the Jewish community, the CJC was an organization that had little power, few impacts, and a reluctant audience.<sup>36</sup> In their foundational work *None is too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, Abella and Troper concluded the CJC neither affected government policy on refugees nor generated public awareness. Janine Stingel wrote in her book, *Social Discredit: Antisemitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response*, that no one listened to Congress during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>37</sup> Norman Erwin and Max Beer argued that when they did engage the public, they failed. The notion that Canadian Jewish leaders favoured ‘quiet diplomacy,’ lobbying government officials behind the scenes, in combination with an immovable Canadian administration, has been the frequent explanation for the CJC’s ineffectiveness. The focus on this narrative has overlooked the instances when the CJC, whether directly or through their partners, successfully appealed to the public and influenced policy. Paula Draper has shown how the CJC bucked this favoured tactic of quiet diplomacy during a subtle public relations campaign for interned Jewish refugees.<sup>38</sup> Only recently have scholars noted that the Canadian Jewish community was not so weak as some claimed. James Walker wrote about the legislative battle against antisemitism undertaken by the CJC’s Central Division, and Franklin Bialystok noted, when compared to other minorities, the Jewish community was more organized and had “unrivalled access...to political

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<sup>36</sup> Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many*; Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Antisemitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000); Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000); Lewis Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press: 1880s-1980s* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1989); Max Beer, “What Else Could We Have Done?”; Norman Erwin, “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy: Canadian Jews and Early Holocaust Discourse, 1933-1956,” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Stingel, *Social Discredit*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Paula Draper, “The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees,” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1983.

leaders.”<sup>39</sup> The CJC’s role in the press is largely unexplored. Historians have explored the topics in this thesis before, yet many studies examine newspapers only to see how a paper covered an event. They ask neither who was behind the story nor what their intentions were. By looking beyond content, we learn outside groups can use the press to get their message on the agenda. The CJC built up Canadian Jewry’s reputation, brought attention to the cause of persecuted Jews in Europe, and ultimately convinced the government to accept refugees. As this study shows, the CJC’s was not as powerless as past studies have concluded.

How the Canadian press responded to Jewish persecution in Europe is well studied. David Goutor’s article, based on a sample of 1944-1945 press coverage, argued that the press paid little or no attention to Jews as victims and gave scant coverage of the refugee issue.<sup>40</sup> Beer’s study reached similar conclusions. Ulrich Frisse’s comprehensive study of the *Toronto Daily Star* rejected Goutor’s conclusions and argued that the *Star*’s reporting on the Holocaust told readers exactly what was happening to European Jews.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, David Halton’s biography of his father, *Star* reporter Matthew Halton, shows he wrote extensively about Jewish persecution from 1933, and also reported on the inhuman conditions of concentration camps for *CBC Radio* later in the war.<sup>42</sup> Patrick Reed has shown the press frequently covered the refugee issue, particularly after the fall of 1943 when it learned Canada would accept some refugees from Portugal.<sup>43</sup> Norman Erwin showed the press reported on the Holocaust as a Nazi crime that singled out Jews for extermination based on a racist

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<sup>39</sup> James Walker, “Claiming Equality for Canadian Jewry: The Struggle for Inclusion, 1930-1945,” in *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War*, edited by L. Ruth Klein (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2012), Chap. 7, Kindle; Franklin Bialystok, “What Was Known? What Was Reported? What Was Done? What Could Have Been Done?” *Canadian Jewish Studies/ Études juives canadiennes* 27 (2019): 96.

<sup>40</sup> David Goutor, “The Canadian Media and the ‘Discovery’ of the Holocaust, 1944-1945,” *Canadian Jewish Studies/ Études juives canadiennes* 4-5 (1996-1997): 88-119.

<sup>41</sup> Ulrich Frisse, “The ‘Bystanders’ Perspective’: The Toronto Daily Star and its Coverage of the Persecution of Jews and the Holocaust in Canada, 1933-1945,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 39, no. 1 (2011): 213-243.

<sup>42</sup> David Halton, *Dispatches from the Front: Matthew Halton, Canada’s Voice at War* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2014), 75, 82, 84, 135-136, 248.

<sup>43</sup> Patrick Reed, “A Foothold in the Whirlpool,” Masters Thesis, Concordia University, 2006.

ideology.<sup>44</sup> Only Frisse's study and Halton's biography looked past what the newspaper printed by investigating the character and motivations of foreign correspondents. Several studies have investigated the Jewish press to gauge the response of Canadian Jews.<sup>45</sup> Rebecca Margolis found the Yiddish press informed its readers about the Holocaust in detail as it happened and motivated Jews to action but had no influence on non-Jews. By focusing on the Jewish press and not looking beyond what non-Jewish newspapers printed, historians have missed a crucial element that showcases not only a forgotten response of Canadian Jews but their hidden power: their voice in the non-Jewish press and ability to get their agenda in it. Sometimes the voice came from their own press releases that the non-Jewish press picked up, encouraging newspapers to reprint stories important to their aims, staging public rallies for the purpose of news coverage, or partnering with other groups and individuals to attack and beseech the government on the refugee issue.

Historians have long investigated how the non-Jewish press portrayed Jews — often negatively, sometimes sympathetically — and potentially shaped their readers' attitudes.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, others have examined how the Jewish press fostered identity, modernism, and Zionism among Jews.<sup>47</sup> What about studies on how Jews shaped non-Jewish attitudes towards Jews in the non-

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<sup>44</sup> Norman Erwin, *Confronting Hitler's Legacy*, 106-117.

<sup>45</sup> Max Beer, "What Else Could We Have Done?"; Rebecca Margolis, "A Review of the Yiddish Media: Responses of the Jewish Immigrant Community in Canada," in *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, Chap. 4, Kindle; Lewis Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press: 1880s-1980s*; Norman Erwin, "The Holocaust, Canadian Jews, and Canada's 'Good War' Against Nazism," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* vol. 24 (2016).

<sup>46</sup> David Singer, "The Prelude to Nazism: The German-American Press and the Jews, 1919-1933," in *America, American Jews, and the Holocaust*, edited by Jeffrey S. Gurock (London: Routledge, 1998): 223-237; Magdalena Kubow, "Polish-Jewish Relations: As Reflected in the Pages of the *Republika-Górnik*, 1926-1930," *The Polish Review* 62, no. 1 (2017): 19-59, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.5406/polishreview.62.1.0019>; Thomas Pegelow, "'German Jews,' 'National Jews,' 'Jewish Volk' or 'Racial Jews'? The Constitution and Contestation of 'Jewishness' in Newspapers of Nazi Germany, 1933-1938," *Central European History* 35, no. 2 (2002): 195-221. doi:10.1163/15691610260420665; Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Jewish Refugee Children from Europe in the Eyes of the American Press and Public Opinion, 1934-1945," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5, no. 3 (1990): 293-312; Theodore R. Weeks, "Fanning the Flames: Jews in the Warsaw Press, 1905-1912," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 28, no. 2 (1998): 63-81, DOI: 10.1080/13501679808577881.

<sup>47</sup> Sarah Abrevaya-Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Reuven Snir, "Arabic in the Service of Regeneration of Jews: The Participation of Jews in Arabic Press and Journalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 59, no. 3 (2006): 283-323; Olga Borovaya, "The Emergence of the Ladino Press: The First Attempt at Westernization of Ottoman Jews (1842-1846)," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 43, no. 2, (Autumn 2010): 63-75.

Jewish press? David Meola's article on Jewish interventions in the local German press showed how German Jews openly fought for their rights.<sup>48</sup> While my study also analyses Jews in the non-Jewish press, the CJC often obscured their role, believing it garnered them both more influence and security. A study from this perspective offers new insights into how Jews engaged the media. Rather than studying Jews as the object of discussion in the non-Jewish press, it shows how Jews represented themselves to non-Jews. Stingel calls this approach giving a voice to the CJC when they had none. It also reveals their opinions in a more candid manner than they could show openly. Potentially, it can show how Jews used the non-Jewish press to change the minds of readers. Scholars studying the relationship between the press and any religious or ethnic minority would benefit from this approach.<sup>49</sup>

I consulted a variety of primary sources to analyze and understand how the CJC influenced the press and, in turn, the government. The CJC's archives, located at the Alex Dworkin Archives in Montreal and the Western Division's papers at the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada in Winnipeg were invaluable. The minutes, correspondence, and reports of the JPRC and War Efforts Committee, as well as the papers of the CNCR, proved essential. Microfilm scans from the CJC Western Division at Library and Archives Canada allowed me to look over more documents than one trip to would afford Winnipeg. Watson Thomson's papers at the University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections included the pamphlets he wrote in cooperation with the CJC and CNCR and showed their impact. The CJC pamphlet, "The Free Press of Canada Speaks," compiled 50 editorials about refugees from large and small papers and gave insight into otherwise inaccessible newspapers. Digital newspaper databases for the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Daily Star*,

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<sup>48</sup> David A. Meola, "German Jews and the Local German Press: The Jewish Struggle for Acceptance in Constance, 1846," *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, 59, no. 1 (2014): 55-72, doi:10.1093/leobaeck/ybu007.

<sup>49</sup> Kathryn Montalbano, *Government Surveillance of Religious Expression: Mormons, Quakers, and Muslims in the United States* (London, Routledge, 2018).

*Vancouver Daily Province*, the Canadian War Museum’s “Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War” project, the Google News Archive, and microfilms of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *Ottawa Citizen*, were critical in showing the breadth of editorial opinion in the largest dailies across Canada. Together, these sources allowed me to analyze the planning behind, and reactions to, the CJC’s public opinion campaigns.

This thesis is divided into three sections, each focused on distinct, yet related, public opinion campaigns in response to pivotal events that affected the CJC. The first section details how the CJC improved their reputation through patriotic war efforts after Jews had been accused of shirking. The second section explains how, after learning of the systematic extermination of more than one million Jews in the summer of 1942, the CJC leveraged their new credibility with a mass rally across Canada and raised awareness of persecuted European Jews in the press. The third section shows how the CJC, after learning it had an opportunity to pressure the government on refugee policy, worked behind the scenes with their allies, notably the Canadian National Committee on Refugees (CNCR) and inspired a public response that forced the government to admit refugees. Together, the three sections show the CJC believed in the power of public relations in the non-Jewish media to change public perceptions of Jews, bring awareness to Jewish persecution, and compel government action. It is unlikely the CJC’s approach was unique. Historians studying persecuted religious, ethnic, or racialized minorities in the media would find new ways these groups engaged with the public if they looked deeper into the stories published about them in the press.

## From Shirker to Patriot: Changing Attributes of Jewish Patriotism in the Press

The propaganda machine of Nazi agents and their sympathizers had assailed Canadian Jews for six years. The Nazis' international network flooded Canada with hundreds of pieces of antisemitic literature that permeated dozens of newspapers. The literature blamed Jews for communism, secret international plots, and fomenting war.<sup>1</sup> When a familiar accusation resurfaced in the early days of World War II — that Jews were not doing their part in the war effort — it gave the CJC an opportunity to improve the reputation of Canadian Jews.

Several historians have investigated the CJC's war efforts.<sup>2</sup> Yet none have examined in depth the relationship between their war efforts and public relations, recognized them as a shift in how the CJC engaged the public, or measured their impact in the press. While pre-war thinking and personnel dictated the CJC's defensive campaigns in the early years of the war, especially related to communism, they also pivoted to a strategic publicity campaign driven by data that benefited from a patriotic atmosphere and reset how the non-Jewish press represented Jews: from a suspect minority to patriotic Canadians by the end of the war. This chapter investigates how the CJC's pre-war public relations strategy and personnel shaped its activities during the war, followed by how the CJC capitalized on a unifying atmosphere fostered by the government and shifted its public relations focus to using the non-Jewish press to increase their reputation as patriotic Canadians. It concludes with an examination of Jewish war efforts as represented in the non-Jewish press.

The CJC's pre-war press campaigns and fears in September 1939 stemmed from coordinated attacks against Jews that put Congress on the defensive. In December 1937, the CJC detailed their concerns in a report on fascism in Canada. They warned that a "powerful propaganda machine,

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<sup>1</sup> "Fascism in Canada: A Factual Statement," December 1937, Reports and Publications, Box 34, MG8, CJC, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*; Ellin Bessner, *Double Threat: Canadian Jews, The Military, and World War II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Erwin, "The Holocaust, Canadian Jews, and Canada's 'Good War' Against Nazism."



financed by a foreign government, operates in Canada, aiming to replace British free institutions with totalitarian, Fascist rule.” The report detailed around two dozen newspapers connected to the movement and 300 different books, pamphlets, and leaflets – much of it antisemitic – that they had discovered across Canada.<sup>3</sup> Countering these attacks as they surfaced across the country pre-occupied Congress before and at the start of the war. Rather than promoting Jews, they defended Jews from attack, but they also developed strategies for long-term success. The JPRC received significant feedback on their efforts to combat these attacks. In a six-month period, it received more than 600 letters, which it categorized by region to track the reception of their releases across the country and to compile mailing lists. It obsessively tracked what the press wrote about Jews. By 1939, it had over 3,000 clippings categorized into 200 files. Congress put the repository of information together for the press to consult whenever they needed to write on issues like antisemitism or refugees.<sup>4</sup>

The personnel and activities in the 1930s determined, in part, Congress’ approach to the public during the beginning of the war. The JPRC’s first branch formed on June 15, 1938 in the Central Division from a joint agreement between the CJC and B’nai B’rith. The CJC conducted all business through its offices and was its public face, although equal numbers from each organization sat on the executive.<sup>5</sup> It prioritized the investigation of antisemitic propaganda from organizations and individuals, but also engaged in publicity and education. Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath was its chairman.<sup>6</sup> Eisendrath was an American and Rabbi to Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple, home of

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<sup>3</sup> “Fascism in Canada: A Factual Statement,” December 1937, Reports and Publications, Box 34, MG8, CJC, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>4</sup> “Report of the Executive Secretary, Central Division, CJC, January 21-23, 1939,” 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly Conference, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>5</sup> “Report of the Executive Secretary, Central Division, CJC, January 21-23, 1939,”.

<sup>6</sup> “Report of the Executive Secretary, Central Division, CJC, January 21-23, 1939,”; The National Executive elected Rabbi Eisendrath as JPRC National Chairman in 1942, but he moved to Cincinnati within a year. Saul Hayes and the CJC executive largely dictated the direction of the National JPRC. The CJC did not establish a National JPRC until the spring of 1942, which replaced the Committee of Information and Public Relations. See “National Executive Minutes, CJC, May 31, 1942,” National Executive Committee, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

Toronto's uptown Jewish community. Eisendrath already had a high profile in the media when the JPRC formed and was known for taking on Nazi apologists as well as his deep commitment to Jewish-Gentile relations.<sup>7</sup> JPRC activities under Eisendrath prioritized close cooperation with inter-religious organizations, especially the Canadian Conference of Christians and Jews (CCCJ) led by Claris Edwin Silcox since 1940.<sup>8</sup> Silcox was an outspoken clergyman who supported the cause of Jewish refugees.<sup>9</sup>

The JPRC under Eisendrath worked with Silcox to link antisemitism and its promotion to a plot by fifth columnists that divided Canadians and harmed the war effort. In the summer of 1940, the JPRC stated its goal was to "intensify" the connection between antisemitism and the fifth column, and thought several prominent non-Jewish newspaper columnists would help them in their efforts, like *Globe and Mail* columnist Judith Robinson, and *Saturday Night* editors Willson Woodside and B.K. Sandwell (later honorary chairman of the CNCR).<sup>10</sup> Eisendrath wrote, "It is our duty, not only as Jews, but as patriotic citizens of Canada, to warn the people of this country of the menace of anti-Semitism to the welfare of Canada."<sup>11</sup> Silcox also believed antisemitism was a wedge to divide the country, as he expressed in his speaking tour on antisemitism and democracy.<sup>12</sup> He and the CCCJ spread this message to non-Jews through educational literature, radio addresses, and speaking tours. The CCCJ also published a regular pamphlet, "Fellowship," and distributed 30,000 copies to groups such as teachers, the press, libraries, and ministers.

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<sup>7</sup> , Richard Menkis and Harold Troper, *More than Just Games: Canada and the 1936 Olympics* (University of Toronto Press, 2015), 38-39.

<sup>8</sup> "Summary of Committee Reports," Seventh Annual Regional Conference, Central Division, CJC, 1941, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 16, Reel M-5464, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>9</sup> Haim Genizi, *The Holocaust, Israel, and Canadian Protestant Churches* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 52,58.

<sup>10</sup> "Congress Bulletin," June 14, 1940, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 16, Reel M-5464, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>11</sup> "Summary of Committee Reports," Seventh Annual Regional Conference, Central Division, CJC, 1941, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 16, Reel M-5464, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>12</sup> Claris Edwin Silcox, "The Challenge of Antisemitism to Democracy," (Toronto: The Committee on Jewish Gentile Relationships, 1939), 7, Miscellaneous 3 of 4, Box 34, MG8, CJC, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

The convergence of the CJC and government positions on antisemitic fascist propaganda and new government measures gave the CJC more room to maneuver. In theory, the press worked with government censors to promote unity and loyalty in Canada, although this cooperation sometimes broke down.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the government fostered a unifying atmosphere that resulted in fewer attacks on Jews in the press and positioned government propagandists on the CJC's side. Similarly, because the government scrutinized fascist and antisemitic propagandists, the CJC dedicated more resources to their public relations campaigns instead of defending Jews against antisemitic attacks. They could set their own agenda rather than responding to the agenda of their enemies. The government forced Canadian fascist and antisemite, Adrien Arcand, to stop publishing, although he secretly continued printing anti-war and antisemitic material.<sup>14</sup> After an amendment to the Defense of Canada Act, the government interned Arcand and eleven other fascists on May 30, 1940 and outlawed several fascist and communist organizations.<sup>15</sup>

The CJC also secretly joined forces with the Bureau of Public Information (BPI) to fight antisemitism and connect it to fascists. The BPI, which the government incorporated into the Wartime Information Board in 1942, was one of several government propaganda organizations that promoted the war effort, publicized government policies, and measured public opinion.<sup>16</sup> The BPI's director, G. H. Lash, gave advice to the CJC on how to engage the non-Jewish public.<sup>17</sup> In 1941, the BPI produced a pamphlet called "Canadians All," based on a film collaboration between their office, the CBC, and the National Film Board. It highlighted 26 different ethnicities in Canada and their contributions. Several pages explained how antisemitic conspiracies perpetrated by the Nazis and

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<sup>13</sup> Claude Beauregard, *Guerre et Censure au Canada: 1939-1945*, (Sillery, Quebec: Septentrion, 1998), 57, 96.

<sup>14</sup> Hugues Théorêt, *Les Chemises Bleues: Adrien Arcand, journaliste antisémite canadien-français* (Quebec: Septentrion, 2012) Chapter 6, Kindle Edition.

<sup>15</sup> Hugues Théorêt, Chapter 6.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saint, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Confidential letter, Mr. M. Eidelbaum to Jewish Auxiliary War Service, Sept 20, 1940, F10, JHC 277, Patriotic Committee Correspondence, 1939-1940, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

their sympathizers attempted to subvert national unity. Although Jews were among the smallest minorities in Canada, their section was larger than all but the Anglo-Canadians. Likely, the CJC supplied the publisher Jewish enlistment statistics during World War I, the current war, and statistics found in Rosenberg's book on Jewish employment rates in the professions and Jews working on farms.<sup>18</sup>

While the actions of both the CJC and government reduced antisemitic content, it did not eliminate it. One example appeared on December 17, 1939 during a broadcast from the French station CKAC. A commentator "slanderosly" said that Jews controlled the Soviet Union, and that Judaism and communism were the same thing. The JPRC contacted the station, and "obtained a formal expression of regret." The station corrected the record on air on Dec 19 and again on Dec 24:

We do not at all subscribe to the statements that were made and wish to make it clear that the statements were the opinions of one individual and this station does not in any way subscribe to them...we undertake to see that greater vigilance will be exercised in the future in order to prevent a repetition thereof.

The *Montreal Gazette*, *Star*, and *Herald* each carried the story.<sup>19</sup> The CJC fought the stereotype that all Jews were communists for years. One important piece of literature, which the CJC "[was] earnestly entreated to distribute [in]...as widespread a manner as possible," was "Facts and Fables about the Jews." They sent more than 75,000 copies to community leaders, politicians, newspapers, schoolteachers, and others.<sup>20</sup> A *Globe and Mail* editorial summarized the statistical arguments in the pamphlet and concluded communism had nothing to do with race, but was an "irreligious, revolutionary doctrine."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Watson Kirkconnel, "Canadians All," (Ottawa: The Director of Public information, 1941).

<sup>19</sup> "Summary of the Secretary's Report for the Months of November and December, 1939," February, 1940," JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>20</sup> "Report of the Executive Secretary, Central Division, CJC, January 21-23, 1939," 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly Conference, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>21</sup> "Jews, Gentiles, and Communism," *Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1938, editorial, 6.

The CJC's efforts to link antisemitism with a fifth column betrayed their own fears of fifth column activity in their ranks, especially related to communism. The CJC had a strained, oscillating relationship with Jewish communists since its rejuvenation in 1934. H.M. Caiserman, the general secretary of the CJC and its most active member before the war, was a Zionist and "avowedly anti-communist."<sup>22</sup> Some cooperation existed behind the scenes between the CJC and Jewish Communists before the war on the anti-fascist front, but after Jewish Communists did not denounce the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, they "were suddenly reviled and universally looked upon as traitors."<sup>23</sup> The CJC proactively distanced themselves from communism completely. During the 1940s, Jewish membership constituted about 30 percent of the Canadian Communist Party of Canada in Toronto, and perhaps 70 percent in Montreal.<sup>24</sup> In a letter to the *Globe and Mail* on December 26, 1939, not long after the Canadian government banned communist organizations, Oscar Cohen, executive secretary of the Central Division urged all Jews to vote against communist candidates in the Toronto civic elections.<sup>25</sup> The Jewish communist and incumbent alderman, J.B. Salsberg, was the CJC's target. He received less than half the votes he got in his previous election victory and their campaign contributed to his defeat.<sup>26</sup>

Leaders in the CJC feared that an association with communism was both politically dangerous and fodder for Nazi propaganda.<sup>27</sup> They could not afford bad publicity at such a contentious time and at the beginning of a public relations reset. In 1940, the Central Division followed the JPRC and called on all Jewish organizations in the country to "oust from their positions all officers and employees associated with Communist and subversive activities and

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<sup>22</sup> Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Lipinsky, 193.

<sup>24</sup> Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur*, 183.

<sup>25</sup> "Urges Jews to Defeat Communists, *Globe and Mail*, December 26, 1939, 6, editorial.

<sup>26</sup> Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*, 193; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 62.

<sup>27</sup> Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur*, 130.

views.”<sup>28</sup> Yet after the Soviets joined the war and communists were, for a moment, darlings to all of Canada, none other than President Samuel Bronfman played host to visiting Soviet Jewish emissaries.<sup>29</sup>

The war forced new leadership in Congress to adapt quickly. In January 1939, the CJC elected Samuel Bronfman, successful businessman and owner of the Seagram’s corporation, as president. Soon, he brought in Saul Hayes, a lawyer by trade, to work on the cause of refugees and to be an intermediary between non-Jews and the Jewish community.<sup>30</sup> Bronfman brought celebrity and financial stability to Congress, while Hayes centralized their efforts into more coherent policies.<sup>31</sup> In September 1939, the CJC organized several committees dedicated to the war, such as the Military Committee, Patriotic Committee, and the Committee on Information and Public Relations, all of which eventually came under a general War Efforts Committee. Each CJC branch formed their own War Efforts Committee and coordinated with a national program to organize recruitment drives, fundraised for the home front, and recorded information to educate the public about their efforts.<sup>32</sup>

The CJC’s ability to mobilize information in support of Canadian Jewry and its contribution to the war was put to the test early. Just one week into the conflict, letters to the editor across Canada accused Jews of not doing their part in the war effort. One example appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*: “Do the Jews expect the Gentile to again fight their battles while they stand behind to reap the monetary benefits?”<sup>33</sup> The CJC feared that the antisemitism that grew during the 1930s could explode in a war setting, and their public relations reflected their insecurity at the beginning of

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<sup>28</sup> “Resolutions Adopted at the Sixth Annual Regional Conference of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Central Division, Toronto, September 22, 1940,” JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>29</sup> Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur*, 174.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Marrus, *Samuel Bronfman: The Life and Times of Seagrams Mr. Sam* (Hanover: Brandeis, 1991), 277.

<sup>31</sup> Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*, 198.

<sup>32</sup> “Formation of Committee,” War Efforts Committee, 1941, National, JHSWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>33</sup> “Jews and Enlistment,” *Vancouver Sun*, September 8, 1939, letter to the editor.

the war. Hayes reflected in 1945 on Canadian Jewry's situation before the war and wrote it was no secret that "the Jewish community of Canada was suffering from a very bad press."<sup>34</sup>

CJC Press Officer David Rome, who had worked as an editor for *Daily Hebrew Journal* in Toronto, made their press strategy clear: "The Jewish community wanted to make clear they were not shirking."<sup>35</sup> The offices of the JPRC and War Efforts Committee collected data on enlistment and war efforts to fight this perception.<sup>36</sup> Some felt publicizing about enlistment should only happen after the CJC had concrete information that would "definitely place the Jews in a favourable position."<sup>37</sup> Harvey Golden, secretary of the Eastern Division's War Efforts Committee, noted that accurate information of enlistees was the "most important single job outside of actual enlistment."<sup>38</sup> Golden informed everyone about the strategic importance of this information. He asked that each organization affiliated with them refrain from publishing their war efforts work in the English or French press unless they had first cleared it with their committee: "this request is made in order that our press relations may be centralized and of greatest possible use to the Jewish community as a whole."<sup>39</sup> The Western Division sent out detailed questionnaires to Jewish communities west of Winnipeg: How many Jews enlisted and in what division? How many tried to enlist and were rejected? How much money did the community donate to patriotic causes? How many Jewish

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<sup>34</sup> "Placing the Facts about Jews before the Canadian Public," 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, January 13-16, 1945, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>35</sup> David Rome, interview by Eiran Harris, tape 15 side a, CJC history part 5, file SC 1105, fonds P0231, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>36</sup> This was a strategy they had adopted in the past that had served them well in their publication of *Canada's Jews*, by Louis Rosenberg. It was their most important publication at the time and still the definitive study on Jewish demographic history in Canada, and the demographic and social characteristics of Canadian Jewry in the 1930s. See the introduction by Morton Weinfeld in the 1993 version.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes, "Inner Executive Committee," September 20, 1939, Central Division, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 17, Reel M-5465, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>38</sup> Harvey Golden, "Emergency Program of Immediate Duties to be Undertaken by Jewish Organizations of Montreal and the Eastern Division of the Canadian Jewish Congress," War Efforts Committee, Montreal, Publicity, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>39</sup> Harvey Golden, "Emergency Program of Immediate Duties to be Undertaken by Jewish Organizations of Montreal and the Eastern Division of the Canadian Jewish Congress."

women knitted for the Red Cross and how many items?<sup>40</sup> Gathering data went hand in hand with enlistment.

This campaign differed in an important way from their campaign against communism and proved more effective. During their anti-communist campaign, the CJC tried to prove Jews and communism were not synonymous. Eisendrath often wrote letters to the editor or went on speaking tours to defend Jews against various accusations.<sup>41</sup> Campaigns designed to refute accusations are not very effective.<sup>42</sup> Their anti-shirker campaign never mentioned the word “shirker.” Instead, they advertised their patriotic efforts, usually in a way that it was not clear the message came from them and allowed their work to do the talking. Attaching a positive attribute to Jews had a higher chance of success than trying to refute a negative one.

Samuel Bronfman, President of the CJC, initially spearheaded the public relations efforts to get the Jewish war effort on the agenda. This suited Bronfman, whom Hayes remembered as a man with an “insatiable desire to be publicized, an insatiable desire to be known. A quest – a hunger for publicity.”<sup>43</sup> Bronfman’s wealth, celebrity, and new role as CJC president ensured press coverage. His first statement on the war signalled their shift away from defensive public relations. Responding to Jews who called for a statement of loyalty to Canada, he said such statements were “superfluous...from a group of Canadians whose loyalty has never been in question!” He went all in on the war effort. Nothing, he proclaimed, would be spared in their prosecution of the war, “every effort would be bent, everyone ounce of energy, will be spent, every sacrifice will be made, to see to

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<sup>40</sup> “Jewish War and Patriotic Efforts in Western Canada,” File 10, JHC 277, Patriotic Committee Correspondence, 1939-1940, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>41</sup> Lipinsky, *Imposing Their Will*, 119.

<sup>42</sup> Todd Hunt and James Grunig, *Public Relations Techniques* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994) in Simge Ünlü Kurt, “Public Relations as a Defense Mechanism Against Discriminatory Propaganda.” *Ege Akademik Bakis* 19, no. 2 (04, 2019): 241. doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.21121/eab.451066>.

<sup>43</sup> Saul Hayes, oral interview by David Rome, 1978, file SC034a, CJCC, *ADCJA*, Montreal.



it that we – all of us – country, and Empire, and people, emerge victorious.”<sup>44</sup> The message came from the Office of the President of the CJC, but it was likely written by A.M. Klein, who worked as Bronfman’s speech writer in addition to his editorial duties at the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>45</sup> *CP* ran with this story, and it appeared in large papers like the *Globe and Mail*.<sup>46</sup> Similar stories followed Bronfman whenever he appeared at a large event, such as the annual conference of the CJC.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, after the government announced the first war loan, Bronfman rallied Canadian Jews to the “Economic Front,” a kind of “Maginot Line...built against Nazi barbarism.”<sup>48</sup> Bronfman’s entreaties received significant coverage in the press. The *Toronto Daily Star* captured Bronfman’s sentiments in an article and noted that he had donated \$500,000.<sup>49</sup> Bronfman’s public support created a great deal of “extensive national publicity” and good will.<sup>50</sup>

Through leaflets, posters, and pamphlets, but primarily through the Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish press, the CJC encouraged enlistment and engagement in war efforts as they sought ammunition for the public relations campaign. The CJC tried to increase enlistment with promises of fame. Photos of Canadian Jewish war heroes like pilot William Henry Nelson circulated, and a regular column in some newspapers called “the Honour Roll,” featured enlistees and their biography.<sup>51</sup> The CJC released information to Jewish communities that detailed what men and women could do for the war effort. For men, enlisting in the active service was paramount. If not that, then in the Home Guard. Active services suggested for women included volunteering for the

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<sup>44</sup> Samuel Bronfman, “A Message to the Jews of Canada,” October 1939, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>45</sup> See Usher Caplan, *Like one that Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 83-84.

<sup>46</sup> “Jews Organize for War Work,” October 20, 1939, *Globe and Mail*.

<sup>47</sup> “Jewry United in Effort to Win War – Bronfman,” January 8, 1940, *Globe and Mail*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Bronfman, “Support the War Loan,” January 12, 1940, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>49</sup> “Flood of \$50 Bond Orders Echoes Nations War Unity,” January 16, 1940, *Toronto Daily Star*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> H.M. Caiserman, “Report to the Fifth General Session of the Canadian Jewish Congress, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 1942,” Fifth Plenary Session, 1942, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>51</sup> Report, War Efforts Committee CJC (Central Division), September 22, 1940.

Red Cross, knitting socks, and making jam for comfort boxes. For both men and women, opportunities for financial contributions abounded.<sup>52</sup> For businesses, the CJC encouraged employers to reserve enlistees' jobs or even supplement their lower army pay.<sup>53</sup> The CJC also shamed able-bodied Jews who did not enlist. During Yom Kippur, they circulated a leaflet that framed enlistees as defenders of democracy and empire, and "proud son[s] of Israel" willing to avenge their murdered coreligionists. Jews who did not enlist, it said, were akin to fifth-columnists and isolationists, and would be "brandmarked for everafter as a selfish, cowardly, and unworthy individual."<sup>54</sup> The Jewish press played its part by advertising locations of registration bureaus.<sup>55</sup> Articles in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* corrected the myth that Jews had never played a significant part in war and encouraged Jews to identify as warriors.<sup>56</sup> The CJC compiled lists of enlisted Jews which they circulated widely in the press and to public leaders.<sup>57</sup> For Jews who did not enlist at bureaus operated by the CJC, the organization posted notices in the press asking them for their enlistment information.<sup>58</sup> Once they had favourable data, they could take it to the press.

During the controversial 1942 plebiscite on conscription, the CJC argued it was Jews' patriotic duty to enlist overseas. The plebiscite stemmed from the problem of the "zombies," (a pejorative term used for enlisted soldiers who would not fight overseas). Before the war, the Mackenzie King government had promised no conscription, but in the government's estimation, too few wanted to fight overseas. The government asked the public to release them from their promise. The CJC called on Canadian Jews to vote yes for conscription: "we urge every Jewish organization

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<sup>52</sup> "What you Can do to Help in the Prosecution of the War," War Efforts Committee, 1939-1945, CJC Western Division, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 12, Reel M-5460, LAC, Ottawa, undated.

<sup>53</sup> Unaddressed letter, Michael Hirsch, Chairman, Patriotic Subcommittee, War Efforts Committee, September 12, 1940, War Efforts Committee, Montreal, Publicity, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>54</sup> "A Yom-Kippur Message to the Young Able-bodied Jew," 1941 War Efforts Committee, Montreal, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>55</sup> "Where to Enlist," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, July 26, 1940, 13.

<sup>56</sup> A. A. Roback, "Jews and the Battlefield," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, October 27, 1939.

<sup>57</sup> "Appendix II," Joint Public Relations Committee Minutes, 1944, Box 19, Series DB01, CJC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>58</sup> "Notice to Jewish Men Enlisted with the Forces," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, May 24, 1940, 8.

affiliated with the Canadian Jewish Congress, and every Jew in Canada who has the privilege and duty of the franchise, to go to the polling stations on April 27...and vote YES.”<sup>59</sup> A.M. Klein amplified their message in an editorial in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* on April 24, 1942. Referencing the CJC message, Klein argued it was both Jews’ “Canadianism and Judaism” that called for a “yes” vote.<sup>60</sup> Opposite the editorial was a full-page ad by the Department of the Secretary of State telling Canadians to vote.

More so-called zombies existed among Jews in the Canadian army, relative to population, than any other ethnic group in Canada, but it did not hurt their reputation as patriotic Canadians.<sup>61</sup> Gerald Tulchinsky gives several explanations for high Jewish representation, such as the perception among Jews of Eastern European origin (most Canadian Jews) that the military was a hostile place for Jews, antisemitism amongst recruiters, and perhaps a deficit of loyalty to the British Empire.<sup>62</sup> Yet as far as this writer has found, the press did not attack Jews on the zombie issue. Rather, some groups associated Jews *with* conscription. About one month before the national plebiscite, around 500 “youths” from the League for the Defense of Canada connected the looming plebiscite vote with Jews when they chanted “Down with conscription! Down with the Jews!” and smashed Jewish shops along St. Lawrence Boulevard in Montreal.<sup>63</sup> That antisemites thought Canadian Jews were patriotic shows how successfully the CJC had connected the war effort to Canadian Jewry. Canada’s Francophone population held strong anti-conscription sentiments. Polling showed 80 percent of Quebec residents opposed conscription, compared to 71 percent approval from all the other provinces.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps due to Canadian Jewry’s increased reputation within the war effort and the

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<sup>59</sup> “Resolution on National Plebiscite,” War Efforts Committee, 1939-1945, CJC Western Division, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 12, Reel M-5460, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>60</sup> “The Plebiscite,” April 24, 1942, *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 4, editorial.

<sup>61</sup> Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews*, 377.

<sup>62</sup> Tulchinsky, 377-378.

<sup>63</sup> “Down with Conscription and Down with the Jews is Chant of 500 Rioters,” March 25, 1942, *Toronto Telegram*.

<sup>64</sup> “Public Opinion Polls,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1944): 153, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1086/265676>.

animosity between Francophones and Anglophones over conscription, Jewish zombies in the ranks never became a big issue for neither the CJC internally nor the press. When tensions over conscription rose again in the summer of 1944, the English press backed the government and the French press, for the most part, aligned with the “vote no” side.<sup>65</sup> For the CJC and the non-Jewish press, the focus was how many Jews enlisted, rather than overseas versus domestic service. Ellin Bessner contends that the issue “preoccupied” the CJC, who were “anxious to dispel public perceptions” that Jews were well-represented in the zombie ranks.<sup>66</sup> Yet wherever this public perception existed, it was not in the press.

The CJC’s goal of attributing patriotism and loyalty to Canadian Jews in the press succeeded, and a group of sympathetic papers and CP propelled it. In the fall of 1939, the press featured stories of Jewish enlistment, sometimes accompanied by photos.<sup>67</sup> Several editorials and articles during the war showed Jews were doing their part, and more, in the war effort. They cited the statistics compiled by the CJC as proof that Jews enlisted in numbers above what was expected of their population.<sup>68</sup> On November 12, 1941, a CP story that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on enlistment of groups of “alien origin” cited War Services Minister Joseph Thorson, who said “the Jews are enlisting in quite remarkable numbers for active service everywhere in the world.”<sup>69</sup> When a Toronto alderman questioned Jewish enlistment in a city council meeting, editors of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Globe and Mail* defended the reputation of Jews.<sup>70</sup> In 1944, in a CP article printed by the *Globe*

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<sup>65</sup> Mark Bourrie, *The Fog of War: Censorship and Canada’s Media in World War Two* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2011), 235-236.

<sup>66</sup> Bessner, *Double Threat*, 24.

<sup>67</sup> “Jewish Boys Seeking Enlistment with Q.O.R.,” October 5, 1939, *Globe and Mail*, 4; “Jews, Seeking to Serve, Register at New Bureau,” September 27, 1939, *Globe and Mail*, 4.

<sup>68</sup> “Canadian Jewry in the War Effort,” May 9, 1944, *Toronto Daily Star*; “Jews Active in Canadian Army,” October 12, 1943, *Globe and Mail*; “Jews in the Fighting Forces of Canada,” August 15, 1941, *Alliston Herald*, War Efforts Committee, Montreal, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>69</sup> “Groups of Alien Origin Enlist Commendably, Thorson Tells House,” November 13, 1941, *Globe and Mail*.

<sup>70</sup> “The Jews and the War,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, War Efforts Committee, Montreal, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa; “Jews in Armed Services,” March 24, 1943, *Globe and Mail*.

*and Mail*, both the Air Force and Navy ministers praised Jews in the ranks who “have given their services wholeheartedly,” were “fighting nobly,” and had even died for their ideals.<sup>71</sup> In an *Ottawa Citizen* editorial, the Minister of National Defense, Colonel Ralston, said the Jews, who had more cause than anyone, “fight shoulder to shoulder” with Gentiles. The article also cited the enlistment statistics provided by the CJC.<sup>72</sup> Saul Hayes noted this editorial came at his request.<sup>73</sup>

The press lauded the CJC’s work on the home front, particularly on recreational centres for soldiers on leave or awaiting deployment. Nationally, they supplied more than 500 centres during the war. An editorial in the *Hamilton Spectator* called the project “praiseworthy” and noted the government appreciated the support.<sup>74</sup> The *Globe and Mail* ran a similar editorial.<sup>75</sup> Both newspapers likely based their articles on a CJC press release. Another *Globe and Mail* article praised the CJC’s support of Jewish soldiers overseas, who received a “Book of Jewish Thoughts” comprised of various quotations by well-known Jews. The author, who liked the anthology, wrote that if Gentiles could not compile a book, the compilation from the CJC would work too.<sup>76</sup> One French language newspaper praised the CJC’s marketing ability. *La Chronique de St. Maurice* wrote that French Canadians who wanted their contributions recognized should follow CJC’s successful model of publicizing Jewish efforts in the armed forces.<sup>77</sup> The CJC knew the impact they had in the press, as evinced by the several pages of newspaper clippings collected by the War Efforts Committee. They could not trace everything, but Hayes believed that, by 1944, propaganda against Jewish servicemen

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<sup>71</sup> “Praise Jews in Services,” September 18, 1944, *Globe and Mail*.

<sup>72</sup> “Jewry in the Field,” October 12, 1944, *Ottawa Citizen*, Publicity & Press, 1944, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 12, Reel M-5460, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>73</sup> Saul Hayes, “Publicity,” October 30, 1944, Publicity & Press, 1944, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 12, Reel M-5460, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>74</sup> “Jewish Congress Supplies Troops with Recreation,” May 28, 1941, *Hamilton Spectator*, editorial.

<sup>75</sup> “Promoting Soldiers’ Comfort,” May 30, 1941, *Globe and Mail*, editorial, 6.

<sup>76</sup> “Jews in Action,” August 30, 1941, *Globe and Mail*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Saul Hayes, “Information to the Press,” January 10, 1945, Publicity, 1945, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

in the press had all but disappeared, and they generated more and more favourable press for Canadian Jews.<sup>78</sup>

Canadian Jewry's reputation was perhaps at its lowest point in September 1939. Accusations of shirking and disloyalty crept into some of the largest daily newspapers in the country. But the CJC wasted no opportunities for Jews to show their patriotism. A public relations programme fostered enlistment of Canadian Jews and contributions on the home front, combined with quantitatively tracking these efforts allowed for the release of a steady stream of patriotic news that the Canadian press craved for the morale and unity of the nation during the war. Not only newspapers, but politicians, and even their enemies attributed patriotism to Canadian Jews. It was an important shift away from the defensive campaigns that generally characterized their public relations before the war. For the CJC and Canada's Jews, the press became a powerful tool rather than a liability. At the end of the war, Saul Hayes declared no other Jewish community apart from Canadian Jewry had such a positive image in the press. Their contributions during the war played a large part, but so did their programme dedicated to improving their image among non-Jews.<sup>79</sup> As the next chapters show, the good press cultivated by the CJC served other purposes. It allowed the CJC to put another item on the press' agenda: the extermination of European Jews.

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<sup>78</sup> "Appendix II," Joint Public Relations Committee Minutes, 1944, Box 19, Series DB01, CJC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>79</sup> "Placing the Facts about Jews before the Canadian Public," 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, January 13-16, 1945, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

## Rallying for Coverage: The Salience of Jewish Extermination

No one in the CJC National Executive wanted a rally. The National Executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress met in President Samuel Bronfman's office on July 17, 1942 because of a letter.<sup>1</sup> On July 8, 1942, B. Sheps, vice-president of the Western Division of the CJC, wrote to Bronfman about the horrifying report from Samuel Zygielbojm of the Polish National Council: the Nazis had murdered one million Jews. Sheps worried that, "with exception of a few brief paragraphs in the daily press, little, if any comment has been made by the Canadian newspapers, in Western Canada at least, on these atrocious happenings." He wanted the National Executive to raise awareness in the non-Jewish press across Canada so that the "sympathy and the protest of all Canadians may be mobilized," to correct the perception that Jews suffered no more than anyone else in Occupied Europe. Sheps feared that otherwise a potentially "communist-inspired" group like the Jewish Branch of the League for Allied Victory would fill the void.<sup>2</sup>

Popular calls for a mass rally grew louder, and became the National Executive's only way forward. While the National Executive was reluctant, just two members voted against the mass rally. Saul Hayes believed the "spurious demand" had been "whipped up" by politically motivated organizations that aired their grievances in the Yiddish press. One hostile editorial, for example, appeared in the *Voebenblatt*, claimed Canadian Jews lacked leadership and silence prevailed.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Hayes and the National Executive realized that they might be out of touch with their base, and if Congress wanted to call itself the voice of Canadian Jewry, there had to be a rally.

Though the National Executive agreed that the CJC should spearhead a Canada-wide rally, they wanted it to align with their goal. They did not want the rally to be in the vein of the mass

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, July 20, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, B. Sheps to Samuel Bronfman, July 8, 1942, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>3</sup> Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur*, 172.

protest in the US, but a “general day of prayer for success to the Allied cause and of mourning for the deaths of our massacred brethren.”<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, Congress used well-known public figures and their own patriotic record to legitimize their message and informed the Canadian press and public about the extermination of Jews in Europe and spurred prolonged press coverage.

To plan for the rally, Hayes studied how the press had received the Madison Square Garden protest to learn from its mistakes.<sup>5</sup> In other words, what topics gained salience in the press and what did not? Spurred by the Zygielbojm report, the American Jewish Congress, Jewish Labour Committee, and B’nai B’rith protested at Madison Square Garden on July 21, 1942. The organizers wanted American Jews to express their “feelings of grief and indignation” and to “awake American public opinion” and the world to “the fate which has befallen the Jews of Europe.” The protest did not mention in any depth how to aid European Jews, and the uptown American Jewish Committee, one of the biggest Jewish organizations in the U.S., was absent over disagreements about the organizers’ message on Palestine.<sup>6</sup> Despite the stated goals of the rally several Jewish speakers called for a Jewish army in Palestine, and one prominent non-Jewish speaker, New York Governor Herbert Lehman, openly disagreed with them. Churchill noted that the Jews were Hitler’s first victims, but his message focused on British policy in Palestine. Palestine became a distraction. Roosevelt’s message used universalizing language: “the American people...sympathize with all victims of Nazi crimes.” He did devote a sentence to Jewish suffering: “citizens, regardless of religious allegiance, will share in the sorrow of our Jewish fellow citizens over the savagery of the Nazis against their helpless victims.”<sup>7</sup> This message would not dissuade a public who thought all

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<sup>4</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, July 20, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>5</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, July 23, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>6</sup> Monty Noam Penkower, “American Jewry and the Holocaust: From Biltmore to the American Jewish Conference,” in *America, American Jews, and the Holocaust*, edited by Jeffrey S. Gurock (London: Routledge, 1998), 359.

<sup>7</sup> “Review of the Yiddish Press, July 24, 1942,” F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.



suffered equally. Historian Laurel Leff has argued the *New York Times* coverage of the rally was so vague that it was unclear what crimes had been committed and who the victims were.<sup>8</sup>

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) did not support the rally, yet all the papers the CJC reviewed carried a separate statement by the American Jewish Committee, which was similar to the message ultimately used by the CJC. The AJC message read in part:

The American Jewish Committee...condemns the barbarous mass murders of civilian populations by the Nazis. Hundreds of thousands of defenseless Jews – men, women and children – have been and are being murdered in violation of all laws of modern warfare by the Nazis, who openly proclaim their intention to destroy the Jews throughout Europe.

The statement went on to say that the world must remember the perpetrators and bring them to justice, and that American Jews stood “shoulder to shoulder with their fellow Americans” in bringing an end to tyranny and reviving the four freedoms from the Atlantic Charter.<sup>9</sup>

The CJC adopted some tactics from the New York rally, such as their use of prominent non-Jews, but focused less on Palestine, more on their war efforts and the mass murder of European Jews, and wanted sole control over the rally. The CJC sought prominent non-Jewish leaders to bring more legitimacy to the gathering as well as interest from non-Jews. In the same vein, Congress wanted to be the sole sponsor, unlike the collaborative effort in the U.S. Part of this was to solidify the CJC’s legitimacy. As Hayes said, “either Congress pretends to represent Canadian Jewry or it doesn’t.”<sup>10</sup> Less involvement from Jewish organizations meant more control over their message and more focus on the “all-Canadian” atmosphere Congress wanted.<sup>11</sup> This was important because even some Jews questioned the reports of Jewish massacres in Europe in 1942. In their review of the press (based on an American Jewish Committee report), Jacob Lestschinsky in the *Yiddisher Kemfer* questioned the

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<sup>8</sup> Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America’s most Important Newspaper* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 142.

<sup>9</sup> “Review of the Yiddish Press, July 24, 1942,” F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, September 15, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, A.M. Shinbane to Morris Smith, July 31, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

massive numbers of reported Jewish massacres as well as the cumulative number of one million Jews murdered, and believed perhaps one quarter that was nearer the truth.<sup>12</sup>

The CJC chose speakers who would engage the public and press. At the Western Division, Louis Rosenberg's thought only one Jew, Rabbi Frank, should publicly speak at the rally in Winnipeg.<sup>13</sup> Towards that end, the Arrangements Committee decided that there would be no Yiddish speakers. They wanted prominent non-Jewish speakers. Rosenberg wanted the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, Winnipeg's mayor, Church of England, Catholic Church, and United Church of Canada representatives, and messages from governments in exile.<sup>14</sup> Montreal secured the U.S. Ambassador to Canada Jay Pierrepont Moffat and Canadian Secretary of State Norman McLarty. While this strategy risked burying Jewish suffering, like it did in the New York rally, the CJC calculated it was the best way to get attention from the press.

They prepared resolutions — some admittedly redundant — that reflected the CJC's priorities of promoting their patriotic efforts while informing the public of Jewish extermination. The resolutions, agreed upon by each division, were written by Michael Garber, A.M. Klein, H.M. Caiserman, and Saul Hayes.<sup>15</sup> Three resolutions addressed Canadian Jewry's dedication to the Allied cause, two on Jewish persecution, and one vague resolution on Canadian Jewry's dedication to defending Palestine from attack.<sup>16</sup>

Notices of the rally in the Jewish press revealed tensions within the community over what to do about Jewish persecution in Europe. The notice by the *Canadian Jewish Review* signified opposition. It appeared in a long list of meetings in the society section on page four. The paper

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<sup>12</sup> "Protest Against Massacres," Publicity – Press Releases, CJC Western Division, 1942-1943, F04, JHC 288, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>13</sup> "Minutes of Committee Meeting Re Protest Meeting, July 31, 1942," Winnipeg, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>14</sup> "Minutes of Committee Meeting Re Protest Meeting, July 31, 1942."

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum, Saul Hayes to Louis Rosenberg, September 8, 1942, Publicity, National Mass Protest Meeting – 1942, Winnipeg, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>16</sup> "Resolutions for Mass Meeting, Oct. 11, 1942," Publicity, National Mass Protest Meeting – 1942, Winnipeg, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

described it as a “protest [against] Nazi atrocities in occupied Europe and to reaffirm faith of free peoples in the ultimate triumph of democracy.”<sup>17</sup> Clearly, the editor placed little importance on the rally, which they revealed in an editorial after the rally concluded. Nothing indicated the rally would be about atrocities against Jews in particular or Jewish war efforts, contrary to the CJC’s goal. This stance matched Margolis’ findings that the Anglo-Jewish press focused less on Jewish persecution compared to the Yiddish press. It also reflected that paper’s reputation as an uptowner paper.<sup>18</sup>

The *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, despite being an Anglo-Jewish paper, had more connections to the Yiddish press and the interests of Canadian Jews of Eastern European extraction. Hirsch Wolofsky published both the *Chronicle* and the Yiddish *Keneder Adler*.<sup>19</sup> The notice appeared on the cover. The “monstrous” treatment of Jews in Europe was in larger and bold font compared to the smaller and italicized font that pointed to their dedication to victory of the United Nations. An editorial from A. M. Klein mentioned the suffering of everyone, but only for the purpose of comparison: ““The fact is, however, that insofar as the Nazi regime is concerned, it has established a hierarchy of persecution-victims, and in that hierarchy Jews occupy a dubiously privileged position.” The first five paragraphs detailed the Nazi plan for the Jews – “the war is not completed with a mere Nazi Victory: it is completed only when the Jewish race is annihilated” – as well as the enormous cost to Jewish life this ideology had brought upon them: “Over a million of our brothers, it is estimated, have been sacrificed upon the altar of the Prussian pagans. Daily reports issue of further mass-executions, of additional devastation, of new torture, and novel methods of murder.” The

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<sup>17</sup> “Montreal Meetings: Canadian Jewish Congress,” October 9, 1942, *Canadian Jewish Review*, <https://newspapers.lib.sfu.ca/islandora/object/mcc-cjr:17628>.

<sup>18</sup> Ben Kayfetz, “Recollections and Experiences with the Jewish Press in Toronto,” *Polyphony* (Summer, 1984): 228-331, <https://web.archive.org/web/20061221204734/http://www.tgmag.ca/magic/mt69.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press*, 55.

sixth paragraph talked about what “over and above all else” the rallies will be about – the dedication of Jews to follow through and all they have contributed so far.<sup>20</sup>

The rallies happened on October 11, 1942, in the most populous Jewish cities in Canada: Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg and home to the three major CJC divisions. They followed the same format: a leader in the CJC presided and gave an opening address, which emphasized Canadian Jewry’s war efforts and the mass suffering and death of Jews. Prominent non-Jews spoke on the general war effort and the need to fight until the final victory, but some pointed out the particular persecution of the Jews. Messages from various governments were read aloud and almost unanimously spoke on Jewish persecution. At the end, the attendees passed six resolutions.

The CJC’s goal for the rally was not only to get the non-Jewish press to talk about their event, but to keep writing stories about Jewish suffering in Europe. Object salience, as explained in the introduction, is only gained through sustained coverage of a topic. Chapter one showed the CJC could reliably get press coverage of their patriotic efforts. By pairing it with the new topic of Jewish extermination, along with their other strategies, they wagered they could both continue building their own reputation and gain salience for the issue of Jewish extermination. Object salience, in combination with the crucial object attribute of a persecuted Europe Jewry, would lead to comprehension. A one-day news story might gain some attention, but an ongoing story becomes part of the agenda.

In the Jewish press, the *Chronicle* thoroughly covered the Montreal rally and recounted Canadian Jewish war contributions and Jewish persecution. The *Chronicle* carried two stories: one about the rally generally and another on President Samuel Bronfman, the rally chairman. The mass rally story was nearly two-pages in length. The first page focused on the Jews’ commitment to winning the war, their determination that the leaders of the Axis should face trial and execution (said

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<sup>20</sup> “A Meeting of Protest and Self-Dedication,” October 9, 1942, *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 3, editorial.

Judge Panken of NY's Children's Court), and McLarty's defense of democratic ideals and the fight for the Four Freedoms. On the second page, McLarty referenced the Jews' plight. He recalled Jewish persecution in England's under Edward I, and said:

in 600 years, one would expect...some progress. But what do we find today? We find a man who for diabolical cruelty, for calculated destruction of humanity, for complete immunity from all human feelings and suffering, surpasses Attila, Alaric, or Ghengis [*sic*] Khan; one who stands out with prominence and distinction as the greatest menace the human race in all its recorded history has ever known.

Judge Panken made a more direct comparison. Like Klein's editorial from the week before, he began by prefacing that all are suffering, "But no words can be found to describe the depths of degradation, the valleys of misery and humiliation, the diabolical acts of extermination inflicted by Germany against our own people."<sup>21</sup>

Bronfman's message gave equal treatment to both items on the agenda and used the patriotic reputation that he and the CJC had built over three years to bring attention to their new cause. He began with the patriotic sentiments he had become known for: "we renew the sacred vow we took three fateful years ago...not to cease from sacred strife, nor let the sword sleep in the hand, until Hitlerism and all that it stands for, is destroyed completely and beyond resurrection!"<sup>22</sup> From the second paragraph of his speech, he spoke about the incomparable suffering of the Jews in scale and method of murder:

...greater than human speech can tell, greater than civilized man can believe, is the nightmare horror the uninformed beasts have visited upon our people. Every cruelty that a madman's science could invent, the insane fury of the Reich has invented. Every barbarism that atrocity could devise – against our people the Nazis have devised it. In the torture-houses of the concentration camps, our brothers fall in their hundreds; before the common graves of the mass execution, they perish in their thousands; in their tens of thousands they fall victim to the enforced famine and introduced pestilence of the ghetto. The gas-chamber – the firing-squad – it is with these that Hitler is taking a census of our people! Truly, the continent in which our people have lived for

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<sup>21</sup> "Thousands Attend Protest Rally," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, October 16, 1942, 5 and 12

<sup>22</sup> A.M. Klein, editor of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, likely wrote Bronfman's speech. Klein became his public relation advisor and speech writer shortly after Bronfman joined the CJC. See Usher Caplan, *Like one that Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 83-84.

generations, at peace with their neighbours, has become for them a valley of the shadow of death. Already, a million...murdered by the Nazis.<sup>23</sup>

Contrary to what past studies have argued, the rally extensively covered the extermination of European Jewry.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it was not only Jews who highlighted the atrocities committed against them, but the Canadian secretary of state.

Vancouver's *Jewish Western Bulletin* highlighted prominent non-Jews who gave credibility to the reports of atrocities against the Jews. The first paragraph partially quoted one resolution passed at the rallies: "In the midst of the titanic struggle against the forces of barbarism and slavery, we, representing the entire Jewish Community, in meeting assembled, express our indignation and sense of outrage at the martyrdom and agony of our brethren in Nazi lands." The article quoted the messages from the governments not in attendance. These addressed Jewish suffering at length. Prime Minister Mackenzie King, for example said: "people of the Jewish faith, throughout the world, have long endured oppression of the most inhuman kind. Under the Nazi regime, oppression has reached the limits of extreme cruelty. The Jewish persecution is but a part of the poisonous doctrine of race hatred." The Belgian Minister to Canada said, "No words can be strong enough to condemn the systematic torture of the Jews, and no enduring peace can be attained if the wrongs done to them are not righted." Minister of Poland to Canada, Victor Podoski, put it most bluntly: "Jews who – owing to the wicked doctrines and sadistic methods of the invader...suffer more than any other racial group." Other governments – China and Czechoslovakia – sent messages that referred to the systematic murder of Jews and the Nazi doctrines that underpinned them.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Greater Is Our Mourning, But Greater Still is Our Determination Not to Pause," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, October 16, 1942, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Past studies by Michael Marrus and Max Beer have framed the protest as a gathering not about Jewish suffering but Jews and the war effort. However, based on the differing news coverage and documents produced by the CJC, a more complete assessment of the rally is possible.

<sup>25</sup> "Messages Sent to Canadian Jewish Congress Mass Rally, October 11," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, October 16, 1942, 2; This issue could not print all the messages but noted they would be printed in the next issue. That issue is missing. The missing messages were filled in from here: "Text of Messages from Government of the United Nations to the Canadian

The rally disappointed some in the Jewish community. For Florence Cohen, who edited the *Canadian Jewish Review*, the rally was a bust. At most, it reminded people of the upcoming victory loan and was an opportunity to meet the U.S. Minister to Canada, Pierrepont Moffatt. Many speeches ran far too long, she argued, and Rabbi Hirsh Cohen's was in Hebrew, and "twice too long in any language." Rabbi Abramowitz "indulged himself in what should be regarded as the Jewish privilege of the day," to tell the audience that if people had listened to the Jews in 1933, no one would be in this situation. She sarcastically noted Rabbi Abramowitz also "put the occasion to good use" by telling everyone many Canadians engaged in race hatred. The timing was poor too: the Sunday before a holiday, in perfect weather, late in the afternoon, with the Russian ballet in town. However, if people were interested, they would have come. By Cohen's estimation, about 3,000 people showed up out of a Jewish population of 50,000 in Montreal because "mass meetings for Jewish protestation have lost urgency." It is also true that, while conditions have never been worse for Jews, they were alone in suffering in 1933. "Today they have so many companions in misery that their agony is part of a big spreading trouble in which features and colors blur together."<sup>26</sup> Obviously, Cohen did not buy into the CJC's tactics and despaired that any efforts by the Jewish community would have an effect.

One of the rally's goals was to satisfy Jews who demanded it, but the major point of the rally was not what Jews thought, but to get the non-Jewish press to write about Jewish suffering and Canadian Jewish patriotism, and it did. Coverage depended on which rally they reported but had some consistency because of the coordinated program. Many papers focused on the Jewish war effort, but also mentioned atrocities against the Jews. The *Montreal Gazette* covered McLarty's speech, which focused on the meeting solely as part of Canada's effort to win the war. The paper

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Jewish Congress on the occasion of the Dedication and Protest Meetings of October 11..." F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>26</sup> F. F. Cohen, "Every Friday," *Canadian Jewish Review*, October 16, 1942, 8, editorial.

paraphrased Samuel Bronfman's address, but any uniquely Jewish suffering disappeared.<sup>27</sup> The *Globe and Mail* ran two stories: one from their reporting at the Toronto rally and another from CP's Montreal coverage. In Toronto, they reported the dual nature of the rally – their will to fight and “express sorrow and protest at the atrocities vented on their brethren in Nazi-dominated Europe.” The majority of the article focused on the address of the president of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann, who mostly talked about Palestine and the need for the United Nations to arm Jews there as well as “restoring Palestine to the Jews.”<sup>28</sup> It is likely Goldmann spoke off script. The Madison Square Garden rally in New York, where Goldmann was based, demanded an armed Jewish army in Palestine. The CJC actively avoided this issue because they believed it controversial to make demands of the British Empire, of which it was a part.<sup>29</sup> In the *Toronto Daily Star*, Goldmann's positions also took up the most space – the first five paragraphs – and the remainder covered discrimination against Jews in war industries and a summary of CJC work.<sup>30</sup> The *CBC* aired portions of the Montreal rally, especially the speech by McLaren. Congress planned for the *CBC* to feature each rally, but whether that happened is unclear.<sup>31</sup>

Papers also emphasized Jewish persecution. *CP* attended the rally in Montreal and reported on it in a two-column story that non-Jewish papers picked up. The *Globe and Mail* used the *CP* article for their Montreal coverage, which gave a broad overview of the speeches. It emphasized the war effort, but also dedicated two paragraphs to Judge Panken's address, which mentioned “1,000,000 civilian non-combatants” who had been murdered by the Nazis as well as specific massacres, like the one in Lublin where Nazis killed Jews and non-Jews and used their bodies “for the manufacture of fertilizer and soap.” He also referenced gas chambers used on Russian prisoners, who were

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<sup>27</sup> “McLarty Outlines Canada's War Role,” *Montreal Gazette*, October 12, 1942, 13.

<sup>28</sup> CARRY ON FIGHT JEWS PROMISE: Protest Atrocities by Germans on Brethren, Oct 12, 1942, *Globe and Mail*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, July 20, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>30</sup> “Would Exterminate Leaders of Nazism,” *Toronto Daily Star*, October 13, 1942, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Letter, L. Rosenberg to Saul Hayes, September 15, 1942, F04, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.



“disposed of in 500 lots.”<sup>32</sup> Other newspapers published this article, either in whole or in part. All the stories in the Toronto papers appeared prominently on either page two or three. The *Winnipeg Free Press* placed the story on the front page and republished the first paragraph of the *CP* story, but focused on the rally in Winnipeg. Their story led with Mackenzie King’s message, then the resolutions that condemned the Nazi persecution of Jews, and their dedication to see the war to its conclusion. They also highlighted speeches of leading provincial and local politicians who spoke about similar themes.<sup>33</sup> The *Ottawa Citizen* published the *CP* piece in part, titled “Removing Hitler’s Race Hate Poison Declared War Aim” based on King’s message.<sup>34</sup>

Using prominent figures in the rally paid off in press coverage. Newspapers had obscured the overall message of Jewish extermination at the Madison Square Garden rally, whereas in Canada it was a feature. In contrast to Roosevelt’s one sentence, Prime Minister King emphasized the extreme suffering of European Jewry. It became the basis of several articles, including a *CP* piece that many papers picked up. Canadians learned not only of the magnitude of Jewish death, but the Nazi’s systematic mechanisms and ideology that justified it. It was the beginning of increased coverage in the press. Soon, the press would not need rallies or the prime minister to comment on Jewish extermination. The topic stood on its own. It became part of the agenda.

Following the mass rally, the CJC found a substantial increase in editorials about Jewish persecution. Bronfman pointed to an editorial in the *Globe* as evidence that the rally had served its purpose.<sup>35</sup> The editorial, “War Spirit of the Jews,” noted that “no race on earth has so deep an interest in the downfall of the Nazis and their allies as the Jews,” and detailed the systematic roundup of Jews in France. The editorial continued that what was happening in occupied countries would befall every

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<sup>32</sup> Jewish People Pledge to Hasten Huns’ End, October 12, 1942, *Globe and Mail*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> “Mackenzie King Message Read at Rally of Jewish Congress,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 12, 1942, 1.

<sup>34</sup> “Removing Hitler’s Race Hate Poison Declared War Aim,” October 11, 1942, *Ottawa Citizen*, reel 960, University of British Columbia Library.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Samuel Bronfman to L. Rosenberg, October 16, 1942, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

Jew wherever the Nazis took power; therefore, the most important result of the rally was the CJC's dedication to end the Nazi's reign of terror.<sup>36</sup> The CJC noted another important result of the rally: "an increasing flow of editorial comment" in the non-Jewish press on Jewish massacres in Europe in the fall and winter of 1942.<sup>37</sup>

The rally spurred follow-up stories on Jewish persecution that began appearing on October 24, 1942. Both the *Globe* and *Free Press* were pro-refugee newspaper during the 1930s.<sup>38</sup> The *Toronto Daily Star* had covered Jewish persecution with sympathy since 1933.<sup>39</sup> After the rally, nearly every major English newspaper in Canada covered Jewish issues with sympathy. A *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial reported Churchill's condemnation of continued Nazi persecution of Jews and declared that "if there are Canadians so stupid" who do not realize Hitler persecutes Jews to raise antisemitism in other countries, then "those who even murmur antisemitism in this country are not worthy of the democracy which they profess to cherish."<sup>40</sup> The *Gazette's* November 6, 1942 editorial reported on the Nazis' casual cruelty towards the Jews. They reported the Nazis had disposed of up to a million Jews through mass deportation in "sealed cattle trains."<sup>41</sup> A *Vancouver Daily Province* editorial on November 26, 1942 recounted horrifying details provided by the Polish government in exile, and said words like "extermination, massacre, and killing" did not adequately describe the Jewish situation in Occupied Poland.<sup>42</sup> On December 18, 1942, an *Ottawa Citizen* editorial noted that "there is nowhere in any land from Spain to Rumania where the Jews can find sanctuary," and that Nazi policy "has the appearance of being directed toward total extermination of the Jewish people in

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<sup>36</sup> "War Spirit of the Jews," October 13, 1942, *Globe and Mail*, 6, editorial.

<sup>37</sup> "Canadians on Massacres in Europe," File 4, JHC 288, Publicity and Press Releases, 1942-1943, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>38</sup> Ainsley Fuller, "The *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Globe and Mail*, and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1939," Master's Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Ulrich Frisse, "The 'Bystanders' Perspective."

<sup>40</sup> "Churchill on the Jews," October 24, 1942, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6, editorial, R446, reel 567, University of British Columbia Library.

<sup>41</sup> "Jews Under the Axis: A Moral," November 6, 1942, *Montreal Gazette*, editorial, 7.

<sup>42</sup> "The Shape of Terror," November 26, 1942, *Vancouver Daily Province*, editorial, 4.

Europe.”<sup>43</sup> Several editorials appeared over the next four months in papers such as the *Toronto Daily Star* and *Halifax Herald*, some of which referenced the CJC mass rally. Although Troper and Abella concluded that the rally did not inspire increased news coverage of Jewish persecution, it clearly did.<sup>44</sup>

The CJC believed they set the agenda of press coverage on Jewish persecution. A list of Canadian newspaper editorials on Jewish massacres, made separately from the CJC’s usual record of stories about Jews in the press, made it clear that the CJC thought they inspired the non-Jewish press to comment on the extermination of European Jews. As Anke te Heesen has argued in her book, *The Newspaper Clipping: A Modern Paper Object*, the practice of clipping a newspaper out of its original context creates new meaning.<sup>45</sup> While the CJC did not “clip” these stories in the traditional sense (they typed one- or two-line summaries of them on paper), they did put them in a new context. By recording these individual stories, printed in newspapers over several months, a pattern of increased press coverage of Jewish persecution in Europe revealed itself after their mass rally – not only to the CJC, but this writer as well. The cataloguing method also reveals its significance. The CJC catalogued stories in the press about Jews, including stories of persecution, in a numbered list that ran well into the hundreds. Yet rather than including these stories in their running list, they categorized stories of massacre into a document of their own following their mass rally, linking the two.

No one in the CJC National Executive had wanted to have a rally. Though Jews received more favourable press in 1942 than 1939, a dominion-wide rally had risks. Antisemitic backlashes

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<sup>43</sup> “Effort to Save Jewish Children,” December 18, 1942, *Ottawa Citizen*, editorial, R960, University of British Columbia Library.

<sup>44</sup> Troper and Abella, *None is too Many*, 99.

<sup>45</sup> Safie Azzouni, review of *The Newspaper Clipping: A Modern Paper Object*, translated by Lori Lantz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) *Isis* 106, no. 4 (Dec. 2015): 976-977, <https://doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1086/684664>. I could not get access to this book.

were unpredictable. No one could know if the attention would turn public opinion against them – undoing three years of work. Public pressure from Jews forced them to act, and Congress decided if there was a rally, it would be the biggest showing of collective action in Canadian Jewish history. They carefully planned out an event that would be garner positive press: many prominent speakers, especially non-Jews, speaking about Jewish suffering in Europe in the same breath as the patriotic war efforts of Canada’s Jews. Their plan worked. The initial coverage leaned towards the war effort, but the effort to raise awareness paid off. Many editors from the largest papers in the country wrote about Jewish persecution in the months that followed. The issue of Jewish extermination had gained salience in the press. Sympathy for the cause of Canadian Jews was no doubt due to another crucial decision: it was an informational campaign. Canadian Jews did not ask for anything, like the admittance of refugees or a change to immigration laws. They were in the middle of a quieter public relations fight to win the release Jewish refugees interned in Canada.<sup>46</sup> Historians who have called the rally inconsequential have underestimated both the CJC’s ability to generate press coverage of Jewish persecution and its importance. The rally had ramifications for their next campaign. With the press and public already aware of the conditions Jews faced, Congress could focus their efforts on rescue and did not have to get the press to assimilate two topics at once. The CJC waited until the spring of 1943 to persuade the public on the controversial topic of refugees, but they needed even more help than before from their allies to accomplish it.

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<sup>46</sup> See Paula Draper, “The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees,” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1983.

## Comprehending the Refugee Crisis: A Shift in Public Opinion

The CJC's National Executive Committee held a special emergency meeting at their Montreal headquarters on March 9, 1943. Saul Hayes had spoken with Undersecretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson five days earlier and received news that compelled their action – talk of a refugee conference in Ottawa. An international conference in the Canadian capital created a unique opportunity for Congress. Robertson believed “the Jewish community can obtain something now but only if a sufficient pressure” was applied to the government.<sup>1</sup>

The CJC had experience with another refugee conference. In the weeks before the last refugee conference at Évian in the spring of 1938, the CJC still preferred the strategy of quiet diplomacy: behind-the-scenes interventions by Jewish leaders with the government. It was crucial, its proponents argued, that Canadian Jews “refrain from mass meetings, publicity, and noise.”<sup>2</sup> It made no difference to Canadian immigration policy.

The CJC used a different strategy in 1943. Instead, it would “organize expression of public opinion” towards the Canadian government to accept “a number of threatened refugees.” Simultaneously, they needed to prevent an anti-immigration movement. They planned to petition the government through an “extensive press and radio campaign.” Notables would speak across Canada and get resolutions from various groups. The CJC would send letters to prominent people in government, publish a weekly periodical, and have a sub-committee of Catholics and Anglicans to lobby their authorities against anti-immigration positions.<sup>3</sup> It quickly became clear, however, that the United States government had suggested Ottawa to the British with no input from Canada. The refugee conference would not be in Ottawa, but in Bermuda. Nonetheless, the CJC went ahead with

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<sup>1</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to Samuel Bronfman, March 8, 1943, Doc 130, in *Archives of the Holocaust: An International Collection of Selected Documents*, edited by Paula Draper and Harold Troper, vol. 15 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 281.

<sup>2</sup> Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, 21.

<sup>3</sup> “Draft on Program in Connection with Proposed International Conference on Refugees in Ottawa,” March 9, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

their campaign. The CJC operated behind the scenes and with its allies and realized their plan. Their publicity campaign for refugees stimulated public opinion across the country in major and minor newspapers. They did not just inform Canadians, but both inspired the government to budge on their refugee policy – if only a little – and headed off an antisemitic backlash.

The CJC enlisted their old ally, the Canadian National Committee for Refugees (CNCR). Congress had worked since late 1938 with the CNCR, an organization that would become one of its most important fronts. The CNCR was born out of failure. After *Kristallnacht*, the CJC publicly mourned the pogrom through a mass meeting that received a great deal of sympathy in the press, which included calls for more refugees. Despite the CJC's private appeals, the government took no action. Prime Minister King feared the “political consequences” if his government gave into Jewish demands. He told his petitioners to change public opinion.<sup>4</sup> The CJC Refugee Committee realized they needed an educational campaign about refugees, but also lacked the social capital – Jewish appeals carried little weight and could backfire. They knew non-Jewish opinion mattered far more to the government and to Canada and feared an antisemitic backlash. Thus, they created a largely non-Jewish organization to speak publicly about refugees. On December 6 and 7, 1938, the CJC brought together more than forty national organizations, most prominently the League of Nations Society, as well as 150 prominent individuals, and formed the Canadian National Committee for Refugees.<sup>5</sup>

The CNCR proved useful whenever the CJC needed cover for more controversial messages, like in the spring of 1943 when Prof. Watson Thomson's five-minute radio address shamed Canadians. Thomson was the director of Adult Education at the University of Manitoba, and a well-known radio commentator for the *CBC* that the CJC and CNCR used to speak against government immigration laws. They worked together on an address called “Jews in Europe.” Saul Hayes singled

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<sup>4</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is too Many*, 43-45.

<sup>5</sup> “Report of the Executive Secretary, Central Division, CJC, January 21-23, 1939,” 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly Conference, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, Library and Archives Canada LAC, Ottawa.

out Louis Rosenberg as central to its production.<sup>6</sup> They hoped “to stimulate public opinion in favor of immediate and practical action on the part of the Canadian Government and others of the United Nations to assist those Jews in Europe who are threatened with extermination.”<sup>7</sup>

On Easter Sunday, 1943, Thomson spoke on *CBC* to Canadians of the Christian faith and implied they would be complicit in murder if they did not heed his message. As they contemplated Christ’s crucifixion, he pointed out that they had been “pass[ing] by on the other side” while “the crucifixion of a whole people – the Jews of Europe” happened before their eyes. He outlined the facts, but told his listeners, “facts do not speak for themselves.” His main concern was how to convey the facts “not just so that you are shocked (that is comparatively easy with such facts at one’s disposal) but so that you and I may be stirred and shocked and stimulated to action about it.” This is so difficult, Thomson said, because these facts “take on meaning only as they link up with something in our own lives. And you – have you seen even one murder? Have you seen human beings dying of slow starvation? Have you had your children flung into one train while you were pushed into another to be carried apart forever?” What had so far been done about questions of refugees and immigration? “Just about nothing. What is it we can do? I’ll tell you. It’s perfectly straight-forward and simple and if our governments don’t do it, it is because they don’t believe their people will back them – and that means you and I.” He told his listeners to petition the Prime Minister, their M.P.s, and the Department of External Affairs and demand the government open their immigration policy to Jewish refugees now. For Thomson, winning the war was not the most important challenge, but to deserve to win the war. To deserve victory, Canada needed to “rise up and act with all the passion of an awakened human conscience, and save Jewish lives. Save them –

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, May 4, 1943, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>7</sup> Letter, L. Rosenberg to Henry Monsky, President Supreme Grand Lodge Bnai Brith, May 3, 1943, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

not send them to Eritrea or Madagascar, but to live with them ourselves.” He ended with a warning. They faced “the awful accusation of these lines of verse written by a Jewish woman to a Christian friend” if they failed:

There is something between us now:  
The cry you did not raise.

You have washed your hands again.  
Put down the pitcher.  
This water will flow between us.

Give me back Jesus;  
He is my brother.  
He will walk with me.  
Behind the gray ghetto wall  
Into the slaughter-house.  
I will lead him into the lethal chamber;  
He will lie down upon the poisoned stone.  
The little children pricked with the death-bubble  
Will come unto him.

Return to him the yellow badge.  
Give me back Jesus;  
He is not yours.<sup>8</sup>

This CJC could never issue this message, but they wanted to capitalize on it. After Thomson’s address “created a stir all over,” Hayes wanted to determine the number of copies needed, noted “decentralized” distribution would be the best method, and kept a list of who wanted the speech.<sup>9</sup> When M. Merker of the *Winnipeg Free Press* wanted to donate \$1,000 to a fund in Thomson’s name, Hayes had ideas about distributing the speech.<sup>10</sup> Hayes and others wanted to collect the positive editorials written about the address and print them in a pamphlet to distribute

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<sup>8</sup> Watson Thomson, “The Jews in Europe,” Easter Sunday, 1943, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, File 1, Box 5, Watson Thomson Papers, UBC RBSC, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to L. Rosenberg, May 4, 1943, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>10</sup> M. Merker, *Winnipeg Free Press*, undated and unaddressed letter, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg; This idea became the pamphlet “The Free Press of Canada Speaks.”



widely and also to “certain members of Parliament.”<sup>11</sup> Thomson received the money and donated it to the CNCR.<sup>12</sup> Rosenberg also told Henry Monsky, president of the Supreme Grand Lodge B’nai B’rith in Nebraska that they could circulate the speech with credit to the CBC and Thomson.<sup>13</sup>

The CJC’s use of celebrity, the increasingly popular *CBC Radio*, and their message resonated in papers across Canada. By the CNCR’s count, there were 100 editorials for and 17 against the admission of refugees by December 1943.<sup>14</sup> Editorials came from both large and small newspapers, from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Globe and Mail*, *Montreal Gazette*, *Toronto Daily Star*, and *Saturday Night*, to the *Lethbridge Herald*, *Trail Times*, *Elora Express*, and *Prince Albert Daily Herald*. Some only wrote about the deadly conditions Jews in Europe faced, but others demanded action. They echoed Thomson’s charge of complicity in Jewish death if they did nothing. *Saturday Night* mocked the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ’s planned “day of compassion for the Jews.” While they did nothing, Jews were “systematically murdered by means which a humane people would not tolerate for use upon animals; and all that we can do about it is to devote a day, one single day, to feeling sorry for them!” If Canadians did not act, it was more evidence of “our guilt as accessories to murder.”<sup>15</sup> The *Halifax Herald* condemned democratic countries that looked on in “academic horror as from viewing an old book or pictured scene.”<sup>16</sup> The *Trail Times*, *Winnipeg Tribune*, and *Elora Express* all referenced the parable of the Good Samaritan. The *Express* put it explicitly: reluctance to share our abundance with those in desperate need is “a denial of democracy, a denial of freedom, a denial of the grace of charity and a denial of Christ. Meanwhile, in all the ghettos that have arisen since the German

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<sup>11</sup> Letter, S. Hayes to L. Rosenberg, May 4, 1943, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>12</sup> “Canadian National Committee on Refugees National Executive Minutes,” June 4, 1943, file 28, Vol. 6, MG28, V 43 6, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>13</sup> Letter, L. Rosenberg to Henry Monsky, President Supreme Grand Lodge B’nai B’rith, May 3, 1943, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

<sup>14</sup> “Canadian National Committee on Refugees Executive Minutes,” November 30, 1943, file 28, Vol. 6, MG28, V 43 6, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>15</sup> “Day of Compassion,” *Saturday Night*, in “The Free Press of Canada: Its editorial opinion about the plight of Jewish Refugees,” (Montreal: United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, 1943).

<sup>16</sup> “What Haven?” *Halifax Herald*, in “The Free Press of Canada.”

occupation, men plead for a cup of cold water, for they thirst, but we, great in complacency, offer them only a sponge full of vinegar.”<sup>17</sup>

Anyone could reproduce Thomson’s address, and it became widely distributed and the subject of speaking tours across the country and beyond. An *Ottawa Citizen* editorial summarized it and commented that “It should be read by people of goodwill throughout Canada.”<sup>18</sup> The paper printed Thomson’s entire address.<sup>19</sup> Within a month, speakers addressed over 40 venues about admitting refugees to such groups as League of Nations Societies, Rotary and Canadian Clubs, and the Council of Women. Mostly, people were unaware of the refugee issue. It was reported that “the interest and sympathetic response was quite general and indicated that opinion [was] favourable to the admission of refugees.” Copies of “The Jews in Europe” were distributed at the gatherings.<sup>20</sup> The *Vancouver News-Herald* reported on one address Thomson gave at the Hotel Georgia. He demanded Canada rid itself of antiquated racist immigration policies – a policy he likened to the Nazis – to secure a better future. Hundreds of attendees “applauded vigorously” to his demand.<sup>21</sup> News of Thomson’s address even reached rural areas. The *Prairie Messenger*, a self-styled Catholic family paper in Muenster, Saskatchewan, wrote an editorial on the “considerable propaganda” that had reached them on the Jewish refugee question, including Thomson’s address on the CBC and the *CJC Bulletin*.<sup>22</sup> Thomson’s address reached at least as far as London, where the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror widely distributed it.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Is this Christianity?” *Elora Express*, “The Free Press of Canada” This is in reference to the Pretorian Roman guards offering vinegar for Jesus to drink on the cross: Matt. 27:34 and Mark 15:23.

<sup>18</sup> “Homeless Victims of Hate,” April 28, 1943, *Ottawa Citizen*, editorial, File 2, Box 5, Watson Thomson Papers, UBC RBSC, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>19</sup> “The Jews in Europe,” *Evening Citizen*, File 2, Box 5, Watson Thomson Papers, UBC RBSC, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>20</sup> “Canadian National Committee on Refugees National Executive Minutes,” June 4, 1943, file 28, Vol. 6, MG28, V 43 6, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>21</sup> “Dominion’s Immigration Policy like Nazi’s, Says Dr. Thomson,” August 30, 1943, *Vancouver News-Herald*, File 1, Box 8, Watson Thomson Papers, UBC RBSC, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>22</sup> “Jewish and Other Refugees,” *Prairie Messenger*, in “The Free Press of Canada.”

<sup>23</sup> Letter, L. Rosenberg to Watson Thomson, October 11, 1943, F02, JHC 278, JHCWC, Winnipeg.

With their widespread reach, the CJC spread the word with its press office and *Congress Bulletin*. National Press Officer David Rome noted 900 newspapers across Canada carried the press releases of the CJC.<sup>24</sup> In line with their promotion of Jewish patriotism in the non-Jewish press, most of the news covered the achievements of Jews in the military, especially the missing or killed. Some releases dealt with CJC efforts, such as their government lobbying. When the CJC privately petitioned government leaders about refugees, and received a favourable response, they issued a press release. After the CJC visited Prime Minister Mackenzie King and asked the government to “act immediately to relieve the plight of the Jews of Europe,” they released news that Canada was ready “to do its part in a cooperative effort to deal with the tragic position of the victims of Nazi persecution.”<sup>25</sup> Their *Bulletin*, which consisted of news releases of importance to the CJC and was distributed to the press, did not shy away from openly calling on the government to take in Jewish refugees, as long as it had backup from non-Jews. A May 1943 issue wrote that city councils across Canada, in such places as Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg, passed resolutions that condemned the “brutal policy of murderous extermination of Jewish and other racial and religious groups in Nazi-fascist occupied territories.” They called for cooperation between the Canadian government and the United Nations and a secure “haven for those victims who can be saved from the grip of Hitlerism at the present time.” The CJC listed proposals, the first of which called on the government to take in “a number” of Jewish refugees, especially children, into Canada. It declared “Canada Must Act Now,” lest the Jewish people be “disappointed in their hour of agony.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “Report of the Joint Public Relations Committee Conference Central Region,” April 16, 1944, File 88, Box 4, ZA 1944 series, CJCC, ADCJA. Montreal.

<sup>25</sup> “News Release,” Publicity & Press, 1944, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 12, Reel M-5460, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>26</sup> “Something Should be Done for the Jews’ Feeling Rises in all Parts of Canada,” May 1943, *Congress Bulletin*, File 1, Box 8, Watson Thomson Papers, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections, Vancouver, Canada.

Some in the CJC believed no refugee conference in Ottawa removed the reason for a public petition for refugees, but Congress leaders pushed it forward.<sup>27</sup> Hayes believed that he spoke for the majority (including President Bronfman) when he wrote on May 4, 1943, that the Jewish position on refugees was well-known, mattered little, and a petition might backfire.<sup>28</sup> However, positive editorials from the Watson Thomson speech had just arrived. By May 13, there was a change of heart. It was a “matter of self-respect,” that Canadian Jews had to speak out. A feeling pervaded that “in the matter of life and death,” they had to at least try. Consequently, “if only a few thousand lives can be saved by the dramatic pressure of our campaign, then this will justify the bustle, noise, and the activity.”<sup>29</sup> Shortly before June 22, 1943, however, the CJC learned the CNCR sponsored a similar petition. After some debate, the National Executive abandoned their Jewish-only petition and signed onto the petition from the CNCR.<sup>30</sup> However, before they collected any signatures, their publicity campaign had already produced results.

By late summer, the efforts of the CJC and its allies paid off. The Department of External Affairs noticed an overwhelming favourability towards refugees in the press. Minister of Immigration Thomas Crerar wrote “a rising tide of public opinion in Canada, as expressed through the press” demanded swift action on refugees.<sup>31</sup> Hume Wrong from External Affairs sent a memo to the War Cabinet and explained the situation in more detail:

There is an insistent demand from Jewish agencies for action to relieve the trials of the Jewish people.... Apart, however, from the Jewish appeals there is wide spread evidence of an uneasy public conscience over the Canadian record with respect to refugees which has found expression editorially in the Winnipeg Free Press, the Globe and Mail, Saturday Night and many other journals.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Of the three resolution drafts, one specifies Jewish refugees, and two refugees generally. See “Alternate Drafts of Petition,” May 12, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>28</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to Ben Sadowski, May 4, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>29</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to Ben Sadowski, May 13, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>30</sup> National Executive Minutes, CJC, June 22, 1943, National Executive Committee, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 14, Reel M-5462, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>31</sup> A.L.J., Memorandum, August 30, 1943, Doc 136 in *Archives of the Holocaust*, 298.

<sup>32</sup> “Memorandum from Hume Wrong, Department of External Affairs, to the War Cabinet, August 30, 1943, Doc 144 in *Archives of the Holocaust*, 315.

Jewish appeals did not hold much weight with the government, a fact the CJC already knew. What the government – and indeed historians who have written on this topic – did not realize, was that the awakening consciousness in the press that moved the government to action did not occur spontaneously. It arose from a deliberate campaign to inspire such a response – and it worked. Past studies on this topic have perhaps not given credit to the CJC because they did not connect Watson Thomson and a broader public opinion campaign with the organization.<sup>33</sup> While published opinion is not synonymous with public opinion, as historian Heidi Tworek has argued, many elites believed they were one and the same.<sup>34</sup> The Canadian government was no different. By September 10, 1943, the government reopened their immigration office in Lisbon.<sup>35</sup> Minister Crerar announced on November 2, 1943, that the government granted “a substantial number” of refugees who remained in Spain and Portugal a haven in Canada until the war’s end.<sup>36</sup> Saul Hayes soon discovered that large numbers of refugees would not be coming to Canada simply because few refugees remained in Portugal, and many who did were destined for Palestine. Action had come too late for most, but not all. The first group would be 200-300 people destined for Montreal and Toronto.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the government’s announcement, the CJC and CNCR continued collecting signatures to demonstrate public support. Both Constance Hayward, secretary of the CNCR, and Saul Hayes, who also sat on the National Executive Committee of the CNCR, spearheaded the project. They wanted 500,000 signatures, but 200,000 would suffice. The petition called for the government to, in the interests of “common humanity,” admit refugees “without regard to race,

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<sup>33</sup> Norman Erwin, “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy, 139-140.

<sup>34</sup> Heidi Tworek, *News from Germany: The Competition to Control World Communications, 1900-1945* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2019), 18.

<sup>35</sup> A.L.J., Memorandum, September 10, 1943, Department of Mines and Resources, Doc 11, in *Archives of the Holocaust*, 244.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Crerar, “Press Statement on Refugees,” November 2, 1943, Doc 113, 249.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes, National Executive Meeting of the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, December 11, 1943, United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies National Executive Minutes, 1939-1944, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

creed, or financial condition.”<sup>38</sup> They planned a public campaign and targeted appeals to the government. They decentralized the campaign: all the CNCR’s affiliates were responsible for their membership, and the CJC for the Jewish communities.<sup>39</sup> The CJC covered 50 percent of the costs.<sup>40</sup> Both groups created different media, such as radio addresses and pamphlets, and wrote or inspired many newspaper articles. They worked with the *Toronto Daily Star*, which gave 10,000 copies of a radio address transcript from a speech by Robert Falconer — former University of Toronto president and CNCR honorary chairman — they had featured in the paper.<sup>41</sup> The paper also ran a story on the many prominent individuals who had signed the petition, such as presidents of various organizations, premiers, mayors, university presidents, and *Toronto Daily Star* editor, J. E. Atkinson. In its paper, the *Star* reproduced a petition form that could be cut out and mailed to the CNCR.<sup>42</sup> Hayes planned to put the petition to the government in the best light. At this point, he knew the government placed importance in public opinion. Rather than presenting the petition as a “canvas of those favourable” to refugees, he planned to present it like a Gallop poll, as a “sampling of public opinion,” broken down by support among different groups.<sup>43</sup>

Both the CNCR and CJC used the CNCR’s pamphlet “Does Canada Want Refugees?” to shame individuals into a pro-refugee stance. While published by the CNCR, Saul Hayes likely wrote it. In April 1943, Hayes wrote a memo for the CNCR that detailed how to approach the government—the pamphlet followed the same format and appeals. He described it as a plan of

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<sup>38</sup> Memorandum, “Admission of Refugees into Canada,” November 25, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>39</sup> “Plan for Project of Eliciting Petition from Canadian Public for the Admission of Refugees,” File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>40</sup> Minutes, National Executive Meeting of the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, December 11, 1943, United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies National Executive Minutes, 1939-1944, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 15, Reel M-5463, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>41</sup> “Canadian National Committee on Refugees Executive Minutes,” November 30, 1943, file 28, Vol. 6, MG28, V 43 6, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>42</sup> “Nearing 500,000-Name Goal on ‘Admit Refugees’ Plea,” November 27, 1943, *Toronto Daily Star*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum, Saul Hayes to Samuel Bronfman, “Interview with Senator Wilson,” March 10, 1944, Sam Bronfman, 1944-1949, CJC Central File, Additional Files, Box 1, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

attack to get the Canadian public and government on board with refugees.<sup>44</sup> The CNCR used 15,000 copies during the petition campaign.<sup>45</sup> The pamphlet focused on a series of questions: What is the problem? What have other countries done? What can be done? What does the press of Canada think? Labour? The Church? The pamphlet represented each group favouring the rescue of refugees and highlighted influential organizations and individuals, like the Trades and Labour Congress, Canadian Congress of Labour, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. This was a build up to address the reader: What do YOU say? It placed personal responsibility on the individual. If they did not act, they were guilty: “Am I callous enough to turn from the unparalleled crimes and refuse a helping hand?” “Am I content to have history record that when eternal values were being weighed Canada was found wanting?” “Am I ready to leave uprooted people stranded and hungry to the fate of marching from place to place or to internment camp or even death?” The pamphlet ended with a final question: WHAT MUST I DO? Thomson told people to write their member of Parliament and get others to sign the petition.<sup>46</sup>

Watson Thomson wrote a lengthier text in 1943 that the CJC and CNCR distributed as a pamphlet. Titled, “I Accuse: Revealing the Facts of Canada’s Inhumanity to Man,” it borrows the title from Émile Zola’s *J’accuse*, but directed its ire towards the Canadian people. Rosenberg consulted with Thomson on the pamphlet and provided immigration statistics on Canada’s comparably ungenerous record.<sup>47</sup> The text was more biting than his address on the CBC. He wrote that those who could help refugees but did not had a “blood-guilt” upon them – they are “accomplices” to Nazi crimes. Unless more were done, “Canada condemn[ed] thousands...within

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<sup>44</sup> “Memorandum,” from UJR, Montreal, to National Committee for Refugees, Ottawa, April 12, 1943, Doc 142 in *Archives of the Holocaust*, 309.

<sup>45</sup> “Canadian National Committee on Refugees Executive Minutes,” November 30, 1943, file 28, Vol. 6, MG28, V 43 6, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>46</sup> “Does Canada Want Refugees?” (Toronto: Canadian National Committee on Refugees, 1944).

<sup>47</sup> Letter, L. Rosenberg to Saul Hayes, September 1, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

Nazi Europe to certain death and torture.”<sup>48</sup> He went on to say “Canada is one of the countries most frequently pointed to by less privileged peoples not only with envy, but as an example of national selfishness and international injustice in that so much territory is held by so few with such exclusiveness.”<sup>49</sup> He told readers how to prove him wrong: write to the prime minister, minister of immigration, and your MP. He gave a template of a petition and urged them to sign the petition of the CNCR, get everyone they knew to sign it, and recruit speakers for local meetings.<sup>50</sup> Thomson concluded his pamphlet with a message of “above all humanness.” He wanted his readers to recognize the innate “preciousness and positive worth of every human being, just because he’s human and alive” as a reordering of the world into a “common human household.”<sup>51</sup> While more than one anti-refugee petition claimed over 100,000 signatures in Quebec, it made no difference.<sup>52</sup> Prime Minister King called them fraudulent and “the opinions of mere handfuls of persons.”<sup>53</sup>

The pro-refugee petition created passionate discussion among the letters to the editor section in the press. An analysis of letters written in the *Toronto Daily Star* and *Globe and Mail* from the start of the petition in October 1943 to the end of the year revealed 36 letters relating to the refugee petition. Of that number, 29 letters were for the petition and 7 were against. Many responded to three letters from O.T.G. Williamson, secretary of the Canadian Corps of World War I veterans, an organization against the petition. Several writers echoed the rhetoric from the CJC and CNCR and wondered whether people against the petition were content to “sit...smug in our safety and security, unmindful of the suffering and persecution” faced by thousands trapped in Portugal. Canadians risked being branded by the world as “little people with little minds.”<sup>54</sup> Writer Frederick

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<sup>48</sup> Watson Thomson, “I Accuse: Revealing the Facts of Canada’s Inhumanity to Man,” 5, (Winnipeg: Contemporary Publishers, 1943), File 2, Box 5, Watson Thomson Papers, UBC RBSC, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>49</sup> Watson Thomson, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Watson Thomson, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Watson Thomson, 31.

<sup>52</sup> “Petition Asks Parliament to Ban Immigration to Canada,” March 17, 1944, *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 12.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Reed, “A Foothold in the Whirlpool,” 53.

<sup>54</sup> G.V.C., “The Refugee Problem,” November 15, 1943, *Toronto Daily Star*, 6.



W. Noyes, a self-proclaimed World War I veteran, took exception to Williamson's rationale for maintaining Canada's Britishness, and likened it to the racial superiority claimed by the Nazis.<sup>55</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the letters came from many cities in Ontario. With both the CNCR and the CJC's Central Division headquartered in Toronto, and the wide reach of both newspapers, their messaging won over more people than not – at least among letter-writers to the papers.

After the Lisbon refugees arrived in the U.S., the CJC tried to shape the story in the local press. David Rome travelled to Philadelphia and “worked on the local [American] press” to inform them about the refugees. Rome noted the press naturally focused on the refugees who would stay in the city, but apart from that, “the story [was] entirely the Canadian aspect: their destination, guarding and transportation arrangement, first Passover in Canada, credit to the UJR, the National Committee on Refugees, Senator Wilson, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, our representations to the government, our guarantees, the occupations of the refugees.”<sup>56</sup> The *Jewish Telegraph Agency* also carried the story, the details of which Rome likely supplied, and it worked in the number of Canadian Jews currently in the armed forces – 13,000 – in a story totally unrelated to the Canadian military. It quoted Saul Hayes at length talking up Jewish refugees in Canada and their work in war industries and on farms.<sup>57</sup>

The CJC avoided the antisemitic backlash it had feared. Rome told Hayes that “about the only fly in the ointment” in Montreal occurred when Samuel Guttman, president of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, interfered with the reporters. This caused “unfriendly” and “nasty” reporting from papers like the *Gazette*, *Standard*, *La Presse*, and others. The French press generally opposed immigration, but for this specific group of refugees, there was “moderation of treatment.”<sup>58</sup> *Le*

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<sup>55</sup> Frederick W. Noyes, “Casualty List Lesson,” November 30, 1943, *Toronto Daily Star*, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Letter, David Rome to Saul Hayes, May 5, 1944, File 85, Box 4, ZA 1944 series, CJCC, ADCJA. Montreal.

<sup>57</sup> “Copy of Release given by JTA, NYC,” File 117, Box 6, ZA series 1944, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>58</sup> Letter, David Rome to Saul Hayes, May 5, 1944, File 85, Box 4, ZA 1944 series, CJCC, ADCJA. Montreal.

*Devoir* did not favor refugees, but noted some were Catholic, not here permanently, and “speak excellent French and are dressed in a European manner.” The usually reliably antisemitic *L’Action Catholique* asked for information about the government’s long-term policy – how many, from where, and where would they settle?<sup>59</sup> The reaction in the Francophone press aligns with Pierre Anctil’s findings that it was neither monolithic nor always antisemitic, as often portrayed by Abella and Troper.<sup>60</sup> When the first transport of refugees arrived in Toronto, the *Globe and Mail* wrote a sympathetic three column story and included two photos.<sup>61</sup> For the second landing of refugees, the *Globe and Mail* noted the “happy” refugees were gladly received in Toronto and included a photo of a smiling couple.<sup>62</sup> A *Toronto Daily Star* editorial demanded that the city “welcome and respect these guests,” and that Canada should take in “as many more as possible.”<sup>63</sup>

Historians who have written on the refugee public opinion campaign have unanimously called it a failure.<sup>64</sup> This position could be explained by their focus on CJC and CNCR refugee petition in the fall of 1943, rather than the efforts that preceded it and prompted a government response. The CJC’s deliberate strategy of working behind the scenes to get their agenda in the non-Jewish press was its most powerful tool. It was so powerful that one study missed the connection between Thomson and the CJC’s campaign.<sup>65</sup> The CJC’s victory was small, but it was far from a failure. The realization that there would be no refugee conference in Ottawa might have crushed the will for a large effort, and it nearly did, but a five-minute speech on CBC radio awakened press

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<sup>59</sup> Letter, David Rome to Saul Hayes, April 12, 1944, Publicity & Press, 1944, JHCWC, CJCC, Volume 12, Reel M-5461, LAC, Ottawa.

<sup>60</sup> Pierre Anctil, “A Double Standard: The Respective Responsibilities of English and French-language Canada in the German Refugee Crisis,” trans. Jonathan Kaplansky, *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études juives canadiennes* vol. 26 (2018); More work needs to be done on the relationship between the CJC and the Francophone press, but that is not the focus of this study.

<sup>61</sup> “Haven in Canada Thrills Refugees After Long Years of Dodging Nazis,” April 10, 1944, *Globe and Mail*, 7.

<sup>62</sup> “Tired, Happy Refugees Welcomed on Arrival,” June 2, 1944, *Globe and Mail*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> “Welcome and Respect these Guests,” April 11, 1944, *Toronto Daily Star*, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Norman Erwin, “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy; Max Beer, *What Else Could We Have Done*; Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many*.

<sup>65</sup> Erwin, “Confronting Hitler’s Legacy,” 139.

opinion in a way that no one expected. It was not economic arguments that swayed Canadians, but a connection formed between people separated by thousands of miles. The connection was a common humanity - unmediated by ideas of racial, religious, or cultural differences - crying out for help. Their tactics made Canadians, and especially the press, think about refugees (and themselves) in a new way. The need for Canadians to take in refugees, lest they be found guilty of abandoning their fellow humans in their most desperate time, became part of the agenda. This pressure forced the government to accept at least a few hundred refugees. While some Canadians resisted the idea, the government did not take them seriously – at least in this isolated case. A petition showed that it was not just the press that demanded action, but Canadians across the country – 190,000 signed.<sup>66</sup> The French-Canadian press, notoriously anti-immigrant, tolerated the newly arrived refugees when they arrived in Montreal. Were all Canadians “stirred and shocked and stimulated to action” like Watson Thomson had hoped they would be?<sup>67</sup> No, but just enough to save the lives of a few hundred refugees. Saul Hayes said that if just a few thousand could be saved, it would be worth it, but he probably thought a few hundred justified the “bustle, noise, and activity” too.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> “Canadian National Committee on Refugees, Bulletin No. Twenty – Summary of Committee Work – Jan. 1944 – May 1945,” File 53a, Box 3, CD series, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

<sup>67</sup> Watson Thomson, “The Jews in Europe,” Easter Sunday, 1943, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, File 1, Box 5, Watson Thomson Papers, UBC RBSC, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>68</sup> Letter, Saul Hayes to Ben Sadowski, May 13, 1943, File 104, Box 9, ZA 1943, CJCC, ADCJA, Montreal.

## Conclusion

Before 1939, the CJC already faced significant challenges from antisemitism. It was the very reason it reformed. The war brought even greater challenges to not only their reputation, but their ability to advocate for Jews in Canada and Europe. Public relations became a crucial means to confront these challenges. By collecting huge amounts of data, as the loudest voice among Canadian Jewry, they amplified the achievements of Canadian Jews in the military and on the home front. What might have been a hostile press became full of praise for their patriotic efforts. As news from Europe worsened, the CJC put their improved reputation on the line by staging a mass rally to bring attention to the extermination of European Jewry in the press and Jewish persecution became a frequent topic of sympathetic editorials. Soon enough, they undertook their most difficult challenge: making the government accept refugees. Fearful of a backlash and that Jewish concerns mattered to few, they worked as a silent partner with the public facing CNCR. Here, too, they succeeded, although not to the degree they would have liked.

The CJC's public relations during the war have garnered little attention from historians, yet it was during this period that they developed and tested the strategies that would bring them major victories in the early 1950s. Under the continued leadership of Samuel Bronfman and Saul Hayes, the CJC won human rights victories during what James Walker calls the "Jewish phase." In 1950, when the CJC and its allies sought to overturn the right of businesses to discriminate based on race, colour, or creed, Walker says they needed "a highly public campaign and an issue that would command both the attention and the concern of Ontario voters but would not animate antisemitic stereotypes." Rather than putting themselves at the forefront, the CJC and others put their energies behind the National Unity Association, a small organization in Dresden Ontario that fought against

discrimination of African Canadians.<sup>1</sup> Walker notes the government passed legislation not because they recognized racial inequality, but instead saw “public dissatisfaction” through newspaper headlines as a “problem to be solved.”<sup>2</sup> Walker argues that the campaign borrowed its tactics from the postwar campaigns of the American Jewish Committee.<sup>3</sup> However, the strategies of the CJC’s forgotten 1943 refugee campaign and the government’s response are generally identical. When the war dominated the headlines, this strategy secured a few hundred refugees. In the early 1950s, the same strategy resulted in the Fair Employment (1951) and Fair Accommodations Practices Acts (1954) in Ontario, and a “revolutionary change in the definition of individual freedom.”<sup>4</sup> This suggests that it was the war-time atmosphere that stifled some of the CJC’s efforts as opposed to poor decision-making as some historians have argued.

How the CJC engaged the public was the key to getting their agenda in the press and the results they wanted. The importance of the Jewish press to Jews is well established, but this study reveals that the non-Jewish press was essential for Jews, too. Non-Jews did not read the Yiddish press, where Canadian Jews read about Jewish massacres with horrifying frequency during the war, and the comparatively low circulations of the Anglo-Jewish press tells us that few apart from Jews read their papers either. Getting their agenda in the non-Jewish press was one of the only ways to make themselves heard. After they succeeded in convincing the press, the government listened. No doubt many other histories lurk behind the very public, yet also hidden campaigns in the press. If we look beyond the headlines, they will be easier to find.

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<sup>1</sup>James Walker, "The 'Jewish Phase' in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002): 10. <https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/scholarly-journals/jewish-phase-movement-racial-equality-canada/docview/215637367/se-2?accountid=14656>.

<sup>2</sup> Walker, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Walker, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Walker, 15.

These findings have important implications for how historians can investigate the responses of the ongoing persecution of religious and ethnic minorities today. Similar to the CJC's mass rally, we have seen how the Uyghur diaspora have used the press to draw attention to the persecution they faced in the Xinjian region of China.<sup>5</sup> Organizations like the World Uyghur Congress and Uyghur American Association lobby governments and regularly issue press releases. However, the world has known about the plight of the Uyghurs for more than half a century.<sup>6</sup> Their ongoing persecution has prompted scholars to study how the media has covered the ethnic minority, but like studies of Jews in the media, they only focus on the text.<sup>7</sup> Yet this study shows the CJC was at its most successful when they hid their efforts from the public. It is likely that a great deal of the Uyghurs' efforts remain hidden. As we have seen, organizations are often strategically behind the stories we read in the media. Like Canadian Jews in the 1940s, Uyghurs have legitimate fears of speaking openly. The Chinese state has attempted to silence critics in the diaspora by sentencing relatives who remain in China to long prison sentences.<sup>8</sup> When the histories of how the Uyghur diaspora responded to the persecution of their friends and family in Xinjiang are ready to be written, historians will have to look beyond public actions to uncover the full scope of their efforts.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Emma Murphy, "Being Uighur in China: 'After Nazi Germany the world said never again, but it is,'" September 3, 2020, *ITV*, <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-09-03/being-uighur-in-china-after-nazi-germany-the-world-said-never-again-but-it-is>.

<sup>6</sup> Justin M. Jacobs, *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 207, doi:10.2307/j.ctvct01xm.

<sup>7</sup> Fawwaz Ma'ruf Prayudha, "Uyghur and China in the American Media Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of "CNN" News Articles," *English Language Teaching Educational Journal* 2, no. 3 (2019): 121-132; Erkin Emet, "Urumqi Clashes: The Reactions and the Aftermath," in *The Uyghur Community: Diaspora, Identity and Geopolitics*, edited by Güljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Konuralp Ercilasun, 137-150 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Liang Zheng, "Media and Minkaohan Uyghurs: Representation, Reaction and Resistance," Order No. 3489628, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011, <https://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/dissertations-theses/media-minkaohan-uyghurs-representation-reaction/docview/915643879/se-2?accountid=14656>.

<sup>8</sup> Nate Schenkkan and Sarah Cook, "A Global Campaign of Repression, Made in China: The Chinese government is the world's leading perpetrator of attacks on dissidents abroad," February 5, 2021, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/a-global-campaign-of-repression-made-in-china/>.

Historians of responses to the Holocaust have argued that Jews in the United States and Canada were powerless against the government's antisemitic policies and a public more interested in winning the war than saving refugees. This argument persists because historians have not considered all the methods Jews used to influence the public and government. This has led to both forgotten and misattributed victories. In an atmosphere of increased antisemitism, the CJC used subtle yet influential methods to achieve their goals. Overt efforts, like a mass rally have also been dismissed as inconsequential. Perhaps this is because historians have misjudged their purpose, but it is also due to a tendency to treat events as isolated. As this thesis has shown, their public relations continually built upon their past efforts. Is the outcry for refugees in the press thinkable without the CJC first making the press aware of Jewish extermination in Europe? Looking at these well-studied events in a new light reveals moments when Canadian Jews succeeded. These successes do not mean they were powerful, but neither were they powerless.

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