

# The Commentator

## 60TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL RETROSPECTIVE PULLOUT

BY STEVEN MIODOWNIK

On March 1, 1935, the students, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva College cautiously laid their hands on Volume 1, Issue 1 of *The Commentator*. With an article on Palestine as a possible haven for German Jewry, and a critique of the administration for failing to adequately stress a YC education's "Jewish aspect," the voice of the students was thus launched - or loosed - upon Yeshiva.

The pages of *The Commentator* soon became the medium through which YU students could convey their support or disdain for university policies, their moral and ethical viewpoints, their sardonic brands of humor, and their literary prowess. The emotions of YU students confronting both cataclysmic world events and more trivial campus issues were converted into words and inscribed in *The Commentator*. It consequently reads as a history of YU's coups and crises, successes and failures, triumphs and gaffes.

Sixty years later, *The Commentator* continues its tradition of examining and influencing university policy as the instrument through which the pulse of YU students is taken. Read by students, their parents, alumni, rebbeim, faculty members, and benefactors - and scrutinized cover-to-cover by the administration - *The Commentator* is an institution some hate to love and others love to hate. It has been perceived by the school's myriad constituencies as both ally and foe, a source of enlightenment and disgust, a great asset sometimes playing the role of muckraker and menace.

Nevertheless, an anniversary year provides an opportunity for former editors to wax nostalgic about their experiences running *The Commentator*. "The *Commentator* is where I got my start in journalism," notes Ari Goldman, Features Editor, 1969-70. "It was more than 25 years ago, but I've still saved my clips, not because they are my best writings but because they are my most joyful," says the former New York Times religion correspondent, currently an assistant professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Goldman, like many former editors, notes that "Commie gave me a forum to say what I wanted to and gave me the confidence to say it." Among his memories from those college years are "my first by-line, my first threat of a libel suit," and "the onion rolls with sweet butter at Ratner's at three in the morning after putting the paper to bed." Goldman's Editor-in-Chief at the time, Bernard Firestone, calls working on the paper one of his life's most "intense group working experiences." His was the era before desktop publishing software wherein a laborious layout of the paper occupied three days of the editors' time.

Dr. Firestone, now an associate dean at Hofstra University and a professor of political science at YC and Stern, asserts that "*The Commentator* provides a vehi-

### *The Commentator: Six Decades as the Voice of the Students*



cle for the students to express their opinions. It helps empower the students and it is a tremendous outlet for creativity." He says "*The Commentator* helps create a sense of community" by giving YU "a shared base of knowledge" and by "breaking through the isolation" of YU's many constituencies.

#### **A Check On The Administration**

By being a publication entirely independent of the faculty and administration, "*The Commentator* is one of the few institutions capable of and dedicated to getting the whole story," Firestone contends. "Students don't always know what's going on" because the amount of information teachers and administrators may divulge is often "limited."

Sender Cohen, Editor-in-Chief, 1993-94, echoes Firestone's remarks: "Having an independent newspaper that serves as a check on the university's policies certainly lends to YU's credibility as well as helps the school constantly improve." Cohen's co-Editor-in-Chief, Robert Fagin, lauds *The Commentator* for being "a conduit from the students to the administration," and "the most popular student forum on campus."

#### **A Learning Experience**

Robert Kantowitz, Associate Editor, 1975-76, is still an avid reader of *The Commentator*. As a YC Board Member he boasts a subscription, and as a life member of the YU Alumni Association, he receives an additional copy at alum-

ni meetings. President of the President's Circle, Kantowitz says *The Commentator* "was a vehicle through which I polished my writing and editing skills," abilities he did not acquire as a physics major. "It helped me do well in law school," and it was "a great club, in effect."

"Properly used," Kantowitz claims, "*The Commentator* is the principle source of information that people both in and out of YU get about YU. It is far more important than people realize." In that respect, it is crucial that *The Commentator* be subjected to neither "censorship" nor "a faculty advisor."

Moshe Kinderlehrer, a RIETS student and last year's Editor-in-Chief, says his position allowed him to "learn about YU and the people who work and go to YU. I was at the intersection of the students, professors, and administrators. Being in between all of them was a tremendous growing experience."

Because YU is a microcosm of American Orthodox Jewry, working on *The Commentator* gave Kinderlehrer a "sense of what's happening within the Orthodox community." And he "wasn't repelled by it."

#### **The President's Perspective**

"As a student I always looked forward to reading *The Commentator*, as a faculty member I did, and as president I do," says President Norman Lamm, who has been the subject of many a *Commentator* news article, editorial, let-

ter-to-the-editor, or cartoon during his nineteen-year occupancy of the fifth-floor of Furst. Upon the paper's sixtieth anniversary, Rabbi Lamm revealed that he is actually a former *Commentator* staff member, having anonymously authored the paper's humor column in 1947.

"The editor then was the late Rabbi Louis Bernstein," recalls the president. "He and I got into a battle about certain issues. But I learned to respect him and vice versa; we became very close friends as a result of the confrontation in print. After a while, he invited me to write for *The Commentator*. I was the author, for a few issues only, of a humor column, not under my name. But I didn't have time to pursue it afterwards, so I dropped it."

But Rabbi Lamm's relationship with the undergraduate newspaper outlasted his graduation from the college and the classroom. *The Commentator* succeeds in "bringing the attention of issues more forcefully to my consciousness as well as those of my vice-presidents and deans on a number of issues." In that respect, "What *The Commentator* has to do - or in a sense continue to do - is to point out those areas where we fail to live up to our promise, fail to live up to our mission, and to encourage us to do better." The administration looks to *The Commentator* "as a barometer," even though "sometimes there's exaggeration - more than sometimes. When you read a college newspaper you have to realize that some things agitate students which are perhaps not as important as they'd like to think, while other issues that are more important fail to inspire them. Hence, you read the criticism with a critical eye."

Although at times "journalism befools itself" and "occasionally [editors] went overboard and were terribly destructive" in their quest to become "young Woodwards and Bernsteins," Rabbi Lamm recalls times when editors' actions brought great good to the university. "There was one particular time a number of years ago where we were besieged by an individual of quite reactionary point-of-view who was carrying on terribly in the Beis Medrash and elsewhere, writing scurrilous letters, etc. It took one editor who had guts to face the issue and it resulted in the fellow leaving. He simply performed a very important function - I will never forget my gratitude to that particular editor. It required a student voice to be heard."

#### **Racism and Cheating Articles**

Exercising freedom of speech and of criticism should be a newspaper editor's goal, says Rabbi Lamm, but "at all times you have to remember that it is not the function of a Yeshiva College student to participate in a *Chillul Hashem*. And that can happen very easily." Several times this year alone, *The Commentator's* Governing Board has been on the receiving end of much derision for printing articles that cast YU in a negative light. Rabbi Lamm says, however, that a

*continued on page 12*



# The 1930's

BY JOSHUA M. FELDMAN

The United States has George Washington, the Zionist Movement has Theodore Herzl, *The New York Times* has Adolph Ochs, and *The Commentator* has Moses I. Feurstein. On March 1, 1935 Volume one, issue one of *The Commentator* rolled off the press with the name Feurstein reading as the very first editor-in-chief.

In the 1930's, this fledgling four page newspaper proudly reported on Yeshiva College's growth over the years.

An attempt to open a new business school dominated the front page in a late April issue - YC's first attempt at expansion planned for the Yeshiva College School of Business. The school was to be started in September of 1935. "The administration believes that there is room in industry today for the really well-trained Jewish businessman, and that graduates will be readily absorbed by Jewish firms. Hence it seeks to produce a fully developed and well rounded personality integrating in the curriculum the liberal arts requirement and education the student needs for an appreciation of Judaism, its culture and spirit," noted the newspaper.

However, with the glory of a campus newspaper came the controversy that still surrounds *The Commentator* today. Issues of appropriateness arose from both students and the administration. Editorials over the years included the development of Palestine and the Histadrut, the death of the Nunan Bill and dismay at the administration for refusing to take part in the Rambam festival. It was this last editorial that took the newspaper into its first "freedom of the press" challenge.

After publishing its first controversial editorial the administration made an attempt to invalidate the editorials by labeling them as individual opinion, and sanction the students accordingly. However, a motion set forth by then YCSC President David W. Petergorsky was passed by Student Council, formally endorsing the newspaper as the official undergraduate newspaper of Yeshiva College, and urging *The Commentator* to continue with its editorial policies.

With the passing of the motion, Petergorsky said "*The Commentator* in its last issue has given expression to the sentiment of the overwhelming majority of the student body. The issues it has raised are fundamental to the existence of the institution. It is the duty of Council as the

voice of the undergraduate to rally in support of *The Commentator* in its fight for a truly Jewish College."

In its very next issue, *The Commentator* adopted its own constitution, and called for the University to be more "Yeshivized."

However, this did not the end the paper's woes. In the very first issue of the next Volume, the administration attempted to slap a faculty advisor on *The Commentator* with the idea of censoring the newspaper. The newspaper retorted by publishing an editorial claiming that "*The Commentator* was founded for the avowed purpose of cementing student opinion towards all undergraduate and institutional problems that directly concern the student body." The editorial went on to bring proofs for its defense from Constitutional Law, and the Talmud.

It is hard to imagine a *Commentator*

# The 1940's

BY JASON BUSKIN

As *The Commentator* headed into its second decade of existence the paper settled into its assigned role on campus. A simple four page edition every two weeks trumpeted the ongoing of campus clubs, student councils and Yeshiva sports teams. In fact it seems, that the issues and stories that made their way to the

Resolved: That President Roosevelt be reelected for a third term.

## The Holocaust

While focusing on the events of a growing Yeshiva College campus the paper was careful to pay attention to the growing developments in the war in Europe. One issue in early 1940 features a small piece on the bottom corner, in which Dr. Theodore Abel, associate professor of sociology, expresses his belief that the US will not become militarily involved. However, news about the war was not at the forefront of *The Commentator*.

That is, until March 4th, 1943, when then *The Commentator* presented a 6 page memorial/plea for the Jews of Nazi-Europe. Students joined administration in protesting and condemning Nazi actions. A call was sent in these pages to the United Nations and America to act and stop their compromising silence. Additionally a call is made for Palestine, described as the only viable solution to save Jewish lives.

Indeed this very wish arrives several years later as *The Commentator* hails the arrival of the State of Israel with tremendous front page spreads including a reprint of Israel's Declaration of Independence.

The 1940's provided a balance for *The Commentator* between reporting the stories of the campus and incidents of the world as it affected Yeshiva College, the center of Orthodox Judaism.

It is amazing to look through the decade and spot many of the legendary names from the annals of Yeshiva history; the decade is filled with landmark events within the college and personalities which shaped the school we attend today.

A piece from an early issue of the decade quotes a speaker by the name of Dr. Isaac Breuer who says, "Torah must guide life" in an address to the students. In November of 1942 a young promising coach named Bernard Sarachek is named to coach the school basketball team and the following year a new school President is named, Dr. Samuel Belkin. Belkin would continue to lead the University until his retirement in the late 1970s.

## University Expansion

As the decade progresses the school begins to grow. In 1945 the paper proclaims, "Belkin announces Yeshiva Expansion Program To Be Financed \$5,000,000 Drive." The expansion fund was aided by a \$1000 a plate dinner (that's without Al Gore). In 1948 the school announced the plans to establish a medical school and later that year the school had its first Chanukah concert, the first of what was hoped to be a yearly event.

Indeed the 1940's was a decade of prominence for Yeshiva, with expansion and the addition of graduate schools Yeshiva College became an accredited University. As we look at the decade it is amazing to see that fifty years ago many of the concerns of the student body were no different than they are today. Fortunately, for the first time, this newspaper was there to cover ten years worth of a lifetime.

## Birth of a Newspaper: The Early Years (1930-1949)



less campus. For years, YU students have come to expect a new issue, full of news, opinions, sports, and occasional controversy, surface on the Main Campus once every two weeks announcing to the administration, the student body and the world how YU students feel on the issues that surround them.

pages of the Commie in the early '40s are no different than stories we read today. One issue in early 1940 proclaimed on the front page "Study to be Made of Student Spirit." A more amusing anecdote from the early years is the inception of the "wake up committee," a contingent of sophomores who one day decided to go door to door one morning and wake the school for 7:30 minyan.

Amid student council events, basketball game box scores and reports of new professors arriving on campus come stories of a new faculty-student library committee and a dining room committee. Additionally, The YC Players performed "The Wolves" in Lampport Auditorium, the school's first dramatic production. Oh, and let's not forget the Yeshiva debate team which beat Rutgers in a series of matches in 1940. The topic?





# The 1950's

BY MEIR S. ZEITCHIK

Remember the 1950's? Okay, maybe not firsthand. But you've heard all about this wholesome time. The decade that brought us clean family fun like Father Knows Best and Leave it to Beaver. The decade that saw the havoc wreaked by a World War replaced by the serene prosperity of the Eisenhower years. The decade when the line between wrong and right was so sharply drawn that only the truly decadent violated it.

And at YU? Surely this wholesomeness was reflected in *The Commentator* and everything that transpired here? Well, not exactly. After all, kickoff events no longer take place at Weber's Alehouse, Purim Chagigahs don't feature wine, beer and cigarettes (they don't include music either, but that's another story), and jokes about sex do not appear in front-page *Commentator* interviews.

Then again, there were some surprisingly stringent regulations, at least by contemporary standards. Students today wage the perennial struggle between cozily warm bedsheets and the spiritual duty of *sha-charit*; imagine past students being exiled from the dorm because of lackluster minyan attendance (Strange but true - March 1958). If you remain suspicious about these bizarre occurrences outside the classroom, then get a load of the academic arena. Back in the 50's arbiters of academic standards didn't pussyfoot around.

Cites a 1953 *Commentator*: "One currently proposed solution is that of extending the length of the college career to five or six years rather than the present four..." And you thought this year's Senate was strict.

When it came to a rigorous education, though, students weren't just blowing smoke. The arguably exacting math major enjoyed improbable success; in March 1952 *The Commentator* reported that it held the top spot among all majors with 13.8% of YC claiming it as their own.

1950's *Commentator* editors seemed eager to tackle taboos in these hallowed pages. A front-page article on drinking habits of YU students in virtuous 1956 contained the following paragraph.

"It is well known to this writer... that once they [senior dormitory residents] get the 'itch,' will go from bourbon to Scotch to rye to Wildroot crew-oil in the course of a night's adventure." So much for the "not hanging dirty laundry in public" school of thought. Nor were the vices discussed limited to fermented beverages. A November 1950 interview with fledgling psychology professor Helmut Adler chronicled the following dialogue between a student reporter and Adler.

"What made you become interested in psychology [queried the student]?"

'A course with Professor Sargent of

Columbia,' was the prompt answer [from Adler].'

'Hurrah,' a voice [the student's] muttered, 'not sex!'"

And if you think surveys that expose students' failings are prevalent now, how about a *Commentator* poll in December 1951 that revealed their gross ignorance on even the most pertinent matters. The survey demonstrated that 10% of the students were unaware of the YC dean's name, 33% did not know *The Commentator* Editor-in-Chief, and a robust 50% couldn't name the president of the student council.

The campus newspaper paid a price for its candor, choosing not to print the 1957 Purim issue after a controversy erupted. And when administrators intervened to prevent the printing of a sensitive editorial, it resulted in the

following ultimatum from the editors in an April 1958 issue.

"The right of *The Commentator* to print articles, news stories and editorials on any problem which are not limited to the college has been denied by Dr. Simeon L. Guterman, dean of Yeshiva College and concurred in by Dr. Samuel Belkin, president of the University... The Governing Board has voted unanimously to suspend publication of *The Commentator* under this ruling. If the ruling is not rescinded there will be no *Commentator*." And indeed, the remainder of the academic year brought no insightful news nor vivid features from the YC journalistic well-spring.

Perhaps most perplexing of all 1950's *Commentator* stories was the headline-grabbing minyan gate of

1958. Several years earlier, dorm supervisors instituted a policy wherein minyan-conscious counselors would make the 7:30AM rounds and [attempt to] rouse students from sweet slumber. The situation came to a head in March 1958, when the following article appeared on the front-page of *The Commentator*.

"Ten New York City residents have been suspended from the dormitory for one week because of 'unsatisfactory' minyan attendance. Thirty other students, most of them from out of town, received 'suspended' suspensions. This means they will be evicted if their minyan attendance continues to be 'unsatisfactory.'"

The suspensions were issued by Rabbi Moshe Klein, dormitory supervisor. He explained that attending minyan two times a week would be considered satisfactory by his office."

As *The Commentator* sought to probe uncomfortable issues on campus, the University was setting its sights beyond Yeshiva College. In one frenetic decade, they created programs as diverse as M.D.'s, math Ph.D's and Social Work degrees. But the most relevant development for YC students was the inauguration of a division limited to those with a specific chromosome pattern. "College for Girls Opens; Freshmen Class has 32," proclaimed *The Commentator* in September 1954. "We were very impressed by the spacious classrooms and we readily visualized the innocent girlish faces that would soon be peering from behind polished desks," recounted a reporter who in May 1954 investigated the school, four months before it opened.

Perhaps realizing that the addition of a women's institution required supplying YU students with the means to attract these students' attention, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine opened with 56 students in 1955 (more than enough to go around for SCW). The rising number of pre-med majors (it jumped from 3.4% of YC to 6.1% between 1951 and 1952) finally had a school they could call their own, and *The Commentator* proudly celebrated the event by displaying a photo of then-president Dr. Samuel Belkin and Albert Einstein chatting amicably.

But as expansion continued unabated, the uptown campus remained in disarray. "The potters have been working with might and main to keep the bathrooms clean, in commodius, but they have neither the manpower, nor the technical skill at their disposal to do the job required. We are forced to recommend that if correction is not made in the immediate future since the toilets are practically unusable, they be locked altogether," cited a December 1951 editorial. Improvements were attempted, but they were slow in coming and often limited in scope. Two weeks later, *The Commentator* hailed the installation of five washing machines in the dorms, several decades after the school's founding. By the end of the 50's, however, ambitious plans for a new dormitory were unveiled. It eventually became Morgenstern Hall, as construction was juxtaposed with controversy in this otherwise staid and static decade.

## Construction and Controversy: (1950-1959)



Students flocked to The Rav's zt"l shiur ever since its began



# The 1960's

BY STEVEN MIODOWNIK

*The Commentator* of the 1960s is the archival repository for a defining era in YU history. Although we can no longer hear the din of that decade's relentless campus construction or the cries of protesting students, the emotions of a student body confronting the Six Day War, the Vietnam War, and the Space Age are captured in *The Commentator*.

Even a cursory read of its yellowed pages reveals a student body grappling with issues of state, campus, and mind - matters that are not foreign to today's YU student. Through news and features articles, letters to the editor and advertisements, we can reconstruct a YU of the 1960s quite close to home.

Contained in *The Commentator* of the sixties are numerous essays - if not masterpieces - of the Rav; opinion pieces by R. Aaron Lichtenstein; a young Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's plea for aliyah; and Professor Moses Tendler's first brush with autopsies and organ transplants. One can discover the annual articles about YU's record-breaking successes in blood donation, the story about the Macs facing the Israeli Olympic Team at the Garden, the letter to the editor protesting the fact that shiurim are in Yiddish, and the articles detailing the genesis of the movement to free Soviet Jewry. Advertisements for Philip-Morris cigarettes appear frequently in *The Commentator* of the sixties, as do ads for No-Doz, ironically heralded as "safe as coffee." Fleming's latest Bond flick, "Goldfinger," is reviewed favorably, and a features article appears entitled, "College Men Sporting Hairy Chins And Bewhiskered Upper Lips, Too."

Our journey through this decade begins with the 1960-61 school year. With great fanfare, the September 20, 1960 issue celebrates the 25th anniversary of *The Commentator* by featuring contributions from four former Editors-in-Chief and describing a special Silver Anniversary Dinner held in the Rubin Residence Hall dining room. On October 24, the front page is dominated by the announcement that Furst Hall will be erected next year. The building will contain three working elevators and *The Commentator* will receive an office in its basement. YCSC makes the front page on January 4, 1961 after it votes to espouse voluntary attendance for all seniors, juniors, and sophomores with "B" averages.

Soon afterwards, a rise in enrollment puts a strain on accommodations. The October 18 issue reports that rooms are being refused to Manhattan and Bronx students within commuting distance. Newly-appointed Director of Residence Halls Rabbi Joshua Cheifetz vows to alleviate this problem and additionally revitalize YU's shabbos program. The year ends with news that tuition has been hiked to \$1200 - a \$200 raise that causes an uproar, which is described in the De-

cember 21 edition.

November 15, 1962 brings news of the rebirth of Hamevaser, a newspaper that is "not a competitor" of *The Commentator*. On December 4, it is reported that all students boycotted the cafeteria last week to protest the administration's refusal to allow YCSC vending machines in Furst Hall. January 2, 1963 is the first time *The Commentator* reports on the Student Senate, but certainly not the last. As detailed in the February 19 issue, four YC and Stern students will appear on G.E.'s College Bowl TV show before a national audience. The students are finally selected and on May 8, *The Commentator* announces that YU will play the University of Louisville before America on Sunday at 5:30. Initial talk of a \$15 million Science Building being erected at the Main Center is

*"Commentator was founded for the avowed purpose of cementing student opinion towards all undergraduate and institutional problems that directly concern the student body."*

*-Commentator Editorial, 1935*

accompanied by an artist's rendering of the structure in the October 24, 1963 issue.

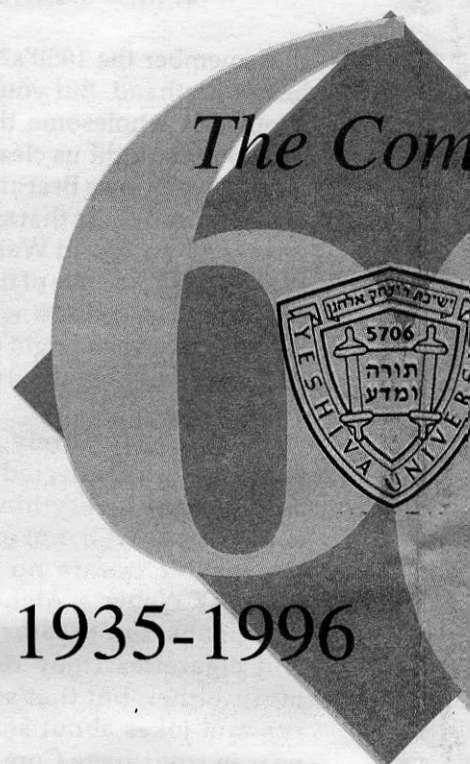
Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir's address to the students of Yeshiva University is related to the students in the November 20 edition. But bigger news - of October 21, 1964 - is that of the imminent construction of a \$2.6 million dormitory to be dubbed Morgenstern Hall, but to be known colloquially as the "New Dorm" for several years. More construction news comes in the September 30, 1965 issue, in which plans to erect an architecturally interesting library building are revealed to the students.

Broader issues begin sneaking into the pages of *The Commentator* as the decade continues. The December 2, 1965 issue contains a debate by YU professors on American policy in Vietnam. A full-page ad placed by the Yeshiva Committee For Peace With Freedom in the December 30 issue declares, "Americans must make plain to the entire world their support of the United States commitment in Vietnam." David Ben Gurion addresses the students and implores them to settle in Israel, as reported on March 16, 1967. On the more local front, the April 20 issue tells of Yeshiva College's capture of the top award at the National Model U.N. in Milwaukee - the "National Best Representation Award." May 28 brings news that over Pesach vacation, residents of the New Dorm were victimized by a robber who stole phonographs, radios, and cameras. The building was locked shut on Yom Tov and open to employees only on Chol HaMoed.

The September 28, 1967 edition of *The Commentator* is dedicated to the Six Day War, which occurred at the end of last semester. YU students who were in Israel during the battle relate their experiences. February 15, 1968 is the first day *The Commentator* reports on WYUR, which has just begun its regular broadcasting schedule. On October 31, *The Commentator* backs Humphrey over Nixon for President. The March 27, 1969 issue describes Mayor Lindsay's speech at YC to open his reelection campaign. On October 15, YU joins campuses throughout the nation in the anti-war Moratorium. The October 30 issue reports that regular classes were scheduled for RI-ETS, but many of the rabbis took time during shiur to discuss the halachic overtones of American involvement in the Vietnam War.

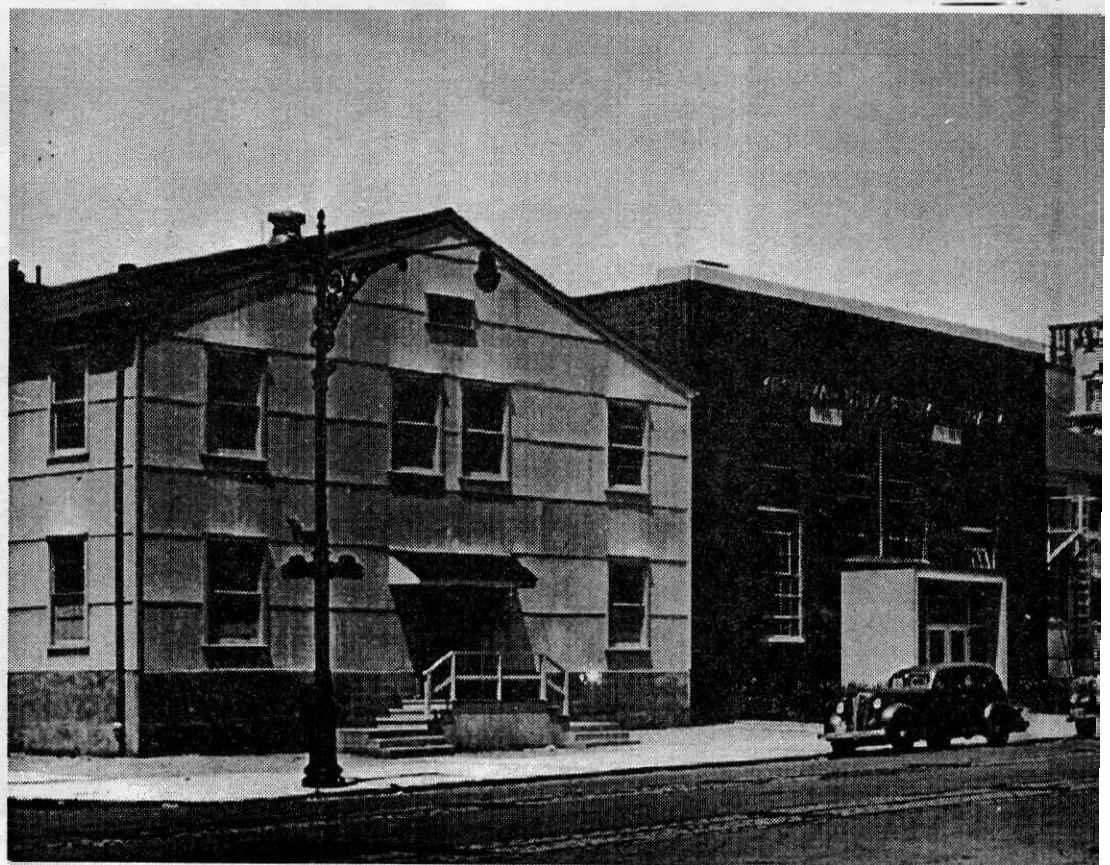
As we reflect on our journey through time, we note that the nation's metamorphosis during this decade was matched by change at YU, which matured into a bona fide university with several new buildings and many new students, programs, and activities. The written word and the photograph converge in *The Commentator* to convey powerfully the thoughts and feelings of YU students adrift in the turbulent sea that was the 1960s.

## The More Things (1960-1996)



*"The Commentator is a part of our life, it started in journalism, it was born years ago, but I've still not because they are not but because they are not"*

Former NYU  
Assistant Professor, Columbia University





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(-79)

mmmentator

is where I got my  
it was more than 25  
still saved my clips,  
re my best writings  
re my most joyful."

-Ari Goldman,

Features Editor, 1969-70

er New York Times Religion Correspondent,  
a University Graduate School of Journalism.

# The 1970's

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

In addition to YCSC's and the YU administration's effort to solve the exorbitant fees charged by the school cafeteria by introducing their "budget meal" plan, a nutrition packed combination of delicacies which included a main meat dish, two vegetables, bread, and a choice of soup, drink, compote, or pastry, all for \$1.35, a number of issues of great importance occurred during the early 1970s.

One issue that rocked the campus was the feeling that the university was moving away from its religious ideologies and becoming more secular. On March 25, 1970 Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, in a *Chag HaSimcha* address, called upon the university administration to reverse its trend toward secularization. The Rav was worried that the university, which changed its charter to non-sectarian in order to receive federal funding, would no longer be able to enforce religious observance on campus. In addition, the Rav was concerned that a student might challenge the college requirement to enroll a religious division of the university - a requirement no longer compatible with the Yeshiva's secular status. The Rav warned in what was reported as a "veiled threat" that if the secularization did not stop he "would no longer have a place in this yeshiva." The Rav was criticized by many for not fully grasping the financial implications of the situation.

On May 27, 1970 *The Commentator* reported that as a result of President Richard Nixon's decision to expand the Indochina War into Cambodia, and four killings at Kent State University which resulted from a protest of this policy, students at Yeshiva College joined students from colleges across the country and terminated their semester three weeks earlier than usual. In a student referendum on the issue,



Belfer Hall Groundbreaking Ceremony

*"The Commentator is one of the few institutions capable of and dedicated to getting the whole story, because the amount of information teachers and administrators may divulge is often limited."*

-Dr. Bernard Firestone,  
Editor-in-Chief 1969-70

that same day, *The Commentator* reported that Dr. Sheldon Socol was named as chief university fiscal and business officer. Socol predicted that the decrepit financial condition that the university was in could be corrected in "a year or two of belt tightening."

Tremors of possible dormitory fee and tuition hikes grabbed the front page of *The Commentator's* March 24 issue. The initial plan called for \$150 tuition increases for those that were currently enrolled in the university and a \$200 jump for incoming students. One month later, a modified version of the initial proposal, was made official. The first tuition increase since 1969 was attributed to "rising operating costs by the inflationary spiral in the nation and enabling the university to provide the special caliber and scope of the undergraduate education characteristic of YU."

High School seniors across the country cheered YC Dean Issac Bacon, when on October 2 *The Commentator* revealed that the College had adopted an early admissions program. Students who scored higher than a 600 on each of the verbal and math sections of the SAT, had a minimum scholastic average of 90%, and received a recommendation from either their high school principal or guidance counselor.

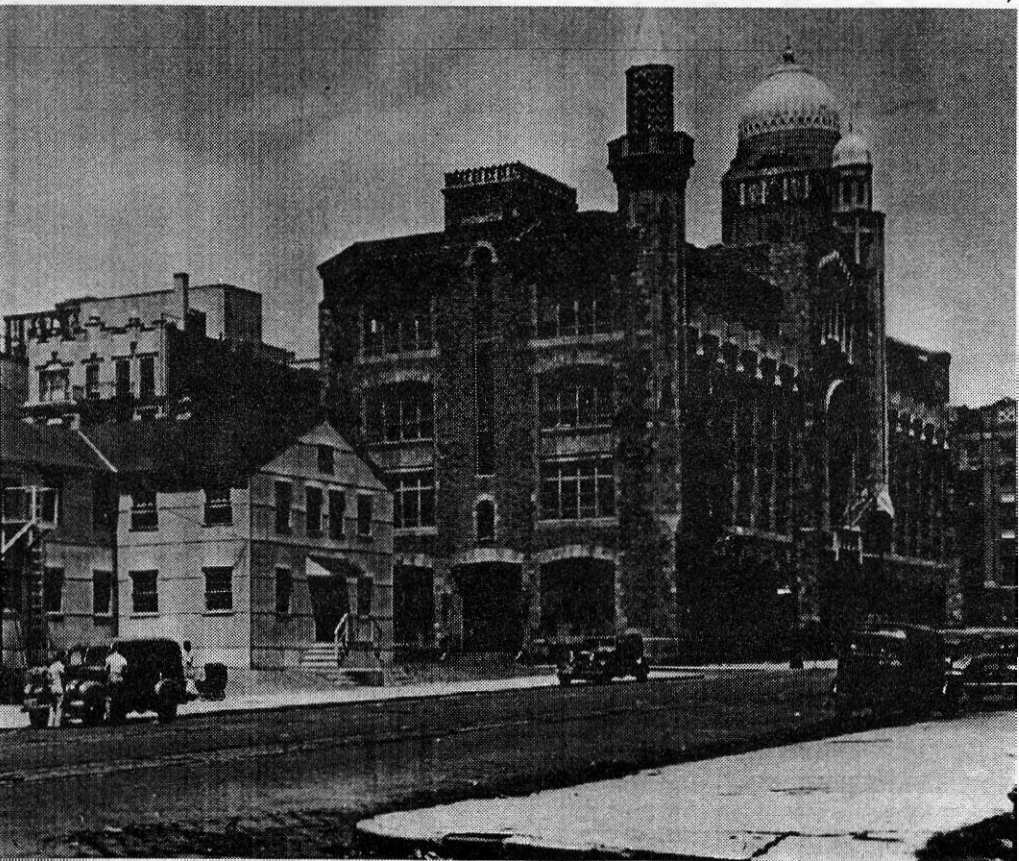
"Yeshiva Envisions A Downtown Law School" was plastered across the February 28 *Commentator*. YU had announced that it was seeking formal approval from the Board of Regents to establish a legal program. Although early predictions slated the school to open in September 1975, it's first day of classes did not begin until the Fall of 1976.

On March 28, 1974 after nearly five months of deliberations the Yeshiva College faculty approved the Student Senate's plan for a student evaluation of their performance, with a two year trial proviso. The evaluations would be used should faculty members be considered for promotion or tenure.

'Ill health' was the reason Dr. Samuel Belkin resigned as long time Yeshiva University President *The Commentator* reported on Thursday, October 16, 1975. Belkin was responsible for the establishment of Stern College, the first liberal arts college for women under Jewish auspices, and The Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

84.3% of the nearly 1000 voters agreed to permit students to withdraw from courses and receive a Pass or letter grade in a course if their work justified it. To be eligible for the "emergency academic provisions" a student was required to sign a statement to the effect that he felt morally compelled to direct his efforts to activities other than the daily educational process.

September 16, 1971 brought news that Rabbi Zevulun Charlop was appointed the new administrator of RIETS replacing R' Reuven Aberman who left to head Michlala in Israel. On





# The 1980's

BY ARI KAHN

The Eighties, they say, was the "Me" decade. Thin ties and hostile takeovers dominated Wall Street, Datsuns dotted our nation's highways, and the sound of synthesizers and Euro-punk filled the radio airwaves. Things have surely changed in the past sixteen years...right? Well, the Datsun is defunct and Euro-punk is no more (thank goodness), but the hostile takeover is making a comeback, bringing the ties with it, and people now make millions by recording symphony-like pieces on a synthesizer (i.e. Yanni.)

Life today differs only slightly from sixteen years ago, and many issues of importance back then, remain in the forefront of debate today. Looking at the first issue of *The Commentator* in the 80's, one notices five major articles connected to one topic. Would you hazard a guess as to what the controversy was about? Collect ten points if your answer was the Student Senate. Yes, even then the Senate sparked reactions from all



Groundbreaking Ceremony for Morgenstern Residence Hall

sectors of the student body, and among the various op-ed pieces either supporting or calling for immediate disillusion of the Senate, were the actual issues being discussed. The first concerned various honors awarded at graduation such as cum laude, summa, and magna, and the grade point averages needed for each. The second, concerned a plan to combat student cheating. The guidelines they eventually passed divided the cheating offense into two categories, and its complexities had to be explained by *The Commentator*. Type A cheating meant the stealing of an exam or its equivalent and Type B included all other forms of cheating: crib sheets, note passing, copying, etc. A category A offense called for immediate dismissal from school. A category B offense caused the student to receive an F on the exam as well as a note, explicitly stating the event, placed in his record folder in a sealed envelope. The note was temporary, pending the student's ability to avoid cheating (or at least getting caught) in the future, and was removed upon graduation or application to graduate school.

A student found guilty of a second type B offense saw the old note as well as a new one become a permanent part of his record. A third B offense meant dismissal. The Senate and cheating at the center of debate? Not much changes around YU.

Another event heavily covered by *The Commentator* in the early 80's found

a parallel in today's world. In 1982, Israel launched Operation Peace in the Galilee. Dedicated to halting the terror attacks on Northern Israel perpetrated by the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, the army went in to create a security zone eighteen miles wide that would serve to stop the terrorist from penetrating the border. *The Commentator* reported the speech of General Yitzchak Segal when he came to discuss the details and significance of Shalom HaGalil. Op-Ed pieces debated success and failure of the operation. The centerpiece of the coverage was an interview conducted with soldiers who fought in the war. Their descriptions and emotions brought the essence of the fight to the student body of YU.

On November 7, 1985, *The Commentator*

had financial problems with one of its creditors, the Bowery Bank, the New York Post reported that YU would soon fold, providing account of the story that was as one sided as it was inaccurate. *The Commentator* reported the story from both sides putting to shame its professional adversary. And don't think *The Commentator* was always so friendly towards its sister papers in the University. In fact, the editors sued the Observer for libel over an editorial published in the Observer that accused *The Commentator* staff of strategically placing typos.

The look of the newspaper was different - an older, less polished typeface, and it wasn't just the editor or president who had their picture in the paper. Anyone who wrote a regular

In the early 80's the editors of *The Commentator* viewed its role in the following manner: "If a tree falls in the forest and there are no reporters present to cover the crash, not only is there no sound- there is no forest as well. There were significant stories over the years at YU that were not disclosed. For the public they never existed. Conversely, the minor issues which were publicized received unbelievable amounts of attention. Such is the inherent and chronic myopia of journalism."

At the end of the early eighties, in December of 1985, *The Commentator* was once again reporting on the issues that divided the campus. Lance Hirt questioned the need for appointed senators in his article "Student Senate: Seventeen Years in Retrospect. Is It Dispensable?" In 1986 they went on to question the need for dorm counselors.

Later that year they featured the administration's proposal for a pedestrian mall on Amsterdam Avenue and the local opposition it provoked, and reported on faculty measures to cut back on cheating.

Finally, in 1989 *The Commentator* was designated an All-American Newspaper with five marks of distinction by the Associated Collegiate Press, bringing a glorious ending to a tumultuous decade.



Groundbreaking Ceremony for Furst Hall

## YU in the Me-Decade (The 1980's)



*tator* reported the terrorist hijacking of the Achille Lauro. It featured an article on Shimon Peres entitled "The Search for Peace is Unconditional", contrasted When someone came to speak, *The Commentator* sat down for an interview with them. They got David K. Shipler, the former Jerusalem bureau chief of the New York Times to admit that the media was focusing an inordinate amount of coverage on Israel and harping at every opportunity on West Bank clashes. They interviewed CBS News Correspondent Mike Wallace on charges that he misquoted Vice President Israel Miller in statements made regarding AIPAC.

They also spoke with the late Rabbi Meir Kahane to understand his approach to global diplomacy: "You can't be nice. You have to be crazy. They have to believe they're dealing with Qaddafi in a Yarmulke. [referring to the use of nuclear weapons...] We should have a Samson complex- that if we go, we want to take everyone with us. Because remember- nobody wants to go."

*The Commentator* went head to head with other newspapers that reported on happenings in YU. When the Universi-

column had to show the public who they really were. Features such as "Behind the Dorm Doors," in which students replied to an impromptu *Commentator* poll with the question asking something like "If there were Oscars given out in YU who would win what?" made a regular appearance. There was even a column called *Commie at Night* that reviewed hotspots and movies, recommending a picture called *American Gigolo* although they found performance to be "too inhibited."

Of course, there were the profiles. New teachers with now familiar names arrived to make their contributions to the school. *The Commentator* was there greeting Dr. Potvin and inquiring as to his future plans in the biology department. It asked Dr. Lee a question he had been expecting: who's better, the students at Harvard [where he had previously taught] or the students at YU? It even reported way back in February of 1980 that Dr. Hecht was resigning his temporary position as dean to go back as a rebbe in MTA. No this was not in the Purim issue, it really did happen.

### continued from page 7

December article about students caught cheating on an organic chemistry exam was "appropriate. The spin that was put on it was too raucous, but the fact that it was published - uncomfortable that it was - probably is justified."

More recently, an in-depth racial attitudes poll conducted by *The Commentator's* Features Department led some students and faculty members to brand the editors troublemakers, even though relatively positive findings resulted. Rabbi Lamm admits that, "Had you asked me in advance, I would have been a bit frightened because I, too, suspected that there is more bigotry than the results showed. And it would have been bad for us. Nevertheless, it's a delicate judgment. All in all, I think it was O.K. In this case I would have taken the risk... I think the amount of racism at Yeshiva should be zero. I'm disappointed that there is any at all. I'm pleased that there's probably less than most other places."

When *The Commentator* lands on Rabbi Lamm's desk, he is "anxious to read it. It's the oldest. It is the newest. *The Commentator* has a tradition of being an exciting newspaper and that tradition is being continued."



# The 1990's

BY ARI D. HIRT

In this first half of the '90s Commentator headlines featured the near collapse of the Revel School of Jewish Studies and the sponsorship of a Yeshiva University Gay club at Cardozo Law; unquestionably the paper's most significant and almost revolutionary innovation, however, took place in its production.

In the same way the Kennedy and the '60s launched NASA, and cable television of the '80s globalized Hollywood, the '90s introduced *The Commentator* to the world of desktop publishing.

The date was October 31, 1991 (Halloween) when editor-in-Chief Daniel Oshinsky and layout editor Jay Bailey courageously abandoned the clumsy and outdated cut and paste layout sessions in favor of more efficient computer technology. They proposed that the new production would save *The Commentator* \$800 per issue.

But believe it or not, more than the budget savings, it was the incredible potential for time savings that served as the paper's impetus for change. And boy, did it ever.

In *The Commentator's* first 55 years layout sessions alone lasted over three days; today, layout is completed in a day's time. Yesterday's jigsaw puzzle process involved submitting the fully edited articles to the typesetter who would return the text in sheets of columns. The editors would then spend the night cutting out the articles and attempt to literally fit the pieces into the given space.

Today, not only do we minimize or enlarge fonts to all sizes at will, but we are also able to edit and polish articles simultaneous to layout.

The new structure bolstered the paper's efficiency as well as its aesthetic quality and also allowed for *The Commentator* to confidently call itself a bi-monthly newspaper by consistently printing an issue every two weeks. In any given five year period, *The Commentator* has never published as many issues as it did from 1991-1996. And in this half decade *The Commentator* has covered, witnessed, manufactured, and broke enough news and controversy to last two decades.

The Cafeteria, under new management, was the first to rock the boat in the early '90s when the Commie broke a story on February 28, 1990: "Mandatory Meal Plan - Student Reps Reject Proposal." Vice President of Business Affairs Sheldon Socol told the Commie back then that "we (YU) are institutionally prepared to subsidize the cafeteria, but the number (deficit) has grown to a point where it's no longer reasonable." Well, since then the Caf's boat continues to rock as students perennially voice their objections in *The Commentator* against the Caf prices and food quality.

On March 28, 1990 the mandatory meal plan was rejected and subsequently grandfathered. The climax of Cafeteria student resistance surfaced in the May 18, 1992 *Commentator* which told how YCSC staged a boycott of the Caf

when Food Services attempted to raise the mandatory meal plan \$300, from \$1000-\$1300. Student objection even persisted in a *Commentator* article reporting the grand opening of the Caf Store on Oct. 23, 1991 - apparently students were worried that the caf store would put the Yum-Yum Shoppe out of business.

## Revel

Another *Commentator* favorite in the early '90's was the University's financial decision to phase out its Judaic Studies program in higher education called the Bernard Revel Graduate School. The first headline appeared on December 11, 1992 reading "Revel Grad School Faces Shutdown." The Students, behind the push of *The Commentator*, high-

gan to uncover stories which apparently confronted YU's full commitment to Torah U'Mada. Were we a Yeshiva, or a University, or both? Well, in early 1994 *The Commentator* reported in its back pages two intriguing stories: the first described how a woman for the first time applied to RIETS and was subsequently rejected; the second reported on a meeting of a homosexual club in Belfer Hall's Wurzelweil School of Social Work. Both issues stirred flames within the Yeshiva but it would be the gay story which blew into an inferno. On February 14, 1995 *The Commentator* reported on YU's official sponsorship of a Gay Club at its very own law school, Cardozo. Stories in *The Commentator* following this issue were about as frequent as a student arguing with

to various circumstances. The Rav, the chairman of the Board of Trustees, three vice-presidents, and the dean of Yeshiva College all vacated their positions, making the '90s a decade of transition for YU administration.

But administrators have always been around. Even when no Yeshiva College dean was present, deans from other schools will gleefully fill in as the interim dean. And thank goodness, for without administrators there would be nothing to report.

Over the past two years, for example, the administration has supplied *The Commentator* with numerous stories dealing with academic credit. One day they try to force credits on the students from MYP, and the next day they take away our CLEP and community college credits; then, all confused over giving or taking credits they decide to initiate the pandemic "Credit Cap."

Some administrators are so valuable to *The Commentator* that they single-handedly produce enough news to warrant a special editorial. In the April 7, 1992 edition *The Commentator* printed a unique editorial lambasting the director of Facilities management Jeff Socol. Never before had *The Commentator* written such a personal editorial, and Rabbinic authorities were properly consulted before such a personal assault was taken.

Not only has Socol been generous in generating news, but so has his security guard - or should it be "ex" security guard. In the March 4, 1992 *Commentator* the front page headline read "Muss Thief Caught." This thief turned out to be a former Burns Security Guard who became desperate for cash after he had become a drug addict. Then, only one month later another 'thief' was caught. However this crook, who had been working the Morg dormitory, was not a security guard but rather a friend of students who would spend shabbos in Yeshiva. One additional time, students had found themselves tied to a security issue in *The Commentator* when the headlines read on October 31, 1990: "Security Raids Dorms, Stops BB Shooters - Five Students Caught and Disciplined."

But students more frequently make the news for their positive and benevolent actions. Whether it be a Soviet Jewry rally in Washington DC attended by over 950 YU students, or a "Speech Major Places 7th in AT&T Investment Challenge," the story is guaranteed to be covered in *The Commentator*.

As the '90s near to a close, *The Commentator* continues to advance in journalism on both the writing and production fronts. *The Commentator* already has its own site on the Internet, and soon all issues will be readily accessible through computers across the globe. The word 'soon' however, in Yeshiva University lingo, may just mean another sixty years.

## More Headlines from the '90s

- "Rav Passes Away"
- "YU Pool Underway: Final Cost \$3 Million"
- "Belfer Hall Lockout after 1:00am"
- "Schottenstein Opens"
- "Morg Engagement Party Sponsorship Cut"
- "Macs Forfeit to Co-Ed Team (Pratt Institute)"

## Commie's Space Age (1990-Present)



ly objected, viewing such an action as a diminution from the university image of being a center for Judaic studies.

A week later *The Commentator* published a special edition titled "YU Community Challenges Revel Decision." The edition included a signed petition on the back of the paper. The December 30 issue reported that the YU Board of Trustees would reexamine the Revel decision as over 250 students began daily protests outside Furst Hall yelling, "Save Revel Now."

Two weeks later, January 13, the Revel protests continue, but now students start to block the main entrance to Furst Hall. Finally, April 7th, after three months of student protest, the YU board of Trustees voted to maintain the Bernard Revel Graduate School with 32 courses. Also emerging out of this fiasco is an initiative to bolster student-administration dialogue. The students are promised to be involved in all major decisions that affect all aspects of student life.

## Challenges to Orthodoxy

Starting in 1993 *The Commentator* be-

his professor for an 'A.'

But while these issues primarily did not affect the students' daily lives, *The Commentator* reported on stories threaded with a common theme - "NOT at YU."

In the Fall of '93 YCSC President Daniel Gurell removed all Kol literary journals from student mailboxes after discovering that inappropriate language was used in two of the students' essays. This controversy followed the tumult in YCDS' production that year of "Lips Together Teeth Apart," a play that dealt with tolerance, one of the issues being AIDS.

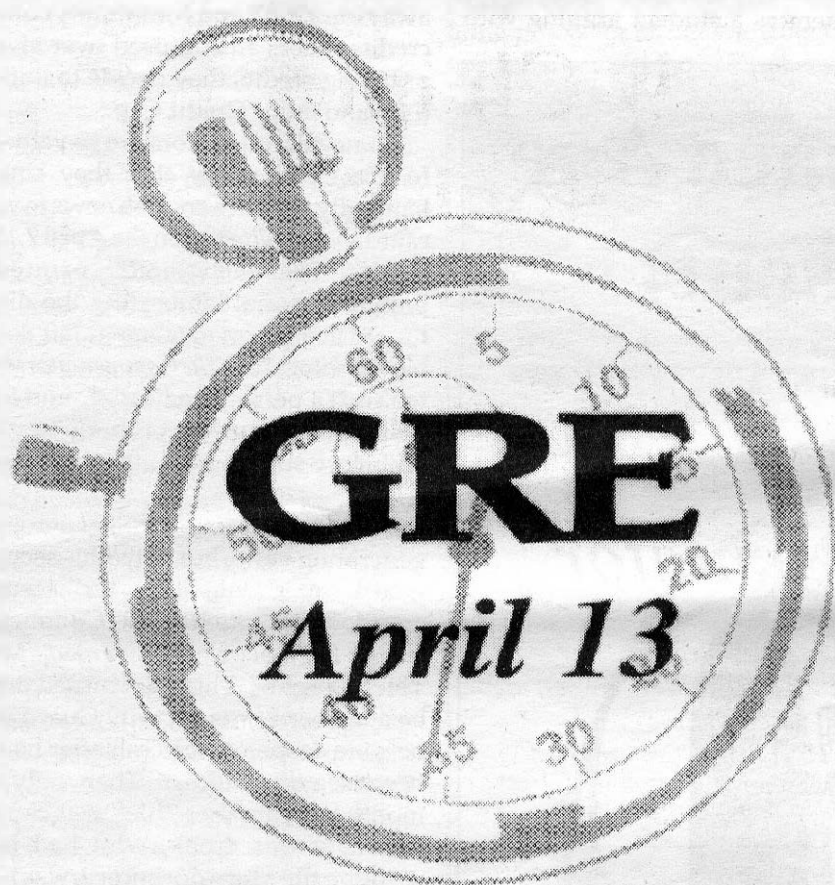
In September 28, 1995 *Commentator*, students together with Rav Kahn and other faculty would decry "Not at YU" when a group of students form a fraternity, AEP.

Surprisingly, a variety of monumental news stories and trends took place in the '90s that were not necessarily tangled in controversy. For example, never before has the face of YU's administration changed so drastically, and so quickly as it did in 1993-1994, when six top administrators were replaced due



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