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Between Jewish State and Diaspora: Exploring the Founding of the Canadian Jewish Congress

Abstract

This article explores the lead up to, formation, and immediate aftermath of the first Canadian Jewish Congress (1919). Meeting minutes, letters, and newspaper articles related to the early CJC suggest that it was an institution built in response to nationwide excitement and agreement concerning the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The CJC was driven by an agenda to invigorate and expand Jewish life in Canada without practical commitments to similar efforts in Palestine. This logic was dissimilar from other contemporary conceptions of Zionism and reflects the reality that Zionist ideas and institutions have been consequential to the endurance of the Jewish diaspora throughout the twentieth century. In the Canadian case, the central factors shedding light on this counterintuitive logic are the influence of the Socialist Zionist Poale Zion upon the CJC's mandate, coordination between CJC leadership factions to ensure the longevity of Canadian Jewry, and the CJC's resolution to create the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, which represents the practical thrust of the CJC and its broadest-reaching and longest-standing policy outcome.

Résumé

Cet article explore la préparation, la mise en place et la suite immédiate du premier Congrès juif canadien (1919). Les procès-verbaux des réunions, les lettres et les articles de journaux liés au début du CJC suggèrent qu'il s'agissait d'une institution construite sur la vague de l'enthousiasme et du soutien national pour l'établissement d'un État juif en Palestine. Le CJC était animé par un programme visant à dynamiser et à élargir la vie juive au Canada, sans engagement pratique envers des efforts similaires en Palestine. Cette logique était différente des autres conceptions contemporaines du sionisme et reflète la réalité que les idées et les institutions sionistes ont été la conséquence de la ténacité de la diaspora juive tout au long du XXe siècle. Dans le cas canadien, les facteurs centraux éclairant cette logique contre-intuitive sont l'influence du Poale Zion Socialiste Sioniste sur le mandat du CJC; la coordination entre les factions dirigeantes du CJC pour assurer la longévité de la communauté juive canadienne et la résolution du CJC de créer la Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, qui représente la ligne de force du CJC et son résultat politique le plus substantiel et ancien.

The first Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) was an affiliate of the World Zionist Congress whose representatives were overwhelmingly elected from the nation's three largest Zionist political parties. Yet it pursued a fundamentally diasporist political agenda and was practically impotent concerning the central Zionist goal at the turn of the twentieth century: settling the Yishuv. It should be noted that diasporism, or diaspora nationalism, denotes an ideology that argues for the endurance and ongoing maintenance of diasporic Jewish communities and their polities while Yishuv

refers to the early settlements of the Jewish proto state in Palestine. Historians of Zionism have long noted intellectual overlap between diaspora nationalism and Zionism, and scholars of Canadian Jewry have examined the CJC as a foundational institution in the development of Jewish political organization. The World Zionist Congress, however, has yet to be looked at as an institution consequential, perhaps counter-intuitively, in furthering diasporist political aims. The case of the CJC is a useful entry point for addressing this issue.

The history of the CJC shows that Zionist discourse and political affiliation were instrumental in the mobilization of diasporist political objectives. The CJC was driven by an agenda to invigorate rather than negate the diaspora, highlighting the centrality of diasporist thought to early Zionist activism. This complicates historiographies that separate the concurrent intellectual development of diasporism and Jewish radicalism on the one hand, from Zionism on the other. As Noam Pianko has noted, there is "a grey area in prestate ideologies that blur boundaries between Zionism and diaspora nationalism."[1] This article outlines how these pre-state intellectual grey areas manifested themselves politically.

The article illustrates that the convening of the first CJC, though animated by communal agreement concerning the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, was fundamentally concerned with overseeing a diasporist political agenda. This can be understood through three factors: 1) the central role of Poale Zion, a socialist-Zionist organisation primarily committed to workers' rights, building local Yiddish-language educational institutions, and, in its Canadian context, administering social services; 2) intracommunal debates between mainstream General Zionists and Poale Zionists that highlight a coordinated agenda among CJC factions to ensure the ongoing maintenance of Jewish existence in the diaspora with no plan for Canadian Jewish immigration to Palestine; and 3) the creation of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, an organization tasked with lobbying for the settlement of thousands of Jewish refugees in Canada rather than Palestine.

Canadian Zionism in its Transnational Context

From 1880 until the creation of the CJC in 1919, Canadian Jewry experienced mass immigration from Eastern Europe, multiplying the population by a factor of at least ten—ushering in a period of dramatic demographic, economic, and cultural transformation. In turn, a distinct socio-economic cleavage took shape between a wealthier establishment who funded social services (uptown Jews) and the newly settled Eastern European immigrants who needed them (downtown Jews).[2] This cleavage is central to the study of twentieth-century Jewry in a transnational context. Jonathan Sarna and David Ceserani have noted that Zionist organizations were more frequently created by downtown/migrant communal leadership to counter the uptown/

settled establishment (in the United States and Britain, respectively).[3] In Canada, Zionist discourse and identity was far more popular among uptown and downtown Jews when compared to its Anglo-Jewish counterparts. Whereas Zionist affiliation deepened the uptown-downtown cleavage in the other Anglo-Jewish contexts, in Canada, Zionist affiliation provided ideological common ground upon which the CJC was founded.

Canada's Jewish polity was organizationally built in parallel with the early Zionist movement. Prior to the period of mass Eastern European migration, Canada was inhabited by just over one thousand wealthy Jewish merchants and fur traders, home to three synagogues, and without national bodies to coordinate political efforts.[4] By 1900 in Canada, modern Orthodoxy, the Bund, Jewish Communism, Jewish Anarchism, and most significantly German Reform were peripheral movements without national coordination as seen in the US and Britain. Whereas in the US, German reformers were the core to its uptown leadership, the political establishment in Canada was far more diverse, consisting of Austrian, German, British, and Eastern European leaders. Consequently, the Reform movement's anti-Zionism, a significant obstacle to Zionism's popularity in the US, was peripheral in the Canadian case, providing ground more hospitable for Canadian Jews to identify with Zionism.

At the CJC's convening in 1919, the population had grown to 126,196 with 57.2 percent born in Eastern Europe.[5] The influx of tens of thousands of Jews beginning in the late nineteenth century prompted the creation of the first national Jewish organizations in Canada. This coincided with the global popularity of General Zionism in the wake of the mass displacement of Jews throughout Eastern Europe (1892-1919), the Balfour Declaration (November 1917), and the commencement of the Paris Peace Conference (January 1919). As early as 1910, Canadian financial contributions to Zionist causes represented the highest per capita globally.[6] Canada's first national Jewish organization, founded by the political establishment, was the Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada. Its anti-establishment detractors instituted the Canadian Poale Zion six years later.[7]

Within the context of early twentieth-century Canada, attempting to understand Jewish diasporism as detached from Zionism is anachronistic, as the principal institutions created to pursue diasporic political goals were Zionist. The CJC represents the apex of communal unity within the process of Canadian Jewish organizational development—as the nation's two major Zionist factions coalesced to build a Canadian Jewish parliament. As will be shown, the first Canadian Jewish Congress developed an ideological-institutional synthesis, blending the institutional blueprint of Theodor Herzl's Zionism with a diasporist political agenda thanks to the socialist-Zionist Poale Zion. The Poale Zion's leaders were the first to call upon national organizations with the idea of a CJC, and they functioned as the primary architects

of the CJC during its preparatory period. Herzl's attempts to consolidate Jewish political efforts around immigration to Palestine through the creation of local, national, and international Jewish political bodies inspired the CJC's founders.[8] At the same time, the CJC was not committed to a practical Zionism, that is, a Zionism focused on wholesale Jewish resettlement in Palestine. Although the CJC agreed on the need to establish a Jewish state, the organization developed a mandate which largely saw itself as supportive rather than active in such a process.

The Ideological and Institutional Camps Responsible for the CJC

In 1897 Herzl presented a set of principles before the first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, calling upon all Jewish communities to build local institutions in preparation for an ingathering in Palestine.[9] Herzl's solution to political and social discrimination against Jews in post-emancipation Europe was for Jews to "return to their own nation and settle on their own soil."[10] His General Zionism advocated for the construction of diasporic institutions capable of consolidating Jewish communities organizationally to "rationally transplant them … in groups of family and friends … to better ground [Palestine]."[11] He argued that establishing Jewish organizations in the diaspora should not be the end goal but rather a means of encouraging Jewish mass immigration to Palestine.

In response to his call, Canada's first Zionist society was founded on March 13, 1898. By 1899, Zionist societies had formed in Montreal, Winnipeg, Toronto, Quebec City, Kingston, Hamilton, and London. On November 7 of that year, each of these municipalities sent delegates to the first national conference of the Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada. At the meeting, organizers tallied more than five hundred individuals affiliated with a Zionist society somewhere in Canada.[12] The Federation had a clear preference for Herzl's brand of political Zionism. At the conference, a version of Herzl's Basel Program was adopted as part of the Federation's national constitution. It promised to:

1. Promote the acquisition for the Jewish people of a publicly secured, legally assured home in Palestine
2. Promote the settlement in Palestine of Jews engaged in agriculture, handcrafts, industries, and professions
3. Centralize the entire Jewish people by means of general and local institutions, agreeably to the laws of the land (where they reside).
4. Strengthen Jewish National consciousness and sentiment, and,
5. Obtain the sanction of governments to the carrying out of the objects of Zionism.[13]

The first ten years of the Federation's political activity reinforced these constitutional goals. The organization oversaw two principal functions: gathering donations from Canadian Jews to build colonies in Palestine; and the distribution of educational materials propagating its "Zionist mission."[14] Interestingly, the Federation's realpolitik justifications for Yishuv, did not dissuade their institutional affiliation with religious leadership.

Alongside the plurality of voices that began to populate Canada's main Jewish centres in the late nineteenth century were the plurality of conceptions of Zionism reflecting the identities of Jews fleeing persecution from the Pale of Settlement. One such tendency was the emerging view of Zionism as an extension of Biblical prophecy and rabbinic thought. Mizrachi Zionists developed in Canada as a religious/Orthodox subsidiary to the Federation. Mizrachi developed out of the thinking of proto-Zionists like Yehuda Alkali (1798–1878), Zvi Kallischer (1795–1874), and Rabbi Yitzchak Yaacov Reines (1839–1915).[15] The Mizrachi organizational presence in Canada was brought to life in 1907 by the Toronto-based rabbis Jacob Gordon and Joseph Weinreb, Ben Zion Nathanson, principal of the city's Talmud Torah, and lay leader Paul Levi.[16] By 1911, Gordon served as the recording secretary of the Federation, displaying institutional embeddedness between so-called secular and religious establishment Jews.[17] Ideological differences between Mizrachis and Herzlians seem to have been overcome via the common "uptown" milieu of their leaders. Nevertheless, two years prior to Mizrachi's foundation, a "downtown"-led movement began to question the hegemonic place of the Federation as *the* national voice of Canadian Zionism.

In 1905, the Canadian branch of the Poale Zion was founded. At the time, the Poale Zion was *the* international association advocating for Socialist Zionism. Its founders, Ber Borochov and Nachman Syrkin, viewed Herzlian Zionism as detached from the experiences and aspirations of Eastern European Jewry. Borochov advocated for a Jewish nationalism that embraced Jewish political agency in the diaspora in the forms of labour unionization, social activism, and national autonomy. Borochov argued that "*galut* [exile/diaspora] and Zion must each be regarded as ends in themselves," and that "the Jewish Question can be solved only by connecting healthy *galut* life with a healthy centre in the independent homeland."[18] Zionism, in his view, does not negate but sustains the diaspora. This notion contrasts the more explicitly anti-Zionist, or non-Zionist, diasporisms which developed contemporaneously with the Poale Zion. Non-Zionist diasporists such as Simon Dubnow (1861–1941), the most popularly recognized founder of diaspora nationalism or "autonomism," as he called it, argued that national minority rights throughout Europe should be pursued as a political end instead of sovereign control over a given territory.[19] Dubnow's emphasis on national minority rights influenced Zionists and anti-Zionists alike, and would be reiterated by the CJC's agenda, which appropriated the language of national minority rights in its policy resolutions.

The early Canadian Poale Zion, while supportive of the General Zionists, evidenced by its financial commitments pledged to Jewish colonies in Palestine, was also the largest Jewish organization in Canada that could be considered politically leftist.[20] In early twentieth-century Canada, anti-Zionist nationalist groups, such as the Bund and Jewish Anarchism, were institutionally weak, as they had not erected national organizations nor literary mouthpieces.[21] So the Poale Zion filled the ideological space left by these more radical groups as an umbrella organization for socialists, radicals, and liberals alike. The socialist and non-Zionist Arbeiter Ring, for instance, coalesced with the Poale Zion-led workers bloc in preparation for the CJC election.[22] From 1909 onward, Poale Zion refused invitations to the Federation and started convening its own conferences. In doing so, it opposed the Federation's monopoly over Canadian Jewish political organization, reframing what it meant to be a Canadian Zionist.[23]

Instead of leading fundraisers for the colonial trust (the principal organization overseeing the transfer of funds from the diaspora to the Yishuv) like the General Zionists, Poale Zion placed its organizational emphasis on labour rights, domestic poverty relief, and the invigoration of Yiddishkeit in Canada. The party raised most of its funds for local trade unions, including the United Garment Workers (established in 1906), the Jewish American Tailor's Union (1915), and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (1919).[24] Poale Zion led campaigns for municipal, provincial, and federal elections throughout Canada on a platform that "showed it was possible to be both a socialist and a Zionist."[25] The party was instrumental in building grassroots Yiddishist cultural and educational institutions. It founded the Canadian Jewish National Workers Alliance (1909), the Jewish People's School of Toronto (1914), the Jewish Legion (1914), Montreal's Jewish Public Library (1914) and the Jewish Peretz Schools (1923).[26] While the Poale Zion publicly supported the Yishuv, its practical political agenda was far more concerned with ensuring the ongoing maintenance of Canadian Yiddishkeit.

The Poale Zion transformed the Yishuv-centric conception of Zionism professed by the General Zionist and Mizrachi coalition by providing a local focus to their organizational mandate. Additionally, it was the Poale Zion who initiated a call to the Federation to form a Canadian Jewish congress as early as 1915; its longtime president, H.M Caiserman, would serve as the CJC's founding general secretary, as the Congress idea was conceived under his leadership of the Poale Zion, alongside Reuben Brainin and Yehuda Kaufman.[27] As such, when the CJC came into being, its ideological framers were fundamentally concerned with broadening the political capacity of the Jewish community *in* Canada.

The Formulation of the Congress Idea

The commencement of the Paris Peace Conference provided international Jewish leadership with the opportunity to place pressure on the British government to further its promises to erect a "Jewish national home" in Palestine, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration.[28] This process undoubtedly provided justification for Canada to convene its own national political conference. However, the World Zionist Congress had existed for twenty-two years and met on eleven occasions prior to the commencement of the Paris Peace Conference. So, there are factors that contributed to the CJC's much later convening, when compared with its international counterpart.[29] To gain a local sense of why the CJC stalled its convening, I will explore communications between and among the two principal Canadian Zionist factions. Although the idea for the Canadian Jewish Congress gained momentum with the signing of the Balfour Declaration, it received pushback from General Zionists who were intent on avoiding discussions related to domestic politics within a national Zionist forum. Thus, Congress' eventual convening represented a major compromise for the Poale Zionists' domestically rooted and diasporist conception of Zionist politics. By contrast, the General Zionists were intent, until 1919, on maintaining a Yishuv-centric Zionist politics.

In February 1915, the Poale Zion's national affiliate, the Canadian Jewish Alliance (CJA), circulated a letter inviting hundreds of Jews in Montreal to its annual conference. The letter's preface critiqued the Federation's lack of financial support for labour organizations and the urban poor throughout Montreal. The letter condemned the budget priorities of Montreal's Jewish leadership, wherein $1,061.50 was allotted to the colonial trust and $5,931.85 to Lord Rothschild's War Victims Committee in London without a specific allocation provided for Montreal's impoverished Jews.[30] The letter reads: "The voice of those who are suffering was mercilessly suppressed. But the situation is too terrible for us to cease our efforts, as have our Up-Town benefactors."[31] It concluded with the CJA calling for a conference where labour organizations could meet to "develop plans to help those who seek help."[32] On March 2, four days before the annual conference, the conference's provisory committee published a letter in the Yiddish-language *Keneder Adler* (Canadian Eagle) newspaper. The letter outlines the most pressing tasks the CJA saw before Canadian Jewish leadership at the time:

> First, to respond to the great need that has been created in the lands of war … and to aid wherever Jewish migration brings them [Jewish refugees]. Secondly, we must be ready to speak in the name of the entire Jewish people … and demand assurances of civil, political and national rights for the Jews in the warring countries, especially in eastern Europe and in Palestine… Thirdly, now that the cultural influence of our European centres has ceased to nurture us … we will of

> necessity need to make ourselves culturally strong by organizing our communities into firm institutions and build our national and social life here on healthier foundations … these are great tasks before us: economic, political, cultural."[33]

The language used in this correspondence contradicts the historiographical tendency to read Zionism as intellectually detached from diasporism. First, the primary concerns of the preparatory committee pertain to those who are suffering and who seek help in all political contexts, not just Palestine. Second, national minority rights, à la Dubnow, should be pursued broadly, implying calls for emancipation, not strictly autoemancipation. Finally, the letter speaks of the need to create communal institutions to build healthier foundations "here," rather than a focus on acquiring land "there."

The CJA conference convened on March 6, 1915. At its conclusion, participants agreed to form a democratically elected "Canadian Jewish Congress."[34] Two weeks later, Reuben Brainin, a Montreal Jewish journalist and Labour Zionist, called for nationwide collective action.[35] As he remarked in a letter sent to the Poale Zion's national headquarters: "Great days have come for the Jewish people … our people suffer most bitterly and hope most stoutly.… We have therefore come to feel that we must unite all these single trends into one mighty stream which will bear all classes, all parties, all movements in Canadian Jewry to one great political-national act."[36] That same year, provisory committees to establish a congress had developed in Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec, Winnipeg, Chatham, and Kingston.[37] The earliest calls for a congress placed far greater emphasis on aid, national rights, and relief for those affected by war than on Jewish resettlement in Palestine. Brainin's reference to Poale and General Zionisms as "all movements" in Canadian Jewry highlights the role that Zionism played as *the* form of organized Judaism at the time.

Despite calls for unity heralded by the Poale Zion leadership, the uptown leadership in Montreal, the most politically influential in Canada, remained hesitant to meet in concert until 1918. In October 1915, an organizing committee of the Conference of Canadian Jews was formed by Louis Fitch, Clarence De Sola, Samuel L Jacobs, and Joseph Margolese—all Zionists of Montreal's uptown establishment.[38] This conference sought to represent all "Jewish opinions and classes" and was set to be held on the same date as the Labour-led CJA national conference—a concerted effort by establishment political Zionists to thwart Labour Zionist aspirations to serve as a national communal leadership.[39]

When receiving an invitation to the uptown-led conference, Marcus Hyman, a prominent Winnipeg Jew, wrote back that "as the purposes of both the National Alliance, and the Conference of Canadian Jews is the same, there should be but one conference."[40] Despite Hyman's apt assessment, establishment Zionists remained

committed to not meeting with their Poale Zion counterparts. They cited two arguments proposed repeatedly in 1916–1917. First, as Federation vice-president Leon Goldman explained in a 1918 article in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*: "The Zionist movement was not organized for the purpose of meddling in local politics…. Hence the proposed Congress does not come within the Zionists' programme."[41] Second, Goldman stated that a national congress should not be held before European governments signed a peace treaty, so as not to compromise the goal of an ingathering in Palestine, were Congress to meet and pass "unwise resolutions."[42] Here, it is likely that Goldman was echoing a fear common amongst Zionist leadership in Canada at the time. The fear being that if Zionist leaders were to pursue their political agenda without consulting and cooperating with the colonial power that were to administer Palestine, then said colonial power would see the Zionist movement as contradictory to its own political interests.[43]

The General Zionist position heralded by the Federation and Goldman changed less than a year later, in line with the Poale Zionists, as the Federation formally agreed to meet in Congress. Sometime between January 5–7, 1919, Clarence de Sola, who had served as president of the Federation for twenty years, resigned, leading to his replacement alongside five other committee executives.[44] During his final meeting as president, de Sola said that he decided to resign as the support he received for twenty years "had much diminished."[45] A.J. Freiman and a like-minded slate of executives were appointed as the new Federation leadership. They sought to overcome de Sola's purported lack of democratic principles in leading the Federation and his ineffective advocacy for the thousands of Eastern European Jews settling in Canada.[46] Knowledge of the upcoming commencement of the Paris Peace Conference, which provided the opportunity for global Zionist leadership including Chaim Weitzman, Nahum Sokolow, and Menahem Ussishkin to address leaders of thirty different European states, may have urged the Federation to rethink its approach to coalescing with the Poale Zion.[47] At its first meeting, the new federation passed a resolution implementing a provisional committee for a "Canadian Jewish Congress"—the democratically elected institution insisted upon by the Poale Zion for the previous four years.

On January 26, 1919, 125 leadership representatives from the Poale Zion (including Simon Belkin and one L. Zucker), the Federation (Hirsch Wolofsky and A.J. Frieman), Mizrachi, benefit societies, and non-partisan national-level charities met at the Baron de Hirsch Institute, in Montreal, to think up a blueprint for the CJC. At the meeting, Lyon Cohen was elected president of the preparatory committee and would later serve as president of the CJC. Though less active in organized Zionism, Cohen's Eastern European origins, eminent status in the garment industry, and his advocacy work in founding the Federation of Jewish Charities meant that he could be seen as the face of both uptown and downtown communities.[48]

During the preparatory session, forty representatives were elected from the group to construct an agenda for the CJC, with H.M. Caiserman appointed general secretary. Poale Zion had first proposed the Congress idea, so Caiserman, its longstanding president, would consequently serve as the primary executive functionary of Congress. Caiserman was tasked with leading the preparatory committee and overseeing Congress' resolutions following its convening.

Caiserman's main task as leader of the preparatory committee was to think through and enact democratic procedures that demonstrated the CJC's commitment to realizing its mandate as a "parliament of Canadian Jewry."[49] The representative parliamentary model promised to the Canadian public by the CJA in 1915 was to be enacted by 1919 in collaboration with General Zionist leadership.[50] The plan divided Canadian Jewry into three territorial electoral districts—Quebec, Ontario, and Western Canada—with eighty, seventy, and fifty delegate seats per territory, respectively. During a subsequent meeting, fifteen delegate seats were added, guaranteeing five seats at least to leadership from the Federation, CJA, and Mizrachi. Jewish men and women were invited to vote according to the plan and were required to pay a ten-cent fee at election centres.[51] All delegates elected were affiliated with one of the three national Zionist organisations, evidence that Zionism provided the institutional and ideological framework, upon which, Canadian Jewish politics were established. In total, sixty-five of the 194 delegates elected (excluding the permanent seats allotted to campaign organizations) were members of the Poale Zion-led workers bloc. The remaining delegates were overwhelmingly General Zionists alongside eight Mizrachis.

Delegate elections were held on March 2–3, 1919, and garnered 24,866 votes in total. With the Jewish population of Canada just under one hundred thousand, it is very likely that an overwhelming majority of Jews who could vote (those who were eighteen and over) did, as the average Canadian family at the time had seven children.[52]

Communal excitement surrounding the establishment of the World Zionist Congress, the signing of the Balfour Declaration, and the presence of Zionist leadership at the newly established Paris Peace Conference provided momentum for the Congress movement in Canada. Still, the General Zionist vision providing momentum for these landmark events did not align with the ideological logic of the CJC. As outlined, the vision held by CJA leadership for a Canadian Jewish Parliament reflects an ideology lying between Zionism and diasporism, drawing heavily from socialist Zionism. The CJC's ideological foundations, which opposed the Herzlian view of Zionism, were mobilized politically via a set of resolutions which sought to expand Canadian Jewry, and which gave no practical guidelines for the CJC's role in settling the Yishuv.

Congress Convenes

The first CJC, staged from March 16–19, 1919, showcased an ambitious agenda. In Lyon Cohen's plenary address, he cited biblical allusions, references to millions suffering globally, and the redemptive thrust of the Balfour Declaration, highlighting the grand world-historical significance of the Congress.[53]

> My friends, I regard this as a most auspicious event. It is a marvelous fact that the Congress idea was born.... Spontaneously from various parts of the country, the idea emerged, and all classes of Jewry were obliged to answer the call to discuss our common problems. Figuratively speaking, it means the realization of the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the dead bones come to life again.... It is true that Jewish rights must still be defended in various parts of the world, and that (organizations) have to be brought into existence for this purpose.[54]

Without "encroaching upon [the members of the plenary sessions'] prerogatives," Cohen offered what he saw as the "hopes and aims of Congress." In doing so, he highlighted four foundational objectives in line with the central issues discussed by Poale Zion in 1915 and agreed upon by the preparatory committee two months prior. These issues were: 1) practical relief for the millions globally who are suffering in the aftermath of war; 2) the "political, civil, and religious emancipation" of Jews as a national group in all states, through an appeal to the parties of the Paris Peace Conference; 3) demonstrating support from the Jewish community for an ingathering in Palestine; and 4) the betterment of mankind "along constitutional lines."[55] The least practical of Lyon's four points is demonstrating support for an ingathering in Palestine. "Demonstrating support" is not an action item. When compared to Cohen's elucidation of his other points, "demonstrating support" seems entirely rhetorical. Alternatively, within the context of war relief, Cohen presents a series of statistics regarding who is suffering in the aftermath of war and where, the institutional avenues necessary to mobilize an adequate response for the resettlement of displaced persons in Canada, and frames such an issue in terms of "practical aid."[56] Indeed, Cohen is professing one major hope, and three independent policies: a hope for settlement in Palestine and a set of practical approaches to aid and resettle Jews in Canada.

The CJC adopted thirteen resolutions, most of which had nothing to do with Palestine. Furthermore, the resolutions that do discuss Palestine use language reflecting Cohen's ceremonial hope for the Yishuv rather than a concerted effort for Canadian Jews to help it grow. The first resolution about Palestine is that "the Canadian Jewish Congress instruct its delegates to cooperate with the World Zionist Congress ... for the creation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which shall prejudice the civil, national, and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." It seems the second resolution was introduced to stress the significance of the latter half of the first resolution. It states

that "Palestine be governed on the principles of social justice, liberty, and most progressive legislation."[57] These resolutions are notably different from those adopted relating to immigration and labour rights, which both explicate how certain commissions, bureaus, and institutions be created to ensure that the CJC is held accountable to said resolutions. For instance, concerning the labour rights of Jewish farmers, the resolution proposes the creation of a "special agricultural commission to investigate the condition of the Jewish farmer … and to convene with the executive committee of Congress concerning its findings."[58] In the context of Palestine resolutions, there is a general lack of emphasis on holding the CJC accountable to ensure that Jewish communities are settled and a state created in Palestine.

Therefore, the convening of the first CJC underscores the foundational role that Zionist discourse played in providing a forum for mass political mobilization toward diasporist ends. Although Zionists also comprised "the backbone" of the first American Jewish Congress, "the first Congress movement," Palestine was likewise a peripheral matter.[59] That congress was also primarily concerned with resettling Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution in America and building local institutions to respond to their influx. Similarly, in Canada, eleven of the thirteen resolutions adopted by the CJC were related to domestic concerns such as Jewish education, labour rights, immigration, and the permanence of Congress. While the Poale Zion was responsible for formulating the Congress idea, its ideological influence over the CJC's resolutions should be understood dually as a response to the global Jewish refugee crisis of the 1910s. The displacement of tens of thousands of Jews from their homes in Galicia, Lithuania, Poland, and Russia elicited short-term solutions to their safe settlement from existing established communities, rather than longer-term plans for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Still, only two resolutions related to Palestine were adopted by the CJC. They were instituted without a plan to raise a certain amount of money for the colonial national fund, to settle Canadian Jews in existing colonies in Palestine, nor to lobby the Canadian or British governments for further action for the creation of a Jewish state. Indeed, it seems evident that Congress used communal excitement and hope for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine to unite the community toward the aspirations it held regarding inherently local matters.

The Lasting Significance of the First Canadian Jewish Congress

The impact of the CJC in the decade following its first plenary sessions can be understood according to all but one of the thirteen resolutions it passed. The resolution states that "A) The first Congress deems it in the best interest of the country that Canada should continue to maintain its old traditional policy of open entry for all immigrants … and the executive committee keep its eye on limitations of immigra-

tion, and B) this Congress be instrumental in creating a central bureau with branches in all large cities and ports of entry, who should give assistance to immigrants."[60] Out of this resolution, the Jewish Immigrant Aid society (JIAS) was created, bridging two of the major domestic concerns for which the CJC decided to meet: relief for refugees fleeing pogroms and the provision of civil, political, and religious emancipation for Jews suffering globally. JIAS, headed by Cohen and Caiserman, established bureaus in Quebec, Ontario, and Western Canada, and lobbied the Canadian government for five years to ensure that a quota for Jewish refugee settlement be achieved. Eventually, the Department of Immigration established a quota of 5,400 Jews to settle in Canada, and JIAS ensured that housing, food, and social services were provided for these new community members upon their arrival.[61]

JIAS was the CJC's greatest institutional achievement following its first plenary session. Additionally, its creation displays the prioritization of a practically diasporist rather than General Zionist agenda central to the first CJC. It must be mentioned that other resolutions adopted by the CJC materialized to some extent beyond its convening, including "ensuring the permanence of the Canadian Jewish Congress through the principle of universal suffrage," "investigating the condition of the Jewish farmer in Canada," and "request that Palestine be governed according to the principles of social justice." While ad hoc institutions were created for the purpose of overseeing these goals, they did not survive well into the twentieth century let alone the twenty-first century, nor have they influenced Jewish and Canadian policymaking on a national scale as JIAS has.[62]

Conclusion

The history of the first CJC sheds light on the critical role that Zionist individuals, institutions, and discourses played in mobilizing diasporist political objectives. The CJC was a World Zionist Congress affiliate that was far more concerned with consolidating, strengthening, and expanding Canadian Jewry than supporting the Yishuv in Palestine. Many transnational developments mentioned provided the impetus for Canada to build its own congress similar to those in the US and Britain. These congresses were all built around a central interest in alleviating the suffering of Jewish refugees who were displaced throughout Eastern Europe. However, interwar Canadian Jewry is unique compared to other Anglo-Jewish contexts. In Britain and the US, religious denominational affiliation was far more central to national politics and communal identity amongst the political elite than Zionism. In Canada, Zionism provided the ideological basis for an uptown-downtown political consensus.

The first CJC asserted an organizational ideology, envisioned by the Poale Zion, that reflected the ideas of Zionists, socialists, and diasporists. This article explored how the CJC, an organization built upon the ideological foundations of a grey area between Zionism and diasporism, mobilized its ideological interests via a practical ex-

pansion of Canadian Jewry. The CJC fits within a broader international framework of early Zionist organizations who sought to provide safer settlement for Jews facing mass displacement, in Palestine and in the diaspora. Thus, the CJC urges deeper consideration of early Zionism and diasporism as overlapping not only according to their intellectual interests, but also according to their political legacies.

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