DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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# THE MILWAUKEE DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS 1933-1945

## The Limits of a Local Jewish Organization During a Period of International Crisis

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the limits of a local Jewish organization between 1933-1944 which were turbulent years for the Jewish people in America and abroad. The American Jewish Congress and many other Jewish organizations in America participated in activities designed to combat anti-Semitic policies in America and abroad. The Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress was given the duty to implement the policies adopted by the national office. The Milwaukee Division had limited success implementing these policies. Sometimes it appeared that the Milwaukee Division chose to simply neglect the requests made by the American Jewish Congress. However, after taking a closer look it appears that the Milwaukee Division was suffering from internal problems which affected its ability to implement the policies of the American Jewish Congress.

## Introduction

Americans tend to associate Milwaukee, Wisconsin with visions of beer, brats, and the Brewers. On the surface Milwaukee seems to be a town whose society and culture has been dominated by its distinct German presence throughout history. However, a deeper look into the history of Milwaukee shows the presence of many other ethnic groups who have managed to leave their mark during some of the most trying times in our nation's history. The activities of one ethnic group in Milwaukee that deserves to be explored are those of Milwaukee's Jewish community during the years prior to and during America's involvement in World War II. Not all Jewish organizations during this time period were successful in completing their goals due to several factors which influenced the success of their endeavors. The Milwaukee Jewish Congress is one of many Jewish organizations which were active in pursuing the interests of Jewish welfare in the years prior to and during World War II.

The twelve years spanning from 1933 to 1945 were extremely turbulent years for the Jews of Europe as well as the Jewish community here in the United States. As Hitler rose to power, the Jewish community in the United States attempted to unite in order to combat anti-Semitism in the United States and protect their brethren abroad. Although the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress (M.D.A.J.C.) attempted to participate in a number of activities designed to combat anti-Semitic policies abroad, their efforts were largely unsuccessful due to several local constraints and conflicts. With this paper I will explore the limits of what a local organization like the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress could do to implement the policies of the American Jewish Congress (A.J.C.) which were designed to combat anti-Semitic policies in Nazi controlled Europe. The M.D.A.J.C. had limited success in implementing the policies of the A.J.C. and appeared to quite often simply neglect requests made

by the national office. However, a deeper look into the Milwaukee Division shows that the organization was facing certain internal issues which greatly affected their ability to properly implement national policy. The Milwaukee Division's lack of adequate funding and dedicated personnel appear to be the major reasons why this local Jewish organization failed to fully implement the A.J.C.'s policies. I will also place the activities of the M.D.A.J.C. in historical context and describe the obstacles that the American Jewish Congress (A.J.C.) and other Jewish organizations in America faced when attempting to save Jews from Nazi destruction.

This study of the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress is based on the manuscripts of its secretary, Nathan Sand. Although Sand appears to have done a fairly good job collecting most of the organizations major documents, there are instances where there he appears to have left certain documents out of the collection. For example, the collection seems to be missing the organization's financial records for several years. There was also a lack of documents concerning the organization from 1933 to 1936. The lack of material from these years forced me to make certain assumptions and speculations concerning the organization during this time period. Manuscript materials also are not able to tell the entire story behind an organization. The conclusions drawn in this paper are simply based upon the material present within the manuscript collection and may be subject to revisions in the light of other evidence.

**Jewish Organizations in Milwaukee**

The representation of Jewish interests began at the turn of the century in Milwaukee in the form of a basic charity committee. The founding of the Federated Jewish Charities in the 1890s opened a new period in Milwaukee Jewish philanthropy whose emphasis gradually shifted from emergency aid to systematic social service. Philanthropic activity gradually became the leading function of the Jewish community, one in which more Jews participated than any other.[1] The Federated Jewish Charities represents the founding father of Jewish philanthropic organizations with in Milwaukee.

The creation of the Federated Jewish Charities coincided with an increase in Jewish immigration to Milwaukee that helped foster philanthropic activity among Jews. From 1900 to 1925, the Jewish community in Milwaukee rose from about 8000 to 22,000 and by 1945 there was approximately 26,000 Jews living among over 600,000 Milwaukeeans.[2] Although the increase in the Jewish population was not numerically astounding, its growth was significant enough to create a solid Jewish identity within the city that eventually brought about the rise of organizations representing their welfare. The nature of Jewish organizations evolved from merely representing local Jews to serving the interests of Jews on a national and global level. The eventual abundance of these Jewish organizations in Milwaukee during the 1930s and 40s will be seen to actually have a negative impact on the M.D.A.J.C.'s ability to implement policies. The Milwaukee Division also had to compete with these other organizations for financial funding, resources, and personnel.

On the national level, Jews created organizations to represent their varied interests and

[1] Louis J. Swichkow and Lloyd P. Gartner, *The History of Jews in Milwaukee* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963), 225.
[2] Ibid., 63,292.

local branches could be seen in Milwaukee. During World War I immigrant intellectuals were joined by prominent American Jews to advocate a central, democratic organization for American Jewry. These groups called for an American Jewish Congress in 1915.[3] Soon after its creation, the American Jewish Congress began to develop local organizations represented in cities throughout the country.

A conference was held in Milwaukee on May 29, 1918, to organize the local division of the A.J.C. Every local Jewish fraternal organization, society, and congregation attended this conference and gave their support to organize a Milwaukee Division. Nathan Sand was elected to the secretarial post of the local branch of the Congress.[4] Sand would serve as secretary of the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress from 1918 to 1944.[5] Sand was clearly the driving force behind the activities of the Milwaukee branch during his twenty-five year tenure as secretary. During his last ten years as secretary it appeared several times as if he was the last thread holding the organization together. While he was secretary, Sand was also involved in other local Jewish organizations such as the Poale Zionists and Ezer beTzar.[6] The role of the A.J.C. and its local branches was to defend the rights of Jews at home and abroad.[7] As a local branch of the Congress, the Milwaukee Division was expected to implement the policies and goals of the national office.

An important Jewish organization during this period was the Jewish Welfare Fund, which was created after the dissolution of the Federated Jewish Charities. The Federated Jewish Charities ultimately dissolved in 1937. A year later, a broader and more representative body was

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[3] Ibid., 272.
[4] Nathan Sand's Secretary Report, January 1945. Box 2, Folder 7. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947, Milwaukee Division of American Jewish Congress. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Milwaukee Area Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Milwaukee, WI.
[5] Nathan Sand to David E. Hirsch, 9 November 1943. Box 2, Folder 5. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[6] Swichkow, *The History of Jews in Milwaukee,* 279.
[7] American Jewish Congress Origin and Purpose Statement, 1944. Box 2, Folder 6. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

formed, the Jewish Welfare Fund. Like its predecessor, it proposed to raise money to be distributed locally, nationally, and overseas. The organization's responsibility for the allocation of monies raised could not be sidestepped, and its implications made the Jewish Welfare Fund the powerhouse of the Jewish community.[8] The local branch of the Jewish Welfare Fund extended a considerable amount of influence over the Jewish organizations in Milwaukee, including the M.D.A.J.C.

The Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund (M.J.W.F.) was an organization whose purpose was to raise and distribute money for local and sometimes national Jewish organizations. Correspondence between the Milwaukee Division and the A.J.C. shows that the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund would provide an annual allotment of funds to the Milwaukee Division.[9] Records of the Milwaukee Division show competition with other Jewish organizations such as the Jewish Labor Committee and B'nai Brith for funding from the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund.[10] There were numerous other organizations which were competing with the Milwaukee Division for funds and resource, but these three local organizations appear to have received the highest allotment of funds.

The M.D.A.J.C. was also intertwined with various Jewish organizations through its membership. A financial statement from 1940 shows that 31 various local societies, clubs, Jewish organizations and congregations formed the basis of the M.D.A.J.C.'s membership, while only twenty one individual members were listed.[11] The financial statements from 1935 to 1945 all indicate that the Milwaukee Jewish Congress's membership consisted mostly of other various smaller Jewish organizations rather than individuals. By May of 1943 the M.D.A.J.C.'s

[8] Swichkow, *The History of Jews in Milwaukee,* 313.
[9] Nathan Sand to G. Jaffe, 19 February 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[10] Nathan Sand to Lille Schultz, 23 April 1942. Box 2, Folder 3. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[11] Milwaukee Division of American Jewish Congress Financial Statement, December 1940. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

membership was comprised solely of fifty local membership organizations with no individual membership.[12] This means that by 1943 all the members of the M.D.A.J.C. were also members of other Jewish organizations in Milwaukee.

It would be impossible to describe all of the connections which tied the Milwaukee Division to other various Jewish organizations in the community. What is important to keep in mind is that although there were various organizations and societies in Milwaukee representing different ideological views present within the Jewish community, they were all intertwined through organizational membership with many of them also depending upon the Jewish Welfare Fund for the allocation of financial support. Regardless of these organization's different ideologies, the rise of the Nazi party in Germany was perceived by all as a threat to Jewish welfare in America and abroad.

[12] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 18 May 1943. Box 2, Folder 5. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

## 1936 Olympic Boycott Debate

The 1936 Olympic Games, which were scheduled to take place in Berlin, provided Jewish organizations in America with an opportunity to protest the Nazi regime in Germany. In 1935 there were a series of events in Germany which brought America's participation in the upcoming Olympic Games to the national forefront. Munich, which was scheduled to host most of the larger social and cultural functions connected to the Winter Olympics, witnessed a series of ugly anti-Jewish actions in the spring of 1935. SA thugs sprayed acid and racist graffiti on Jewish shops, smashed store windows, and assaulted Jews in the street in broad daylight.[13] There had been protest to America's involvement prior to 1935, but these blatant anti-Semitic attacks throughout Germany made the boycott a hot topic for Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in America. The Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress participated in this proposed national boycott, but their involvement was limited in scope and came only after America had decided to participate in the Games.

### *Olympic Boycott on the National Scene*

The violence in Germany during 1935 spurred Jewish organizations in America into action concerning the Olympic boycott. In response to anti-Semitic violence in Berlin the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Labor Committee held an emergency meeting on the calling for an Olympic boycott.[14] However, these Jewish organizations were not alone in their call for an American boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games.

In 1935, spurred by attacks on Jews in Berlin that July and by the announcement of anti-

[13] David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), 18.
[14] Ibid., 81.

Jewish laws in Nuremberg that September, the president of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), Jeremiah Mahoney, began publicly supporting a boycott of the Games. Mahoney said that Nazi ideology-based on racial inequality-was directly opposite of the Olympic code, which was based on the equality of all races and faiths in the area of sports.[15] With Mahoney supporting an American boycott of the Olympic Games, the pro-boycott forces were in a position to influence the AAU and possibly prevent American athletes from competing at the Games. This is because without the endorsement of the AAU, no athlete belonging to that body could go to Berlin.[16] Mahoney became one of the most important supporters of the Olympic boycott movement in the United States due to his position within the AAU.

Mahoney was also a crucial player in the boycott movement due his work trying to arouse American support for the boycott. Mahoney formed a "Committee on Fair Play in Sport" to channel and make more effective the growing domestic alarm over the news about Nazi atrocities.[17] The committee published pamphlets that made the case for the boycott and organized public meetings and letter-writing campaigns in support for the cause. The M.D.A.J.C. would eventually begin to cooperate with the committee's letter-writing campaign. However, this involvement would not come until the spring of 1936 and was quite limited in scope. While the Milwaukee Division remained dormant in the months leading up to 1936, the pro-boycott forces were gaining support from several other non-Jewish organizations.

The American Federation of Labor declared itself against American participation in the German Games because the Nazis were anti-Labor and because there was 'nothing noble' in the

[15] Susan D. Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2000), 49.
[16] Arnd Kruger and William Murray, *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 49.
[17] Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 73.

persecution by sixty million Germans of 600,000 Jews - 100 to one was not fair odds.[18] The Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, would eventually join forces with the M.D.A.J.C. to protest American participation in the 1936 Olympic Games. However, as noted earlier, the Milwaukee Division would not join the boycott movement until the spring of 1936. Prior to the M.D.A.J.C.'s participation in the boycott movement, certain events transpired within the AAU which would lead to America's participation in the 1936 Olympics.

The boycott movement appeared to have considerable support from various Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. However, even with Mahoney in their corner, the pro-boycott forces were unable sway the AAU when it came time to decide whether America would participate. The main opponents of the Olympic boycott included the American Olympic Committee and Avery Brundage who was using his power within the Olympic community to convince members of the AAU to reject the boycott.[19] The boycott debate came to a head at the 1935 AAU Convention held on December 6-8, 1935. The AAU voted 58.25 to 55.75 against a resolution calling for an on-the-spot investigation of German conditions. The defeat of this amendment paved the way for the adoption of a resolution that approved AAU sanction of American participation in Berlin.[20] Even with the support of the AAU's president Mahoney and other organizations, members of the AAU were not convinced that America should boycott the 1936 Olympics. During the months leading up to the AAU Convention held in December, 1935 the M.D.A.J.C. failed to participate in the nationwide boycott movement.

[18] Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics,* 78.
[19] Kruger, *The Nazi Olympics,* 57.
[20] Large, *Nazi Games,* 99.

***Olympic Boycott in Milwaukee***

The Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress eventually joined the forces of the boycott movement in the spring of 1936, but by this point in time there was little hope that the movement could prevent American athletes from going to Berlin. Only after two Milwaukee high school teachers were chosen to attend the Olympic Games did the M.D.A.J.C. show any initiative to participate in the Olympic boycott movement.

The Milwaukee Division was spurred to action when they were informed that two athletic instructors from Milwaukee were attending the Olympic Games in Berlin. On April 17, 1936 the M.D.A.J.C. held an executive committee meeting to discuss the matter. During this meeting the committee discussed the application of two athletic instructors in Milwaukee to the school board to allow extra time with pay to attend the Olympic Games in Berlin. It was unanimously agreed to draw up a resolution to be sent to the president of the school board expressing the committee's opposition to allowing any public officials to visit Nazi Germany at the expense of the city.[21] This executive meeting marks the earliest involvement of the M.D.A.J.C. in the Olympic boycott movement.

According to Nathan Sand, the resolution sent to the school board did not prevent the two athletic instructors from receiving an extension of their vacation with pay. In a letter sent to national headquarters on April 22, Nathan Sand stated that there was only one school board member who was opposed to the instructor's request and their request was granted without an action in the matter.[22] However, an article printed in the Oshkosh Northwester indicates otherwise. The newspaper article stated:

The school board's fear of establishing precedent rather than a Socialist's demand

[21] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 22 April 1936. Box 1, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[22] Ibid.

> that its employees stay out of Nazi Germany today dashed the hopes of two recreational directors who asked for leave with pay to attend the Olympic Games.[23]

This inconsistency illustrates the possible inaccuracies present within Nathan Sand's records. Regardless of the conflicting reports, the resolution drafted by the Milwaukee Division represents their first public protest of the 1936 Olympics. The M.D.A.J.C. participated in other boycott activities, but only following requests made by other pro-boycott organizations.

The largest demonstration of protest towards the 1936 Games in Milwaukee was actually orchestrated by a non-Jewish organization. On April 17, 1936 the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee notified the M.D.A.J.C. that they were in the process of organizing a public meeting to protest against the American participation in the 1936 Games in Nazi Germany.[24] The Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee was a local affiliate of the American Federation of Labor which was previously noted as being one of the non-Jewish organizations in America which participated in the Olympic boycott movement. The meeting was scheduled for May 10, 1935 and the Milwaukee Division was asked if they would be willing to offer their cooperation in organizing such an endeavor. The M.D.J.A.C. replied on April 21 and expressed an interest in helping the Federated Trades Council organize a protest meeting. However, the attitude of the Federated Trades Council towards the participation of the M.D.J.A.C in organizing the protest meeting appears to have changed after the Milwaukee Division expressed interest.

On May 5, 1936 the Federated Trades Council contacted the M.D.J.A.C concerning the organization of the protest meeting scheduled for May 10. In the letter sent to the M.D.J.A.C on May 5, the General Secretary of the F.T.C. stated that:

> After a lengthy discussion of this matter, that, as the committee decided that this

[23] *The Oshkosh Northwestern* (Wisconsin), 31 March 1936, p. 3.
[24] Ibid.

> [protest] meeting was arranged at the request of the American Federation of Labor it should be conducted by the Federated Trades Council, and all arrangements should be handled by the committee. We do thank you for your interest in the meeting, and invite you and as many of your group find it convenient to attend this meeting[25]

Apparently the M.D.J.A.C was invited to participate in the organization of a public protest meeting and then uninvited by the Federated Trades Council. The records of the M.D.J.A.C do not indicate whether they were represented at the May 10th protest meeting, but it is known for sure that they did not participate in the organization of such a meeting. The Milwaukee Division did participate in other boycott activities, but they were limited in scope and were instigated by the requests made by the national office.

During the spring of 1936 the American Jewish Congress was periodically contacted by the Mahoney's Committee on Fair Play in Sports in an effort to keep them informed of the committee's current activities. The national office of the A.J.C. requested that the Committee on Fair Play in Sports send the Milwaukee Division copies of these letters in order to be published in the local press. On April 29, 1936 the M.D.A.J.C. received their first letter from the committee which was a copy of a letter sent to President Roosevelt's Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. The letter addressed to the secretary commented on the committee's concern that the Nazi regime will use the 1936 Olympic Games to advance their own political goals. The committee advised the M.D.A.J.C. to publish the letter and distribute it to members in an effort to raise awareness for the cause.[26] The extent to which the committee interacted with the M.D.J.A.C was limited to requests to publish letters in local newspapers. There were no records indicating that

[25] Federated Trades Council to Nathan Sand, 5 May 1936. Box 1, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[26] American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, 28 April 1936

Milwaukee Division ever cooperated in any other type of activity with the committee.

The 1936 Olympic Games had presented a chance for the M.D.J.A.C to publically protest the Nazi regime in Germany. The boycott activities of the M.D.J.A.C were limited to the drafting of a resolution condemning the paid vacation of two athletic instructors and publishing letters sent by Mahoney's Committee on Fair Play in Sports for its members. The largest public protest held in the city was actually organized by the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee, a non-Jewish entity. Unfortunately, the Olympic boycott movement was not the only instance where the M.D.J.A.C failed to represent the interests of the Jewish community in Milwaukee. The American Jewish Congress' boycott of the Olympic Games was part of their wider support of an economic boycott of all German products.[27] However, not all Jewish organizations agreed that a boycott of German goods was in the best interests of the American Jewry. National Jewish organizations were split on the boycott issue and this internal conflict was mirrored by those local Jewish organizations in Milwaukee.

[27] Bachrach, *The Nazi Olympics,* 51.

## Boycott of German Goods

Unlike the Olympic boycott movement, the national boycott of German goods was unable to gain the support of many Jewish organizations in America. Some Jewish organizations opposed the boycott due to certain ideological affiliations while other segments of the Jewish population opposed the boycott in fear of an anti-Semitic backlash. The boycott illustrates the inability of Jewish organizations to overcome ideological differences and unite against Nazi Germany. The M.D.J.A.C.'s role in the boycott movement also appears to have been plagued by internal opposition within the organization. Although this internal opposition hampered the success of the local boycott in Milwaukee, it appears that lack of initiative within M.D.J.A.C. also contributed to the failure of the local boycott movement.

### *Boycott on the National Scene*

The plan to organize a national boycott of German goods was first suggested by the Jewish War Veterans in March 1933.[28] The American Jewish Congress soon joined the pro-boycott forces and requested that their local divisions do the same. On October 19, 1933 the A.J.C. requested that the Milwaukee Division set up a local boycott committee in Milwaukee.[29] However, the organization of the A.J.C.'s boycott committee was delayed until February 1934, and it was not until February 1936 that the boycott committees of the A.J.C. and the Jewish Labor Committee merged to form a Joint Boycott Council.[30] From 1933 to 1936 the A.J.C. tried to unite the Jewish community through this boycott movement, but Jewish organizations were

[28] Henry L. Feingold, *The Jewish People in America - A Time For Searching: Entering the Mainstream 1920-1945* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 235.
[29] American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, 19 October 1933. Box 1, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[30] Feingold, *The Jewish People in America,* 237.

split in their support for a national boycott of German goods.

The president of the American Jewish Committee, Morris Waldman, characterized the boycott as 'futile and possibly dangerous.' The American Jewish Committee felt that the boycott would confirm the anti-Semites claim that Jews were attempting to dominate the American economy.[31] B'nai B'rith also feared an anti-Semitic reprisal and therefore never supported the boycott movement. American Zionists chose not to participate in the boycott due to the fact that a boycott of German goods would be detrimental to some of their foreign policies. In 1933 the Zionist movement approved an extension of the *ha'avara* (Transfer Agreement) that permitted German Jews to remove their funds from the Reich in the form of capital goods and resettle in Palestine. The Zionists believed that a concrete tangible asset that would strengthen the Palestine economy was preferable to a dubious attempt to weaken the German economy.[32] It appeared by 1934 that the American Jewish community was clearly divided over the decision to boycott German goods. The conflict over the boycott highlights the organizational disarray within the Jewish community.[33] This lack unanimity within the Jewish community over the boycott issue could be seen in Milwaukee.

***The Boycott in Milwaukee***

Soon after the M.D.J.A.C. received a request from the national office to organize a boycott committee, members of the Milwaukee Division began to voice their criticism towards a Jewish boycott of German goods. On November 12, 1933 the M.D.J.A.C. held a conference to discuss the organization's role in the boycott movement where several members voiced their

[31] Ibid., 235.
[32] Ibid., 237.
[33] Ibid.

criticism of the boycott. In a letter sent to A.J.C. headquarters describing the conference, Nathan Sand wrote:

> The so-called delegates for the Reformed Temple, Conservatives, a number of businessmen and various lawyers argued in opposition to the boycott, stressing that the City of Milwaukee has sixty percent German population and should the Press come out that the Jews of Milwaukee declared an open boycott on German goods, it would not be interpreted in the light we mean, not against the German people, but will arouse the German population against the Jews in the city with the result that will endanger their livelihood.[34]

Sand notes that those delegates who argued for the boycott were mainly staunch supporters of the A.J.C., and declared that the National Executive adopted a resolution that a boycott should be conducted throughout the United States.[35] These delegates believed that the M.D.J.A.C. could not be an exception to the A.J. C.'s national policy. By the end of the two hour debate a resolution was adopted to create a boycott committee consisting of seven individuals who would be appointed at the next meeting.[36] Although the decision to boycott was not rejected, there was an apparent split among those delegates which supported the M.D.J.A.C.'s involvement in the boycott. Many members of the M.D.J.A.C. were also members of the local American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith, which felt the boycott would result in widespread anti-Semitism. Milwaukee Division's membership represented a wide array of ideologies which manifested itself in conflict over the boycott. After the Milwaukee Division passed the resolution to participate in the boycott movement they attempted to gain the support of other organizations.

It appears that the M.D.J.A.C. had very little support from other Jewish organizations in

[34] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 17 November 1933. Box 1, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[35] Nathan Sand Secretary Notes, November 1933. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[36] Ibid.

Milwaukee concerning the boycott movement. Milwaukee had local branches of the Zionist organization, the American Jewish Committee, and B'nai B'rith, and as noted earlier, these national organizations did not condone the boycott movement. The local branches of these organizations appear to have upheld their organization's national policy. Sand describes the uncooperative nature of the Zionist movement in Milwaukee in a letter sent to A.J.C. headquarters on May 7, 1936. Sand claims that the M.D.J.A.C. had contacted the Zionist Organization several times concerning the boycott, but received little or no cooperation.[37] With fellow Jewish organization ignoring requests to support the boycott movement, M.D.J.A.C. decided to appeal to local non-Jewish organizations.

One of the duties of the M.D.J.A.C.'s boycott committee was to communicate with non-Jewish organizations that were opposed to Nazism and would be willing to participate in the boycott.[38] Two local non-Jewish organizations expressed an interest in participating in the movement. In November 1933 the local Socialist Party and the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee agreed to meet in conference with the M.D.J.A.C. for the purpose of discussing the means in which to bring about a boycott of German goods in Milwaukee.[39] The coalition with these other non-Jewish organizations appears to be the extent in which the M.D.J.A.C. was able to gain support for the boycott movement in Milwaukee. Following the formation of this coalition, the M.D.J.A.C. attempted to promote the idea of the boycott among the public.

The earliest sign of local boycott activity within the M.D.J.A.C. came in 1936. The Milwaukee Division decided to promote the idea of the boycott through distributing boycott declaration cards and selling boycott stamps. In a letter sent to A.J.C. headquarters January 24,

[37] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 7 May 1936. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[38] Nathan Sand Secretary Notes, November 1933. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[39] Nathan Sand to Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee and Socialist Party of Milwaukee, November 1933. Box 1, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

1936, Nathan Sand wrote:

> It may be of interest to you to know that the Milwaukee District has undertaken this work seriously and the 2000 declaration cards have been distributed among organizations to solicit signatures. After we receive them back they are going to be checked as to the charge accounts in the various department stores and the committee is going to request that the stores cease selling German made products.[40]

Although it appears that the M.D.J.A.C. was successful in distributing 2000 declaration cards, there is no evidence in their records which indicates that they received any of these cards back or that they attempted to contact these stores that were selling German goods. If their campaign to distribute declaration card was anything like their campaign to sell boycott stamps, then it would be safe to assume that the M.D.A.J.C. simply neglected these efforts.

Some of the first signs of the ineffectiveness of the M.D.A.J.C. begin to surface in 1936 when the organization was requested by the A.J.C. to sell boycott stamps to fellow Jews in order to promote the idea of the boycott against German products. In December of 1935 A.J.C. headquarters sent the M.D.A.J.C. several hundred boycott stamps to be sold in Milwaukee.[41] The M.D.A.J.C. appears to have simply neglected the issue until they were contacted by A.J.C. headquarters in May of 1936. In a letter addressed to Nathan Sand, the executive secretary of the A.J.C wrote:

> I am quite at a loss to understand the attitude of the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress. I cannot understand that a matter of this kind, which involves money, should be so lightly treated by your committee, particularly by

[40] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 24 January 1936. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[41] American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, 14 May 1936. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

> Mr. Rubstein, who signed for these boycott stamps, which means money to the organization. If you were unable to use these books of stamps they should have been returned to us immediately. It is exactly six months since these books were taken and now you tell us that the biggest portion of the stamps will be returned. This is not acceptable.[42]

Judging from this letter the M.D.A.J.C. lacked the initiative to even contact the A.J.C. to notify them that they were unable to sell these stamps. This apparent neglect shown by the Milwaukee Division towards the boycott stamps supports the assumption that the declaration cards suffered the same fate. Although the M.D.A.J.C.'s records may not indicate all of the organization's boycott activities, it would be plausible to assume that the Milwaukee Division's lack of initiative also a contributed to the limited effectiveness of the boycott movement in Milwaukee.

The Milwaukee Division faced many of the same obstacles as the A.J.C. did when it attempted to seek support for the boycott movement. Jews in Milwaukee and within their organization were divided over the boycott issue and it appears that the only organizations in the community which supported the boycott were non-Jewish entities. The lack of cohesiveness within the Milwaukee Jewish community was one of the factors which led to the failure of the boycott movement in Milwaukee. The M.D.A.J.C. also appears to have simply neglected certain aspects of the boycott movement in Milwaukee. Although the Nazi regime would remain in power until 1945, the organization only appears to have participated in boycott activities up to 1936. This apparent neglect of boycott activities was also a factor which led to the failure of the boycott movement in Milwaukee. Although the M.D.A.J.C. would abandon the boycott movement in 1936, the organization would eventually participate in some activities designed to aid Jews suffering from Nazi persecution abroad. However, the Milwaukee Division's

[42] Ibid.

participation in these activities appears to also have been limited in scope and plagued by a lack of initiative.

**Jews Suffering From Nazi Persecution**

As European Jews attempted to flee from Nazi persecution, many were turned away from America due to the nature of U.S. immigration laws which were in place since the 1920s. Although President Roosevelt was sympathetic to the Jewish situation in Europe, he was unable to increase these quotas set by these immigration laws due to the political climate during the late 1930s and early 40s.[43] The president of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Stephen Wise, believed that it would be unlikely that American Jews could successfully persuade Congress or the President to change the nature of these immigration laws. Stephen Wise actually believed that it would be detrimental for American Jews to plead for a change in immigration policy.[44] Therefore, Wise and the A.J.C. advocated other means in which American Jews could aid their Jewish brethren abroad. However, the M.D.A.J.C.'s success in implementing the A.J.C.'s policies was limited and their participation in these policies appears to have been marred with neglect.

***U.S. Immigration Policy***

The nature of America's immigration policy during the late 1930s and early 40s greatly reduced the number of immigrants who could flee Nazi persecution through immigration to the U.S. America's immigration policy prior to and during World War II was first formulated during the 1920s. The immigration law of 1921 and the Johnson Act of 1924 effectively cut back the immigration flow from eastern and southern Europe. The combined quota of Poland,

[43] Morse, *While Six Million Died,* 61.
[44] Hertzberg, *The Jews in America, 290.*

Russia, Romania, and the Baltic countries, which furnished about 100,000 Jewish annually prior to World War I, was now fixed at 9,443.[45] In contrast to these countries, the quota for Germany was set at 51,000 annually.[46] These quotas had an immediate effect on Jewish immigration to America. Between 1924 and 1931 only 73,000 Jewish immigrants settled in the United States, which represents only a small fraction of the 656,000 Jews who had come between 1907 and 1914.[47] These quotas also had a drastic effect on Jewish immigration to the U.S. prior to and during World War II. The total Jewish immigration to the U.S. from 1933 to 1937, which came mostly from Germany, did not exceed 33,000. As the situation in Europe worsened the number of immigrants from Germany and the lands it occupied increased, totaling 124,000 between 1938 and 1941.[48] This increase in immigrants from Germany is due to the fact that the Nazis were increasing their level of persecution against ethnic minorities and also was also affected by the fact that Germany was increasing its landholdings by invading countries. The quotas imposed by these immigration laws clearly limited Jewish immigration to the U.S. during a time period when many Jews were trying to flee Nazi persecution. However, a certain provision within the 1924 immigration law also was a factor which hampered Jewish immigration to the U.S.

Section 7 (c) of the Immigration Act of 1924 required that applicants furnish a police certificate of good character for the previous five years, together with a record of military service, two copies of a birth certificate and 'two copies of all other available public records' kept by the authorities in the country form which the immigrant was departing.[49] The law required these documents only if available, but many American consuls insisted that they be

[45] Feingold, *The Jewish People in America,* 29.
[46] Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America – Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 242.
[47] Feingold, *The Jewish People in America*, 29.
[48] Fishman, *The Jews of the United States,* 69.
[49] Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1983), 137.

provided. Clearly when a government is undertaking a policy of mass extermination of Jewish people, the chances of a Jew attaining these records would probably be quite slim. This provision was one of the reasons why many of these quotas actually went unmet. From 1933 to 1943, there were 1,244,858 unfilled spots on these immigration quotas with 341,567 of these vacancies allotted to citizens of countries dominated or occupied by Germany or her allies.[50] It would seem logical for Jewish organizations in America to protest these immigration laws in order to save their European brethren. However, it appears that American Jews did not have enough power to convince President Roosevelt to alter America's immigration policy.

Jewish organizations could not spur Roosevelt into action for several reasons. In 1938, sentiment against relaxing immigrations increased in America: mass opinion in the United States against easing restriction rose from 75 to 83 percent.[51] It would have been very unpopular for Roosevelt to try and increase the immigration quotas. Roosevelt could not afford to annoy the labor movement, which was opposed to more immigration, and he did not want to lose votes to the anti-Semites in America, who were already disturbed by the number of Jews appointed to his administration.[52] America's public opinion concerning immigration policy prior to and during World War II was reflected in the opinion held in the U.S. Congress. The prevailing sentiment in Congress in 1943 was for an even more dramatic curtailment of immigration into America.[53] With both the Congress and public opinion calling for a strict immigration policy, Jewish organizations in America would have had a hard time convincing Roosevelt to increase immigration quotas. The overwhelming anti-immigration sentiment in America led Rabbi Wise

[50] Ibid., 131.
[51] Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 168.
[52] Hertzberg, *The Jews in America,* 287.
[53] Morse, *While Six Million Died,* 61.

and the A.J.C. to the conclusion that an indirect approach to saving the European Jewry was in the best interests of American Jews.

***A.J.C's Aid to European Brethren***

The president of the A.J.C., Rabbi Stephen Wise, was actually against any direct Jewish action that would challenge the status of American's immigration laws. When a Jewish Congressmen from Brooklyn, Emanuel Celler, introduced a bill to waive all limitations on refugees who wanted to come to the U.S., Rabbi Wise condemned such an action. Rabbi Wise believed that such a bill would arouse many enemies of immigration, and the ensuing outcry would block any chance for quiet acts of favor by presidential instruction for all the refugees.[54] Rabbi Wise was not alone in his opinion concerning how American Jews should attempt to aid their European brethren. Aware of the fact that public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to admitting foreign immigrants, most Jewish leaders feared that an open campaign for liberalizing the immigration policy would intensify anti-Semitism and result in even more anti-alien legislation.[55] This fear of an anti-Semitic backlash affected the policies in which the A.J.C. would adopt in order to help aid European Jews.

Prior to and during America's involvement in World War II, the A.J.C. focused its attention on combating anti-Semitic legislation which, if passed, would affect refugees abroad as well as refugees already present in America.[56] The American public's overwhelming opposition to immigration led to a flood of anti-alien bills calling for the further curtailment of immigration and registration of aliens. Groups like the Alien Deportation and Exclusion League called for strict enforcement of the deportation provision of the law and a halt to all further immigration.[57]

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[54] Hertzberg, *The Jews in America, 290.*
[55] Feingold, *The Jewish People in America,* 228.
[56] American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, 6 April 1939. Box 1, Folder 5. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[57] Feingold, *The Jewish People in America, 229.*

For example, in 1941 the A.J.C. publically opposed the Alien Bill H.R. 4873 which stated:

> No alien who has been interned in a foreign country by a nation at war shall be eligible to apply for admission to the United States until after a period of one year following the date he has been granted unconditional freedom by the country which interned him.[58]

The A.J.C. also worked to promote legislation that would allow refugees to stay in America. For example, in 1939 the A.J.C. publically endorsed a bill proposed by Senator Robert Wagner which permitted 20,000 refugee children to stay in the United States.[59] The A.J.C.'s public endorsement or condemnation of current legislation was a way in which the organization felt it was indirectly providing aid for those Jews suffering from Nazi terror. However, once the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, the A.J.C.'s emphasis shifted to rallying behind the war effort.

Soon after the United States entered World War II, Rabbi Wise emphasized that the tide of the war has turned and that only an Allied victory would bring an end to Nazi terror and possibly save their European brethren.[60] As a whole the U.S. Jewry was still fearful of appearing to ask for 'special treatment' and therefore shied away from direct U.S. intervention, but rather accepted the view that an early Allied victory was the sole means to rescue European Jewry.[61] The A.J.C. responded by organizing and sponsoring a United Jewish War Effort in order to establish a victory drive for the U.S. while providing relief for Britain, Russia, and China.[62] The A.J.C. used its talent for orchestrating mass protest rallies as a means for procuring funds that could be given to the United Jewish War Effort. In July of 1942 the A.J.C. held a mass

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[58] Action Bulletin from American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, June 1941. Box 1, Folder 3. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[59] Nathan Sand Secretary Notes, 12 March 1939. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[60] Morse, *While Six Million Died,* 28.
[61] Fishman, *The Jews of the United States,* 74.
[62] United Jewish War Effort to Nathan Sand, 1942. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

demonstration against Hitler atrocities at the Madison Square Garden in New York City to raise awareness about the plight of Jews in Europe and also raise funds for the United Jewish War Effort.[63] The M.D.A.J.C. would eventually be called upon by the national office to orchestrate local rally meetings in order to also raise funds for the United Jewish War Effort.

Although the A.J.C. did not take a direct approach in saving the lives of Jews in Nazi Europe, the organization did attempt to aid their European brethren in other more indirect ways. The Milwaukee Division attempted to aid European Jews by participating in many of these policies adopted by the A.J.C. However, the M.D.A.J.C.'s success in implementing these policies was limited and their participation in these policies appears to have been marred with neglect and lack of initiative.

***M.D.A.J.C.'s Aid to European Brethren***

In February of 1936 the M.D.A.J.C. was contacted by national headquarters concerning legislation that would allow refugees to stay in America. This was the first sign of an attempt made by the A.J.C. to get the Milwaukee Division to implement the organization's national policies on a local level. In a letter sent to the M.D.A.J.C. in 1936, Stephen Wise wrote:

> We recently requested you to take steps to promote the passage in Congress of the Kerr Deportation Bill (H.R. 8163). It is, therefore, very important for everyone who recognizes the urgency of the adoption of this bill, which aims to bring relief to innocent resident aliens who are, under the present law, subject to deportation on purely technical grounds, to make an effort to register their views with members of Congress. If you have not already approached your Congressman, it is not too late

[63] Mass Demonstration Against Hitler Atrocities Flyer, July 1942. Box 2, Folder 4.

> to do so now.[64]

However, there appears to be absolutely no evidence that the M.D.A.J.C. conducted any type of letter writing campaign. As secretary, Nathan Sand kept copies of letters and telegraphs in which the M.D.A.J.C. would send out to various people, organizations, etc. There was no sign that Sand or the M.D.A.J.C. attempted to contact Congress to promote the passage of the Kerr Bill. This lack of initiative was also present when the M.D.A.J.C. was asked to help prevent the passage of anti-alien bills.

On June 30, 1941 an Action Bulletin was sent to the M.D.A.J.C. which urged the organization to write or wire their congressmen to vote against the passage to the Alien Bill (H.R. 4873).[65] Accompanying this Action Bulletin was a letter from the A.J.C.'s Chairman of Commission on Law and Legislation, Nathan D. Perlman. In this letter to the M.D.A.J.C., Perlman wrote:

> We have outlined the reasons why we are against the bill and have indicated the action to be taken. May we also suggest that your group mimeograph copies of this bulletin and mail them to your own membership and to other groups cooperating with you.[66]

It appears that this request made by the A.J.C. suffered the same fate as their previous request to contact Congress. There was absolutely no evidence which indicates that the M.D.A.J.C. attempted to contact their Congressmen or mimeograph copies of this bulletin to their membership. The M.D.A.J.C. continued to neglect the requests of the A.J.C. when asked to set up a Committee on Law and Legislation.

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[64] Stephen Wise to Nathan Sand, 3 February 1936. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[65] Action Bulletin from Stephen Wise to Nathan Sand, 30 June 1941. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[66] Nathan D. Perlman to Nathan Sand, 30 June 1941. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

On January 24, 1941 the Milwaukee Division was requested to establish a local Committee on Law and Legislation which was to comprise qualified representatives who could be called upon to represent the interests of the Jewish community in the legal field and legislative matters.[67] This request also appears to have been neglected due to the fact that there was absolutely no evidence which indicated that the M.D.A.J.C. even attempted to establish a Committee on Law and Legislation in Milwaukee. Although the M.D.A.J.C. chose to neglect the A.J.C.'s policies concerning current refugee legislation, they appear to have been spurred into action once the United States entered World War II.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States entry into World War II, Stephen Wise urged local branches of the A.J.C. to join the efforts of the United Jewish War Effort. On June 19, 1942 Wise described the duties of the M.D.A.J.C.:

> As agreed upon, the tasks of supporting the United Jewish War Effort should include: **(1)** Participation in the Victory Drive of the United Nations, by which we mean **– (a)** the sale of War Bonds, **(b)** The stimulation of contributions to the American Red Cross, **(c)** The collection of needed clothing and other supplies, **(d)** the collection of waste and other scrap, such as rubber, tin, etc. **(e)** Organization and the registration of Jewish youth for participation in the Volunteer Land Corps, **(f)** The stimulation and participation of the Jewish community in all branches of the Armed Forces and Civilian Defense –and **(2)** Contributions to the war relief of the Allied nations, with particular respect to Great Britain, Russia, and China.[68]

The M.D.A.J.C. decided to try and raise financial contributions for the war relief effort. Their campaign to raise financial contributions was somewhat successful, but appears to have been

[67] Commission on Law and Legislation to Nathan Sand, 24 January 1941. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[68] Stephen Wise to Nathan Sand, 19 June 1942. Box 2, Folder 3. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

plagued by the same lack of initiative and neglect present in their previous endeavors.

In order to raise money to contribute to the war relief effort, the Milwaukee Division decided to hold a mass demonstration against Nazi atrocities. On July 23, 1942 a mass meeting was held at the Congregation Beth Israel which managed to attract 1500 to 1600 people and raise $500.00 for the United Jewish War Effort.[69] This fundraising dinner marks the largest financial contribution made to the A.J.C. by the M.D.A.J.C. during World War II. The M.D.A.J.C. had been quite diligent in raising $500.00 within a month after Rabbi Wise's request. Following this successful fundraising rally the A.J.C. requested that future rallies be held by the M.D.A.J.C. in the fall of 1942.[70] However the Milwaukee Division failed to respond to any of these further requests made by the national office. The A.J.C.'s disappointment in the M.D.A.J.C.'s inability to continue fundraising for the United Jewish War Effort was illustrated in a letter sent to Nathan Sand from Morris Margulies, Chairman of the United Jewish War Effort. On October 30, 1942 Sand received a letter from Margulies which stated:

> I want to assure you that I know anew of your fine response to the early call of the United Jewish War Effort when your city was among the first to send in a five hundred dollar contribution, and that this response was deeply appreciated by Dr. Wise and other leaders of the Jewish War Effort. But dear friend, I know that you will agree with me that this sum is nowhere comparable to what is commensurate with the size, standing and generosity of the Milwaukee Jewish community, in the light of the program undertaken by the United Jewish War Effort.[71]

The national office continued to request that the Milwaukee Division hold another mass

[69] Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle, 5 August 1942. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[70] Samuel Caplan to Nathan Sand, 18 August 1942. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[71] Morris Margulies to Nathan Sand, 30 October 1942. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

demonstration during the early months of 1943.[72] However, the single mass rally held in July was the extent to which the M.D.A.J.C. would campaign to raise funds for the United Jewish War Effort. The M.D.A.J.C. last attempt to aid European Jews would come in 1943 when the full extent of the Nazis policies of death and destruction were realized by Jews in America.

In November of 1942 Rabbi Stephen Wise was contacted by U.S. government officials who confirmed the radical nature of the Nazis' polices towards the European Jewry. In November a collection of affidavits and personal testimony reached the State Department and President Roosevelt. The Undersecretary, Sumner Welles, informed Rabbi Wise that the collection of affidavits and personal testimony confirmed his deepest fears: the German's plan for total extermination of the Jews.[73] This confirmation of Nazi atrocities spurred the A.J.C. and other organizations into directly appealing to the U.S. government in hope of saving the European Jews. In the early months of 1943, suggestions for the rescue of the Jews poured into Washington from churches of all faiths.[74] The M.D.A.J.C. was one of these organizations which made direct appeals to Roosevelt in hopes of getting the U.S. government to save their European Brethren. On February 24, 1943 the Milwaukee Division received a telegraph from the national office which recommended that the organization send telegrams to President Roosevelt begging him to act at once without delay to secure exit of Jews form Axis Europe.[75] Within days the Milwaukee Division responded with a fairly successful campaign to send telegraphs to the President. On February 28, 1943 the Milwaukee Division organized a conference intended to persuade its members and membership organizations to participate in the telegraph sending campaign. The conference was well attended and succeeded in sending over 300 individual

[72] Telegram from American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, 23 March 1943. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914 1947.
[73] Morse, *While Six Million Died,* 22-23.
[74] Ibid., 38.
[75] Telegraph from American Jewish Congress to Nathan Sand, 24 February 1943. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

telegrams to President Roosevelt, with 55 organizations responding.[76] One of the appeals made to President Roosevelt on February 27 stated:

> We are heartbroken over the continued planned extermination of the Jews by the Nazis. Two million innocent ones already died. We plead with you to act in the name of humanity to secure the removal of Jews from dominated Europe and sponsor immediately the creation of havens for them.[77]

This telegram campaign was the last major attempt made by the Milwaukee Division during World War II to save their Jewish brethren in Europe whose lives were threatened by the Nazi regime.

The M.D.A.J.C. had limited success in implementing the policies of the A.J.C. which were designed to indirectly aid Jews abroad threatened by the Nazi regime. The Milwaukee Division seems to simply have neglected requests from the national office to participate in promoting or condemning current legislation that would affect Jewish refugees. The Milwaukee Division was initially active in supporting the United Jewish War Effort, but then appears to neglect requests from the national office to continue orchestrating mass demonstration rallies. The Milwaukee Division failed to fully implement national policies of the A.J.C. concerning the 1936 Olympic Boycott, the boycott of German goods, and the welfare of Jews abroad. In many of these instances the M.D.A.J.C. appeared to simply chose to neglect requests made by the national office or lacked the initiative to implement policies. However, this neglect and lack of initiative were signs of much deeper struggles taking place within the organization. The Milwaukee Division's failure to successfully implement national policy was due to the organization's lack of proper financial funding and dedicated personnel.

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[76] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 9 March 1943. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[77] Telegram to President of U.S. from M.D.A.J.C., 27 February 1943. Box 2, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

## Factors Affecting M.D.A.J.C.'s Performance

There were several factors which affected the Milwaukee Division's ability to fully implement the policies of the A.J.C prior to and during World War II. One of these external factors was the lack of proper financial support. The Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund provided an annual allotment of funds to the Milwaukee Division, however this entire sum of money was sent directly to national headquarters. Another major internal factor affecting the Milwaukee Division's performance was the nature of the organization's membership which was comprised mostly of other organizations rather than individuals. It also appears that the organization lacked personnel who were dedicated to the work of the Congress.

### *Lack of Sufficient Funds*

The financial records of the M.D.A.J.C. from 1937 to 1941 all indicate that the organization was in financial trouble prior to and during World War II. The only year in which the Milwaukee Division's records did not show a deficit was 1937. In December of 1937 the financial statement of the Milwaukee Division shown that there was a total of $6.60 in the organization's funds.[78] There were no financial records prior to 1937. The financial records of the years following 1937 all indicated that the organization was facing a deficit. The worst year on record was 1938 which ended with the organization facing a deficit of $501.57.[79] There was no financial statement available for 1939, but the organization's records contained statements form 1940 and 1941. By the end of 1940 the M.D.A.J.C. was in debt $112.09[80] and by the end

[78] 1937 M.D.A.J.C. Financial Statement, December 1937. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[79] 1938 M.D.A.J.C. Financial Statement, December 1938. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[80] 1940 M.D.A.J.C. Financial Statement, December 1940. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers 1914-1947.

of 1941 the organization shown a deficit of $286.59.[81] One of the main reasons for the Milwaukee Division's financial problems during this period was the nature of the financial arrangement between the M.D.A.J.C., the A.J.C., and the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund.

An agreement was made between the A.J.C. and the M.D.A.J.C. that all funds received from the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund were to be sent directly to nation headquarters in New York.[82] The annual allotment from the local Welfare Fund was usually quite a sizeable amount and would have provided the Milwaukee Division with the necessary funding needed to implement the polices advocated by the A.J.C. For example, in 1940 the Milwaukee Division received $1000.00 from the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund which was directly sent to national headquarters in New York.[83] These are funds that were raised locally and could have been used by the Milwaukee Division to implement policies of the A.J.C. This arrangement in itself is clearly a reason why the Milwaukee Division was suffering from a lack of funds prior to and during World War II. However, there were further constraints put on the Milwaukee Division by the A.J.C. which affected their ability to raise funds.

Since the M.D.A.J.C. received absolutely none of the funds allotted by the local Welfare Fund, the only way for the Milwaukee Division to acquire funds was through membership drives. During these membership drives the Milwaukee Division held a dinner meeting during which it would distribute cards asking fellow Jews to contribute to the M.D.A.J.C.'s fund.[84] However, once the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund realized that the M.D.A.J.C. was holding these membership drives, the chairman of the Welfare Fund contacted the A.J.C. in protest. In a letter sent to A.J.C. headquarters in New York, the chairman of the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare

[81] 1941 M.D.A.J.C. Financial Statement, December 1941. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers 1914-1947.
[82] Nathan Sand to Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund, 12 May, 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers 1914-1947.
[83] Stephen Wise to Nathan Stein, 8 December 1939. Box 1, Folder 5. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[84] Nathan Stein to American Jewish Congress, 30 April 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

Fund wrote:

> It has come to my attention that the local organization of American Jewish Congress held a dinner meeting on April 28th and a goodly number of persons attended the same. I am informed that cards were distributed soliciting funds. I am also informed, that a mass meeting is planned for the early part of May… and at that meeting a similar request for funds will be made. The action of the local group is in violation of our arrangement whereby no funds is to be solicited on the part of any particular agency in the Welfare Fund Campaign.[85]

Soon after this letter was received by A.J.C. national headquarters, Nathan Sand received a letter from the treasurer of the A.J.C. The treasurer of the A.J.C. requested that the Milwaukee Division cancel the use of the solicitation cards and cease membership activities that conflicted with the efforts of the Welfare Fund.[86] This letter illustrates the A.J.C.'s disregard towards the financial needs of the Milwaukee Division. Nathan Sand discussed the financial predicament faced by the Milwaukee Division in a letter to Nathan Stein, the chairman of the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund. On May 12 Nathan Sand wrote:

> We are getting ready to solicit memberships from a dollar and up for the purpose of covering our local expenses. As to the amount allotted by the Welfare Fund to the American Jewish Congress, it was agreed that this fund goes directly to the National office in New York and we are to not to receive any share of this amount. To object to a membership fund and insist upon discontinuing it, would spell the stoppage of our local activities of the Congress.[87]

It certainly appears that the M.D.A.J.C. was in a Catch 22 position regarding their ability to raise

[85] Nathan Stein to American Jewish Congress, 30 April 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[86] Jacob Leichtman to Nathan Sand, 6 May 1938, Box 1 Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[87] Nathan Sand to Nathan Stein, 12 May 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

funds. The A.J.C. required that all funds received from the Welfare Fund be sent to the national office, while the Welfare Fund required that all participating organizations refrain from conducting membership drives that conflicted with their own drives. Therefore, the M.D.A.J.C. was forced to organize its own fundraising efforts during times when the Welfare Fund was not actively conducting drives. It would be safe to assume that this proposition limited the times during which the M.D.A.J.C. could conduct its drives since the Welfare Fund's main duty was to raise money for Jewish organizations. For example, in 1941 the M.D.A.J.C. had considered the possibility of raising funds for the relief effort, but had to postpone the work because a Welfare Fund Drive was taking place during the same month.[88] This conflict certainly had to put a constraint on the Milwaukee Division's ability to raise money for its local efforts.

The M.D.A.J.C.'s lack of funding in turn affected the organization's abilities to implement the A.J.C.'s national policy. Nathan Sand admitted that the Milwaukee Division's lack of funds limited organization's ability to conduct local activities. In a letter sent to A.J.C. headquarters in 1938 Nathan Sand explained that the Milwaukee Division tried to cooperate with the policies of the A.J.C., but the organization's local work was limited due to its financial status.[89] The influence of Jewish organizations depended as much on its ability to raise money as the size of its membership.[90] However, a lack of proper finances was not the only factor which affected the Milwaukee Division's ability to implement national policy. In the years prior to and during World War II the organization did not have a sufficient number of dedicated individuals needed to implement national policy.

[88] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 1 September. Box 2, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[89] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 4 October 1938. Box 1, Folder 5. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[90] Feingold, *The Jewish People in America,* 157.

***Lack of Dedicated Individuals***

The Milwaukee Division's lack of dedicated members willing to orchestrate the organization's activities was partially due to the nature of their membership. Instead of focusing on individual membership, the A.J.C. and M.D.A.J.C. focused on registering Jewish organizations represented within the community.[91] As previously noted, there were individual membership drives, but these drives appeared to be attempts to raise money within the Jewish community rather than solicit members who would play an important role within the organization. Many of the Milwaukee Division's meetings were attended by individuals who were actually delegates of other Jewish organizations. For example, in 1938 the Milwaukee Division called for a meeting to discuss the Jewish situation in Romania. Those who attended the meeting were delegates of 26 organizations within Milwaukee.[92] Although the membership of the Milwaukee Division represented a wide array of Jewish organizations, many of these delegates owed their allegiance to their organization and not the interests of the M.D.A.J.C. There appeared to be very few members who were dedicated solely to the aims of the M.D.A.J.C.

Quite often the delegates of membership organizations refused to partake in activities of the M.D.A.J.C. Many times these membership organizations were involved in activities of their own and therefore could not participate in the activities of the Milwaukee Division. There were several instances prior to and during World War II where organizations simply refused to send delegates to meetings of the Milwaukee Division. For example, in a letter sent to national headquarters Sand commented on this lack of participation by membership organizations. In 1938 Sand reported that many delegates did not attend executive meetings of the M.D.A.J.C. and

[91] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 14 June 1940. Box 1, Folder 6. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[92] Nathan Sand's Secretary Notes, 27 February 1938. Box 1, Folder 2. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

therefore the organization accomplished nothing.[93] The reasons for the absence of these delegates is not stated, but most likely these delegates were preoccupied with the activities of their own organization or simply too busy with other matters. Sometimes these delegates were attending activities held by other Jewish organizations. In February, 1938 Sand sent a letter to A.J.C. headquarters illustrating this conflict. In the letter, Sand wrote:

> Please be advised that we have arranged a conference for the date stated [February 27, 1938] and have obtained a speaker to address the conference. However, now we are in a peculiar position due to the fact that an organization recently started in Milwaukee known as "Jewish People's Committee against Fascism and Anti-Semitism" became suddenly active, calling upon organization for delegates to attend a conference for the very same date. In other words, those delegates who were intending to come to the Congress Conference will be diverted to attend their conference, thereby strengthening their organization.[94]

For many of these members the work of the Milwaukee Division was not their top priority. With the majority of the Milwaukee Division members preoccupied with other endeavors, there appeared to be very few members dedicated solely to the work of the Congress.

One of the reasons why the Milwaukee Division was unable to fully implement the policies of the A.J.C. was because there were very few executives within the organization that were dedicated solely to the Congress. This lack of individuals dedicated to the work of the Congress was illustrated in a letter Nathan Sand sent to Rabbi Morton M. Berman who was the speaker as a mass meeting held by the Milwaukee Division on December, 1939. In the letter, Sand wrote:

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[93] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 20 January 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1917-1947.
[94] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 21 February 1938. Box 1, Folder 4. Nathan Sand Papers, 1917-1947.

> Please accept my apologies for not meeting you at the station [prior to the meeting] and also not seeing you off on your way back. We are only two members of the Congress who organized the whole thing and it was impossible to attend every detail. We have not enough workers in the Congress movement in Milwaukee.[95]

The exact reason why the Milwaukee Division lacked dedicated individuals is not known, but it is plausible to assume that it was partially due to the organization's financial status. Since the organization was suffering from a lack of funds there was no financial incentive for individuals to dedicate themselves to the Milwaukee Division's activities. Like Nathan Sand, those who worked for the Milwaukee Division had to be willing to volunteer their time orchestrating activities for the organization. Another reason why the Milwaukee Division lacked dedicated individuals may be the same reason why the organization's membership did not fully participate in Congress activities; they were involved in other Jewish organizations.

The president and chairmen of the Milwaukee Division during the early 1940s appeared to have been involved in the activities of other Jewish organizations and therefore neglected the work of the Congress. In 1941 Sand discussed the reason why the new president of the M.D.A.J.C., Arthur Shutkin, did not have enough time to devote to Congress activities. In a letter to the president of the Chicago Division of the Jewish Council, Sand Wrote:

> Now as you recall we have put the chairmanship onto A. Shutkin, who is an active in many other fields in Jewish life, enough to mention he is State Chairman of the National fund "Nachlath" and the chairman of the Seven State District of

[95] Nathan Sand to Rabbi Morton M. Berman, 4 January 1940. Box 1, Folder 5. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

> the J.N.W.A. so he naturally cannot give the necessary time in helping the organization.[96]

It appears that many of the Milwaukee Division's chairmen during the early 1940s were just as negligent towards the M.D.A.J.C. as the organization's president was. In a letter to A.J.C. headquarters in 1945, Sand described the negligence of some of the organization's chairmen and described the general condition of the M.D.J.A.C. In the letter Sand wrote:

> I now realize fully that as far as Milwaukee is concerned, we have no branch here. Suffice to say that Mr. Speidlman and Mr. Weinrod are not vitally interested in the Congress work. They are both delegates to the American Jewish Conference, members of the Zionist Emergency Committee, and the heads of the National Fund Council. It seems that their time and effort are directed to those particular activities.[97]

With many of the Milwaukee Division's chairmen neglecting the responsibilities of the organization, it becomes no wonder why the M.D.A.J.C. was unable to fully implement the policies of the A.J.C. during the early 1940s. Both its members and executives appear to have been preoccupied with other matters

Although the Milwaukee Division's chairmen chose to neglect the organization it would be wrong to claim that they were unsympathetic to the welfare of Jews in America and abroad. For some reason these chairmen felt that the welfare of Jews was better served if they were to devote their time and resources to other Jewish organizations. They may have felt that the organization's lack of funding limited the extent to which it could help the situation of the Jews. However, it is apparent that the organizations lack of funding and individuals dedicated to the

[96] Nathan Sand to Max A. Kopstein, 5 May 1941. Box 2, Folder 1. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.
[97] Nathan Sand to American Jewish Congress, 19 January 1945. Box 2, Folder 7. Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947.

Congress were major factors which affected the Milwaukee Division's ability to implement the policies of the A.J.C.

## Conclusion

The twelve years spanning from 1933 to 1945 were extremely turbulent years for the Jews of Europe as well as the Jewish community here in the United States. Hitler's rise to power threatened the welfare of Jews abroad and in the U.S. Jewish organization in the United States attempted to unite in order to combat anti-Semitism in the United States and protect their brethren abroad. Although the Milwaukee Division attempted to participate in a number of activities designed to combat anti-Semitic policies abroad, their efforts were largely unsuccessful due to several local constraints and conflicts. The M.D.A.J.C. had limited success in implementing the policies of the A.J.C. and appeared to quite often simple neglect requests made by the national office. However it has been shown that the organization was facing certain internal issues which greatly affected their ability properly implement national policy. Their apparent neglect of requests made by the national office was not because Jews in Milwaukee were unsympathetic to the plight of their brethren in Europe. The Milwaukee Division's lack of adequate funding and dedicated personnel appear to be the major reasons why this local Jewish organization failed to fully implement the A.J.C.'s policies. The organization's lack of adequate funding was due their financial agreement with the A.J.C. which directed all funds from the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund to the national office. The organization's lack of dedicated personnel was due to the organization's membership structure and also due to conflict with other Jewish organizations. The activities of the M.D.A.J.C. were placed in historical context and the obstacles faced by the American Jewish Congress (A.J.C.) and other Jewish organizations in their struggle to fight the Nazis were described.

The Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress was only one of countless

local Jewish organizations spread across the United States from 1933 to 1945. There are several unexplored issued that would be interesting to investigate in light of the Milwaukee Division's failures. Was the Milwaukee Division's failure to implement national policy a common theme for local Jewish organizations in the U.S.? It would also be interesting to investigate how the Milwaukee Division's failure to implement national policy affected the success of the A.J.C. One important issue that was not explored in this paper is the ethnic background of those Jews living in Milwaukee from 1933-1945. Were there divisions within the Jewish community along ethnic or class lines? It would be interesting to investigate whether these divisions led to the plethora of Jewish organizations in Milwaukee, each representing a different ideology. Another issue to investigate was the strong German presence in Milwaukee during this time period. Did the strong German presence make Jews afraid of expressing their ethnic identity or asking for relief to be sent to their European brethren? These are all important issues that can be investigated to further explain and understand the M.D.A.J.C.'s failure to implement national policy from 1933 to 1945.

## Bibliography

**Primary Sources:**

Nathan Sand Papers, 1914-1947. Milwaukee division of American Jewish Congress Papers. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Milwaukee Area Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI.

This collection is the basis for my entire research project. The collection includes correspondence and minutes kept by Nathan Sand who was the secretary for the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress for over 25 years. This collection has provided insight into Milwaukee's Jewish community during the years prior to and during World War II. The collection also provides insight into other Jewish organizations during this time period and how these organizations interacted with each other.

*The Oshkosh Northwestern.* 31 March, 1936.

This newspaper provided information concerning the two athletic instructors from the Milwaukee public school who asked for paid leave to attend the 1936 Olympic Games. The information in this article illustrated an inconsistency that was present within Nathan Sand's records.

**Secondary Sources:**

***Books***

Bachrach, Susan D. *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936.* New York: Little Brown and Company, 2000.

Bachrach discusses the 1936 Olympics which were held in Berlin. More importantly she discusses the boycott debate in America and the American Jewish Congress' role in the boycott debate.

Dallek, Robert. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

This book provided me with a general background of Roosevelt's foreign policy prior to and during World War II. However, this book was not used in the formation of this paper

Feingold, Henry L. *The Jewish People in America - A Time For Searching: Entering the Mainstream 1920-1945.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Feingold discusses issues concerning Jews in America such as immigration restriction laws, anti-Semitism, and more importantly the American Jewish Congress and its conflict with

other Jewish organizations. He also discusses how the American Jewish Congress and other Jewish organizations in America tried to aid Jews in Europe.

Fishman, Priscilla. *The Jews of the United States.* New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1973.

Fishman discusses American's immigration policy prior to and during World War I and explains how these laws reflect anti-Semitism within the American Government. The author also discusses other anti-Semitic factions in America such as Father Coughlin and the Christian Front. She also discusses the American Jews attempted to unite and save European Jews.

Glad, Paul W. *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940.* Edited by William Fletcher Thompson. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990.

Glad discusses the general attitude held by Catholics and Lutherans in Wisconsin towards Jews. The book also slightly discussed sources of anti-Semitism in Wisconsin prior to and during World War II. However this book was not used during the formulation of this paper.

Hart-Davis, Huff. *Hitler's Games*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986.

This book provided me with a broad overview of the 1936 Olympic Games and the boycott which ensued. However, there was no specific information from the book which was used in the paper.

Hertzberg, Arthur. *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

Hertzberg discusses the immigration laws prior to and during World War II affecting Jews. The book also addressed anti-Semitism in the U.S., conflict between Jewish organizations, and the confidence within the Jewish community that Roosevelt would properly address the plight of the Jews in Europe.

Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

This book provided me with a general background of Roosevelt's foreign policy prior to and during World War II. However, this book was not used in the formation of this paper

Kruger, Arnd and William Murray, eds. *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

This book provided useful information about the role of the Amateur American Union in deciding whether or not American athletes would participate in the 1936 Olympic Games. It also provided me with abroad overview of the boycott movement in America prior to the Games in Berlin.

Large, David Clay. *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007.

This book provided extensive information about the Olympic boycott movement in America. It provided information about the non-Jewish forces involved in the boycott movement like the Catholic organization *Commonweal.* The book also discussed how Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Labor Committee reacted to the boycott movement in the United States.

Mandell, Richard D. *The Nazi Olympics.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971.

This book provided information concerning the boycott movement in America of the 1936 Olympic Games. Specifically it explained the role of some non-Jewish organizations in the boycott like the American Federation of Labor and Mahoney's "Committee on Fair Play in Sports." Both of these organizations would work on the local level with the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress. The book also provided me with a general overview of the boycott movement in America of the 1936 Olympic Games.

Morse, Arthur D. *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy.* New York: The Overlook Press, 1983.

This book provided a lot on U.S. immigration laws prior to an during World War II. Morse discusses the reasons why Roosevelt was unable to alter the immigration laws and also provided a lot of information on how Rabbi Stephen Wise and the American Jewish Congress tried to held their brethren in Europe.

Swichkow, Louis J. and Lloyd P. Gartner. *The History of Jews in Milwaukee.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963.

This book provided insight as to the Jewish organizations present in Milwaukee during the early to mid-1900s and how these organizations dealt with one another. This book also addresses other issues facing Jews in Milwaukee such as anti-Semitism and economic discrimination.

Traxler, Ruth. *The Golden Land: 150 Years of Jewish Life in Milwaukee.* Milwaukee: Sesquicentennial Celebration, 1994.

This book provided a broad overview of important Jewish organizations in Milwaukee during the last 150 years. However, it had very little information on the Milwaukee Division of the American Jewish Congress and was not used in the formation of this paper.