

Marauding Youth and the Christian Front: Antisemitic Violence in Boston and New York During World War II

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In October 1943, the New York newspaper *PM* declared that bands of Irish Catholic youths, inspired by the Coughlinite Christian Front, had for over a year waged an “organized campaign of terrorism” against Jews in Boston’s Dorchester district and in neighboring Roxbury and Mattapan. They had violently assaulted Jews in the streets and parks, often inflicting serious injuries with blackjacks and brass knuckles, and had desecrated synagogues and vandalized Jewish stores and homes. The *New York Post* stated that the “beatings of Jews” in Boston were “an almost daily occurrence.” State Senator Maurice Goldman, representing 100,000 Jews, residing mostly in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, joined by four state representatives from those areas, declared to Governor Leverett Saltonstall that their constituents were living “in mortal fear.” Many Jews could not leave their homes, even in daylight, frightened of being beaten by youths from adjacent Irish Catholic neighborhoods like South Boston, Fields Corner, and the Codman Square area, who deliberately entered Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan to go “Jew hunting.” The New York Yiddish daily *The Day* called the antisemitic violence that had occurred in Dorchester during the previous year “a series of small pogroms.”¹

Neither Boston’s police nor its Catholic clergy made any serious effort to discourage the antisemitic violence. Jewish victims of the attacks had repeatedly complained about them, “only to be insulted and beaten again by the police themselves.” One Jewish leader in Dorchester stated that the Boston police, largely Irish American, not only took no action to prevent antisemitic violence, but “would just as soon encourage it.” The Christian Front, during the middle of World War II, distributed inflammatory antisemitic literature throughout Boston, “without the slightest interference by the police.” Frances Sweeney, a prominent Boston Irish Catholic anti-fascist, denounced both city and state authorities and

1. *PM*, October 18 and 20, 1943; *New York Post*, October 20 and 22, 1943; *The Day*, October 22, 1943. The prominent writer Wallace Stegner in 1944 noted that the “Jewish section” of Boston—that is, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury—was surrounded by neighborhoods “largely Irish-American in population.” The “gangs” that launched raids to beat up Jews “were composed mainly of young Irish-Americans.” Stegner, “Who Persecutes Boston?” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1944, 46.

Boston's Catholic Church at all levels for their lack of concern about the antisemitic outbreaks: "The attacks on Jew[s] . . . are the complete responsibility of Governor Saltonstall, Mayor [Maurice] Tobin, the [Catholic] church, and the clergy—all of whom . . . ignored this tragedy."²

The *PM* articles, written by Arnold Beichman, drew on documents supplied by the American Jewish Congress (AJ Congress), the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the *Dorchester Record*, as well as by Frances Sweeney. Dr. Samuel Margoshes, editor of *The Day*, declared that he had carefully reviewed the sworn affidavits of fifty Dorchester Jews—men, women, and children—who reported that they had been attacked on the streets. He had also spoken personally to several of the victims. Margoshes concluded that the affidavits, collected by the Boston AJ Congress, verified that *PM* was "one hundred per cent right."³ There were far more Jewish victims of beatings and vandalism than these affidavits revealed, but many feared retaliation if they made a public complaint. *PM* published sixteen of the signed affidavits from Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury over two days, a random sample which revealed that many Jewish children and adults had sustained serious injuries in the attacks.⁴

Arthur Derounian, one of the nation's leading authorities on hate groups, an Armenian American who wrote under the pseudonym John Roy Carlson, reported in the *New York Post* that he had visited Jewish victims in Boston and received their signed complaints of antisemitic assaults and property damage. He interviewed sixty-nine-year-old Samuel Rudofsky, bed-ridden after youths blackjacked him from behind, and

2. *The Day*, October 22, 1943; *PM*, October 18, 1943. Numerous commentators at the time emphasized the failure of the Catholic Church to condemn, or even discourage, the antisemitic attacks. Wallace Stegner, for example, concluded in July 1944: "The Roman Catholic Church . . . could do more than any other single agency or institution to stop . . . [the anti-Semitic outbreaks in Boston] . . . if it would." Stegner, "Who Persecutes Boston?" 52. J. Anthony Lukas compares the failure of Boston's Cardinal William O'Connell to denounce the "bands of Irish youths [that] ranged Blue Hill Avenue [in Dorchester and Mattapan] . . . harassing and beating Jews" to Pope Pius XII's silence in the face of the Holocaust. J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground* (New York, 1985), 378.

3. *The Day*, October 22, 1943.

4. *PM*, October 19 and 20, 1943; Memo to Governor Saltonstall from WAM [sic], October 19, 1943, carton 9, Leverett Saltonstall Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter, MHS). Frances Sweeney provided valuable assistance to the Jewish organizations assembling information on the antisemitic outbreaks. She edited a newsletter, the *Boston City Reporter*, dedicated to exposing antisemitism and other forms of bigotry in Boston. Sweeney employed about a dozen volunteer researchers, including Nat Hentoff, then a Northeastern University student. Hentoff recalled that Sweeney had emphasized to her researchers that she only wanted facts from them, which she defined as "something that can be proved." She required them to present "the proof with each fact" they brought her. Hentoff, *Boston Boy* (Boston, 1986), 69.

noted his blood-stained garments and numerous head stitches. Rudofsky told Carlson that, in his eighteen years residing in Dorchester, he had never seen anything as frightening as the current antisemitic violence. Many of the affidavits were signed by Jewish teenagers who had been surrounded by gangs of youths, who hurled antisemitic epithets and badly beat them. Carlson referred to one that detailed the breaking of synagogue windows by a large gang taunting, "Let's kill the Jews!"⁵

In Roxbury, about one-hundred Jewish boys and girls aged twelve to sixteen signed a petition that they sent to Mayor Tobin, asking him to assist them in driving from their neighborhoods the marauders "who make us sometimes doubt that this is a democratic land." About twenty of those signing had been victims of antisemitic assaults. The petition stated: "We cannot walk on the streets, whether at night or in the daytime, without fear of being beaten by a group of non-Jewish boys." It noted that the environment was so dangerous for Jews that Jewish Girl Scout troupes and other social clubs had been forced to stop meeting.⁶

Massachusetts Attorney-General Robert Bushnell informed Governor Saltonstall that citizens had complained in June 1943 about "recent and serious attacks on Jewish youth," but that the Boston police had shown "no great concern" until *PM's* disclosures.⁷ Earlier, in March 1943,

Dr. Margoshes stated that he had examined fifty affidavits apparently supplied by the AJ Congress, but the total number collected is unclear. An aide to Saltonstall told the governor that Otis Hood, state chairman of the Communist Party, had met with him and stated he could bring in "over 100 affidavits," and that the *Dorchester Record*, a Jewish neighborhood newspaper, "had a number of affidavits." Wallace Stegner stated in 1944 that "[t]he American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the American Irish Defense Association [led by Frances Sweeney] have been collecting affidavits on [antisemitic] incidents [in Boston] for at least five years." Stegner interviewed Dorchester Jews who had been "surrounded and beaten bloody as early as 1939." Memo from WAM, Saltonstall Papers, MHS; Stegner, "Who Persecutes Boston?" 45.

5. *PM*, October 19 and 20, 1943. Carlson commented that one factor that kept "many respectable Bostonians from knowing" about the "racial [antisemitic] beatings," that constituted a "fascist cancer" in their city, was "the Juvenile Court Law which prohibits the reporting of juvenile acts of delinquency." *New York Post*, October 20, 1943.

In early November 1943, Governor Saltonstall received a report from Henry Levy, Regional Secretary of the American Jewish Committee in Boston, that detailed thirty-one complaints of antisemitic assault, property damage, and insult from January 1, 1942 to October 23, 1943. Twenty-seven involved assault on persons. The governor's Commissioner of Public Safety added nine more such cases from that period, and attached a compilation of antisemitic literature circulating in the Boston area submitted by Francis Hurwitz, Executive Director of the Boston ADL. John F. Stokes to His Excellency Leverett Saltonstall, November 5, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

6. *PM*, October 20, 1943; *Dorchester Beacon*, October 22, 1943; *Christian Science Monitor*, October 20, 1943.

7. Robert T. Bushnell, Attorney-General, to Governor Saltonstall, November 23, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman of Boston's Temple Israel, in a sermon on "What the United Nations Can Do to Save European Jews Now," suggested that, just as the democracies had remained indifferent about Germany's persecution of Jews, Massachusetts authorities had failed to take action against the beatings of Jews in Dorchester and Mattapan. Citing the recent antisemitic outbreaks in Boston, Rabbi Liebman warned that "dark shadows are looming in the United States which makes me fear for my people."⁸

A similar situation prevailed in New York City during the same period, as Irish Catholic youths terrorized Jews in the streets, beat, stabbed, and even physically mutilated them, and tore the clothes off Jewish girls. Other non-Jews besides Frances Sweeney protested about the antisemitic outrages. Alson J. Smith, writing about New York City in *The Christian Century*, a liberal Protestant magazine, declared that "entire neighborhoods are being terrorized" by antisemitic gangs inspired by the Christian Front "with its deliberate policy of provoking violence against the Jews." Smith identified the Christian Front as "almost entirely Irish and Catholic." The gangs harassed Jewish storekeepers, and stole and damaged their merchandise. They desecrated nearly every synagogue in Washington Heights, a section of upper Manhattan with a sizeable Jewish population that included many refugees from Nazi Germany. Intruders inscribed "pornographically hateful descriptions" of Jews on synagogue walls, and hurled Jewish prayer books into toilets. *New York Post* reporters investigating the Washington Heights antisemitic assaults noted that "every Jewish resident" they interviewed "had stories to tell of . . . relatives or acquaintances beaten by gangs whose leaders almost invariably prefaced the attacks by demanding, 'Are you Jewish?'" Like Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury, the principal New York City districts in which Jews were repeatedly assaulted—Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and sections of Brooklyn's Flatbush—were contiguous to heavily Irish American neighborhoods.⁹

8. *Boston Post*, March 20, 1943.

9. PM, May 15, 1944; Alson J. Smith, "The 'Christian' Terror," *The Christian Century*, August 23, 1939, 1017–18; *New York Post*, December 30, 1943, January 8 and 28, 1941 and January 14, 1944; "Christian Action," *Time*, January 10, 1944, 76, 78; Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929–1941* (Baltimore, 1978), 159, 161–62.

Steven M. Lowenstein, in his study of Washington Heights, observed that, although there was much hostility among ethnic groups in New York during the 1930s and early 1940s, "the greatest conflict . . . seems to have been between Jews and Irish." He notes that "anti-Semitic incidents were frequent" in Washington Heights. *Frankfurt on the Hudson*:

In late 1943, New York newspapers reported that vandals had desecrated Jewish cemeteries throughout Brooklyn, Queens, and other areas of Long Island, overturning gravestones and painting swastikas on them. U.S. Attorney-General Francis Biddle compared the damage to New York's Jewish cemeteries to that in Nazi-occupied countries in Europe, an "outbreak of [an] Axis pattern in our own country." New York Congressman Samuel Dickstein charged that the Christian Front was responsible for the cemetery desecrations, and declared that "Not even the dead seem to be secure from organized terrorism."¹⁰

As in Boston, bands of Irish Catholic youths confronted people on the streets, demanded to know if they were Jewish, and beat them mercilessly if they said they were, sometimes disfiguring them. For example, three teenagers in the Bronx surrounded a fourteen-year-old Jewish boy, and when he answered their question in the affirmative, they shouted, "He's a Jew, let him have it!" They proceeded to slash him across the face with a knife, inflicting a deep wound that left a long scar from his ear to his lip. The *New York Post* reported that the assault was only one of many recorded in the previous weeks in the Bronx's Tremont section and in Washington Heights. It noted that Jewish mothers in Washington Heights knew that, every time their children left home, "they [were] walking into potential danger."¹¹

Less than two weeks after *PM* published Beichman's report on the antisemitic attacks inspired by Boston's Christian Front, the AJ Congress released a letter it had sent to New York mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, denouncing a campaign of "terrorism on the [New York] city streets" waged against Jews, that it said was "part of an organized plan." The AJ Congress declared that it had protested to the mayor over a year before, "when assaults on individuals and on synagogues" in New York had already "grown to epidemic proportions."¹²

Arnold Forster, a leader of the New York ADL, recalled that, during this time, he received "a flood of complaints" from New York's Jewish leaders and from the parents of victims of antisemitic beatings, "pleading for help" in protecting against attacks on Jews. Using volunteers, Forster investigated complaints "pouring in" from Washington Heights, and

The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933–1983, Its Structure and Culture (Detroit, 1989), 222. Two youth gangs identified as Irish American—the Shamrocks and the Amsterdams—were largely responsible for the antisemitic assaults and vandalism in Washington Heights. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 156, 216.

10. *The Day*, October 31, 1943; *PM*, October 27 and 28, 1943; *New York Post*, October 29, 1943; *Jewish Advocate*, November 25, 1943.

11. *New York Post*, December 30, 1943 and January 3, 1944.

12. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1943.

compiled “an impressive documented record” of numerous incidents of antisemitic assault and vandalizing of synagogues and Jewish property.¹³

Both Boston and New York were strongholds of the Christian Front, organized in 1938 by the virulently antisemitic Michigan-based priest, Charles Coughlin, whose radio broadcasts reached an enormous nationwide audience during the late 1930s. Coughlin praised Hitler and Mussolini on the air, and in 1938 his newspaper, *Social Justice*, reprinted the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the well-known fabrication purporting to show that Jews were conspiring to take over the world. Coughlin’s support was strongest among Irish Americans, whose antisemitism helped make Boston a “poisonous city,” according to John Roy Carlson. Boston was known as the “capital of the Christian Front.”¹⁴ Measures of radio audiences showed that Coughlin’s was larger in Boston than anywhere else in the country. The Christian Front was composed largely of Irish Americans, and its leaders—Francis Moran in Boston, and Jack Cassidy in New York—were Irish American. Boston’s Christian Front met at Hibernian Hall, located in the Irish American section of Roxbury.¹⁵

The Christian Front remained very influential in both Boston and New York throughout most of World War II, despite its lack of support for the Allied war effort, which led the federal government in early 1942

13. Arnold Forster, *Square One* (New York, 1988), 100–1. Forster identified those assaulting Jews and vandalizing synagogues as “Catholic youth . . . [from] parochial schools.” Forster, *Square One*, 101. Forster was present at a Washington Heights Hebrew school assembly when the principal asked the one-hundred-sixty students if any of them had been “molested” by antisemites during the previous eight weeks. He reported that over fifty raised their hands. The ADL took statements from many of them. *New York Times*, December 30, 1943.

14. Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 454; Isabel Currier, “Nine-Year Old Reporter: Helped to Change Boston for the Better,” *Boston City Reporter*, November 1951, Francis X. Moloney Collection, Manuscript Division, Boston Public Library (hereafter BPL), Boston; Charles H. Trout, *Boston: The Great Depression and the New Deal* (New York, 1977), 289; *The Day*, October 22, 1943.

15. *Boston Herald*, August 19, 1944; Stegner, “Who Persecutes Boston?” 49. In 1940, Mussolini’s ambassador to the United States prepared a report on American antisemitism, in which he identified Coughlin as the nation’s most prominent antisemite. He stated that “the impact of Father Coughlin’s words is mainly among the Irish masses.” Philip V. Cannistraro and Theodore P. Kovaleff, “Father Coughlin and Mussolini: Impossible Allies,” *Journal of Church and State* 13 (Autumn 1971): 437–38.

Journalists at the time frequently commented on the Catholic Church’s unwillingness to condemn the Christian Front. Theodore Irwin, for example, stated: “Of greatest aid to the Front is the absence of a disapproving word from official, authoritative spokesmen of the Catholic Church.” Alson J. Smith declared: “No authoritative Catholic voice” had been “raised in opposition” to the Front. Theodore Irwin, “Inside the ‘Christian Front,’” *Forum*, March 1940, 108; Alson J. Smith, “Father Coughlin’s Platoons,” *New Republic*, August 30, 1939, 97.

to ban Coughlin's *Social Justice* as "seditious." Although Coughlin himself largely withdrew from non-religious activities when his clerical superior, Archbishop Mooney of Detroit, ordered him to do so in 1942, many of his followers continued his antisemitic agitation. Despite the U.S. Attorney-General's order prohibiting the sending of *Social Justice* through the mails, it remained available on Boston newsstands, trucked into the city. New England distributors of *Social Justice* announced that they would defy the government postal ban by delivering the publication in their own automobiles to local pick-up points.¹⁶

The Christian Front espoused an isolationism that was explicitly antisemitic. Francis Moran often aroused his audiences at Boston Christian Front meetings by asking, "Who are the blood suckers plotting to send our boys to die in England?" His listeners would scream, "The Jews!"¹⁷ In June 1941, Moran denounced the war as "just a racket for

16. Henry Hoke, *Black Mail* (New York, 1944), 92; *Christian Science Monitor*, April 16, 1942. Archbishop Mooney's silencing of Coughlin was the result of U.S. Department of Justice pressure. The Christian Front continued operations "under the cover of newly formed groups," like the Friends of Father Coughlin. Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 522; *PM*, October 29, 1943.

The German-American Bund, a pro-Nazi organization based in the Yorkville section of Manhattan's Upper East Side, declined precipitously after U.S. entry into World War II. By contrast, New York's "overwhelmingly Irish" Christian Front, less directly associated with America's wartime enemy, Germany, continued to thrive. Even in largely German-American Yorkville, Coughlin's supporters were primarily Irish Americans, who comprised most of the Christian Front chapter there. Irwin, "Inside the 'Christian Front'," 107; Chris McNickle, "When New York Was Irish, and After," in Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, eds., *The New York Irish* (Baltimore, 1996), 354; Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 163. In Boston, the Bund itself was largely Irish. As Frances Sweeney commented to Professor Gordon Allport, "Around here [Boston], there were more Irish than Germans who attended those Bund meetings." Frances Sweeney to Gordon Allport, May 7, 1943, box 10, Gordon Allport Papers, Harvard University Archives (hereafter HUA), Pusey Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

17. Donald Warren, *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, the Father of Hate Radio* (New York, 1996), 280. The term "blood sucker" evoked the medieval blood libel accusation, that Jews kidnaped and murdered Christian children, extracting blood from their bodies to mix with matzoh at Passover. The image of the Jew sucking the blood of Christians was advanced by official Catholic Church publications, as well as by the Nazis in Germany. For example, in 1893 Father Rondina declared in the Jesuit biweekly *Civiltà cattolica* that "we have known from centuries-long experience that the Jew[s] sucked Christian blood . . . in obedience to their law." David I. Kertzer notes that, "In the Catholic world, *Civiltà cattolica* came to be regarded as the unofficial voice of the Pope himself." David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York, 2001), 135, 160. In 1934, the German Nazi organ *Der Stürmer* published a special "ritual murder" issue with an illustration "showing four rabbis sucking the blood of a Christian child through straws." Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (New York, 1985), 43.

the Roosevelt-Rothschild-Lehman families”—that is, Jewish bankers who were allegedly conspiring with the president to force America to intervene unnecessarily in a European conflict for their own financial gain.¹⁸ In June 1941 and again in August, Moran arranged the Boston screening of *Sieg im Westen* (Victory in the West), celebrating the German conquest of France and the Benelux countries. The Boston Christian Front also distributed books and pamphlets for Flanders Hall, the Nazi government’s publishing outlet in the United States.¹⁹

Bostonians shopping or dining out during World War II often encountered Christian Front propaganda. Inspired by the Front, many Boston restaurants during the war printed antisemitic statements on their menus, and many stores handed customers antisemitic pamphlets with their purchases. The New York Christian Front in 1940 distributed a pamphlet encouraging shoppers to patronize Christian-owned stores that hired only Christians.²⁰

In Boston, Irish American leaders during World War II continued to stage well-attended Evacuation Day ceremonies in overwhelmingly Irish American South Boston, to celebrate British forces’ departure from Boston during the Revolutionary War. The commemoration, funded by the Boston city government, was strikingly anti-British, at a time when Britain was a key ally in the struggle against the Axis. It coincided with St. Patrick’s Day, reinforcing its association with Irish American identity. At the 1943 ceremony, isolationist U.S. Representative Hamilton Fish of New York declared that it was “an honor and a privilege to speak from the theatre of the great British defeat.” John Roy Carlson that same year “found Boston seething with anti-Semitism [and] defeatism.”²¹

Rev. Edward Lodge Curran, a Brooklyn priest known as the “Father Coughlin of the East,” was a principal speaker at South Boston’s Evacuation Day exercises in 1942, 1943, and 1944. In his nationwide speaking tour in 1940 and 1941, Curran had denounced Lend Lease and

18. Stegner, “Who Persecutes Boston?” 49.

19. John Roy Carlson, *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America* (New York, 1943), 451; Stegner, “Who Persecutes Boston?” 49; *PM*, April 12, 1943. Coughlin preached a sermon in March 1944 in which he proclaimed: “It matters not what military force wins this war.” David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear* (New York, 1995 [1988]), 269. Bennett labels the sermon “defeatist.”

20. *Northeastern News*, October 27, 1943, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University Library, Boston; ADL Daily Newspaper Report, November 11, 1943, reel 2773, ADL Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter AJA); Carlson, *Under Cover*, 60; Irwin, “Inside the ‘Christian Front,’” 108.

21. Isabel Currier, “Frances Sweeney,” *The Commonwealth*, August 18, 1944, 428; “March 17—A Day of Sedition?” *Boston City Reporter*, March 1943; Carlson, *Under Cover*, 445.

the Conscription Act, and praised Marshal Pétain, head of the puppet Vichy regime in France after the German conquest, as a “great and noble soul.” In early 1944, Curran advocated an immediate negotiated peace with Nazi Germany. His clerical superiors never censored him during World War II.²²

Speaking with diocesan permission at the March 1944 Evacuation Day ceremony, Curran denounced America’s allies, Britain and Russia, rousing those in attendance to “wild applause, whistling, and stamping.” The *Boston Herald* noted at the 1942 ceremony that the priest was “cheered like a conquering hero.”²³ The 1944 Evacuation Day parade sparked an antisemitic riot by a crowd of seventy-five to one-hundred, some wearing brass knuckles, crying “Let’s get the dirty Jews!” It began with the deliberate jostling and insult of a uniformed Jewish seaman, who was spat upon, and resulted in several Jewish youths sustaining injuries, including “black eyes, swollen jaws [and] cut cheeks.” Police-men observed the beatings but made no effort to intervene.²⁴

During the late 1930s, and until U.S. entry into World War II, the Christian Front and other neofascist groups, most notably the Christian Mobilizers, held frequent antisemitic rallies in the streets of New York. Arnold Forster later recalled that “anti-Jewish harangues . . . were . . . a nightly occurrence” at Columbus Circle in Manhattan, and that the ADL estimated that “35 other such meetings took place every week in metropolitan New York.”²⁵

Led by Joe McWilliams, the Christian Mobilizers, whose rhetoric was explicitly violent, were influential in many New York City neighborhoods. Although McWilliams was not Catholic, the advisory board of the Christian Mobilizers consisted almost entirely of Irish Americans. McWilliams boasted that his twenty bodyguards were all former members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). A former Christian Front activist, McWilliams was nicknamed “Joe McNazi” by liberals. He often

22. John Roy Carlson, “Hate-Mongers Among the Clergy,” *American Mercury*, March 1946, 282; *New York Post*, March 28, 1944; Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 125; Stegner, “Who Persecutes Boston?” 50–51. Stegner noted that Theodore Maynard’s *Story of American Catholicism*, “a highly respected work of Catholic scholarship,” cross-indexed Curran with antisemitism.

23. “Father Edward Lodge Curran,” *Boston City Reporter*, April 1944, Moloney Collection, BPL; *Boston Herald*, March 16, 1942.

24. *Boston Herald*, March 19, 1944; *PM*, March 20, 1944; ADL Daily Newspaper Report, March 22, 1944, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA. The *Boston Herald* noted that the South Boston police station did not record the beatings of the Jews at the parade on its blotter.

25. Forster, *Square One*, 41.

worked himself into a frenzy during his harangues, tearing off his collar and tie as he shouted antisemitic and anti-Roosevelt epithets. McWilliams called Hitler “the greatest leader in the history of the world,” and denounced President Roosevelt as “an amateur Englishman [and] a Jew.” Alleging that Roosevelt was Jewish or had significant Jewish ancestry was a common theme of German propaganda broadcasts.²⁶

New York City’s Commissioner of Investigation, William Herlands, reported that in 1939 the Christian Front had held eighty-six outdoor and seven indoor meetings in a single Bronx police precinct, the 40th, and that the Christian Mobilizers had held forty-two outdoor and twenty-three indoor meetings there. He noted that “rarely did a night pass that the popular corners . . . were not all simultaneously being used as a forum” for the Christian Front and the Christian Mobilizers. In 1944, the *New York Post* described this precinct as “a community torn by hatred . . . intense anti-Semitic violence, vandalism, and subversive activity.”²⁷

Before the United States entered World War II, the Christian Front picketed Jewish stores and businesses in New York, calling on those who approached not to enter them and shouting antisemitic epithets. Alson J. Smith noted in August 1939 that, since the spring, New York had experienced “a plague of *Social Justice* salesmen,” who had positioned themselves at “all the busiest intersections.” They shouted, “Read the truth about the Jews,” and aggressively taunted individuals assumed to be Jewish.²⁸

As in Boston, a significant number of New York policemen were Christian Front members or sympathizers, uninterested in protecting the rights and safety of Jews. *New York Post* columnist Victor Riesel noted in 1944 that Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover had several years before supplied New York’s Mayor La Guardia with a list of 1,500 policemen who had applied for membership in the Christian Front. The city government never took disciplinary action against any of them. Riesel commented that hundreds of New York policemen had openly fraternized with the Christian Fronters who, before Pearl Harbor, had picketed Jewish stores, businesses, and homes. In 1941, some of the picketed merchants had asked New York Police Commissioner Lewis Valentine to order patrolmen to take action against this antisemitic harassment, but were told that he could not prevent “peaceful picket-

26. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 101, 198 n.59; Smith, “Father Coughlin’s Platoons,” 97; *PM*, July 25 and August 1, 1943; Warren, *Radio Priest*, 141.

27. *New York Post*, January 11, 1944.

28. *Ibid.*, January 10, 1944; Smith, “The ‘Christian’ Terror,” 1018.

ing.” Nearly two-thirds of New York’s policemen were Irish American. In 1939, journalist James Wechsler commented that the speeches given at the Irish Catholic policemen’s communion breakfasts often resembled “Coughlin propaganda.”²⁹

The federal government’s arrest of thirteen Christian Front activists in 1940 on charges of conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government and stealing ammunition from a National Guard armory did not significantly undermine grass roots support for the organization in many Irish Catholic neighborhoods, and antisemitism continued to increase there. The FBI charged that the arrested men planned to bomb the offices of the New York Jewish newspaper *The Forward*, as well as other Jewish-owned businesses, and to assassinate Jewish members of the U.S. Congress. The FBI claimed that the plotters hoped this violence would precipitate the emergence of a mass antisemitic movement, leading to a dictatorship that would remove Jews from the United States. Ten of the thirteen arrested Christian Front members were Irish Americans. The FBI believed they imitated IRA techniques in manufacturing explosives.³⁰

The Christian Front emerged as a significant issue in the November 1942 New York gubernatorial election. Jonathan Daniels, White House assistant to President Roosevelt, warned that the Republican candidate, Thomas E. Dewey, would capture a significant portion of the Jewish vote because he was “attacking the mobs of hoodlums that have been harassing Jews,” in contrast to his Democratic opponent, John J. Bennett, who was known to have “attended a meeting of the Jew-baiting Christian Front.”³¹

Edward Lodge Curran served as an inspirational figure for Coughlin’s New York supporters during World War II, propagating the view that Jews had drawn America into the war and criticizing the Allied objective of unconditional victory. Educated at several Catholic divinity schools,

29. *New York Post*, December 27, 1943 and January 10, 1944, and James Wechsler, “The Coughlin Terror,” *The Nation*, July 22, 1939, 95.

30. Bayor, *Neighbors*, 102, 155; Irwin, “Inside the ‘Christian Front,’” 102. The Christian Front formed rifle clubs, whose members gathered for target practice. One of the characters in Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, Roy Gallagher, a Boston Irish Catholic, prior to joining the army in World War II is active in an antisemitic group, Christians United, that Mailer modeled on the Christian Front. Once a week, Gallagher drills with other members, using old Springfield rifles. Mailer, who attended Harvard from 1939 to 1943, writes of Boston that “a sullen vicious temper . . . rides underneath the [city’s] surface,” evident “when the kids are beaten up in the alleyways, and the synagogues and cemeteries are fouled with . . . ‘The fuggin kikes’ and the . . . swastika.” Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (New York, 1948), 210–15.

31. Jonathan Daniels, *White House Witness, 1942–1945* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), 62.

and formerly dean at Cathedral College, Curran served as priest at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, one of Brooklyn's wealthiest. Curran was the leading columnist for the *Gaelic-American*, New York's Coughlinite newspaper, which throughout World War II denounced "the British, the Russians, [and] FDR. . . ."³²

Traditional explanations of American antisemitism, which emphasize agrarian dislocation and antagonism toward the city, cannot account for the intense hostility toward Jews that precipitated widespread violence in Boston and New York, two of America's largest metropolises, nor the role of the Catholic Church in stimulating it. John Higham has argued that antisemitism in the United States was largely a rural and small town phenomenon, associated with people anxious about the effects of economic transformation in an increasingly industrial and urban society. It "concentrated on economic rather than religious themes," stereotyping Jews as non-productive, parasitical, exploiting Gentiles through deceitful business practices and financial manipulation. Jews were associated with an urban decadence that threatened an allegedly morally superior agricultural society. Higham attributes antisemitism's decline in America to the integration of the countryside into an urbanized nation, which sharply diminished distrust of the city, and thus of Jews identified with it.³³

The pervasive anti-Jewish violence in Boston and New York during World War II suggests that antisemitism was more significant in the United States than many scholars and commentators admit, and that it was qualitatively different from antagonism directed against other European-American ethnic groups. Stephen Whitfield has asserted, for example, that "violence against Jews has been remarkably rare in American history," and that "no American Jew has been seriously impeded in his faith." He describes the United States as a country "that has known no pogroms."³⁴

32. Carlson, "Hate-Mongers," 281-82; Hoke, *Black Mail*, 91; "Gaelic American Endorses Lodge as Post-War Isolationist," *Boston City Reporter*, November 2, 1942, Moloney Collection, BPL.

33. John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York, 1975), 181, 185, 188, 193.

34. Stephen Whitfield, "The Presence of the Past: Recent Trends in American Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 70 (December 1980): 151, 160.

Scholars of American Jewish history have largely ignored the violent antisemitic outbreaks during World War II. The major overviews of American antisemitism and of American Jewish history by Leonard Dinnerstein and Howard Sachar, respectively, do give them brief attention. Dinnerstein cites *PM's* report, and states that a resulting investigation

The intense antisemitic violence in Boston and New York, however, calls into question the central argument of the contemporary “whiteness school,” that public perception of differences among European-American groups declined into insignificance after the 1920s. The passage of legislation drastically curtailing immigration from southern and eastern Europe, along with large-scale African American migration from the South to the North beginning in the 1910s, allegedly produced a “unitary Caucasian race” in the United States. It gave rise to the view that the American population was divided strictly along racial lines, black and white. The “whiteness school” denies the uniqueness of antisemitism, arguing that it was “part of a broader pattern” of prejudice against southern and eastern European immigrants, which largely disappeared as others came to regard them as “white.”³⁵

Yet only African Americans shared with Jews the experience of being violently assaulted on a frequent basis, and suffering wide-ranging discrimination in employment, housing, and higher education. African American leaders drew parallels between anti-black racism and antisemitism, but did not compare the African American experience to that of non-Jewish European-Americans. Most contributors to the “Forum of the Week,” in a November 1943 issue of the Harlem African American newspaper *People’s Voice*, stressed the similarities between the antisemitic outbreaks in Dorchester and “anti-Negro manifestations

initiated by Massachusetts Governor Saltonstall, who had previously ignored the outbreaks, “confirmed the accusations . . . that Jewish youths had been regularly assaulted for . . . years while police officers either abetted the attacking hoodlums or ignored them.” Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1994), 133. Dinnerstein entitled his chapter on World War II, “Anti-Semitism at High Tide.” Sachar notes that in World War II “in Boston’s Jewish neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury, assaults on Jewish children became almost daily occurrences.” The governor’s investigation “revealed police negligence approaching collaboration.” Sachar, *History of Jews in America*, 523. Similarly, David S. Wyman indicates the severity of the wartime antisemitic violence in Boston and New York in his critical analysis of the United States government’s policy toward the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York, 1984), 10–11.

35. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 8, 14, 17–18; Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1998), 26. Ann Douglas also advances the “whiteness” argument, that even “the poorest, least successful European immigrant” enjoyed a sense of racial superiority, because s/he was defined as white. She allows that “such benefits . . . didn’t arrive for Jews until the World War II era.” Yet it was precisely during this era that antisemitic violence in major American cities was most intense and widespread. Ann Douglas, “Introduction” to James T. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan* (New York, 2001), xv.

elsewhere.” African American leader Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., pastor of one of Harlem’s largest churches and a New York City councilman, “lambast[ing]” the violent attacks on Boston’s Jews, declared that Jews and blacks had been victims of the same “fascist-inspired . . . pattern of persecution.”³⁶ Julian Steele, the African American director of the Boston National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter, that month conveyed to Governor Saltonstall his “deep concern . . . about the increasing frequency of anti-Negro acts” in Boston, but noted that such anti-black harassment had “not reached the proportions of anti-semitism, at least in its most overt phases”³⁷

Jews and African Americans in Boston and New York regularly joined together in the 1940s to campaign for fair employment practices and fair housing legislation. A speaker at the AJ Congress convention reported in 1943 that discrimination against Jews in employment was “rampant” in the Boston area, and that job application blanks were saturated with the question, “What is your religion?”³⁸ The *New York Post* described a similar situation in New York City, where “religious discrimination [was] alarmingly present among employers.” Many firms flatly told job applicants “We do not hire Jews.”³⁹ During the war, both groups complained vociferously of being refused jobs in war industries. In Massachusetts, in the wake of the Dorchester attacks, Jews and blacks united to lobby for a “race libel” bill that would prohibit the printing and dissemination of literature defaming any racial group.⁴⁰

Rather than declining after the enactment of immigration restriction legislation in 1924, antisemitism intensified in the United States during the next two decades, reaching its peak during World War II. Henry Ford, one of the nation’s wealthiest men, widely admired for making an automobile affordable for the working and middle classes, in 1920 launched an aggressive antisemitic campaign through his newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*. This publication, which attained the second highest circulation of any American newspaper during the 1920s, reproduced the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, later reprinted in

36. *Jewish Advocate*, November 18, 1943; *New York Amsterdam News*, November 13, 1943.

37. Julian D. Steele to Governor Leverett Saltonstall, November 2, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

38. ADL Daily Newspaper Report, December 20, 1943, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA.

39. *New York Post*, January 21, 1944; Dinah Braun to Jewish Labor Commission [sic], August 10, 1937, and I. Minkoff to Dinah Braun, August 20, 1937, reel 33, Records of the Jewish Labor Committee, Robert F. Wagner Archives, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, New York.

40. *The Day*, December 26, 1943; *Christian Science Monitor*, April 10 and 11, 1944.

Coughlin's *Social Justice*. The antisemitic Ku Klux Klan emerged as a significant political force in many sections of the country during the 1920s. Following that, Jews, whom many Christians had for centuries scorned for religious reasons, provided a scapegoat for many Americans frustrated by economic setbacks during the Depression, and domestic fascist groups proliferated, with over one-hundred new antisemitic organizations formed between 1933 and U.S. entry into World War II in 1941.⁴¹ The rapid, seemingly irresistible expansion of Nazi power in Europe during the 1930s greatly encouraged these domestic fascists, who like their German counterparts, blamed Jews for all their country's misfortunes.

Catholic antisemitism, for centuries shaped by the deicide accusation and propagated by priests and nuns in churches and parochial schools, became increasingly virulent during the 1930s, resulting in a more dangerous environment for Jews in the cities of the Northeast and North Central regions, whose neighborhoods were often contiguous to heavily Catholic districts. The Vatican did not officially absolve contemporary Jews for the killing of Jesus until 1965, in the papal encyclical *Nostra Aetate*, a product of the Vatican II Council. Catholic youth often taunted Jews as "Christ Killers."⁴²

Irish Americans were receptive to antisemitism because they were more involved in the Church than other Catholic ethnic groups, and more influenced by it. They dominated the Church hierarchy in both Boston and New York, as well as the priesthood in those cities. They also controlled the parochial schools, and enrolled a higher percentage of their children in them than did other Catholic ethnic groups. Irish-

41. Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 81, 112.

42. Rose Finkelstein Norwood, president of the Boston Women's Trade Union League from 1941 to 1950, and a member of the executive committee of the Massachusetts Citizens Committee for Racial Unity, established in 1943 to combat the antisemitic attacks in Boston, recalled that Irish American youths frequently threw bricks at her and shrieked "Christ Killer" when she walked to school as a child in East Cambridge, adjacent to Boston, around the turn of the century. She suffered a very serious head injury when struck with a brick in one of these attacks. Stephen H. Norwood, "Rose Finkelstein Norwood" in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography*, vol. 16 (New York, 1999), 533. The Irish American novelist James T. Farrell, in his *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, included a scene of a band of Irish American youths invading a Jewish neighborhood in Chicago and dragging two Jewish boys into an alley to administer a beating. As he strikes one of the Jews, an Irish American shouts, "Take that for killin' Christ." The Irish American gang also roams about a park with a pepper cellar, hoping to find Jews and throw pepper in their eyes. They do not treat members of other European immigrant groups in this manner. Besides Jews, the Irish American youths instigate violence only against "shines"—their term for African Americans. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan*, 120, 134–36.

Americans were disproportionately involved in violent youth gangs because of their ethnic group's high rate of father-absent households and mothers working outside the home, resulting in less parental supervision of adolescents.⁴³

The Spanish Civil War, lasting from 1936 to 1939, further intensified Catholic antagonism toward Jews, for American Jews strongly backed the Loyalists, the first group to engage in armed struggle against fascist aggression in Europe. The Catholic hierarchy, by contrast, following the lead of Pope Pius XI, supported the Falange. In Boston, *The Pilot* highlighted Generalissimo Franco's ardent Catholicism, portraying the fascist leader as "the very model of the clement Christian ruler," and regularly alleged that Loyalist forces committed atrocities against the Church. Prominent lay Catholics in Boston, like South Boston's U.S. Representative John McCormack, also strongly sympathized with Franco.⁴⁴ New York's Reverend Edward Lodge Curran established himself as a leading spokesperson for the Christian Front by publishing an adulatory pamphlet about Franco entitled *Spain in Arms*.⁴⁵

In May 1938, supporters of "White Spain" staged a huge mass meeting at Boston's Symphony Hall, demanding that the United States recognize Franco's "Nationalist" regime. The meeting was sponsored by Boston's William Cardinal O'Connell, an honorary chairman of the Spanish Nationalist Relief Committee. Two priests shared the platform with two Catholic women, one of whom declared that the rally "made her proud to be a Catholic."⁴⁶

During 1940 and 1941, the issue of whether the United States should assist Britain in the European war, which American Jews strongly favored, became a major source of tension with traditionally anti-British Irish Americans, many of whom considered fascism a bulwark against the Soviet Union. Coughlin openly supported Germany against Britain, which, from the fall of France until June 22, 1941, stood alone against

43. Harold J. Abramson, *Ethnic Diversity in Catholic America* (New York, 1973), 90–91, 108–9, 159; Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 231; Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America* (Baltimore, 1983), 45–46, 55, 59–62, 70–105; Joseph E. Illick, *American Childhoods* (Philadelphia, 2002), 81–82. Virulently antisemitic folk beliefs casting the Jews as responsible for Jesus's crucifixion had deep roots among the Irish, and had helped spark anti-Jewish riots and economic boycotts in Ireland during the late nineteenth century. Rudolf Glanz, *Jew and Irish: Historic Group Relations and Immigration* (New York, 1966), 12, 22–23.

44. Albert Prago, "Jews in the International Brigades in Spain," a *Jewish Currents Reprint*, 1979, 4; Donald F. Crosby, "Boston's Catholics and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939," *New England Quarterly* 44 (March 1971): 82–83, 85–90, 93–95.

45. Carlson, "Hate-Mongers," 282.

46. *Boston Globe*, May 4, 1938.

the Nazi onslaught. U.S. Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts, who enjoyed strong Irish American backing, firmly opposed Lend-Lease legislation, and warned that the United States might well lose a war with Germany. During the war, he suggested that it might become necessary for the United States to cease offensive naval operations and bring the fleet home to maintain shore defenses that he alleged were “desperately weak.”⁴⁷ Most of the Irish American newspapers, including the *Irish World*, the *Gaelic-American*, and the *Irish Echo*, along with the Brooklyn diocesan organ, *The Tablet*, were strongly isolationist in 1940 and 1941.⁴⁸

In 1943, Selden Menefee, an Irish American, wrote that “isolationism, anti-Semitism, and pro-appeasement sentiment are more rampant in Boston than in any city in the land.” Jonathan Daniels, White House assistant to President Roosevelt, recalled a visit in December 1942 from ex-U.S. Representative Joe Casey of Massachusetts, who “spoke of the dangerous anti-Semitism among the Irish Catholics” in that state. Casey told Daniels that, when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy had visited Massachusetts prior to the election the previous month, “his influence with the Irish was immediately destroyed,” because photographs were published showing him being greeted by two Jewish army officers.⁴⁹

Antisemitic propaganda circulated in Boston charging that Jews, allegedly responsible for U.S. intervention in the war, avoided military service and engaged in war profiteering. This ignored the U.S. military’s own data, which showed that Jews were serving in the armed forces at a rate above their proportion in the population. According to the ADL, an organized propaganda campaign began in Boston in September 1942 with the publication of “America’s Fighting Jew,” which alleged that Christians died in combat while Jews remained at home. Its last verse warned ominously that returning war veterans would “deal with the Jew.” The campaign’s most widely-circulated publication, “The First

47. Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth-Century America* (Urbana, 2001), 63; Allen Grover to Deputies and Messrs. Lewis, Bell, Pringle, and Kane, February 23, 1942, Office of Facts and Figures (hereafter OFF), 1941–1942, entry 7, box 7, Office of War Information (hereafter OWI) Papers, Record Group (hereafter RG) 208, National Archives (hereafter NA), College Park, Md.; Jack Beatty, *The Rascal King: The Life and Times of James Michael Curley, 1874–1958* (Reading, Mass., 1992), 451; *Boston Herald*, March 4, 1941.

48. Rossa F. Downing to editor, *Washington Post*, November 13, 1941, OFF, 1941–1942; entry 7, box 1, OWI Papers, RG 208, NA.

49. Selden Menefee, *Assignment: U.S.A.* (New York, 1943), 11; Daniels, *White House Witness*, 105–6.

American,” listed military acts of heroism by Irish American soldiers, and concluded with a line identifying a Jew as the first to be awarded a new set of tires by the ration board. The *Boston Herald* referred to reports of an “organized distribution of anti-Semitic literature” at the Boston Navy Yard, printed on U.S. Navy presses, and “appearing . . . with clock-like regularity.”⁵⁰ The ADL also reported, in the spring of 1944, that a large quantity of professionally printed pamphlets was being bulk-mailed to Gentiles throughout Boston and Chelsea, calling on them to drive Jews out of their communities. The pamphlets were signed “CF,” presumably Christian Front.⁵¹

Professor Gordon Allport, chair of the Harvard psychology department and one of the leading scholarly authorities on ethnic and racial prejudice, asserted that the circulation of this antisemitic literature was inspired by the Axis. He denounced the material as “racial libel,” and declared that it exceeded the limits of free speech. Allport considered the antisemitic literature exceedingly dangerous: “Imperceptibly [it] lead[s] to name calling on the street, to stone throwing, to physical assaults, and finally to pogroms, which, indeed, they specifically threaten.”⁵²

Although beatings of Jews in the streets of Boston and New York and synagogue desecrations had been occurring frequently for several years prior to October 1943, the press largely ignored them, and the Jewish leadership remained mostly silent, fearful that publicizing the attacks would stimulate further antisemitism. Indeed, Nat Hentoff later recalled that, when he uncovered information on how the printing and distribution of antisemitic literature in Boston were being financed, leaders of Jewish organizations told him to keep quiet about it.⁵³

The *PM* disclosures about the antisemitic attacks were prompted by Frances Sweeney, a strong opponent of Coughlinism and all forms of bigotry, who persuaded that newspaper to report on the Dorchester outrages. Sweeney headed the Boston chapter of the minuscule American Irish Defense Association (AIDA), the only Irish American organization to back President Roosevelt’s foreign policy. Established in 1941 and headquartered in New York, it advocated United States support for Britain against the Axis. The AIDA called for Ireland to permit Britain to establish naval bases in Irish ports to protect Atlantic convoys against

50. Currier, “Nine-Year Old Reporter,” *Boston City Reporter*, November 1951; *Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 1943; *Boston Herald*, November 24, 1943; ADL Daily Newspaper Report, November 11, 1943, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA; *The Day*, November 29, 1943.

51. *Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 1944.

52. *Ibid.*, November 6, 1943.

53. Hentoff, *Boston Boy*, 98.

German attack.⁵⁴ Sweeney's newsletter, the *Boston City Reporter*, was largely devoted to combating antisemitism.

In 1942, Frances Sweeney led a protest at Boston City Hall against the use of city funds to support the South Boston Evacuation Day ceremony at which Rev. Edward Lodge Curran was the featured speaker. Later, the enormous audience gathered to hear Curran's speech at South Boston High School stood and applauded "wildly" as Sweeney was roughly ejected from the auditorium, sustaining bruises in the process.⁵⁵

On October 18, 1943, *PM* ran a lengthy article headlined "Christian Front Hoodlums Terrorize Boston Jews," written by Arnold Beichman, whom Sweeney had contacted when he was in Boston to cover the American Federation of Labor convention. Beichman charged that Governor Saltonstall, Mayor Tobin, the Boston police, and the Boston press had all ignored repeated acts of antisemitic violence during the previous fourteen months, despite an outcry of protest from Dorchester's Jews. The article listed and provided specifics about numerous antisemitic incidents that had occurred in Boston, which Beichman attributed to "an organized campaign of terrorism, inspired by Christian Front elements." To underline how frightening the situation was in Dorchester, Beichman quoted a Christian Front slogan about Blue Hill Avenue, the neighborhood's major thoroughfare: "There'll be no more Jews on Jew Hill Avenue when this war is over." He concluded that the antisemitic attacks established that "the Christian Front still thrives . . . in Boston."⁵⁶

The next day, Governor Leverett Saltonstall, "spluttery angry," according to *Time* magazine, looked out over a group of reporters assembled for a press conference at the Massachusetts State House, and declared to Beichman, who was in attendance: "That is a stinking article and you can get the hell out of this office. . . ." The governor then

54. Currier, "Nine-Year Old Reporter," *Boston City Reporter*, November 1951, Moloney Collection, BPL; "Re: National Roll Call" [1941], clipping from *Washington Daily News*, October 31, 1941, and pamphlet "No Blarney From Hitler!" OFF, 1941-1942, entry 7, box 1, OWI Papers, RG 208, NA; Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 112. Ireland adhered to a position of neutrality throughout World War II. Irish Prime Minister Eamon de Valera issued a strong protest to the U.S. government in January 1942 when it sent American troops to Ulster. On May 2, 1945, he visited the senior German diplomat in Dublin to express his condolences on Adolf Hitler's death. Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History* (New York, 1989), 295, 683.

55. Currier, "Frances Sweeney," 428; *Boston Herald*, March 16, 1942; Currier, "Nine-Year Old Reporter," *Boston City Reporter*, Moloney Collection, BPL.

56. *PM*, October 18, 1943; *Northeastern News*, October 27, 1943. Beichman reported that he "had seen the affidavits written and signed in the scrawling hand of Dorchester's Jewish children, in which they recounted how they were beaten by gangs of toughs, beaten because they were Jewish."

ordered his personal bodyguard to escort Beichman out of the building. *PM* responded by mockingly labeling Boston the city “where the people talk only to Beichman, but Beichman can’t talk to the Gov.”⁵⁷

The Jewish leadership in Boston, largely silent until the *PM* disclosures, was sharply divided about how to respond to the antisemitic outbreaks in Dorchester. John Roy Carlson, in a *New York Post* article entitled “Storm Troopers Ride in Boston” published two days after Beichman’s, declared that “the policy of hush-hush begins with the Governor’s office and extends all the way to some Jewish organizations who completely deny the existence of racial [antisemitic] beatings.” The New England branch of the AJ Congress had collected information on the antisemitic attacks in Dorchester, but had chosen not to make it public. The Yiddish daily *The Day* disclosed that Boston Jewish leaders in July 1943, “at the very height of the anti-Semitic outbreaks,” had formed a Central Advisory Committee (CAC), comprised of “thirty-eight estimable Jews,” which advised Jews to “hush-hush the anti-Jewish attacks,” and “above all, [not to] talk to the newspapers.” *The Day* stated that these “so-called ‘Best Jews,’ huddling in . . . parlors,” had been “powerful enough to dictate the course of all Jewish organizations.” They had prevailed even on the AJ Congress to withhold the information it had gathered on the antisemitic attacks from the press.⁵⁸

Several Jewish leaders in Boston now spoke up, demanding that city and state authorities take immediate action to terminate the antisemitic outbreaks. Rabbi Samuel I. Korff of Mattapan charged that the outrages against Boston’s Jews had begun three years before, were organized, and were “financed by somebody.” They could not be dismissed as “isolated unmotivated hooliganism.”⁵⁹ Lillian Gurvitz, counsel for the New England branch of the American Jewish Congress, admitted that her organization had until then “refrained from taking any action,” but declared that the assaults of the previous two months had amounted to a “distinct pattern of deliberate anti-Semitic acts,” substantiating *PM*’s claims.⁶⁰ State Senator Maurice Goldman, speaking with the support of four state representatives, denounced the CAC members as “self styled . . . Jewish leaders . . . representing nobody but themselves,” who “ha[d]

57. “In Boston,” *Time*, November 1, 1943, 42; *PM*, October 19, 1943; John P. Lewis to Governor Saltonstall, October 18, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

58. *New York Post*, October 20, 1943; *The Day*, October 22 and 23, 1943.

59. *PM*, October 19, 1943; *Christian Science Monitor*, October 19, 1943; *New York Post*, October 19, 1943. Boston City Councilman Charles I. Taylor of Roxbury substantiated Rabbi Korff’s charges. *New York Post*, October 19, 1943.

60. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 19, 1943.

done nothing,” proving that “they kn[ew] little about the true situation.”⁶¹

At the grass roots level, Jews in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan now organized vigorous self-defense units to protect residents and their property against further assaults. Rabbi Korff announced that public officials’ indifference to Jewish safety would cause Jews “to organize their own protective association.” Neighborhood air raid wardens and auxiliary police began patrolling the streets to guard against the Irish American intruders, who, as *PM* observed, “rove the area . . . unmolested by police.”⁶² A group of Jewish butcher boys banded together to protect Jews returning home from Friday night synagogue services. *The Day* noted that many Jewish youths and army draftees, “spurning the advice to hush-hush . . . answer[ed] blow with blow.” It compared Dorchester’s Jewish self-defense groups to those that Jews had organized in czarist Russia to combat pogromists.⁶³

New York Jews similarly prepared to defend themselves. Jewish parents in the Bronx who attended a police-sponsored meeting on “juvenile delinquency,” the term police used to describe the antisemitic attacks, rejected the proposal to establish more youth recreation centers put forward by city social workers. A Jewish mother declared at the meeting, “We’ll patrol ourselves. . . . If the police won’t protect [our children] we will.” *PM* reported that two-hundred Jewish parents were setting up a vigilante patrol.⁶⁴

As in Boston, Jewish air raid wardens attempted to provide protection for Jewish residents, but, outnumbered, they were frequently assaulted by bands of antisemitic youths, who challenged them with the question,

61. *PM*, October 22, 1943.

62. *Ibid.*, October 18 and 19, 1943.

63. *The Day*, October 23, 1943. This organized self-defense in Boston was undoubtedly reinforced by news of heroic Jewish resistance against the Nazis in Europe, including that of the Warsaw ghetto fighters in the winter and spring of 1943. Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman had “electrified” a huge crowd at Boston Garden in May 1943, the “largest Jewish mass meeting” ever held in New England, in a “fiery speech” in which he demanded that the Allies make immediate efforts to rescue Europe’s Jews. *Boston Herald*, May 3, 1943; *Jewish Advocate*, May 7, 1943. In July 1943, Yiddish poet Itzik Feffer, who had enlisted in the Russian army the day of the Nazi invasion, gave a public address in Boston, which Rabbi Samuel I. Korff and City Councilman Isadore Muchnick of Dorchester helped arrange. Feffer spoke “with all the fervor and determination of one who had just returned from violent struggle against the Nazis.” He emphasized that Germany’s objective was the “complete annihilation of the Jews,” but vowed that the Jews would fight the Nazis “like lions.” *Jewish Advocate*, July 9 and 23, 1943.

64. *New York Post*, December 30, 1943; *PM*, May 15, 1943.

“Are you a Christian or a warden?” Spectators shouting “Kill those Jews” offered them encouragement.⁶⁵

Before *PM*'s revelations, no Boston non-Jewish newspaper had covered the antisemitic outbreaks in that city, other than the *Northeastern News*, the Northeastern University student newspaper, edited by Nat Hentoff. Hentoff and his editorial staff consciously modeled the *Northeastern News* on *PM*.⁶⁶ *Time* noted that Beichman's article caused many Bostonians to realize that “their own papers had . . . been suppressing news.” Massachusetts Attorney-General Robert Bushnell stated that the Boston press had maintained a “ring of silence” about the antisemitic disorders.⁶⁷ As early as 1938, in an editorial entitled “Attention, Police!” Boston's English-language Jewish newspaper, the *Jewish Advocate*, had complained of youth gangs from the heavily Irish American Hyde Park district committing “vicious assaults” on Jews in Franklin Park, bordering Roxbury, accompanied by antisemitic taunts. Several of the Jews had required medical treatment.⁶⁸

Most of the Boston dailies in the several months after *PM* published Beichman's article, nonetheless denied that Coughlinism and antisemitism were significant forces in Boston. When *Life* mentioned that there had been “incidents between Catholics and Jews” in Boston, the *Boston Post*, which had a large Irish American circulation, denied that there was “[any] foundation . . . for that statement.” The *Boston Herald* dismissed John Roy Carlson's discussion of the Christian Front threat in Boston in his 1943 book, *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America*, as “hog-wash.” It insisted in August 1944 that “there is no organized anti-Semitism in Boston.” The *Boston Daily Record* even claimed that Beichman had come to Boston to “stir up race hatred.”⁶⁹ Frances Sweeney commented in February 1943 that the “natural Irish obscurantism” of the editors of the *Record*, the *Post*, and the *Boston*

65. *New York Post*, January 11, 1944.

66. See *Northeastern News*, September 1 and 16, 1943; “In Boston,” *Time*, November 1, 1943, 42; Hentoff, *Boston Boy*, 97.

67. “In Boston,” *Time*, November 1, 1943, 42; Robert Bushnell to Governor Leverett Saltonstall, November 23, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS. Nat Hentoff describes an incident in 1938 at Grove Hall in Roxbury, in which eight youths in their late teens and early twenties, explicitly identified as “Irishers,” one evening came “careening out of a side street.” One “snatched a yeshiva boy's glasses from his face and spun them into the street; as another dumped the [Jewish] newsboy's first batch of *Daily Records* into the gutter; as yet another . . . yanked, as he had seen in the newsreels, an old, spidery Jew by his beard.” Hentoff, *Boston Boy*, 29.

68. *Jewish Advocate*, May 6, 1938.

69. *Northeastern News*, September 16 and October 27, 1943; *Boston Herald*, August 19, 1944.

Traveler, newspapers she described as “violently anti-intellectual,” “fits beautifully . . . with the whole pattern of reaction.”⁷⁰

The *Northeastern News* condemned the local newspapers for failing to cover the numerous episodes of antisemitic violence in Boston, running a headline shortly after Beichman’s article that read, “Boston Press Fails to Throw Light on Hub Hatelers; PM Has to Do It.” It complained that Jewish students at Northeastern were “forced to taste the bitter venom of Christian Front anti-Semitism on their way to and from school,” and noted that a student had been severely beaten near the campus.⁷¹ In New York, the newspapers that devoted significant attention to the antisemitic outbreaks were *PM* and the *New York Post*, both with large Jewish readerships.⁷²

Government and police officials in both Boston and New York initially asserted that the violence about which the Jews complained amounted to little more than ordinary juvenile delinquency, and claimed it consisted of isolated acts, and did not form a general pattern. Governor Saltonstall insisted that the Dorchester situation had never been brought to his attention prior to the week before Beichman’s article. Immediately upon reading the article, Saltonstall wrote to Boston Police Commissioner Joseph F. Timilty that its “conclusions and insinuations against the people of Boston, its mayor, and the governor of the state are utterly unfair and without foundation.” He asked Timilty to investigate at once. The police commissioner responded, “There is no organized activity by the Christian Front or any group relative to anti-Semitic activities.” Timilty disputed *PM*’s charge that the police were not protecting Jewish residents of Dorchester and Roxbury against “unwarranted attacks.”⁷³ Boston’s Mayor Tobin, speaking about the Dorchester outbreaks for the first time a few days after the *PM* disclosures, announced that “it appears to be strictly a juvenile problem” However, Ruth O’Keefe, a member of the Massachusetts Parole Board and an authority on juvenile crime, declared that gang violence in Boston, which she maintained specifically targeted Jews, was directly inspired by Coughlin.⁷⁴

70. Sweeney to Robert Littell, February 20, 1943, box 6, Allport Papers, HUA.

71. *Northeastern News*, October 27, 1943.

72. The *New York Post* was unusual in refusing to accept advertisements from hotels and resorts with a “selected clientele”—a term used to indicate that they did not accept Jews. *New York Post*, January 21, 1944. *PM* did not carry any advertising.

73. Governor Saltonstall to Hon. Joseph F. Timilty, October 18, 1943, and Timilty to Saltonstall, October 18, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

74. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 21, 1943; *Boston Post*, October 22, 1943; *New York Post*, October 28, 1943.

Nine Protestant ministers, whose churches were in areas of Boston adjacent to Jewish neighborhoods suffering from antisemitic attacks, forcefully condemned the indifference of the Boston police and the press's "confusing [of] . . . anti-Semitic hatred . . . with common juvenile delinquency." The ministers sent a statement to Governor Saltonstall, which they also read in their churches at Sunday services, that denounced the "current outbreak of anti-Semitism in our community," and demanded that the police provide the Jewish community with "unprejudiced law enforcement."⁷⁵

In New York, Mayor La Guardia viewed the antisemitic "incidents" as "sporadic and unorganized," and the police remained unsympathetic to calls that they take action to stop the violence. In December 1943, New York's Commissioner of Investigation, William Herlands, denied any connection between the "teenage marauders" and Coughlinite organizations. The *New York Post* in late December 1943 noted that, despite scores of Jewish complaints about physical attacks and synagogue invasions in Washington Heights, Magistrates Court had tried no cases related to such offenses during the previous three months. The police inspector in charge of the four-and-a-half-square-mile district, in which 365,000 people resided, claimed there had been only "a few isolated" cases of vandalism involving pre-teenage boys, and that no synagogues had been defiled. The New York police often described acts of antisemitic vandalism as "boyish pranks."⁷⁶

The outcry in the Jewish community and in other quarters that followed *PM's* article caused Governor Saltonstall to make an abrupt about-face. He granted Beichman a fifteen-minute interview, confessing, "I had a rude awakening." A spokesperson for the Massachusetts Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) declared that "*PM's* revelations disclose a shocking state of affairs . . . [which] calls for determined, fearless investigation and prosecution of the instigators."⁷⁷

Saltonstall circumvented Police Commissioner Timilty, whom Dorchester Jews had strongly denounced for "laxity in suppressing the outbreaks," and ordered Acting Commissioner of Public Safety John F. Stokes to investigate the antisemitic attacks. Almost immediately, Stokes assigned detectives to interview Dorchester Jews, whose statements about being beaten, harassed, or having property vandalized had

75. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 29, 1943.

76. *New York Post*, December 30, 1943 and January 15 and 17, 1944.

77. *PM*, October 19 and 22, 1943; *Boston Globe*, October 23, 1943; "In Boston," *Time*, November 1, 1943, 42.

appeared in *PM*. Detectives also inspected police blotters to determine whether Boston police had made any attempts to stop the attacks.⁷⁸

Stokes issued a report confirming that antisemitic violence was a problem in Boston, but denied that it was in any way organized. He assigned responsibility for the breakdown of law and order to the patrolmen and sergeants, not to higher officials in the police department. Stokes did state that the widespread dissemination of antisemitic literature in Boston required immediate attention.⁷⁹

Dorchester Jews greatly mistrusted Police Commissioner Timilty, and, in the wake of *PM*'s revelations, pressure mounted on Governor Saltonstall not to reappoint him when his term expired in November 1943. Until Beichman's article was published, Timilty's reappointment had been a foregone conclusion. According to *PM*, Timilty was the best friend of Joseph P. Kennedy, the antisemitic former United States ambassador to the Court of St. James's. Massachusetts Attorney-General Bushnell publicly blamed Timilty for Boston's antisemitic violence, and sharply criticized the Stokes report. The *Christian Science Monitor* called in an editorial for Timilty's replacement.⁸⁰

Attorney-General Bushnell cited, as an example of the "disgraceful breakdown of law" in Boston under Timilty, the arrest and beating by the police of four Dorchester Jewish boys who had been assaulted by a large Irish American crowd. Jacob Hodas, age seventeen, one of the Jewish boys whom police charged with "participating in an affray," testified that several officers, including Sergeant Bernard Fay, had subjected him to a "terrific beating" at the station house, repeatedly striking him with a blackjack until he toppled to the floor, nearly unconscious. He stated that the police had also manhandled at least two of the other Jewish boys. Two Jewish adults testified that they had seen Sergeant Fay push his pistol into Hodas's stomach and threaten to shoot him. Robert Ruttenberg, age sixteen, told the court that policemen had whacked him on the knee in their car after arresting him, and had punched another arrested boy, Harvey Blaustein, seventeen, in the face. Ruttenberg stated that he saw several policemen take Hodas into an anteroom at the station house, where one shouted, "You dirty Jew —," and that screams began, which were then muffled. Dr. Samuel Sandberg, who treated Hodas a few hours later, testified the boy had been terribly

78. *PM*, October 20 and 21, 1943; *Boston Globe*, October 20, 1943.

79. *PM*, November 11, 1943; Stokes to Governor Saltonstall, November 5, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

80. *Christian Science Monitor*, November 10, 1943; *PM*, October 21 and November 11, 1943.

beaten, with contusions and welts on his arms and legs. He had to place his arm in a sling. Attorneys, who included Herbert Ehrmann, junior counsel for Sacco and Vanzetti over fifteen years before, declared that the police had made no attempts to chase the Irish American youths, and had not taken down the names of any witnesses.⁸¹

In the first case involving Irish American-Jewish conflict since the *PM* disclosures, the Irish American judge, Richard Walsh, found guilty the two Jewish boys who were tried as adults and fined them. Jews expressed outrage that, despite many reported acts of antisemitic violence and vandalism in recent months, the police had not made a single arrest. Instead, as *New York Post* columnist Victor Riesel noted, "The first to be found guilty were Jewish lads who attempted to protect themselves." Defense counsel responded to the verdict by asking the judge for a warrant for the arrest of Sergeant Fay on charges of assault and battery for beating Hodas, but the judge refused. The newly-energized Central Advisory Committee of Jewish Organizations vowed to finance an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary.⁸²

Attorney-General Bushnell *not proessed* the charges against the convicted Jewish boys, which he considered absurd, given that they had been attacked by a mob estimated at between sixty and three-hundred people. He considered the crowd's assault part of a long series of "unchecked outrages" against Jews that had been occurring since the United States had entered World War II. Bushnell declared that Sergeant Fay's beating of Hodas was "brutal and unprovoked."⁸³

Governor Saltonstall replaced Timilty in November 1943, despite a massive petition campaign on his behalf in Irish American neighborhoods, which was supported by many city councilmen. Timilty announced from Joseph P. Kennedy's home in Hyannisport that 99 percent of the Boston police force had signed their own petition to give him another term. The Boston School Committee, dominated by Irish Americans, voted unanimously to ask Governor Saltonstall to reappoint Timilty.⁸⁴

81. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 26, 27, and 28 and November 18 and 24, 1943; *Boston Post*, October 27, 1943; *Boston Herald*, October 27 and November 11, 1943; *New York Post*, October 29, 1943.

82. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 27 and 28, 1943; *Boston Herald*, October 28, 1943; *New York Post*, October 29, 1943.

83. Robert Bushnell to Governor Leverett Saltonstall, November 23, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS; *Christian Science Monitor*, November 18, 1943; *PM*, November 19, 1943.

84. *Boston Herald*, November 14, 17, and 24, 1943; *Christian Science Monitor*, November 26, 1943.

The outlook of the new police commissioner, Thomas F. Sullivan, an Irish American from South Boston who had been state emergency food and fuel conservator, did not differ appreciably from Timilty's. Sullivan informed the director of the New England ADL that Jews had reported many cases of violence to the police as "anti-racial conflicts," in which he contended antisemitism was not a factor. *PM* disclosed that a resolution had been introduced in the Boston city council in 1936, when Sullivan was city director of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), accusing him of singling out Jews for removal from WPA rolls. It also quoted Sullivan as vowing to "arrest the defamation of the most patriotic city in the U.S.A.," where "all racial groups have lived happily together . . . over the past 60 years."⁸⁵

In New York, Sullivan's counterpart, Police Commissioner Lewis Valentine, precipitated angry protests in the Jewish community when, after conducting an investigation, he exonerated Patrolman James Drew, who had been charged with associating with persons engaged in antisemitic activities and subscribing to seditious publications. Investigators found large quantities of Christian Front literature in Drew's garage and home. Arthur Derounian stated that he had met Drew "with the Christian Mobilizers" in 1939, and that he had impressed him as "a dangerous Nazi." While at Drew's home, Derounian had talked to a man who had borrowed the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* from Drew. Drew admitted to associating with Joe McWilliams, head of the Christian Mobilizers.⁸⁶ Victor Riesel stated that Commissioner Valentine, in announcing that Drew had been cleared, had "casually dismissed reports of anti-Semitic violence in Washington Heights." Jewish leaders and spokespersons for tolerance denounced Mayor La Guardia for bringing Drew on to his weekly radio broadcast, where he denied that he was antisemitic, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise demanded that the mayor discharge Drew from the police force. Dr. Margoshes, editor of *The Day*, declared that Drew was only one of many New York City police officers who held "subversive, anti-democratic, and anti-Semitic views."⁸⁷

Despite *PM*'s reports, and further coverage of antisemitic violence in Boston in such newspapers as the *New York Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, assaults against Jews and the vandalizing of synagogues

85. *Boston Herald*, November 27, 1943; *Boston Globe*, December 1, 1943; Lawrence R. Klein to Governor Leverett Saltonstall, December 1, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS; *PM*, November 12 and 30, 1943.

86. *New York Post*, July 12, 1943 and January 10 and 17, 1944; ADL Daily Newspaper Report, July 13, 1943, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA; *The Day*, December 25, 1943.

87. *New York Post*, January 10 and 17, 1944; *The Day*, December 31, 1943.

and Jewish property continued on a large scale during the next year. Only days after Beichman's article appeared, a Jewish girl in Mattapan on her way to the movies was "set upon" by a group of non-Jewish youths, who told her Jews were no longer going to be allowed to go to movie theaters. The same day, a similar group attacked a Jewish boy in Roxbury, while a prominent Jewish leader in Dorchester awoke to see swastikas crayoned in front of his house.⁸⁸

Antisemitic beatings escalated in the spring, as warmer weather drew more people outdoors. A gang assaulted two Jewish sixteen-year-olds near Franklin Field in Dorchester, after first asking whether they were Jews. A few days later, twenty Dorchester High School students, at least one of whom wielded a hunting knife and another a club, assaulted three of their Jewish classmates after school on an elevated train. After the beating, one of the Jewish boys had a closed and badly swollen eye. Rabbi Korff stated that he had asked the police that morning to provide protection for Jewish boys at the high school, because Christian students were openly plotting attacks. Teachers had warned the principal that Jewish students were in danger, and he had assigned eight faculty members to patrol the school grounds at closing time. The principal, acting under orders from the school superintendent, refused permission to the three Jewish victims to visit classrooms with the police in order to identify their assailants. Supporters of the victims claimed that the "recent outbreak of attacks" in Dorchester was caused by "a flood of anti-Semitic literature of a particularly virulent nature" that had been "widely circulated in recent weeks."⁸⁹

About two weeks later, seven or eight high school students in Cambridge, a city immediately adjacent to Boston, "badly mauled" two Harvard freshmen walking along the Charles River after demanding to know whether they were Jews. Both victims had to spend the night in the Harvard infirmary. The attack received national attention, although it was almost totally ignored by what *Time* called "Boston's ostrich press." Cambridge's population was 77 percent Irish Catholic, and *Time* described the town as "rife with Coughlinism [and] anti-Semitism."⁹⁰

Similarly in New York, antisemitic violence remained widespread during 1944. The *New York Post* noted that, time and again, Jews were

88. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 25, 1943.

89. *Ibid.*, May 9, 13, 15, 16, and 22, 1944; *Boston Globe*, May 13, 1944; ADL Daily Newspaper Report, May 23, 1944, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA; *PM*, May 16, 1944.

90. "Trouble in Cambridge," *Time*, June 12, 1944, 81-82, clipping in Headquarters Records, Division of Review and Analysis, Tension File, entry 37, box 448, Fair Employment Practices Commission Records, RG 228, NA; *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 1944.

being assaulted on the very street corners at which Christian Front and Christian Mobilizers speeches had been given before the war. A fifteen-year-old South Bronx girl who roamed the streets with a "Jew-hunting" band acknowledged in January 1944 that the prewar antisemitic street corner meetings had strongly influenced her. She believed the Christian Front and Christian Mobilizers claims that Jews owned all the wealth and ran the country, and recalled that the streetcorner speakers had told neighborhood residents not to patronize Jewish stores. That month, an antisemitic mob of twenty in a Brooklyn pool hall, shouting "Jew bastard" and "dirty Jews," badly mauled two Jewish teenagers. Although one of the Jews suffered two black eyes from being kicked in the face and stab wounds to his leg, police refused to arrest anyone, dismissing the attack as "just a poolroom fight."⁹¹

An Irish American New York judge ruled against a Jewish man who had charged a woman with hurling antisemitic epithets at him on the subway throughout a long ride from the Bronx to 34th Street in Manhattan, where she left the train. As he dismissed the charges, the judge drew on a hoary stereotype of the greedy, vindictive Jew, announcing, "This is not going to be a pound of flesh case."⁹²

A Washington Heights rabbi, whose synagogue had been defaced with large amounts of black paint two weeks after assailants had stoned members when they arrived for Purim services, declared that "the Coughlin Christian Front is coming once again into the open . . ." He was "firmly convinced that such attacks [were] premeditated, and planned . . ."⁹³

Antisemitic violence also reached epidemic proportions during 1943 and 1944 in Providence, Rhode Island, where Jewish leaders charged that the attacks "reveal[ed] the same pattern as has recently been found in Boston and New York." A delegation visited Rhode Island's Governor McGrath in January 1944 and demanded that he take immediate action to stop the attacks. It presented him with affidavits from victims describing the beatings, which ADL investigators had collected. The Jewish leaders mentioned as examples of antisemitic violence the stoning of synagogues during services, the bands of youths who threw stones at elderly Jews and hurled antisemitic epithets at them, so that they were "afraid to attend synagogue services," and the boys who struck a rabbi with a tomato, while shouting that he was a "dirty Jew." That rabbi insisted that there was an organized campaign in Providence "bent on

91. *New York Post*, January 11, 12, 13, 1944.

92. *Ibid.*, February 21, 1944.

93. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1944.

molesting” Jews. By the fall of 1943, beatings of Jewish boys had become so widespread that Jewish students were walking home from school in groups. “Jewish store,” as well as “vile anti-Semitic legends,” were painted on Jewish-owned shops. The delegation emphasized that “scurrilous and obscene anti-Jewish literature ha[d] been distributed widely in Rhode Island,” some of which was tied to the Christian Front.⁹⁴

Several factors contributed to a significant decline in antisemitic violence in Boston and New York after World War II. Public awareness of the horrors of the Holocaust resulted in some diminution of antisemitism. A markedly improved economic climate and better prospects for social mobility reduced frustration and resentment against other groups. The movement of many Jews to suburban neighborhoods lessened direct physical contacts with hostile Irish Americans on the streets. In Boston, the relatively liberal Richard Cushing, whose brother-in-law was Jewish, replaced the archconservative William O’Connell as cardinal in 1944. O’Connell had been uninterested in taking steps to reduce the antisemitic violence, and had not disciplined Christian Front priests. Cushing, by contrast, initiated a considerable amount of inter-faith dialogue, and took strong measures in the early 1950s against a reactionary antisemitic movement that had resurfaced in the Boston archdiocese.⁹⁵

The severity of the antisemitic violence in Boston and New York during World War II caused some liberal Christians to undertake efforts to combat antisemitism in their churches, and to join with Jews in educational efforts to eradicate antisemitism in the schools and in police forces. An advisory committee to Governor Saltonstall introduced a special course of instruction in January 1945 on “The Police and Minority Groups” for the Boston, Cambridge, and Metropolitan District police forces. Its purpose was to educate police officers about the problem of bigotry and of ethnic and racial tensions. No such course for policemen had ever been given in any American city. It was built around

94. *Ibid.*, January 18 and 19, 1944; *Providence Journal*, January 19, 1944. In November 1943, swastikas and antisemitic statements were painted on the windows of over one-hundred stores in Hartford, Connecticut, in the heart of the business district. *Jewish Advocate*, November 11, 1943.

95. Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore, 1992), 39–40, 143–45; Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 150–51; Sachar, *History of the Jews in America*, 664–66; Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon, *The Death of an American Jewish Community* (New York, 1992), 38; Memorandum from Frances Sweeney Committee to Professor Gordon W. Allport, April 17, 1951, box 10, Allport Papers, HUA, PL, HU.

a series of four lectures by Professor Gordon Allport of Harvard. Representatives of the Jewish and African American communities were invited to speak to the policemen taking the course and to answer questions they raised.⁹⁶

Jews and some liberal Christians took important and unprecedented steps in combating antisemitism as a result of the World War II attacks on Jews, and this helped somewhat to reduce prejudice after the war. Leonard Dinnerstein has noted that, before World War II, the AJ Congress and the ADL had been “inexperienced, timid” groups, that “emphasized patience and caution.” They lacked the staff and the finances to work effectively against prejudice.⁹⁷ Yet, during the war these groups became increasingly involved in monitoring antisemitic incidents and in developing alliances with progressive forces alarmed about mounting antisemitism. In Boston, they helped form the Massachusetts Citizens Committee for Racial Unity (MCCRU) in June 1943, in collaboration with Frances Sweeney’s AIDA, the Boston Urban League, the Boston Women’s Trade Union League, the Rabbinical Association of Greater Boston, and some liberal Protestant ministers. The MCCRU sponsored a mass public meeting at Boston’s Symphony Hall about a month after the *PM* revelations of antisemitic violence, for the purpose of “enhanc[ing] . . . [an] appreciation of the diverse contributions of all sorts of Americans to our rich and varied culture.” Similar cooperation between Jewish organizations and liberal groups resulted in the creation of the Good Neighbor Association of Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park, which met regularly to devise measures to combat the antisemitic attacks.⁹⁸

Liberal Protestant ministers, led by Rev. Donald G. Lothrop of Boston’s Community Church, in February 1944 began organized lobbying against antisemitism, calling on Governor Saltonstall to take aggressive action against the outbreaks. The ministers established a speakers bureau, consisting of authorities on prejudice who gave community lectures on “the cause and cure of anti-Semitism.” The lecturers included Kenneth Leslie, the national chair of the Protestant Textbook Commission to Eliminate Anti-Semitic Statements in American Textbooks. In a

96. Gordon Allport to Clement A. Norton, April 29, 1944, box 8, and Draft of Gordon Allport statement to Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, n.d., box 16, Allport Papers, HUA, PL, HU; *Christian Science Monitor*, December 13, 1944.

97. Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, 146–47.

98. “Public Meeting for Racial and Religious Understanding—Sunday, November 28, 1943,” and Dana McLean Greeley to Governor Saltonstall, August 31, 1943, carton 9, Saltonstall Papers, MHS; Rabbi Korff to Allport, March 23, 1944, box 6, Allport Papers, HUA, PL, HU.

full-page newspaper statement, the ministers drew attention to the theological roots of antisemitism, declaring that “much of the basis for anti-Semitism is to be found in teaching originating within Christendom.”⁹⁹

In New York, the ADL assisted the *New York Post* in monitoring, publicizing, and combating antisemitism throughout the city. The *Post* established an Intolerance Bureau, which began operations in January 1944. It functioned as a “clearinghouse for complaints of intolerant acts,” and as a “follow-up agency” to ensure that police investigated the complaints. Pressure from the Intolerance Bureau, which provided regular, detailed newspaper coverage of antisemitic beatings and vandalism, prompted the police to devote greater attention to the outrages.¹⁰⁰

Public opinion polls after the war showed a marked decline in antisemitic attitudes in the United States, but police prejudice against Jews hardly disappeared. Gordon Hall, director of the Frances Sweeney Committee, established after Sweeney’s death in 1944 at the age of thirty-six to carry on her work for tolerance, in 1950 found Boston Police Commissioner Thomas F. Sullivan bigoted against minority groups, and unable to grasp the seriousness of the World War II antisemitic outbreaks. He described the violence during the war against Jews in Boston as “inconsequential scraps among children.”¹⁰¹ And in New York after V-J Day, an assemblyman and a city councilman charged that there was still a “pro-Nazi element in the Police Department.”¹⁰²

While antisemitic harassment never again attained the level it had reached during World War II, antagonism toward Jews remained significant among many Irish Catholics after the war. The New England

99. *Jewish Advocate*, April 2, 1944; *Christian Science Monitor*, February 16, 1944; Kenneth Leslie, “Seeds of Hate”: Textbook Commission to Eliminate Anti-Semitic Statements in American Textbooks,” carton 10, Saltonstall Papers, MHS.

100. *New York Post*, January 20 and 28, 1944. The Intolerance Bureau was concerned with “acts . . . ranging from assault and vandalism to discrimination in employment.” The Bureau’s first report, issued a week after it began operating, “reveal[ed] wide intolerance.” Day after day, the Bureau listed in the *Post* numerous acts of antisemitic assault, verbal street harassment of Jews, and the painting of swastikas and antisemitic epithets on store windows, on and inside apartment buildings, and in subways. *New York Post*, January 20, 21, 25, 26, 29 and February 5, 1944.

101. “Report: Interview with Police Commissioner Thomas F. Sullivan, by Gordon Hall,” April 7, 1950, box 15, Allport Papers, HUA, PL, HU. Hall also reported that Sullivan referred to an African American police officer as a “big boogie,” and mimicked him by pacing the floor as though he had enormous feet.

102. ADL Daily Newspaper Report, September 10, 1945, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA. Gerald Gamm notes that “the anti-Semitic violence of Catholic gangs remained a major concern of Jews throughout Dorchester and Roxbury in the early 1950s.” Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 227.

ADL reported that the number of assaults against Jews had decreased during 1945, but noted that serious antisemitic propaganda campaigns continued. The antisemitic priest Edward Lodge Curran made four speaking trips to Boston in 1945. John Roy Carlson noted the following year that Coughlinism, a fundamentally antisemitic movement, “flows on unabated,” even increasing in strength in major Eastern and Midwestern cities. The ADL’s survey of antisemitism in the United States during 1947, issued in March 1948, reported “a very real increase in prejudice [and] unfriendly acts . . . against Jews.”¹⁰³

Physical attacks on Jews continued to occur in Boston during the postwar period, although less frequently. There were more than twenty reported assault cases in Boston during 1950 in which antisemitism was the motivation, thirteen of them in Dorchester, Mattapan, or Roxbury. In 1951, there were several beatings of Jewish youths in Dorchester, one of whom was a rabbi’s son. Shortly afterward, seven young men were accused of “attempt[ing] to manhandle Jewish citizens” in nearby Hyde Park, a heavily Irish American neighborhood. That year in Roxbury, a man who intervened to assist a Jewish boy being mauled by a crowd of twenty to thirty youths in an antisemitic attack was himself beaten. The man recalled that “the savage intensity of the beating [of the Jewish boy] was beyond imagination.” Youths in the crowd repeatedly hit the boy with metal-studded belts, sticks, and fists until he collapsed, and then “they kicked and trampled him, shouting ‘dirty Jew’ and other anti-Semitic names.” The *Boston City Reporter* noted that had the man not intervened, the Jewish boy “might have been mortally injured.” Jewish leaders in Dorchester were reported to be investigating “frequent instances of bias,” including the desecration of Jewish cemeteries there.¹⁰⁴

For at least two years during the early 1950s, Rev. Leonard Feeney, the head of a Catholic religious order known as the Slaves of The Immaculate Heart of Mary, made virulently antisemitic speeches every Sunday afternoon on Boston Common, supported by a large entourage. *Life* called them “frightening demonstration[s].” Feeney was the former

103. “Annual Report of the Anti-Defamation League of B’Nai B’rith, 1945,” and ADL Daily Newspaper Report, March 28, 1946, reel 2773, ADL Papers, AJA; John Roy Carlson, *The Plotters* (New York, 1946), 82; *New York Times*, March 29, 1948.

104. “Accentuate the Positive’ About Hecht House,” *Boston City Reporter*, April 1951, and Isabel Currier, “Agencies on the Ball in Latest Outbreak,” *Boston City Reporter*, May 1951, Moloney Collection, BPL; Report from Mr. Francis J. A. McMahon to Frances Sweeney Committee, October 3, 1951, box 3, and “Examiner,” July 20, 1951, box 1, series 3, RG 3, E.11.01, Records of Nondiocesan Agencies, Archdiocese of Boston Archives (hereafter ABA), Brighton, Mass.

literary editor of the national Jesuit magazine, *America*.¹⁰⁵ Cardinal Cushing censured him in 1949 for teaching that no non-Catholic could be saved, and the Vatican excommunicated him in 1953. Feeney branded Cardinal Cushing a heretic, and ridiculed him for “sitting down at interfaith dinners with a bunch of rabbis.” He claimed that Cushing was “always seeking Jewish dollars.”¹⁰⁶

Feeney invoked the deicide accusation, denouncing Jews as “descendants of the crucifiers of Christ” who plotted to take over the world, using the Communist movement as an instrument.¹⁰⁷ He responded to hecklers by shouting, “I see your Jewish face,” and referred to the Frances Sweeney Committee, which often monitored his speeches, as the Frances “Sheenie” Committee.¹⁰⁸ A reporter for a Brooklyn English-language Jewish newspaper in 1951 noted the presence in the audience on Boston Common of “many Christian Fronters,” who “show[ed] their delight in Feeney’s attacks on Jews. . . .”¹⁰⁹

The repeated beatings of Jews in the streets and parks, the desecration of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, and the vandalizing of Jewish stores in Boston and New York during World War II caused widespread alarm among Jews. Although the marauders killed no Jews, they attacked hundreds and inflicted serious injuries on many, mutilating some for life. They traumatized many Jewish children, terrorized the elderly, and caused a significant amount of damage to Jewish property.

Contemporary observers drew some parallels between the World War II antisemitic outbreaks in Boston and New York and pogroms in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century eastern Europe. The editor of *The Day*, Samuel Margoshes, emphasized that what existed was “a pogrom condition.”¹¹⁰ As in Europe, the youths who carried out the attacks were inspired by virulently antisemitic propaganda, which the Christian Front circulated widely in Boston and New York. They, too, had been influenced by antisemitic views that priests, parents, and other

105. “Father Feeney’s Excommunication,” *Life*, March 2, 1953, 85; Obituary, *Boston Globe*, January 31, 1978; “Here’s Leonard Feeney, Boston’s Hate Merchant,” *The Compass*, January 27, 1952, box 1, series 3, RG 3, E.11.01, ABA.

106. “Who Shall be Saved?” *Newsweek*, April 25, 1949; “Feeney’s Excommunication,” *Life*, March 2, 1953, 85; “Here’s Leonard Feeney,” box 1, ABA; *The Compass*; “Examiner,” July 20, 1951, box 1, ABA.

107. “All Roads Lead to Rome,” n.d., box 1, series 3, RG 3, E.11.01, ABA.

108. “Examiner,” July 20, 1951, box 1, ABA; “Common Talk,” draft for *Boston City Reporter*, June–July 1952, box 3, series 3, RG 3, E.11.01, ABA; “Examiner,” July 20, 1951, box 1, ABA.

109. “Examiner,” July 20, 1951, box 1, ABA.

110. *The Day*, October 22, 1943.

adults propagated in their homes and neighborhoods, and by their diocesan newspapers.

To be sure, government authorities in Boston and New York, unlike many of their European counterparts, did not usually endorse assaults on Jews or attempt to justify them by blaming the Jews for provoking them. In Boston they did, of course, try, convict, and fine two Jewish youths assaulted by an antisemitic crowd, none of whose members were arrested. For the most part, the authorities in both cities claimed that the perpetrators were misguided adolescents lacking parental supervision. William Herlands, New York's Commissioner of Investigation, even reported that the majority of the youths involved in antisemitic beatings and vandalism were "mentally retarded or sexually perverted."¹¹¹ Yet, as in European pogroms, many policemen sympathized with the marauding antisemitic bands, refused to arrest the attackers, and even sometimes themselves delighted in physically abusing innocent Jewish youths. High government officials, including police commissioners and mayors in both cities, and even the governor of Massachusetts for a considerable length of time, remained indifferent to severe outbreaks of antisemitism, taking little or no action against them.

The pervasive anti-Jewish violence in Boston and New York during World War II suggests that antisemitism in the United States, at least in some locales, was much more deeply entrenched than most scholars have acknowledged. It indicates that American Jews in the 1940s suffered not only discrimination in access to housing, employment, and higher education, but savage beatings as well, which were frequent and widespread, at least in the two major cities studied here. Marauding antisemitic bands severely restricted the physical movement of many Jews in two of America's metropolises, rendering it difficult for them to carry on normal religious, business, or social activities.

111. *New York Post*, January 11, 1944.