

Sidney
Shutz . . .

The Commentator

Don't Trust
Your Lawyer

Official Undergraduate Newspaper of Yeshiva College

VOL. LXXI

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 1970

232

No. 6

Rav Responds to Secularization; Sympathizes with Student Rally





L'il. Tag

Students picket in front of Furst Hall on Sunday, April 12, in response to the alleged "secularization" of the University. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, addressing the Chag Hasemicha, reacted to the picket by speaking out on his fear of "secularization" and expressed the possibility that if present policies continue he might be forced to resign.

By ANDREW GELLER

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik has called on the Yeshiva administration to reverse the trend toward secularization upon which it has embarked. His address, delivered during the celebration of *Chag Hasemicha* on April 12, was seen by many as one of the most significant in Yeshiva's eighty-five year history.

The Rav defined three specific problems which he fears may soon face the undergraduate divisions if Yeshiva College remains a secular institution. He cannot believe that a non-sectarian school will be able to enforce religious observance in its dormitories. He fears that a rebellious student may soon challenge the college's requirement of attendance in a religious division, a requirement no longer compatible with Yeshiva's secular status.

Rabbi Soloveitchik's greatest

fears concern Dr. Belkin's successor. The Rav pointed out that the religious ideology which is the backbone of Yeshiva today is due to a great extent to President Belkin. But since all men are mortal, he said, Dr. Belkin's position will inevitably be filled by another, whose competence will not be as great as Dr. Belkin's. Rabbi Soloveitchik emphasized that the administration cannot allow the character of the entire university to depend upon one man, but that it must be a concrete and legal part of the University's constitution.

He concluded with a veiled threat that if the problems he mentioned are not satisfactorily resolved, then "I no longer have a place in this *yeshiva*."

Reaction

Reaction to Rabbi Soloveitchik's speech was immediate and varied. Dr. Belkin was visibly upset by both the tone and the

content of the Rav's remarks. At several points during the Rav's speech he interjected denials to accusations made against the YU administration, but the Rav insisted that he be allowed to speak freely.

One member of the Board of Trustees charged that the Rav had chosen a bad time and place for his remarks. Moreover, since the Rav has done little to aid YU's fund-raising efforts, it was not in his province to criticize the way Yeshiva obtains its money. Even some *rebbeim* in the *yeshiva* expressed their belief that Rabbi Soloveitchik had not grasped the financial implications of the situation.

Student reaction was overwhelmingly favorable. Some felt that his complete rejection of present Yeshiva policy made Dr. Belkin's position untenable and would ultimately force the latter's resignation. Others were of

the opinion that Rabbi Soloveitchik's personal praise of Dr. Belkin was completely sincere and his threat to leave YU was sufficiently vague so as to allow Dr. Belkin room to maneuver without resigning his position.

The Issue

The issue of secularization has burned fitfully among the student body throughout most of this year. However, the issuance of new catalogues representing JSS and EMC as non-sectarian institutions aroused the resentment of many students who felt the administration was dealing deceitfully not only with Albany but with its own students as well.

On April 8, four *semicha* students presented Dr. Belkin with a list of six demands which they termed "imperative." They asked that:

1) The corporate structure of YU be changed so that RIETS (both undergraduate and gradu-

ate), YC, EMC, JSS, Stern and TIW be established as a separate corporation independent of the other divisions of the University.

2) This new corporation be given as assets classroom, dormitory, and library buildings currently used by it as well as an equitable share of the endowment.

3) All new catalogues issued under the pressure of the present charters be immediately withdrawn and new ones stating conspicuously the requirements for a double program be issued as soon as possible and forwarded to Albany.

4) Salaries of the religious faculty be raised to at least parity with those of the college faculty.

5) Faculty councils of the respective religious divisions be empowered to set definitive policy with respect to admissions, cur-

(Continued on page 5, col. 1)

Secularization Pickets Demand Undergraduate Corporation

(Continued from page 1, col. 5)
riculum and degree and *semicha* requirements.

6) The Belfer Graduate School and its buildings should be totally shut down on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*.

The students, banding together under the banner "Concerned Students' Coalition," pointed out that the \$300,000 in Bundy funds which the undergraduate divisions would lose if they remained sectarian was an insignificant sum compared to YU's multi-million dollar budget.

According to the Coalition's leaders, the six demands were negotiable. They indicated that they might be satisfied with a return to the situation before 1967, the year in which RIETS was separated from the University.

Picket

As no positive response to their demands was forthcoming from Dr. Belkin's office, the students decided to picket the *Chag Hase-micha* on Sunday, April 12. This decision was supported by some of the rabbinic faculty and by Rabbi Soloveitchik himself.

At a student meeting on Thursday, April 9, some students expressed the opinion that picketing alone, even with the threat of



Rabbi Soloveitchik speaks at chag hasemicha.

B. Spivak

bad publicity, might not be enough to force a restructuring of the entire University. They believed that only actual occupation of the college buildings could bring about the changes they had demanded.

The picketing action itself, however, did not receive the support of the entire student body.

A declaration of support was signed by the presidents and presidents-elect of JSS and SOY, the president-elect of YCSC, the president of Stern College student council, and the editors of the *Observer*, the *Hamevaser* and *Hamashkif*. Conspicuous by their absence were the signatures of the president of YCSC and the

editor of THE COMMENTATOR. Later, Robert Sacknovitz of JSS and president-elect Robert Weiss of YCSC claimed that their signatures were added to the declaration of support without their explicit consent.

The lack of popular enthusiasm was also evident to an extent when the actual event took place on Sunday. Only 25 Stern girls took part, and of the 200 YC students who marched in front of Furst Hall and the main building, the majority were from RIETS and JSS; few if any were from EMC. Not one member of the YCSC executive council was present.

Even Rabbi Soloveitchik declined in the end to back the pickets. In his speech on Sunday he claimed that he had put a stop to the picketing, and only upon being informed that students were indeed marching at, that very moment did he declare his wholehearted support for "those fine young people" and their demands.

A number of students declined to join the coalition of essentially right-wing students, some of whom had previously been involved in protests not approved of by the general student body. Some who did march did so because of the influence of the Rav's speech, not because they supported all of the Coalition's demands.

Publicity

Many of the pickets had opposed publicizing the affair through the news media, fearing *chilul Hashem*. Nonetheless, the leaders of the Coalition insisted

upon obtaining a demonstration permit and requesting a police-contingent, moves designed to attract publicity.

Among the administration as well there was some confusion. It was Rabbi Israel Miller, the Assistant to the President, who arranged for WYUR coverage of Rabbi Soloveitchik's speech, apparently in the mistaken belief that the Rav's speech would mollify rather than inflame student opinion.

The most crucial credibility gap is the one which seems to exist between the executive officers of the administration and the rest of the University. Rabbi Soloveitchik made it quite clear that he no longer believes the public relations office or Yeshiva's attorneys. He is also not at all impressed by the machination of the "snobs" at Einstein, Belfer, Ferkauf and Wurzweiler and is convinced that we can get along without these graduate schools.

Some doubt if even Dr. Belkin is truly aware of the implications of Yeshiva's drive toward secularization. Or it may be that he indeed understands the situation, and that he allows it to continue is the greatest tragedy of all.

In either case, until the various segments of the University re-establish trust in one another, there can be no fruitful negotiations within the University. If there are no meaningful discussions then those issues which face YU in this crisis may never be properly resolved. And if that happens, there may no longer be a Yeshiva.

Financial Difficulties Hit Pollack; Plagued By Senseless Vandalism

(Continued from page 3, col. 5)
lems of the library.

In discussing Pollack Library,

Just as the arrival of triplets places an added strain on the newlyweds who, nevertheless,

precisely because of the theft of many works from Gottesman Library, the side-door entrance is