

members of a Christian civilization." Those who grew up later, however, remembered a more Balkanized Boston, where Jews lived within their own boundaries and faced consequences if they ventured out. Journalist Theodore H. White, for example, recalled living in "an enclave surrounded by Irish" during his youth in the 1920's. The local library lay in an Irish district, and his "first fights happened en route to the library" to get books. "Pure hellishness divided us," he recollected, but looking back he concluded that "even where the friction between the groups was greatest . . . it was not intolerable."²⁰

Jews, of course, were not the only targets of young toughs. Fights between the Irish and the Italians were legion as well. "For years," according to one student of the subject, "it was not considered safe for a young Italian to set foot in Charlestown, and the young Irishman who ventured into the North End found himself in similar jeopardy."²¹ To a considerable degree, these battles among Boston's young people reflected the political battles then being waged by their elders over turf, power, and social advancement.

Anti-Jewish violence peaked in Boston during the hard years of the Depression and the Second World War. Fear stalked the Jewish community at that time and senseless acts of violence abounded. Nat Hentoff recalls a typical episode in his autobiography, *Boston Boy*.

One evening, three friends and I are walking through large, dark Franklin Park on the way to a dance at the Hebrew school. Coming toward us are four bigger boys. When they are close enough, it is clear they are not Jewish. And since they are not Italian, they are Irish. Their leader swaggers up to me and asks—what else?—"Are you Jewish?" Since there are other members of my tribe with me . . . I nod.

"You got a light?" he asks.

As I go to my pocket, I look down, and a stone, a huge stone, smashes into my face. Or so it feels. The shock and pain are such that it takes a few moments for me to taste the blood and feel the space where, a second ago, there had been a tooth. Their leader, rubbing his fist with satisfaction, waits for a revengeful lunge and is not surprised when it doesn't come. So few of these kikes fight back. He and his sturdy companions move on, guffawing.²²

Economic tensions and jealousies underlay some of this violence. Cultural and political differences between Catholics and Jews, exacerbated by the New Deal, the Spanish Civil War, Catholic isolationism, and the Church's fear of communism also played a significant role. The man who fully exploited these tensions and in the process attracted a large local following was Father Charles E. Coughlin, a demagogic radio priest from Royal Oak, Michigan. His call to "drive the Money-changers from the Temple," his scurrilous

NOTE

1. Judah L. Magnes (1877-1948), American-born rabbi and communal leader. Upon his ordination as a Reform rabbi by Hebrew Union College in 1900, Magnes went to Germany to study. This occasioned several extended trips to Eastern Europe, where he was profoundly impressed by the richness and vitality of Jewish life there. This strengthened his sympathy for Jewish tradition, peoplehood and Zionism. On his return to the United States in 1904, he served as a rabbi of

several Reform congregations, most notably Temple Emanu-El (1906-1910). During that time, he was the secretary of the American Zionist Federation (1905-1908) and later became the president of the organized Jewish community of New York City, the so-called Kehillah, from its founding in 1908 until its demise in 1922. He left for Palestine in the same year, where he became the chancellor and first president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

LOUIS D. BRANDEIS

28. Zionism Is Consistent with American Patriotism¹

Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with Patriotism. Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent. A man is a better citizen of the United States for being also a loyal citizen of his state, and of his city; for being loyal to his family, and to his profession or trade; for being loyal to his college or his lodge. Every Irish American who contributed towards advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so.

Note what Seton-Watson says:

America is full of nationalities which, while accepting with enthusiasm their new American citizenship, nevertheless look to some centre in the old world as the source and inspiration of their national culture and traditions. The most typical instance is the feeling of the American Jew for Palestine which may

well become a focus for his *déclassé* kinsmen in other parts of the world.

There is no inconsistency between loyalty to America and loyalty to Jewry. The Jewish spirit, the product of our religion and experiences, is essentially modern and essentially American. Not since the destruction of the Temple have the Jews in spirit and in ideals been so fully in harmony with the noblest aspirations of the country in which they lived.

America's fundamental law seeks to make real the brotherhood of man. That brotherhood became the Jewish fundamental law more than twenty-five hundred years ago. America's insistent demand in the twentieth century is for social justice. That also has been the Jews' striving for ages. Their affliction as well as their religion has prepared the Jews for effective democracy. Persecution broadened their sympathies. It trained them in patient endurance, in self-control, and in sacrifice. It made them think as well as suffer. It deepened the passion for righteousness.

Source: Louis D. Brandeis, "The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It," *Brandeis on Zionism: A Collection of Addresses and Statements*, foreword by Mr. Justice Felix Frankfurter, ed. Solomon Goldman (Washington, D.C.: Zionist Organization of America, 1942). Copyright 1942 by the Zionist Organization of America. Reprinted by permission.

lations announcements that were issued by the Maimonides Institute's office as well as a number of letters to the editor lauding the achievements of the new educational endeavor.³⁷ This demonstrates that not everyone was opposed to the school.

Archival sources suggest other grounds for the hostile response generated by Rabbi Soloveitchik's proposed institution but, before analyzing these sources, it is important to distinguish between the lack of support for the Maimonides Educational Institute and the negativity spawned by the founding of the Boston Yeshiva Academy. While Maimonides intended to create a private school, the Yeshiva Academy was broader and community-oriented as it offered a kindergarten, a supplementary school, a rabbinical training program, and a public center.

Hillel Levine, who wrote a political history of Jewish Boston, has suggested that the opposition came from some of the leaders of the organized Jewish community who believed that a Jewish day school "would hinder the integration of American Jews into the mainstream." According to Levine, Louis Kirstein—vice president of Filene's Department Store and a board member of Bloomingdale's, Abraham and Strauss, and a number of Jewish organizations—tried unsuccessfully to convince Soloveitchik to abandon his plans.³⁸

Kirstein was a well known Boston philanthropist who, together with the prominent jurist Felix Frankfurter, had helped to mobilize the Jewish community of Boston during the elections of 1936 in support of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He had also been a founder of Beth Israel, the first Jewish hospital in Boston.³⁹ If not the wealthiest, Kirstein was probably the most influential Jew in Boston. In 1940, Kirstein became the chairman of the board of the Associated Jewish Philanthropies.

While Levine is correct that Kirstein was opposed to Rabbi Soloveitchik's plans, he confuses Kirstein's objection to the parochial school with his rejection of the entire Boston Yeshiva Academy. Furthermore, Levine speculates as to the nature of Kirstein's dissent, inferring that Kirstein believed that the school would hinder integration into American culture.

An original letter from Louis Kirstein to Rabbi Soloveitchik exists among Rabbi Soloveitchik's papers. In this letter, one gets a true sense of Kirstein's objections.

I have seen your letter today informing me of the campaign that is on for the Boston Yeshiva Academy.

I am frankly disturbed that in these days when we are all struggling to raise funds for so many tragically urgent Jewish needs, a campaign like yours should have been started in Boston without even talking it over with any of us. It is not that those of us who

are responsible for raising funds would want to have the final say. Rather because we believe in democracy do we think it of first importance to have some joint consideration and pooling of resources, interests, and energy in critical times like these.

Is there a lack of facilities in this country for training men for the rabbinate or young people generally in Jewish tradition? My impression is that Jewish education is not over-prosperous and that we are having all we can do to maintain the program already existing. At any rate, are not all these questions proper matters for discussion rather than having a *fait accompli* presented? Action of this sort does not help to bring about the unity and teamwork which certainly more than ever are absolutely essential if we are to survive the hard days upon us.⁴⁰

Kirstein's complaint was aimed at the issue of independent fundraising and had little to do with the parochial nature of the school. He believed that Rabbi Soloveitchik was being insensitive to the broader needs of the Jewish people. By creating a new institution, Rabbi Soloveitchik was displacing valuable resources from other community interests. For Kirstein, this was a particularly sensitive issue since in 1940 he unified the fundraising campaigns of the United Jewish Campaign (for overseas rescue and services) and the Associated Jewish Philanthropies to form the Combined Jewish Appeal.⁴¹ Economic allocations alone were not Kirstein's only consideration. He was mainly upset that Rabbi Soloveitchik did not approach the organized community to discuss his initiative. The keystone of the organized community was, in Kirstein's view, the Combined Jewish Appeal, which he chaired. By ignoring the conventional channels employed for community fundraising, Rabbi Soloveitchik had essentially demonstrated his independence from the organized community. From Kirstein's perspective, Rabbi Soloveitchik's move was autocratic and counterproductive.

A closer look at local Boston records indicates that the opposition to Rabbi Soloveitchik's Yeshiva Academy had its roots not only in the matter of lay leadership's funding priorities, but also in an internal battle within the Orthodox community over status and power within Boston Jewry.⁴² In 1941, Rabbi Binyamin Chayet, a local community rabbi and the chair of the Vaad ha-Rabbonim of Boston, coordinated a campaign designed to publicly humiliate Rabbi Soloveitchik. In a letter published in the *Jewish Advocate*, Chayet wrote,

About two years ago Rabbi Soloveitchik was invited by the Rabbinical Association (RA) to present the case of the Parochial School

This schedule was similar to that of the public schools. Originally intended to add one new class each year, Maimonides offered two new grades a year, so that by 1941, six grades were in full operation. The teachers were hired from the public schools and Dr. Henry Lisman, Rabbi Soloveitchik's brother-in-law, served as principal. Though some of the students came from traditional homes, others did not have any Orthodox upbringing whatsoever. The original Maimonides program included "instruction in reading, writing, and speaking of Hebrew and Yiddish, translation of the Bible together with Rashi and other commentators, and Shulchan Arukh." In 1941, Boston's superintendent of education endorsed the school. At least one parent was impressed that "My son's teacher . . . is not only an excellent teacher, but himself a well-versed scholar in addition to being a Doctor of Philosophy."³⁰

The school initially operated in the building of Rabbi Soloveitchik's supplementary school, Yeshivat Torat Israel, but during its second year it moved to the building of the Young Israel of Roxbury. One student recalled that the heating system of the Young Israel of Roxbury routinely broke down. When this happened, the students marched to the nearby Soloveitchik home. The founders of the school and his wife "opened their door and their hearts to the pupils. The children huddled on the living room sofa, and learning resumed."³¹ While the Maimonides School was adapting the public school model to the Orthodox context, the provincial atmosphere of the school was still apparent.

The early success of Rabbi Soloveitchik's school made an impression on visitors to Boston. Writing in 1940 after a visit to Boston, Rabbi Aron Pardes described Rabbi Soloveitchik's activities in the context of Boston's Jewish community, focusing on the Maimonides School:

Rabbi Soloveitchik's *drashot* have impressed the love of Torah on all those who have heard them. The influence of the Reform rabbis that laid their roots in synagogues and *batei midrash* in Boston before Rabbi Soloveitchik's arrival is slowly diminishing. The other factions recognize that an important and powerful force is being created: a *haredi* Judaism that recognizes its values and knows its mission. This Judaism will not cower before ignoramuses nor will it sell its birthright for lentils. . . . The critical thing is that because of Rabbi Soloveitchik, the attitude toward the oral law has changed.

The parochial school is developing nicely. Children who come from homes absent of any holiness are being educated as believing Jews. The Yeshiva and the Heichal Rabbenu Hayyim haLevi are breaking new ground in changing the community attitude regard-

of many of the families, the desire on the part of these schools to maintain traditional Orthodox culture, and the attitudes of the teachers all contributed to the conservative character of these schools. Maimonides and Ramaz, by contrast, shared a philosophy of engagement rather than retreat from modern society.

The integration at Maimonides went beyond *halakhic* observance and secular studies, as American values were considered essential to the goals of the school. The by-laws of the institute read:

The object of this corporation shall be the maintenance of a place of worship, according to the Orthodox Hebrew rite, and the educational instruction of Jewish youth in the tenets of the Jewish religion; to maintain and operate a school for the dissemination and teaching of Hebrew religious and literary works based upon Orthodox traditional Judaism, together with English secular education in co-ordination with and under the supervision of the public school authorities and covering all subjects taught in the elementary and high school grades of our public schools; to promote literary and educational, charitable, and benevolent movements in the community, and to help the youth of our City and State to become fitter for true American citizenship, manhood and womanhood; to acquire by purchase or otherwise and to hold real and personal property necessary in the conduct of its affairs, and to borrow with or without security from individuals and corporations on the signature of its President and Treasurer. The corporation shall have the power to solicit and raise funds by subscription from its officers and members and the general public to help maintain the institution.³²

The institute set out to open an Orthodox school, a place of worship, an institution for *tzedaka* and a civic center. In the school, Jewish texts would be taught only from an Orthodox perspective and secular subjects would complement, not simply supplement the Judaic ones. The school was to be coeducational, and from the outset, it was determined to develop a high school. The corporation was to act to promote community-wide activities in line with its philosophy. All these activities were meant to harmonize Orthodox Jewish life with American values.

The first published reports of the school mention a "homelike atmosphere," a sunny courtyard, and tuition of four hundred dollars a year. Classes ended each day at 3:30 P.M. and students were bused home for lunch.