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Irish Nationalism as an Inspiration for American Zionists in the Early Twentieth Century: As Exemplified by Boston Lawyer Louis D. Brandeis's Speeches and Writings

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Abstract:

At the turn of the twentieth century, in light of increasing antisemitism and assimilationism, a growing number of American Jews discovered Zionism as a tool of resistance. Boston lawyer and later Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis was one of the first prominent supporters of Zionism in the US. While Brandeis's approach to Zionism was influenced by European Zionist thinkers, he drew inspiration from non-Jewish independence movements too. Brandeis repeatedly referred to the Irish nationalist movement and offered the Irish experience as a model for Jews to realize their dream of an independent Jewish nation in Palestine. This paper will analyze speeches and writings by Brandeis written in the second half of the 1910s. An article on this particular aspect of the intersection of Irish and Jewish history might be especially helpful since today the Irish independence movement is usually compared to the Palestinian resistance movement rather than to early Zionism.

Keywords: Antisemitism, Assimilation, Irish Nationalism, United States, Zionism

1. Introduction: Jewish Immigrants Facing the Melting Pot

The second half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century were "in a way the most

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important decades in American Jewish history", to quote historian Jacob Marcus (1996, 203). In this time frame, over two million Jewish immigrants arrived in the US. Most of them came from the Russian territories in eastern Europe, fleeing from pogroms and seeking a less oppressive society. New Jewish institutions were established, and pre-existing ones were extended; the number of congregations increased rapidly. By the 1920s, Jewish individuals had occupied virtually all political offices except for the presidency. At the time, there was probably no other country more hospitable to Jews than the US. Eastern European Jewish immigrants celebrated New York as the "promised city" (Sarna 2004, 151-154).

Despite this promise, Jewish immigrants faced several challenges. They experienced discrimination in the job market, as historian Deborah Dwork has shown in her examination of migrant Jews on the Lower East Side of New York (1986). But they also had to face challenges in the realm of integration. The American political and intellectual elite endorsed a model of ethnic integration known as the "melting pot", which aimed at "melting together" the different elements of a heterogenous society into a common, more homogenous culture. At first sight, this model might seem different than assimilationist policies, where the non-dominant group is expected to give up its original traits and adapt the dominant group's traits. Such assimilationism was practiced most notably in central European countries like the German states and the Austrian Empire (Giddens 2009, 643-644; Langer 2020). Many Americans believed that their melting pot model was more progressive than that (Gordon 1964, 121-122).

However, in reality, the melting pot model did not change the majority's cultural and political hegemony. In particular, those immigrants who wanted to keep their traditional expressions of cultural and religious identity, like many Jews, found it difficult to "melt" into the Anglo-Protestant hegemonic culture. Though the United States was juridically speaking non-Christian, the overwhelming majority of the population was affiliated with various Christian, mostly Protestant, churches. Christianity, especially in its Protestant forms, set the norm. Jews, too, were expected to conform to the Christian-Protestant way of life (Marcus 1996, 203; Diner 2004, 166). For this reason, contemporary sociologists claim that the melting pot model was a form of assimilationism (Joppke 1999, 147; Healey 2010 [2004], 49; Zerubavel 2012, 108; Langer 2021). While some Jews were willing to follow the path of the melting pot, others were looking for strategies of resistance (Wiener Cohen 2003, 23). At the turn of the twentieth century, an increasing number of American Jews chose a cultural and political strategy to resist the melting pot assimilationism: Zionism (Bornstein 2011, 16).

2. Resisting Assimilation in the US: Jewish and Irish Nationalism

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Zionist movement had become a relevant factor in the Jewish communities of Europe, especially those of eastern Europe (Stanislawski 2017, 34). Nonetheless, the movement did not have an easy start in the US. For decades, the American Jewish establishment was overtly non-Zionist, if not anti-Zionist. They frowned upon the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine: their Zion and "promised land" was America. For the Reform Jewish organizations, "the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect" (Medoff 2002, 22) was the realization of the messianic dreams, not "the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state" (Dollinger 2018, 152-153). The influential American Jewish Committee (AJC) observed with worry the growth of Zionism, especially among the Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe arriving in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century (Medoff, Waxman 2012, 14; Kibler 2015, 44).

Zionism became more significant in American Jewish life only on the eve of the First World War, just as the antisemitism facing Europe's Jews became more visible and the US introduced immigration restrictions limiting the number of eastern European Jews who could enter the country (Gurock 2013, xiii-xiv). In order to gain more credibility within the Jewish community, and equally the wider American society, these early American Zionists often compared their agenda with those of other American immigrant groups' nationalist movements. This was especially true for the Irish independence movement. It was not just the similar memory of persecution and oppression in Europe, living in diaspora and the comparable experiences of struggling with anti-Irish/anti-Catholic and with antisemitic sentiments in the US that made Zionists take note of Irish nationalists (Bernstein 2017, 9); in their eyes, the Irish movement was the first prominent form of nationalism that set an example for other anticolonial efforts throughout the British Empire. This interest in the other was also true for Irish nationalists, who were themselves inspired by Zionism. For instance, in 1903, after returning from a journey through eastern European Jewish settlements, Irish republican activist Michael Davitt said that he was "a convinced believer in the remedy of Zionism" (Kibler 2015, 41-42; Bernstein 2017, 12).

From a Jewish point of view, "the Irish represented the ideal type of a small, oppressed, stateless nation", historian Judah Bernstein explains (2017, 8). Although antisemitism did indeed influence republican politics in Ireland, as historian Brian Hanley notes, it played a smaller role in the Irish nationalist movement in the US (2020). This was especially true in comparison to the independence movements of other immigrant communities, such as that of Polish Americans, for which antisemitism seemed to be more significant. Besides, "the American Irish had established a strong and visible nationalist movement in America" (Bernstein 2017, 8). Irish Americans were greatly interested in the struggles for statehood in Ireland. In fact, Irish nationalism may have been stronger in America than in Ireland itself, as a national consciousness increased among these immigrant groups after arriving in the multiethnic US. For example, Oscar Wilde was perceived as an Englishman in England but as Irish on his 1882 lecture tour in Canada and the US; it was in North America that Wilde rediscovered his Irishness (Mendelsohn 1993, 132-133).

Despite the similarities between the Irish and Jewish nationalist movements, there was a key difference: Jewish immigrants to the US did not come from Palestine like the Irish did from Ireland. Most American Jews had never even been to the Middle East, nor had their ancestors going several generations back. Nevertheless, patterns of Jewish support for the creation of a Jewish society in Palestine were comparable to Irish Americans' campaigning for an independent Irish state. The representatives of these national movements were aware of their similarities and they repeatedly pointed to each other as a source of legitimation (133). Some major Zionist leaders in the first decades of the twentieth century expressed their sympathies with the Irish cause. In the United States, there was one Zionist leader who was especially noted for repeatedly referring to the Irish experience and its struggles in his speeches and articles and for connecting the Jewish and Zionist narrative to that of Irish nationalism. This person was Louis D. Brandeis (Kibler 2015, 42).

There is considerable literature available on Brandeis's life and work that I made use of while developing this paper, such as the Brandeis biographies written by Jeffrey Rosen (2016), Philippa Strum (1994) and Melvin I. Urofsky (2009). However, none of these monographs detail Brandeis's approach to Irish nationalism. Works by Jonathan D. Sarna (2004), Melvin I. Urofsky (1995) and Naomi Wiener Cohen (2003) formed the basis for this paper's depiction of American Jewish history and the history of Zionism in the US. I also made use of the 2018 volume *Irish Questions and Jewish Questions: Crossovers in Culture*, edited by Aidan Beatty and

Dan O'Brien, who gathered a wide range of contributions dealing with the intersection of Irish and Jewish history, mostly from the perspective of Irish historiography. While these and other historians addressed the relationship between Irish nationalism and Zionism, this area "remains a desideratum", to quote Judah Bernstein (2017, 27), whose research article provides an initial overview of this field. My paper's intention is to contribute to this under-researched subject and situate it within American Jewish historiography. First, I will present Brandeis's approach to Zionism within a framework of ethnic integration. Then, I will analyze a selection of his speeches and articles from the years 1914-1916 where he made comparisons between Jewish and Irish nationalism.

3. The People's Lawyer

Louis D. Brandeis was born in 1856, in Louisville, Kentucky. His parents, Adolph Brandeis and Frederika Dembitz, immigrated to the United States from Prague, Austrian Empire, today in Czechia. They were part of the migration wave of the so-called Forty-Eighters, who left their homes in central Europe after the failed revolutions of 1848. Adolph and Frederika were both assimilated German-speaking middle-class Jews who celebrated the major Christian holidays, treating them as secular events (Strum 1994, 5). They were committed liberals and abolitionists who raised their children to be idealists based on high German culture. Louis read and appreciated the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller; his favorite composers were Ludwig van Beethoven and Robert Schumann (Klebanow, Jonas 2003, 55-57). However, there were also more traditional Jews in Louis's extended family, such as his uncle Lewis Naphtali Dembitz, who practiced law in Louisville. Unlike other members of the extended Brandeis family, Dembitz was religiously observant and involved in Zionist activities. Brandeis later changed his middle name from David to Dembitz in honor of his uncle (Urofsky 2009, 18).

After a short stay in Europe, where Brandeis spent three years at a secondary school, Annen-Realschule, in Dresden, Saxony, he went on to study at Harvard Law School, from which he graduated at the age of 20 (Strum 1994, 12, 23-24). Following his graduation, Brandeis settled in Boston, where he founded a law firm and eventually became a nationally recognized lawyer through his work on progressive social causes. He fought against powerful corporations, monopolies and corruption, all of which he felt were detrimental to American values and culture. He devised the Massachusetts plan to protect small wage-earners through savings bank life insurance after a disclosure of insurance fraud in 1906. In 1907, he launched a campaign to prevent the banker J.P. Morgan from monopolizing New England's railroads (Urofsky 2009, 281). In 1910, Brandeis emerged as the chief figure in the Pinchot-Ballinger investigation that helped define the US conservation movement (Rosen 2016, 51-60). When his family's finances became secure, he began devoting most of his time to public causes and was later dubbed the "People's Attorney" or the "People's Lawyer" (Strum 1994, 63; Rosen 2016, 42). This was also the time when he began publishing opinion articles in magazines and giving public speeches. Brandeis stood at the front line of reform politics. In 1910, he joined the Progressive movement that sought to oust the conservative Republicans, and two years later he served as adviser to the Democratic presidential nominee, Woodrow Wilson, who eventually defeated incumbent Republican President William Howard Taft (Wiener Cohen 2003, 60).

Brandeis was an agnostic secularist and did not observe Jewish religious law (Sarna 2004, 204). Yet, he maintained personal ties with other Jews in Boston. His close ties with other Boston Jews might have also been caused by social exclusion in the city. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most Boston Jews were excluded by the Protestant elite of the city, who

were referred to as the "Brahmin Caste of New England" (Farrell 1993, 1). These "Brahmins" were upper-class Protestant Bostonians who retained their Puritan settler-colonial ancestors' emphasis on the individual and self-reliance. Many Brahmins were alarmed by the influx of Jewish and Catholic immigrants and advocated restrictions on immigration from eastern and southern Europe (Strum 1994, 16, 29)[1]. Brandeis, too, experienced social exclusion tinged with antisemitism and therefore did not have much choice but to socialize with other socially excluded people (Gal 1989, 67, 69; Pearce, Winer, Jenab 2017, 341). However, Boston was home not only to Brahmins and Jews but also to other groups, such as Irish immigrants.

From the second half of the nineteenth century through the first two decades of the twentieth century, around 3.5 million Irish immigrants arrived in the US (Dolan 1985). The Irish immigrant population rose especially after agricultural distress in Ireland in the 1880s. The Irish, too, faced severe discrimination in the United States in the form of "political Anglo-Saxonism" (Jacobson 1995, 188). Woodrow Wilson, himself a Scottish American Presbyterian, shared anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiments (Shelley 2006, 585). Irish immigration disproportionately affected Boston, a city that had laid claim to a considerable Irish immigrant community even before the Irish mass migration at the turn of the twentieth century. By this time, the Irish represented a quarter of all of Boston's inhabitants, making the city's Irish population the largest in the US; indeed, the Irish played a more significant role in Boston than in any other major US city (Johnson 2015, 14-15)[2].

In Boston, both Jewish and Catholic immigrants faced severe discrimination. As historian Marlynn S. Johnson notes, "Boston was often at the fore-front of nativist political organizing, as well as being an intellectual center for those advocating immigration restriction" (2015, 27). Conflicts erupted not only between "established" Protestant Bostonians and non-Protestant immigrants but also among the various immigrant communities, especially those who belonged to the working class (31). Jonathan D. Sarna has written on the tensions and hostility between Irish and Jewish immigrants in Boston (2005 [1995]). But despite ongoing conflicts, there were also attempts to foster an alliance between the Jewish and Irish communities. When Harvard University's leadership instructed the admissions committee "to segregate Jews, and to some extent Irishmen, in certain dormitories", the few locations with concentrations of Jewish students received antisemitic nicknames like "Kike's Peak" (Bornstein 2011, 178). It was Boston's Irish Catholic mayor James Michael Curley – a politician known for challenging Boston's ward bosses and the Democratic party's Anglo-Saxon Protestant leadership – who spoke out against Harvard's antisemitic barriers in admission and residency:

> These people seek to bar men because of an accident of birth. This is the most intolerable thing that could be done by any educational institution. […] God gave them their parents and their race as He has given me mine. All of us under the constitution are guaranteed equality, without regard to race, creed or color. […] If the Jew is barred to-day, the Italian will be to-morrow. Then the Spaniard and Pole, and at some future date the Irish. ("Intolerable, Says Mayor", 1922, 6)

Similarly, Irish journalist Harry Craig advocated for Irish-Jewish solidarity by suggesting that the wave of Jewish immigrants had come to the US "as the Irish had come" and called attention to their common experience of exclusion and bigotry, as in the signs "No Irish or Jews

[1] For a further discussion on the relationship between the Brahmins and immigrants, see the classic study by Barbara Miller Solomon (2013 [1956]).

[2] On the history of the Boston Irish, I recommend Handlin (1991 [1941]).

here" and their oppression by the KKK. "The problem of the American Jews and the American Irish were intimately woven into each other—the K.K.K. made it so—and as such it should have led to some mutual sympathy and some understanding", argued Craig (Bornstein 2011, 198). Jewish-Irish alliances were not only a matter of political debate, as Jews and Irish would sometimes find themselves in the same social spaces as well. This was also true for Brandeis, whose daughter befriended Mary Switzer, a second-generation Irish American. Switzer spent "considerable time" (Verville 2009, 15) with the Brandeis family and was affected by the views of Brandeis. Brandeis might have influenced her to pursue a career in government in Washington, D.C. upon graduation. In time, Switzer became a public administrator and social reformer best remembered for her work on expanding vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities (*ibidem*).

The large Irish presence in Boston and the local Irish community's support for Irish Home Rule might have contributed to Boston becoming a center of early American Zionist activities. The local Jewish newspaper, *The Jewish Advocate*, was established in 1902 as a Zionist paper and was edited by British Jewish journalist Jacob de Haas. The paper compared Jewish and Irish nationalism on several occasions. De Haas himself published a series of articles entitled "Evidences of Jewish Nationalism", in which he suggested American Zionists could learn from "the cause of the Irish-American dreaming of a free Ireland and the Irish desire for home rule or State rights" (1907a, 1). De Haas also asserted that the English "could not absorb […] the Irish" (1907b, 1), just as the Romans and the Spanish could not absorb the Jews. The interest was mutual. At a 1915 mass gathering of American Zionists at Mechanics Hall in Boston, Irish American local politician E.J. Slattery, Mayor Curley's representative, said in an address to the crowd that "he was a better American for having fought for Irish Home Rule, and the Jew who strives for Jewish 'home rule' is a better American and is more respected by the world", as *The Jewish Advocate* reported ("Mass Meeting Unique Demonstration by Twenty Thousand" 1915, 11).

After the 1907 death of Lewis Dembitz, Brandeis learned from de Haas that his uncle was involved in American Zionist organizing (Strum 1994, 231). With this new information on Dembitz – and his personal experience with social exclusion in Boston – Brandeis's Jewish identity became more relevant to him. He was already 50 years old at this point (Urofsky 2009, 407). There was another key experience that contributed to Brandeis's increasing interest in his Jewishness: in 1910, Brandeis was involved in a legal case surrounding the strike by New York's garment workers, who were largely eastern European Jewish immigrants. Brandeis was impressed by the idealism of these Jewish workers and their commitment to democracy and social justice. He arrived at the conclusion that the ideals he had believed to be American were in fact "age-old ideals of the Jews" (Wiener Cohen 2003, 60). In the same year, he announced publicly his sympathy for the Zionist movement. He saw the establishment of an independent Jewish state as a way of solving "the Jewish problem" (68-69) he had experienced in Boston and as a tool to realize the New York Jewish laborer's high morals. Brandeis imagined a Jewish Palestine that would serve as a laboratory for testing new principles of economic and social organization that could be applied also in the United States (59-60).

Over the following years, Brandeis devoted time and money to the Zionist cause. The outbreak of the First World War provided the impetus for even more commitment from his side: the war divided European Zionists who supported different sides in the conflict and this disunion rendered the World Zionist Organization, a group rooted in Europe, impotent (Ettinger 1976, 989). Filling the gap left by the WZO, Brandeis and the American Zionists assumed a larger responsibility independent of their European counterparts. In 1914, they established

the Provisional Executive Committee for Zionist Affairs (PEC) in New York to run Zionist affairs on behalf of the WZO (Urofsky 2009, 405). The new committee elected Brandeis as its chairman, making Brandeis the leading figure in American Zionism. "The conversion of the nationally famous 'People's Lawyer' Louis Brandeis to Zionism and his subsequent promotion to the chairmanship of the Provisional Committee for General Zionist Affairs in 1914 served as a prime catalyst for Zionism's growth", observes historian Jonathan D. Sarna (2004, 203-204). "The fact that a person of his stature stamped Zionism with his seal of approval," argues Sarna, "gave the movement instant legitimacy" (204). Brandeis's "conversion" set off a chain reaction, bringing to Zionism other well-established American Jews who were likewise not religiously observant. They all found in Zionism a way of synthesizing their Progressive ideals with their latent Jewish attachments (*ibidem*). By 1917, Brandeis's leadership had increased American Zionist membership tenfold, to 200,000 members. American Jews became the largest financial supporters of the global Zionist movement, surpassing its European partners (Urofsky 2005, 120).

4. Zionism as an Answer to Assimilationism and Antisemitism

As head of the PEC, Brandeis laid out his vision for American Zionism in a 1915 speech, entitled "The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It", delivered to the Conference of Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis in New York City. This speech has been regarded as Brandeis's "most comprehensive statement on Zionism" (Brandeis 1942, 12; Rosen 2016, 160). It is especially remarkable that he delivered this speech to an audience of Reform rabbis, since the Reform Jewish movement was officially anti-/non-Zionistic until the movement's 1937 Columbus Platform, and only a few Reform rabbis were sympathetic to Zionism (Medoff, Waxman 2012, 49-50). At the beginning of his statement, Brandeis identified the so-called Jewish problem in an assimilationist society. Brandeis recalled that "[w]hen religious toleration was proclaimed, the solution of the Jewish Problem seemed in sight. When the so-called rights of man became widely recognized, and the equal right of all citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness began to be enacted into positive law, the complete emancipation of the Jews seemed at hand" (1919, 5-6). Unfortunately, Brandeis observed, post-Enlightenment Western societies recognized only the rights of individuals and failed to acknowledge collective rights: "Enlightened countries grant to the individual equality before the law; but they fail still to recognize the equality of whole peoples or nationalities. We seek to protect as individuals those constituting a minority; but we fail to realize that protection cannot be complete unless group equality also is recognized" (7). To put it in other words: Jews in "Western" societies were welcome only if they left behind their Jewishness and became "Western". Belonging to a distinct ethnic or religious group was against these societies' self-understanding.

The observation that post-Enlightenment Western societies did not treat collective rights in the same way as individual ones was not new. German-Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn had warned already in 1783 that the political liberalism emerging from the Enlightenment would not solve the "Jewish problem" (1844, 676-677). Mendelssohn, to whose ideas the Haskalah, the "Jewish Enlightenment" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is indebted, wrote that the new doctrine of tolerance would in reality include Jews only if they assimilate. Mendelssohn's warnings were neglected by most central European Jews, who believed the Enlightenment's promises and chose the path of assimilation – but it became obvious a century later that Mendelssohn had been right, resulting at the end of the nineteenth century in a politicization of European Jewry. We can illustrate this process of politicization through the

example of the "father of modern political Zionism", writer and activist Theodor Herzl.

At the beginning of his career Herzl embraced the complete desertion of Jewish identity, thus the program of Jewish assimilation. He came from an acculturated Hungarian-Jewish family, grew up in Vienna and wanted to be a fully recognized member of Austro-Hungarian society. As a student, Herzl was a member of a pan-German nationalist fraternity that promoted the disappearance of Jewry into Germandom (Kornberg 1993, 51). He gave his son, whom he did not circumcise, the typical Germanic name of Hans; they celebrated Christmas at home (Penslar 2020, 97). However, as Herzl became gradually aware of mounting antisemitism in Europe, he came to realize that Jews, no matter how assimilated they were, would always be perceived by antisemites as "the others". Herzl came to reject his early ideas regarding Jewish assimilation and began to believe instead that Jews must physically remove themselves from Europe. Thus, he came up with the idea of the *Judenstaat*, a state for Jews, where Jews can live the way they want to live (Kornberg 1993, 20). In developing the agenda of Jewish nationalism – that is, political Zionism – Herzl himself was inspired by the Irish nationalist movement. Herzl applauded the Irish nationalist politician Charles Stewart Parnell and viewed himself as "the Parnell of the Jews" (Kibler 2015, 42).

It was Jacob de Haas, Herzl's emissary to the US, who introduced Brandeis to the ideas of Herzl and political Zionism (Rosen 2016, 149). For Herzl, European antisemitism was the most important argument for the creation of a Jewish national home outside of Europe. Brandeis also justified his support for an independent state for Jews with the rise of antisemitism in Europe:

> The anti-Semitic movement arose in Germany a year after the granting of universal suffrage. It broke out violently in France, and culminated in the Dreyfus case, a century after the French Revolution had brought 'emancipation.' It expressed itself in England through the Aliens Act, within a few years after the last of Jewish disabilities had been there removed by law. (1919, 6)

> The "Dreyfus case" was an 1894 event in which the French artillery officer Alfred Dreyfus was falsely convicted of treason. Dreyfus was an assimilated Jew, and his trial was surrounded by a virulent antisemitic campaign. (Stanislawski 2017, 23)

Even though Brandeis justified his Zionism most of all with antisemitism in Europe, antisemitism in the US might have also played a role in his "conversion" to Zionism. Antisemitism was not only a European phenomenon. Jews might have enjoyed the privileges and duties of citizenship in the US long before they did in most European states; notable American leaders might have welcomed Jews since Washington and might have repeatedly condemned antisemitic violence in the US and worldwide (Marcus 1996, 185, 202-203) – nevertheless, especially toward the end of the nineteenth century, the discourse on Jews in America took an antisemitic turn and began to imply that Jews would never be able to become fully American and lose their "racial identity". Racial theory was widespread in both Europe and the US at that time and antisemitic conspiracy theories were disseminated in the public, culminating in the 1915 lynching of young Jewish businessman Leo Frank. Antisemitic hate became even more challenging in the 1920s with the publication of Henry Ford's antisemitic pamphlets, the resurgence of the KKK and immigration restrictions aimed at – among others – Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe (Dinnerstein 1991, 214; Diner 2004, 169-171).

Brandeis himself had to face antisemitic biases when he was nominated for the US Supreme Court in 1916. According to the legal historian Lucas Powe, much of the opposition to Brandeis's appointment stemmed from blatant antisemitism (2009). Former US President

William Howard Taft accused Brandeis of using his Judaism to curry political favor, and Taft's Attorney General George W. Wickersham referred to Brandeis's supporters as "a bunch of Hebrew uplifters", suggesting a joint Jewish agenda to gain influence on the Supreme Court (Carchman 2005, 157-158). Though Brandeis focused on antisemitism in Europe, he reflected on antisemitism in the US as well. In his above-mentioned 1915 speech, Brandeis explicitly addressed the "Saratoga incident", when a hotel in Saratoga, New York, refused accommodation to the Jewish banker Joseph Seligman and his family in 1877 (1919, 6). The hotel management argued that Christians did not want to stay in the same place as Jews (Pak 2013, 86-87). Brandeis reminded his audience that "we [Americans] too have a Jewish question" (1919, 6). On the other hand, Brandeis might have benefited from the emerging debate on antisemitism too: Brandeis biographer Melvin I. Urofsky has suggested that some senators might have supported Brandeis's nomination to the high court only because they feared being labeled antisemitic (2009, 440).

Even if antisemitism in the US did not play a key role in Brandeis's Zionist argumentation, the melting pot assimilationism certainly did. Brandeis warned against assimilation, for example, in his 1915 article "A Call to the Educated Jew", which was published in the first issue of the Jewish periodical *The Menorah Journal*. Brandeis was a consulting editor of the journal, which sought to advance a line of creative solutions to the dilemmas of the time. The *Menorah Journal*'s contributing authors were among the most important thinkers of the period, including Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, Rabbi Judah Magnes – who was involved in the Irish Relief funds during 1921 (Hanley 2020, 69) – Rabbi Solomon Schechter and Zionist leaders Henrietta Szold and Rabbi Stephen Wise (Kaufman 2012, 61-62; Langer 2021). In his article, Brandeis argued that:

> We are bound not only to use worthily our great inheritance, but to preserve, and if possible, augment it; and then transmit it to coming generations. The fruit of three thousand years of civilization and a hundred generations of suffering may not be sacrificed by us. It will be sacrificed if dissipated. Assimilation is national suicide. And assimilation can be prevented only by preserving national characteristics and life as other peoples, large and small, are preserving and developing their national life. Shall we with our inheritance do less than the Irish […]? And must we not, like them, have a land where the Jewish life may be naturally led, the Jewish language spoken, and the Jewish spirit prevail? Surely we must, and that land is our fathers' land; it is Palestine. (1915, 17-18)

This *Menorah Journal* article by Brandeis was not the only time that the Boston lawyer referred to the Irish experience as parallel to the Jewish one. Throughout his years as a Zionist leader and public intellectual, Brandeis made comparisons between the Jewish and Irish national movements. He saw in the Irish case a model of respectable ethnic nationalism, "one that easily blended philanthropic support for the homeland from afar with patriotism to America, and one practiced by an established minority" (Bernstein 2017, 17). He emphasized the similarities between the two peoples, including the distinct culture and language, the thousands of years of history, the experience of oppression and the yearning for self-governance. Besides, both Ireland and Mandatory Palestine were occupied by the British. In what follows, this paper will present some aspects of the comparison to be made between Jewish and Irish nationalists, as perceived by Brandeis. I want to note in advance that there was a difference between the "Home Rule" campaign and the more radical forms of Irish nationalism that became dominant following the 1916 Easter Rising. Brandeis was mainly engaging with supporters of "constitutional" Irish nationalism rather than separatists.

5. A Zionist in the Diaspora

Herzl's thinking certainly had a great impact on Brandeis, but there was a significant difference between these two men in their approach to Zionism. Brandeis did not wish to physically remove himself from the US and to move to this new Jewish society in Palestine. This was true for most American Zionists, in fact. The American Jewish nationalists' unwillingness to move to Palestine can be compared to most Irish American nationalists' behavior regarding Ireland: most of them did not wish to move (back) to their country of origin and to physically be there to fight for independence. They did not return to the independent Irish state once it was established either, however actively they had supported its creation. The great majority of them regarded the US as their home and had no desire to leave it. Historian Ezra Mendelssohn has called the nationalism of Irish and Jewish Americans "platonic" (1993, 133). Brandeis felt that, instead of encouraging American Jews to move to Palestine, the re-creation of a Jewish national homeland could be the solution to the "Jewish Problem" in their American home – that is, to assimilation and antisemitism:

> The Zionists seek to establish this home in Palestine because they are convinced that the undying longing of Jews for Palestine is a fact of deepest significance; that it is a manifestation in the struggle for existence by an ancient people which has established its right to live, a people whose three thousand years of civilization has produced a faith, culture and individuality which enable it to contribute largely in the future, as it has in the past, to the advance of civilization; and that it is not a right merely but a duty of the Jewish nationality to survive and develop. They believe that only in Palestine can Jewish life be fully protected from the forces of disintegration; that there alone can the Jewish spirit reach its full and natural development; and that by securing for those Jews who wish to settle there the opportunity to do so, not only those Jews, but all other Jews will be benefited, and that the long perplexing Jewish Problem will, at last, find solution. (1919, 15)

For Brandeis, the creation of a Jewish state was the best way to revive "the Jewish spirit" that was threatened by forces of assimilation. This claim was especially popular among adherents of cultural Zionism, who imagined a Jewish spiritual center in Israel would form an exemplary model for the dispersed world of Jewry in exile to imitate (Stanislawski 2017, 20-21; Langer 2021). Cultural Zionists in America repeatedly emphasized that Judaism was a distinct "nationality" that must be embraced. This aspect provided the basis for Brandeis's argumentation. In the 1915 speech "The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It", Brandeis referred to Trinity College's Walter Alison Phillips, who was a specialist in the history of Europe in the nineteenth century. Brandeis (1919, 11) quoted from Phillips's article "Europe and the Problem of Nationality", which was published in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1915. Here, Phillips explains that it is "race, language, religion, common habitat, common conditions, mode of life and manners, political association" that make up distinct nationalities – but these elements are not always all present at the same time. "A common habitat and common conditions are doubtless powerful influences at times in determining nationality", Philipps argues, "but what part do they play in that of the Jews or the Greeks, or the Irish in dispersion?" (1915, 28).

Phillips was a committed Unionist who opposed Irish Home Rule (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1923). Yet, his acknowledgment of a distinct Jewish national identity that was in line with other, more "established" (1919, 6) nationalities like that of the Irish seems to have uplifted Brandeis: "See how this high authority [Phillips] assumes without question that the Jews are, despite their dispersion, a distinct nationality; and he groups us with the Greeks or the Irish, two other peoples of marked individuality" (11). There can be no doubt, Brandeis asserted, that Jews, who amounted at the time of his speech to about 14,000,000 people, are

"an extensive aggregate of persons" and "conscious of a community of sentiments, experiences and qualities which make us *feel* ourselves a distinct people" (*ibidem*). Brandeis asserted that Jews were a nationality within nations – and to justify his assertion he drew parallels once again with the Irish case:

> The difference between a nation and a nationality is clear; but it is not always observed. Likeness between members is the essence of nationality; but the members of a nation may be very different. A nation may be composed of many nationalities, as some of the most successful nations are. An instance of this is the British nation, with its division into English, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish at home; with the French in Canada; and, throughout the Empire, scores of other nationalities. Other examples are furnished by the Swiss nation with its German, French and Italian sections; by the Belgian nation composed of Flemings and Walloons; and by the American nation which comprises nearly all the white nationalities. The unity of a nationality is a fact of nature. The unifying of a nation is largely the work of man. (1919, 10)

Trying to "melt" together "nation" and "nationality" might have serious consequences. Brandeis warned that "[t]he false doctrine that nation and nationality must be made co-extensive is the cause of some of our greatest tragedies" (11). In fact, Brandeis saw in the lack of differentiation between nation and nationality in Europe the cause of the First World War. This gap "has led, on the one hand, to cruel, futile attempts at enforced assimilation, like the Russianizing of Finland and Poland, and the Prussianizing of Posen, Schleswig-Holstein, and Alsace-Lorraine. It has led, on the other hand, to those Panistic movements which are a cloak for territorial ambitions" (*ibidem*). While nationalist movements certainly played a role in the outbreak of the First World War, I want to note that more modern schools of thought place economics to the center of their explanation of the outbreak of the war. At the dawn of the war, foreign policy was mostly determined "by an explosive mixture of rapid industrial growth", argues historian Mark Hewitson (2004, 21).

Once Brandeis had established that Jews, just like the Irish, are a distinct nationality within the American nation, it was time to fight for an acceptance of these minorities as collective groups in their own right. This approach to ethnic integration is known as cultural pluralism. In this model, diversity is the norm, and ethnic cultures are given the liberty to exist separately yet still participate in the larger society's economic and political life (Giddens 2009, 644). The phrase "cultural pluralism" was coined by Horace M. Kallen, a German-born American Jewish philosopher who advanced the ideal that cultural diversity and national pride were compatible with each other and that ethnic and racial diversity strengthened America. Kallen not only influenced Brandeis but also enjoyed prominence among American Zionists and within other nationalist circles (Ratner 1984).

Both Irish and Jewish nationalists campaigned for cultural pluralism in the US. They repudiated the melting pot model and Anglo-Protestant cultural hegemony. The Gaelic League, an international organization that promoted the Irish language in Ireland and the Irish diaspora, challenged Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the US by emphasizing the Celtic contributions to the country. The League encouraged Celtic folk dances and songs in amateur entertainments, along with the use of the Gaelic language. Some Irish nationalists claimed that the US anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner", was of Irish origin (Kibler 2015, 43). Brandeis , too, championed the idea of cultural pluralism and proclaimed in another 1915 speech, entitled "True Americanism", which he delivered in Boston, "that each race or people, like each individual, has the right and duty to develop, and only through such differentiated development will high civilization be attained" (1942, 11).

A core aspect of the development of these "nationalities" was the development of "national" languages. As chairman of the PEC, Brandeis traveled to several American cities in 1914

and 1915 to convince their Jewish communities of the Zionist agenda. During these trips, Brandeis spoke also about Eliezer Ben Yehudah, the Lithuanian-born Hebrew lexicographer and newspaper editor who was the driving force behind the revival of the Hebrew language in the modern era (Stanislawski 2017, 16). In one of his speeches on Ben Yehudah, Brandeis once more compared the Jewish and Irish national struggles:

> It was no ordinary sense of piety that made Ben Yehudah seek to introduce the Hebrew language. He recognized what the leaders of other peoples seeking rebirth and independence have recognized, that it is through the national language, expressing the people's soul that the national spirit is aroused, and the national power restored. Despite the prevalence of the English tongue in Ireland, the revival of Gaelic became one of the most important factors in the movement which has just resulted in securing for the Irish their long-coveted home rule. (1942, 52)

Brandeis was right to compare the Jewish efforts to revive Hebrew to the Irish process of deanglicization and embracing of Gaelic. For centuries, Hebrew had been considered a language of the liturgy and was not spoken by most European or American Jews. Gaelic was discouraged by the Anglo-British administrations and the Irish Catholic Church and was vanishing among the Irish immigrants in North America as well. References to the revival of Hebrew were presented in discourses on the restoration of Irish too (Ó Laoire 2018, 186). Both Jewish and Irish nationalists felt that they would not be whole without a national language; both movements complained about the indifference of the broader community toward this language, whether that be the general Irish population's attitude toward Gaelic or the Jewish one toward Hebrew (Bornstein 2011, 15, 92). Early attempts to revive these national languages often bordered "on the absurd", as historian Ezra Mendelssohn notes (1993, 129). For instance, when Douglas Hyde, the founder of the Gaelic League, tried to deliver an address in Gaelic to a 1905 gathering of Irish nationalists in Boston, he quickly shifted to English after the audience responded with laughter. Similarly, at Zionist congresses Hebrew was often replaced by German or English. Even in Mandatory Palestine, among the Zionist settlers themselves, language was an issue. Austrian philosopher Martin Buber famously resisted teaching in Hebrew and wanted to deliver a 1927 lecture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in German, despite the university's policy of Hebrew-language education (Segev 2000, 264).

Brandeis referred to the Irish case in other addresses too, such as in the one he delivered before the Collegiate Zionist Society of Columbia University in 1915: "Is England less glorious because all of the little nations that went to make up England were permitted to develop naturally and constitute units within the greater unit? Is England wronged because the Scotch are different from the Welsh and the Irish are different from the English?" (1942, 70). The Irish were, of course, not only present in Ireland but also in the US. Brandeis set the Irish Americans' involvement in the Irish Home Rule campaign as an example for Jews. In another speech, entitled "The Responsibilities of American Jews", which he gave on his 1914-1915 tour, Brandeis praised the Irish American contribution to Ireland's struggle:

> When we consider how large and generous has been the contribution of the Irish of America for the cause of home rule, the present demand upon the Jews for Zionist purposes seems small indeed. The Jews in America can be relied upon to perform fully their obligation. And indeed there are special reasons why we should be eager to do so. Palestine gives promise of doing for us far more than we can ever be called upon to do for Palestine. For the Jewish renaissance in Palestine will enable us to perform our plain duty to America. It will help us to make toward the attainment of the American ideals of democracy and social justice that large contribution for which religion and life have peculiarly fitted the Jew. (54)

Brandeis made this exact claim about the American Irish contribution to the Irish independence movement in other speeches too, such as in "The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It" (1919, 18). Historian Dan Lainer-Vos has shown how the struggles in the homeland were used to justify demands for financial generosity from Irish Americans and Jewish Americans (2018). For American Jews like Brandeis, emphasizing the Irish American contribution to their nationalist movement in Ireland was relevant because it dismantled accusations of "dual loyalty" that American Jews also faced (Wiener Cohen 2003, 7; Sarna 2004, 203). This was a message not only to the wider society but also to non-Zionist Jews, who were hesitant to support Zionism because of potential accusations of dual loyalty but at the same time were inspired by the Irish efforts (Bernstein 2017, 10-11). Brandeis turned the argument upside down and asserted that being a Jewish American who is involved in matters of Palestine is just as ideal as being an Irish American who helps the Irish cause in Ireland. To support his argument, Brandeis referred not only to Irish American activism but also to British historian Robert William Seton-Watson who claimed that "America is full of nationalities which, while accepting with enthusiasm their new American citizenship, nevertheless look to some centre in the old world as the source and inspiration of their national culture and traditions" (1915, 290). Seton-Watson named "the feeling of the American Jew for Palestine" (*ibidem*) the most typical instance of this phenomenon.

For many American immigrant communities, supporting separationist agendas in their countries of origin while at the same time embracing integration into their new American home was not seen as contradictory. Aforementioned Irish leader Davitt explained the nexus between these two aspects during a lecture to an Irish audience while on a tour of the US in 1880: "Aid us in Ireland to remove the stain of degradation from your birth … and [you] will get the respect you deserve [here in America]" (Mendelsohn 1993, 133). The success of the national movement abroad was connected to success in Americanization at home (133-134). For Brandeis too, Zionism was not inconsistent with his American patriotism. Brandeis reassured everyone who was worried of accusations of dual loyalty that Zionism is not inconsistent with Americanism:

> Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with Patriotism. Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent. A man is a better citizen of the United States for being also a loyal citizen of his state, and of his city; for being loyal to his family, and to his profession or trade; for being loyal to his college or his lodge. (1919, 18)

6. Discussion: Ireland, Israel and Palestine

Brandeis ended his talk "The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It" with the words "Organize, Organize, Organize" (24). He urged American Zionists to organize despite their differences, "until every Jew in America must stand up and be counted–counted with us" (*ibidem*). According to Jewish studies scholar Frances Malino, it was nineteenth-century Irish leader Daniel O'Connell – who campaigned for the Catholic's right to representation in the British parliament – who inspired Brandeis for this motto with his saying, "agitate, agitate, agitate!" (Russell 2019, 7). Indeed, Brandeis continued to "organize" even after he resigned from his position as chairman of the PEC in 1916. Though he was officially the leader of the American Zionist movement only for two years, his influence was remarkable (Gal 1989, 69).

In 1916, after being nominated by President Wilson, Brandeis became the first Jewish Supreme Court justice and one of the most influential figures ever to serve on the high court (Strum 1994; Klebanow, Jonas 2003, 54, 58). As a Supreme Court justice, Brandeis was a leading figure of the Progressive Era in using the law as an instrument for social change. Despite

his new office, Brandeis did not withdraw from his engagement in the Zionist agenda. Brandeis was involved in pushing for the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which would announce that "His Majesty's Government view with favour the settlement in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object". The Balfour Declaration "put the seal of legitimacy on political Zionism" (Wiener Cohen 2003, 37). In the late 1930s, Brandeis became involved in immigration to Palestine and in the effort to help European Jews escape genocide when Britain denied entry to more Jews (Urofsky 2005, 120).

Brandeis continued to support the Irish cause after his withdrawal from the PEC. He met with Irish leader Robert Briscoe, who later became Lord Mayor of Dublin and served in the Irish parliament from 1927 to 1965 (Heilweil 2019, 27). Briscoe was an Irish Jew, and a Zionist too. Although many Irish nationalists embraced Zionism and admired the Jewish struggle for the ancient Jewish homeland, some of them expressed antisemitic views too. Arthur Griffith, writer and founder of the Irish republican party Sinn Féin ("We Ourselves"), accused Jews of corrupt business practices and backed an openly antisemitic priest in Limerick (Bender 2018, 27). Nonetheless, most Irish nationalist leaders and their adherents in the early twentieth century supported the Zionist cause (Kibler 2015, 41). However, the closer the establishment of a Zionist state came to being realized, the more voices emerged that compared the Irish not to the Jewish nationalists but rather to the Palestinian resistance against the Zionist settlements.

Brandeis retired from the Supreme Court in 1939 and died in 1941, following a heart attack (Rosen 2016, 186). He did not get to see the State of Israel's creation in 1948 and the shift in Irish-Zionist relations. By the time of the establishment of the Zionist state, the Irish had begun to see themselves in the Palestinians rather than in the Zionists. During the 1947 United Nations debate on the partition of Mandatory Palestine, influential Irish author Seán Ó Faoláin wrote that "if we could imagine that Ireland was being transformed by Britain into a national home for the Jews, I can hardly doubt which side you would be found" (Miller 2010a, 174). In the late 1940s, Irish Foreign Minister Seán MacBride said about the partition of Ireland that "it would create a situation in Northern Ireland comparable to that of Palestine in 1946-1948" (Cockburn 1989, 10). As scholar of governance Rory Miller describes it: the Jewish state now looked less like "a besieged religious-national community struggling valiantly for its natural rights and more and more as a form of plantation illegitimately established by British force of arms and intent on imposing itself on an indigenous population" (2010a, 174). There were other factors too: by the late 1940s, the British authorities had begun to view the future Zionist state as a "little loyal Jewish Ulster" (*ibidem*), referring to the Protestant Northern Irish province of Ulster, which was seen as a bulwark against Irish nationalism. Likewise, this "little loyal Jewish Ulster" was perceived by the British as a bulwark against rising Arab nationalism. Another factor contributing to the shift in Irish interest might have been Pope Pius XII's 1948 encyclical, *In Multiplicibus Curis*, which endorsed Jerusalem's "international character" and called for international control over the city (Miller 2010b).

Ireland today is one of the least "pro-Israel" countries in the European Union. In 2018, Dublin became the first European capital to vote in favor of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which calls for a boycott of Israeli products. The City Council also requested the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland. A year later, the Dáil Éireann ("Assembly of Ireland"), the Irish lower house, passed the pro-BDS "Occupied Territories Bill" that restricted the import of goods from any of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories (MEMO 2019). This "pro-Palestinian" sentiment is not only visible in politics, but also at universities: "Irish, both North and South, have traditionally been pro-Palestine because of the relationship between republicanism and international anti-imperialism. In this sense, Irish

republicanism sees the fight for the liberation of Palestine and the reunification of Ireland as one and the same", University College Dublin student leader Darryl Horan has explained (Jouda 2020). Israelis, too, are interested in the Ireland/Israel/Palestine analogy: using the example of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, Aidan Beatty has shown how the Israeli press discussed the events in Northern Ireland in terms of their own local realities (2017).

For Brandeis and the early American Zionists, Zionism was liberation from assimilation and antisemitism. However, Brandeis's ideas of a model Jewish state in Palestine were never realized. His utopian vision, combining American Progressive ideals with the moral teachings of the Jewish prophets, remains in the realm of utopic beliefs. Yet, Brandeis's ideas of cultural pluralism in the US gained many followers and are still influential today. Brandeis's attempt to bring together his Americanness and Zionism became known as the "Brandeisian synthesis" (Urofsky 1995, 164). Brandeis's belief in what biographer Jeffrey Rosen has called "the value of group differences for preserving American ideals" (2016, 162) benefited not only Irish Americans who backed Ireland's independence but also other ethnicities in the US. Black nationalist movements in the US in the 1920s were inspired by the postwar settlement that led to the establishment of new nation states in Europe and the Middle East. They pointed to the Great Powers who "gave to the Jew Palestine", and independence to the Irish, while Black Americans had received nothing (Mendelsohn 1993, 135-136). Brandeis and the early twentieth-century American Zionists made an often-overlooked contribution to cultural pluralism in the US. They made it possible for the following generations of immigrants and their descendants to identify as "hyphenated" Americans and celebrate the distinct national culture of their ancestors.

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