



# Latin America

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Latin American countries suffered from political and economic instability during the period under review. Argentina and Chile experienced unsuccessful conspiracies. Guatemala, Salvador, Bolivia, and Ecuador suppressed uprisings. In Paraguay, Venezuela, and Peru revolutions were carried out successfully. The political unrest in this region had not yet subsided at the time of writing, and a number of countries were in a state of political tension. This unrest was due, to some extent, to economic causes. The currencies of nearly all Latin American countries had been devalued, inflation was rampant, and an economic crisis threatened some areas.

Though the Jewish communities suffered from this unrest together with the general population, there was no specific Jewish element in these occurrences, and the development of the communities proceeded.

### *Efforts for Israel*

The central fact of life within the Jewish communities was the establishment of Israel and concern for its consolidation. The different communities actively worked for the recognition of Israel by their respective countries, and its admission to the United Nations. A special role in these efforts was played by the "liaison officers" of the Israeli government who maintained contact with the Latin American republics. In almost every case these liaison officers were members of the local Jewish communities.

Recognition of Israel by the Latin American countries did not take place immediately. With the exception of Uruguay and Guatemala, which were represented in the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine and were therefore among the first to recognize the Jewish state, nearly all the other countries extended recognition in three stages: First was the establishment of postal communications; second, support of Israel's admission to the international conference on radio communications which was held in Mexico, and third, trade contacts which were followed by recognition. As the Latin American countries progressed from one stage of recognition of Israel to another, continual efforts on the part of the local Jewish communities were required.

These political activities, as well as the unanimous desire of all Jews to see Israel recognized as a member of the family of nations, contributed toward the cementing of internal solidarity. The honor accorded Israel in some of the parliaments (those of Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Cuba); the

establishment of regular diplomatic relations; the arrival of Jacob Tzur as the only accredited minister to Uruguay and Argentina; the festivities marking the first anniversary of Israel and its admission to the United Nations—all these contributed to the sense of Jewish self-respect and the rising esteem in which they were held by their neighbors.

The Jewish communities were drawn closer to the new center of Jewish life in Israel as a result of the frequent visits of individuals and groups of tourists to the Jewish state. Nearly four hundred young people volunteered for Israel's army—most of them settled there permanently—and scores of young people accepted the invitation extended by the Jewish Agency to spend a year in Israel in order to prepare to serve as youth leaders in their native lands. This interchange exerted a beneficial influence on local Jewish life.

Of equal significance were the visits of leading personalities of Israel and of members of the Israeli government. Special mention should be made of I. Gruenbaum, former Minister of Internal Affairs, David Shaltiel, Inspector General of the Israeli army, M. Tov, secretary of the Latin American Department in the Israeli Foreign Office, M. Laniada, former military governor of Jaffa, A. Hollander, Undersecretary for Trade and Industry; and M. Beigin, member of the Knesset. In addition, the Latin American countries were visited by prominent members of the Jewish Agency, among them E. Dobkin, vice-president of the Agency.

#### UNITED APPEALS

The campaigns for Israel and the needs of the refugees, which were nearly everywhere conducted as united ventures, further contributed significantly to the consolidation of Jewish communal life in the Latin American countries. Communal leaders in a number of countries had come to realize that in order to insure the success of the campaigns for Israel it would be necessary to include in these campaigns the drives for the various organizations of worldwide scope, such as JDC, the World Jewish Congress, ORT, OSE, and HIAS. In some countries the most important local institutions were also included in the united campaigns. Chile was the first to introduce such a united drive and was shortly followed by Peru, Bolivia, Southern Brazil, and the small communities in Central America. In Argentina the local institutions, with the exception of the Jewish hospital in Buenos Aires, which was to receive a single large contribution, were not included in the drive. In Uruguay, Paraguay, Mexico, and Rio De Janeiro the united drive was exclusively for Israel. But even where local institutions were not included in the drive, from 3 to 5 per cent of the funds raised was earmarked for local cultural and educational activities.

#### INTERNAL RIFTS

The united appeals served powerfully to foster understanding and solidarity between the various trends within the communities. However, complete unity lasted only during the first year of Israel's existence. The profound differences between the Eastern and Western blocs in the international scene were reflected in local Jewish life. Nearly everywhere an open rift occurred between those elements which leaned toward the People's Democracies of the

Soviet zone of influence and those who clung to the traditional principles of democracy as it is understood in the West. The left-wing elements had entered Jewish life in a number of countries and there gained influence as a result of their dynamic and drastic methods. Their demand that their ideology be accepted in the work for Israel led to an ultimate rift.

### *Effect of Israel on Public Opinion*

The rise of Israel also influenced the political situation of the Jewish communities in Latin America. The daily reports in the press concerning Jewish achievements and their significance for the political stability of the Middle East, the novelty of participation by local political notables in Jewish public affairs, Jewish mass demonstrations in the streets, and such events as the reception of the Israeli representatives by the Presidents of Argentina and Uruguay changed the attitude of the average person toward the Jews, who were previously looked down upon as persons without a country.

### *Anti-Semitic Manifestations*

Despite these developments anti-Semitism appeared sporadically in different parts of this region. Thus, Bolivia suddenly promulgated a law in September, 1948, requiring a review of the property of Jews who had entered that country since 1939. This was a clear case of racial discrimination, and the law was repealed only after the intervention of the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee.

In Peru, too, anti-Semitism was apparent in radio programs, the publication of a new anti-Jewish paper, *Temple*, and a government regulation forbidding the importation of matzoth—though the last ban was excused on the grounds of a shortage of foreign currency. However, as time passed the situation in Peru again became normal in this respect.

The establishment of trade relations between Israel and the Latin American countries would no doubt have its effects. The first transport of frozen beef had already been sent from Argentina and another was being prepared. A shipment of beef was also exported from Uruguay. Brazil could export lumber, pre-fabricated houses, and furniture to Israel. Chile could find a market in Israel for its fertilizers, which were already being exported to Egypt. There were also the beginnings of imports of such items as artificial teeth and chemicals from Israel.

### *Emigration*

The rise of Israel introduced still another and unexpected factor into the situation of the Jews in Latin America. They became an emigrant as well as an immigrant element. The consulates of Israel in Argentina and Uruguay, which at the time of writing also served Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru, had issued 1,741 visas for more than 5,000 persons during the few months since they were opened. One-third of these were for tourists, the remainder for persons intending to settle in Israel.

## *Civil Rights*

It was expected that the political situation of the Jewish communities would also be favorably influenced by the inclusion in the new constitution of Argentina of Article 28, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of race, religion, or descent. Argentina had often been emulated by other Latin American countries in the past, and it was expected that they would imitate Argentina's example.

## *Internal Organization*

There were no important achievements in the field of community organization to be recorded, but some significant steps were taken in the direction of the consolidation and expansion of the internal organization in the larger communities.<sup>1</sup>

In Brazil a congress of the Brazilian federations and institutions of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Porto Alegre and Recife was held in January, 1949, with the aim of forming a union of Jewish institutions on a nation-wide scale.

In Montevideo, Uruguay, a dispute which had troubled the community for years was patched up, and though complete harmony had not yet been attained, internal peace bade fair to produce beneficial results.

In Chile the Comité Representativo, which was the spokesman of all Jewish institutions in the country, gained in authority and influence, since the united campaign for all Jewish needs was placed under its direction. The prestige of this committee was such that no urging was required to collect pledges to the campaign. Five per cent of the funds raised in Chile were deducted for the use of the local education committee, providing it with an opportunity to expand its activities.

The first census which was conducted in Mexico deserves mention as a significant contribution to the internal organization of the community.<sup>2</sup>

## *Culture and Education*

Definite though unspectacular progress was made in the field of culture and education. Heightened interest in Jewish scholarship and culture emphasized a shortage of teachers and cultural workers. It was also evident that this type of personnel could not be imported and that the larger communities had to rely on their own resources. Teachers' seminaries were therefore established in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Brazil, in addition to those existing in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Mexico City, Mexico. Teachers' training courses were initiated in Santiago de Chile. Special mention should be made of the Hebrew courses for adults which existed in Buenos Aires, as well as in a number of other cities in Argentina, in Santiago, Montevideo and in other Latin American centers. In some localities there were Yiddish courses as well, but at the time of writing Hebrew monopolized the interest of those adults who had the time and inclination to devote themselves to Jewish studies.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of communal consolidation in Argentina, see p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 257.

The following table describes the state of Jewish education in Latin America:

TABLE I

## LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH SCHOOLS AND ENROLLMENT BY COUNTRY

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of Schools</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>
Argentina .....	122	10,246
Uruguay .....	10	675
Bolivia .....	2	95
Chile .....	3	720
Brazil .....	27	3,362
Mexico .....	est. 4	est. 1,500
Peru .....	1	263
Total .....	est. 169	est. 16,861

The Jewish communities in Latin America concluded the year 5709 in a hopeful mood, stimulated by their activities in behalf of Israel and the continuity of Jewish life in the lands of their adoption.

MOISES SENDEREY

## CENTRAL AMERICA

THE year 1948-49 in Central America was pock-marked by numerous military uprisings, civilian unrest, and student riots. That region also came close to an international war between two contiguous neighbors, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, when Costa Rica was invaded by revolutionary forces whose base was in Nicaragua.

In El Salvador the revolution succeeded in ousting the President and his government. In Guatemala, Panama, and Costa Rica the military revolts failed to achieve their purposes. Students led strong internal civilian opposition in Nicaragua. Many students were jailed and one was killed.

Against this background of political instability, military uprisings, and civilian rioting, tiny Jewish groups, estimated at about 3,000-4,000, led an isolated existence in the six Central American republics, from Guatemala in the north to Panama in the south, and were incapable of carrying on even the minimal tasks of Jewish communal living.

*Honduras*

In Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, there were 76 Jews among a population of 65,000. There was no way of providing the twelve Jewish children with any Jewish experience or education. In San Pedro Sula, the country's second largest city, with a population of 27,000, there were 50 Jews. The twenty children among them were similarly cut off from all facilities for a Jewish education.

*Panama*

The situation was no better in Panama. Most of the Jews lived in its two chief cities: Panama City, the capital, on the Pacific side, and Colon, on the

Caribbean. The former had about 170 Jewish families, of whom 60 were Ashkenazic, 75 Sephardic, and 35 Dutch Jews from Curaçao, who were also Sephardic. Colon's 85 Jewish families were divided between 35 Ashkenazic and 50 Sephardic families.

These groups maintained separate synagogues and there was no liaison between their respective leaders. There was no Jewish school or teacher. The religious life of the communities was very inactive. While the Ashkenazim and Sephardim could muster a quorum for certain festivals and the High Holidays, or even an occasional memorial service, Temple Shearith Israel of the Curaçao Jews was open only for Yom Kippur services. Nor was there any kosher slaughtering.

### *Costa Rica*

Costa Rica boasted the highest cultural standards in Central America. Its Jewish community could make a similar claim for itself vis-à-vis the Jewish groups in the other republics of Central America. However, in this republic that prided itself on having more teachers than soldiers and police and one of the highest literacy rates in Latin America, there was more anti-Jewish sentiment than in any other Central American countries. Jews were popularly referred to as *polacos*, a derogatory term. Jews and non-Jews had only business contacts, but did not fraternize socially.

Of the 275 Jewish families in Costa Rica, most lived in the capital city, San José. A few score were to be found in Cartago and the two port cities, Limón on the Caribbean Sea and Punto Arenas on the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> In San José there was a Jewish center. The afternoon Jewish school had thirty-five pupils, ranging in ages from six to sixteen. The teacher traveled twice a week to Cartago to teach twenty children in that town. There was no rabbi.

### *El Salvador*

Jewish relations with the surrounding community were bright in the smallest of Central American countries, El Salvador. According to a report from Eugenio Liebes, president of the Jewish community in the capital city, San Salvador, the 200 Jews living in that republic were free of anti-Semitic experiences. Liebes assigned the very small number of Jews as one of the principal reasons, but added that the immigration restrictions in force were made necessary by the country's inability to absorb large numbers.

Official circles and the press of El Salvador were completely free of any discriminatory manifestations towards Jews. Catholic-Jewish relations were very cordial, and business relations between Jews and residents of Arabic origin, most of whom were Catholic, were very friendly. There was no social intercourse between Jews and Arabs, but there never had been any in El Salvador. The Arabs carried on no anti-Jewish propaganda.

<sup>1</sup> See also World Jewish Population, p. 248. The disparity in the figures may be explained in part by the fact that persons who visited the country on business may have been counted in the estimate.

### *Economic Life*

In Central America as in the rest of Latin America, Jews were making their contribution to industrialization. They pioneered in the clothing industry and in shoe manufacturing in Costa Rica. There, as well as in the other countries of that region, Jews were also importers, retailers, and, in some cases, even coffee planters. The chief economic complaint of Central American Jews was against Mexico, whose consular representatives in the Central American republics usually refused visas to naturalized citizens of these countries. This discrimination applied also to tourists wishing to visit or pass through Mexico.

### *Need*

The supreme need of Central American Jews was for Jewish companionship both at home and with other larger Jewish communities. This was important for the adults themselves and for their children with whose future they were concerned.

JOSHUA HOCHSTEIN

## MEXICO

THE YEAR under review was one of continued growth for the Mexican Jewish community, of further organization and consolidation of previous achievements. The formation of the *Campaña Unida* (United Jewish Appeal) was a successful experiment in collective responsibility and proof of the participation of Mexican Jewry in world Jewish affairs.

### *Population*

Exact population statistics for Mexican Jews were not to be available until the end of 1949, pending the completion of the census being prepared by the Central Jewish Committee. Tentatively, it was estimated that there were between 20,000 and 25,000 Jews in Mexico. The numbers from Poland, Russia, Germany, Hungary, and other European countries were indeterminate, but approximate information was available concerning the Sephardic Jews. José Benbassat, the president of the *Unión Sefardita de México* reported 300 Sephardic families and an estimated 3,000 individuals. The bulk of the Jewish population of Mexico resided in the capital, an insignificant fraction in provincial cities and towns.

### *Political Events*

The period was a tranquil one in the political life of the country, no overt Fascist or reactionary movement having emerged. There was a favorable atmosphere for civil liberties under the government of President Miguel Alemán, which cut the ground under reactionary attacks against the regime. The gov-

ernment's effort to achieve harmonious relations with the Catholic Church was a tremendous factor in bringing stability to Mexican political life.

The elimination of both the fascistic Sinarquistas and the Communists from the elections for the parliament due to convene on September 1, 1949, resulted in an overwhelming majority for the government party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, the Mexican equivalent of the New Deal in the United States. Mexican Jews participated in unprecedented numbers in the balloting.

### *Economic Life*

The past year was one of economic adjustment after the period of war prosperity. The need for more home production and the devaluation of the peso were reflected in an increased production by many Jewish industrialists, in response to the government's appeal for the achievement of Mexican economic independence from foreign markets. Marginal Jewish middle-class elements suffered from the economic strain, and a trend toward the emergence of a Jewish proletariat was discernible. The establishment of a Mexican branch of ORT in order to train Jewish workers, a class previously absent from the Mexican scene, was under discussion. The need for more adequate social assistance to provide for the increasing numbers of needy Jewish families was pointed out in *Di Shtimme* by a prominent member of the board of the local Hilfsverein (benevolent society). The Hilfsverein was caring for fifty families weekly, in addition to the relief work carried on by the local branch of OSE as well as other local benevolent societies. On June 23, 1949, the president of the Unión Sefardita de México reported the existence of a similar problem among the Sephardic community. On the other hand, there was a trend for those Jews formerly engaged in commercial activities to transfer to industry.

### *Intergroup Relations*

There was no official discrimination against Jews in Mexico, and Jews held important government posts. Three local Jewish schools were even granted the use of the Palace of Fine Arts for the celebration of the first anniversary of the proclamation of the state of Israel.

However, Jews suffered from the traditional Mexican identification of all foreigners as "exploiters." There was a lessening of organized anti-Semitic provocation by the Sinarquist movement, whose influence was greatest in the mining state of Guanajuato, particularly in León, in Central Mexico. A few exclusive upper-class clubs attempted to be *Judenrein*.

### *Israel*

The creation of the state of Israel and the victories of the Israeli army reflected favorably in the popular Mexican mind upon the Jewish community, and were even more effective than the activities of the Comité Mexicano pro Palestina in counteracting local Arab propaganda. On the other hand, much uneasiness existed in the Jewish community concerning the government's attitude toward Israel, in view of Arab influence among high government func-

tionaries. The latter often accepted invitations to social affairs tendered by such rabid anti-Zionists as the multimillionaire Miguel Abed. Mexico failed to recognize the state of Israel, despite the efforts of the Comité Mexicano pro Palestina, until the eve of the admission of Israel into the United Nations. But the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations had not yet made an official declaration, despite the permission granted by the Mexican government for the establishment of an Israeli immigration office.

### *Communal Organization*

The most notable progress in communal organization was the result of the activity of the Central Committee, a representative body democratically elected. The next Central Committee, to be elected in November, 1949, was to consist of thirty members, twenty-one from the Ashkenazic community and nine from the Sephardic. Working autonomously, the two sections of the plenum were to meet only to discuss and decide affairs of concern to all the Jews of Mexico. Since its election in March, 1948, the Central Committee initiated the census cited above. The Committee's Commission for Cultural Activities was responsible for an official *pinkas*, or community record, begun on April 25, 1948, which was expected to be of vast interest to historians of Mexican Jewry.

### *Religion and Education*

The outstanding Jewish religious institution in Mexico was Nidje Israel, whose most recent contribution was the establishment of an old age home in Cuernavaca, a famous resort near Mexico City. Nidje Israel numbered among its many activities the supervision of the Yavne school, and the maintenance of the Jewish cemetery in Mexico City. Mizrachi maintained the Orthodox Yeshiva Etz Hayim, an afternoon school which was growing slowly but steadily. The Colegio Israelita conducted its own preparatory school and teachers' seminary, as well as a publishing department which issued a number of books and educational manuals. Seventy-five per cent of the Jewish children of school age were attending Jewish schools. Many Mexican Jews were planning to send their children to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Hebrew Technion in Haifa.

### *United Jewish Appeal*

The success of the Campaña Unida, the local United Jewish Appeal, was important morally as well as materially. The reluctance of a few members of the community to share the collective responsibility for Israel was only a minor breach in Mexican Jewish solidarity. Local institutions, guaranteed a permanent subsidy, could devote all their efforts to the improvement of their programs.

### *Zionism*

The Zionist influence, important in Mexican Jewish life for twenty-nine years, was felt in every communal undertaking. Contributions of Mexican

Jewry to the Jewish National Fund ranked high proportionally among those of all Jewry. *Halutzim*, though numerically few, were a source of considerable spiritual strength.

### *Emigration and Immigration*

The Jews of Mexico felt sufficiently rooted in the economic life of the country to be indifferent to the prospect of emigration, even to Israel, which was, however, visited by many enthusiastic tourists. The immigration of Jews into Mexico was negligible.

### *Culture*

Yiddish was the principal language of Jewish culture in Mexico. The Yiddish press was widely circulated. Beside the two privately owned newspapers, each of the political groups from the rightist Mizrachi to the leftist Progressives had its own organ. The publication of the Zionist Organization appeared in Spanish, for the benefit of the Sephardic community.

In July, 1948, the Central Jewish Committee began to sell cheap editions of Yiddish books, as well as Spanish volumes on Jewish subjects. During the very first month, an income of 2,000 pesos was received, a far from negligible amount. H. Kashdan's *The History of Jewish Education in Poland between the World Wars* was published by the Shlomo Mendelssohn Fund of the Bundist Gezelshaft far Kultur un Hilf. In addition, the Tzvi Kessel Fund presented three prizes of 2,000, 1,000 and 500 pesos to authors for works on Jewish subjects, as well as publishing the volume *Shtill Zol Zayn* ("Let There Be Silence") by the local poet, Isaac Berliner. Winners during the period under review were Leo Katz for his novel *Seed Time*, published in a Yiddish translation, and the local intellectual and essayist I. Austriak for his Spanish volume *The Jewish Question and Zionism*.

The League for Labor Palestine initiated the institution of the *Oneg Shabbat*, Sabbath eve entertainments which became very popular, in which local writers and intellectuals, as well as distinguished visitors like Hayim Greenberg and B. Z. Goldberg of the United States, participated. The Central Jewish Committee also planned to inaugurate a Yiddish dramatic studio under the direction of Ezra Harari, who was engaged and brought to Mexico from the United States.

SOLOMON KAHAN

## CUBA

CUBAN Jewry felt its position more secure during the past year as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel, the stability of the government, and the favorable atmosphere of public opinion.

### *Population*

The Jewish population of Cuba consisted during the period under review (June 1, 1948, through June 30, 1949) of slightly more than 10,000 inhabitants,

90 per cent of whom were concentrated in Havana. Of this number, 6,500 were Yiddish-speaking persons of Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, and Rumanian origin, 3,000 were Sephardic Jews from Turkey and the Balkans, and 800 were refugees who had arrived during and after World War II. In addition, there was a permanent colony of 100 influential American Jewish businessmen. No Jewish census had ever been undertaken in Cuba; the above figures were estimates based on the contributors to various campaigns, whose maximum number was 2,000.

### *Economic Life and Political Situation*

The Jews in Cuba were employed principally in commercial and industrial occupations. As a consequence of the nationalistic "Cuba for the Cubans" legislation promulgated by the revolutionary regime of Grau San Martin in 1933 and still in force at the time of writing, every business establishment was required to hire 50 per cent of its laborers from the Cuban citizenry. As a result, 400 Jews who were non-citizens for a variety of reasons were forced to give up their employment as tailors, shoemakers, etc., and became small-businessmen, peddlers, and small manufacturers organized in cooperatives. Another factor contributing to the absence of a Jewish laboring class in Cuba was the seasonal nature of such employment.

Jewish industrialists were represented in the shoe industry (fewer than previously), in knit-goods, building construction, clothing, and linen industries, where they made important contributions to the Cuban economy by developing industries and producing and distributing commodities which had previously been imported into Cuba. There was also a considerable number of Jewish importers, of whom some 300 did business with the United States.

During the period under review there was a decline in the volume of Cuban business, which inevitably affected Jewish businessmen and industrialists, as well.

Unlike other Latin-American countries, Cuba had a quiet year, politically speaking. The Communists lost a great deal of the significant power they possessed in 1945, both in the government and the federation of labor. The Jewish colony, which in the Western tradition had no official political party of its own, was not affected by the anti-Communist agitation.

### *Anti-Semitism*

There was no organized anti-Semitism in Cuba. Occasional anti-Semitic manifestations were referred by the Jewish community to the government, which quickly put a stop to them. One such instance occurred when several non-Jewish Cubans bought an hour of radio time and broadcast slanderous accusations at Cuban Jewry daily from October through December, 1948, with the intention of blackmailing the Jewish community. But at the complaint of the Jewish Center of Cuba, the Minister of Communications investigated and halted the broadcasts. At the time of writing the case was in the hands of the courts.

In July, 1949, particularly as a result of the rise of the Jewish state of Israel

in May, 1948, press as well as public opinion was favorable to the Jews. The Cubans had reacted instinctively in favor of this new independent small nation; the rally for recognition of Israel held by the Federation of Cuban University Students on June 2, 1948, is worth noting at this point. On the other hand, the opposition of the Cuban citizens of Arab origin is not to be overlooked in assessing Cuban public opinion in reference to Israel and the Jews.

### *Communal Affairs*

On September 6, 1948, an effort was begun to coordinate all local fund-raising campaigns into one united campaign to raise \$500,000. Of this sum, 80 per cent was allocated to organizations which had previously conducted separate campaigns for Israel (e.g., Keren Kayemet); the remaining 20 per cent was destined for the refugee aid committee, World Jewish Congress, HIAS, ORT, and local philanthropic institutions.

Unfortunately, the campaign had succeeded in raising only half of the sum desired at the time of writing (July, 1949)—this despite the auspicious opening dinner at which \$40,000 was collected in the presence of Moshe Yuval, the vice-consul of Israel in New York, and the decision of the campaign committee that all Cuban Jews were to contribute 1 per cent of their incomes. To carry out this decision, evaluation and arbitration committees were created, and individuals were required to forward their contributions directly to the campaign committee rather than wait to be asked. The committee threatened all recalcitrants with sanctions as national traitors, but failed to act on its warning, despite large-scale defections. This caused some dissatisfaction with the campaign committee. Nevertheless, in the light of poor business conditions, the campaign results were satisfactory.

### ZIONISM

The Zionist Federation of Cuba consisted of all the Zionist groups, with the exception of the Revisionist Betar youth movement, which was small. The Federation embraced the General Zionists, Histadrut, Hashomer Hatzair, Zionist Refugees, and Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), and had 400 individual members, 200 of them accessions as the result of a recent campaign. The goal was 1,000 members. Histadrut was preparing a new membership drive. Most active among these organizations was WIZO, with a membership of 1,200, and branches of Yiddish-speaking, Sephardic, refugee, and American groups. WIZO sent two representatives to the WIZO Congress in Israel in February, 1949.

Another very active Zionist organization in Cuba was the Keren Kayemet committee under the presidency of Baruch Shames. By attending public and private functions assiduously, representatives of the Keren Kayemet collected some \$25,000 for Israel.

### CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION, AND RELIGION

Founded on September 1, 1925, with the aid of the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Center of Cuba was the oldest Jewish institution in that country. The Jewish Center opened a new adults' and children's library on

December 11, 1948, an occasion which it commemorated with a large book exhibit of all the Yiddish volumes ever published in Cuba.

The Jewish Center was the sponsor of an independent school, the largest in Cuba, with an enrollment of 360 children. The children studied Yiddish and Spanish through the sixth grade, whence they were graduated into government institutions. Second largest school was the Sholom Aleichem School of the "progressive" elements, with 80 children; a private school called The Modern Jewish School numbered about 60 children and the Theodore Herzl School (Sephardic), 100. All these Jewish schools were in Havana; there were no Jewish schools in the provinces of Cuba, where the Jewish population was 1,000.

A tragi-comic religious controversy between competing burial societies created a furor in the Cuban Jewish community and was still unresolved at the time of writing, despite the intervention of Rabbi Meyer Rosenbaum, who had been called to Cuba from the United States in 1947. The Cuban Jewish *kehillah*, unable to expand its membership beyond 200, also found it impossible to unravel a tangled *kashrut* situation.

#### COMMUNAL COORDINATION

The Central Council of Jewish Institutions in Cuba collapsed during this period. The "progressive elements," in an attempt to dominate the Central Council, created so many fictitious organizations that at one point the Central Council consisted of thirty-six members, mostly on paper. It was necessary in emergencies for representatives of the dominant Cuban organizations to form special committees. Such was the case during the United Campaign mentioned above.

#### *Emigration and Immigration*

During the period from December 13, 1948, to June 29, 1949, 223 Jews emigrated from Cuba to Israel. Of this number, 117 were refugees, 24 of the Cuban Jews traveled to Israel as tourists, and the remainder (82) settled in Israel. After having received preliminary training in the United States, 8 Cuban *halutzim* left for Israel.

Immigration to Cuba was at a standstill. During the period from 1945 to the present (June 30, 1949), only a few hundred Jewish immigrants entered Cuba, of whom only a small portion remained. On October 15, 1948, the American Joint Distribution Committee discontinued its relief activities in Havana, and asked the local community to continue to maintain 200 Jewish refugees who were unable to support themselves because of the Cuban legislation prohibiting the employment of non-citizens.

#### *Governmental Relations with Israel*

Under the leadership of ex-president Raphael Silber and the political leader, S. M. Kaplan, Israel's liaison in Cuba, the Zionist Union of Cuba was instrumental in obtaining Cuban *de facto* recognition of Israel on January 15, 1949,

and *de jure* recognition on March 18, 1949, although Cuba had voted against the partition of Palestine in the United Nations in November, 1947.

On May 6, 1949, the Cuban government appointed the Zionist veteran, Raphael Silber, as commercial attaché of Cuba in Israel.

ABRAHAM J. DUBELMAN

## ARGENTINA

**D**URING the period under review, the political situation in Argentina continued satisfactory for the Jewish residents, who benefited from the affirmations of friendship by President Juan Perón. At the end of September, 1948, a law was passed in the Argentine congress granting general amnesty to all foreigners who had entered the country without the necessary visas. This allowed several thousand Jews to settle legally in Argentina and relieved many hardships.

Publicly supported by President Perón, the Organización Israelita Argentina (OIA), which dealt officially with the above problem, became a political body interested in the relationships between the Jewish community and the government. On the whole however, though there were Jews in governmental positions of importance, the Argentinian Jews did not make great efforts to secure official office, either by election or by appointment.

### *Economic Situation*

Argentina suffered from the same dearth of dollars that affected all the nations of the world during the postwar period. Though it was premature to talk about an economic crisis, the situation had already affected the financial contributions of Argentinian Jews to various philanthropic causes.

### *Population*

The total Jewish population in Argentina as of 1946 was 321,546, as compared with the total population of 16,000,000, or approximately 2.13 per cent; in the capital, Buenos Aires, the figures were 207,000 and 3,000,000 respectively, or approximately 7 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Table 1 presents an analysis of distribution of Jews in the Argentine interior, based on the study prepared by Yedidia Efron for the Jewish Colonization Association.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF JEWS IN ARGENTINIAN INTERIOR

<i>Province</i>	<i>Population</i>
Buenos Aires (including La Plate and Bahía Blanca and excluding Buenos Aires proper) . . . . .	38,743
Santa Fe (including Moisesville, Rosario, and Santa Fe)	23,866
Entre Rios (including Paraná and Concordia) . . . . .	22,406
Córdoba (including Córdoba City) . . . . .	8,439
Other provinces (including Tucumán, Mendoza, San Juan, etc.) . . . . .	500—2,500 each

<sup>1</sup> For later population estimates, see *World Jewish Population*, pp. 248-49.

### *Sephardic Community*

The Sephardic community in Argentina numbered some 45,000 persons in 1946. Of this number, some 40,000 resided in Buenos Aires, comprising 21 per cent of the total Jewish population in that city. The remaining 5,000 were distributed in the provinces of Córdoba, Rosario, Tucumán, Santa Fe, and Corrientes. The majority was Middle-Eastern in origin; there were also Sephardic Jews from Morocco and a substantial number from the Balkans.

### *Communal Organization*

Significant of the growth of Jewish community life during the period under review was the change in the title of the body originally known as the Chevra Kadisha and later as the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina. This organization, in whose religious, social, and educational work some 38,000 Jewish individuals and heads of families participated, became the Kehila Ashkenazi, in an analogy to the all-inclusive *kehillot* of pre-war Eastern Europe.

### *Education*

The problem of the general and Jewish education of Jewish children in Argentina aroused the increasing interest of community leaders and parents. Though the law permitted Jewish pupils to absent themselves from the Christian religious classes held in the public schools and the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) repeatedly and publicly advocated that this privilege be exercised, the parents and children themselves were hesitant to attract attention to themselves by taking advantage of the legal exemption. Hence, many Jewish pupils were being indoctrinated in the Christian religion.

To counteract this unfortunate situation, several new Jewish schools and classes opened during the period under review. The total number of children receiving a Jewish education of some kind was approximately 10,000, of whom 7,500 were in Buenos Aires and 2,400 in the provinces—the percentage having risen above 15 per cent during the past two years. In addition, the cultural department of the Jewish Agency in Argentina established a Midrasha Ivrit, which held night classes for post-university students, and for adults. Deserving of mention were the development of the Makhon Lelimude Ha-Yahadut—the preparatory school for teachers and rabbis sponsored by the Congregación Israelita Argentina—and the Sunday classes held in the newly opened building of the Temple Libertad. In recognition of the value of Argentine Jewish education, the central office of the Jewish Agency assigned a sum up to 3.5 per cent of the net income of the United Jewish Appeal of Argentina to the local educational system.

### *United Appeal for Israel*

Immediately after the proclamation of the Jewish state in May, 1948, the Argentinian Campaña Unida pro Israel was founded. Including the Keren

Hayesod, Keren Kayemet LeIsrael, World Jewish Congress, ORT, American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), OSE, and Bitachon, the United Appeal launched a drive which was eminently successful. Sums collected in 1948 were 800 to 1,000 per cent larger than those for any previous year. The Jewish community displayed a strong sense of solidarity, and on rare occasions applied effective moral sanctions to a small number of recalcitrant contributors.

### *Zionism*

In an attempt to exploit the favorable atmosphere for Zionism in Argentina that resulted from the founding of the state of Israel, the Consejo Central Sionista—an inter-party organization—with the aid of the Jewish Agency unified Zionist efforts and sponsored the agricultural training and emigration of young pioneers to Israel through *hachsharah* and *aliyah* programs, respectively. Press references to Zionist activities were generally favorable; non-Jewish papers frequently devoted pages and half-pages to Zionist topics. *Critica*, for example, published important extracts of *Trial and Error*, the autobiography of Chaim Weizmann, which later appeared and was widely read in book form.

### *Government and Israel*

Although one of the last of the nations to recognize Israel (February, 1949), Argentina's recognition evoked a thanksgiving celebration which was attended by 2,500 Jewish guests and many high government officials, headed by President Perón. Similar demonstrations and expressions of friendship on the part of General Perón ensued when Pablo Manguel was nominated Minister Plenipotentiary of Argentina in Israel. The Argentine government also received Jacob Tzur, the first Minister Plenipotentiary from Israel, whose functions were to begin in August, 1949, with all honors.

### *Intergroup Relations*

The official attitude toward anti-Semitism was exemplified by the paragraph introduced into the revised constitution adopted in March, 1949, outlawing racial and religious discrimination. With the government taking so firm a stand, it was impossible for Nazi and pro-Nazi elements to engage publicly in their jingoistic activities. Nevertheless, the continued existence of such groups, as well as of several nuclei of Arab anti-Israel agitators, the dissemination of anti-Jewish literature such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and the origin of a great deal of Nazi material in Argentina for distribution abroad—all these phenomena required the continuance of the defense activities of the Instituto Judío Argentino (IJA), which was founded in June, 1948. IJA attempted to enlighten the non-Jewish public through small publications and the introduction of good-will articles in the local press. IJA received considerable moral support from the government's insistence that overt discrimination would not be countenanced.

### *Emigration and Immigration*

The founding of the state of Israel attracted some 300 emigrants from Argentina during the period under review; an equal number was studying the possibility of emigrating in the future. There was, in addition, a constant and increasing stream of tourists to Israel. Jewish immigration into Argentina was still limited to special permits for immediate relatives. It was expected that a larger number of permits would be assigned to Jewish skilled laborers with the settling of the difficulty over illegal immigrants [see above].

### *Personalia*

Important visitors to Argentina included Eliahu Dobkin, in December, 1948, and Itzhak Gruenbaum in June, 1949 (from Israel). Eli Eliashar of Jerusalem visited during the period of the United Appeal, to call special attention to the needs of the Alliance Israélite Française school in Jerusalem. Eliashar's emphasis on the responsibility of the Sephardic community for their brethren in Israel and elsewhere aroused controversy within the Sephardic community.

ABRAHAM MIBASHAN

## BRAZIL

THE BRAZILIAN government's policy toward Jews was generally favorable. Native Jews were exempt from all discrimination and enjoyed full rights as Brazilian citizens. Many were in national government service. Some were granted government scholarships for study abroad. Jews frequently represented Brazil at international congresses. Jewish aliens were secure in their economic and community activities. Zionism, which had been prohibited by the dictatorship of General Getúlio Dornellas Vargas during World War II, enjoyed full freedom at the time of writing. Zionist organizations had their headquarters in the principal streets of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre, and frequently received favorable official attention.

### *Population*

Informed opinion placed the Jewish population of Brazil at 100,000 to 115,000. Of this number approximately one-third resided in the capital, Rio de Janeiro, another third in São Paulo, and the remainder in smaller urban areas. The Quatro Irmãos colony, sponsored by the Jewish Colonization Association, contained approximately 1,500 Jews.

Although vital statistics were lacking, the Jewish population showed a very small natural increase. Increase through immigration was considered unlikely because of the government's unfavorable attitude to Jewish immigration. The government based its opposition on the argument that Jewish immigration would only aggravate the situation in the large, overpopulated cities, citing the meager achievements of Jewish colonization. Would-be Jewish immigrants therefore found Brazil's doors almost hermetically sealed.

TABLE 1  
URBAN CONCENTRATION OF JEWISH POPULATION

<i>City</i>	<i>Number</i>
Rio de Janeiro .....	40,000
São Paulo .....	30,000
Porto Alegre .....	7,500
Recife (Pernambuco) .....	2,000
Belén do Pará .....	2,000
Belo Horizonte .....	1,500
Curityba .....	1,300
Bahia .....	1,200
Santos .....	700

However, there was a more liberal policy in regard to transit visas, and a stream of transitory migrants passed through Brazil en route to Argentina and other countries, leaving a very small sediment in Brazil.

### *Intergroup Relations*

The powerful Fascist Integralist movement had been strongest among alien Germans and Poles during the peak of Nazi influence. But under the constitutional regime instituted by President Eñrico Gaspar Dutra in 1946, anti-Semitism declined noticeably.

### *Economic Situation*

The economic situation was a highly satisfactory one. The war prosperity had enabled many installment peddlers to transfer to more stable commercial enterprises and some even entered industry. The Jews were contributing considerably to Brazil's industrial development. Table 2 describes the occupational distribution of Brazilian Jewry by urban area.

TABLE 2  
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIAN JEWS

<i>Occupational Area</i>	<i>Rio de Janeiro (Per Cent)</i>	<i>São Paulo (Per Cent)</i>	<i>Other Urban Areas (Per Cent)</i>
Commerce and Installment Sales .....	30	10	40
Stable Commerce .....	40	30	45
Industry .....	15	45	5
Laborers and Employees .....	10	10	7
Professionals and Official Functionaries .....	5	5	3

In terms of communal background, Eastern-European Jews comprised about 70 per cent of the total, and showed preference for the various branches of commerce, with a tendency to pass into industry. German-speaking Jews with a strong preference for industry constituted about 20 per cent, while Sephardic Jews accounted for about 10 per cent and were almost exclusively in commerce. The proportion of native Brazilian Jews was not significant nor was that of the naturalized citizens.

The process of integration among these several groups was delayed by differences of language, custom, and religious ritual.

## *Communal Organization*

Communal organization was still in a rudimentary stage in Brazil. In the larger cities there were a number of institutions: synagogues, schools, welfare societies, Zionist centers, and sports and cultural groups. Rio de Janeiro possessed over fifty such organizations; São Paulo, forty-five; Porto Alegre, fifteen; Curitiba, five.

### COORDINATION

However, all of these institutions were independent of each other and there was a lack of coordination. In recent years attempts were made to federate community life on a local scale as a preliminary to national federation. But only in São Paulo were appreciable results achieved. Forty-four societies which were making a beginning at coordinating activities comprised the São Paulo federation, which provided for the deficits of its member organizations through an annual fund drive. In 1947, this drive raised about \$50,000 and in 1948 a third less. It was compensated for the loss, however, by the Brazilian United Campaign for Israel, for which the federation had suspended its separate fund-raising activity.

At the time of writing each of the member organizations of the São Paulo federation was following its own program of activities without any coordination to prevent duplication in such areas as building projects and the expansion of activities.

Federations also existed in Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, and Recife. On May 29 and 30, 1948, representatives of these federations had met in Rio de Janeiro with those from São Paulo to found a Brazilian general federation. A resolution was passed to organize the other communities in the interior. However, nothing or very little was achieved in the direction of implementing this resolution. Brazilian Jewry had barely commenced the development of organized community life.

## *Education*

Jewish education was a subject of general Jewish concern in Brazil. There were thirteen primary and two secondary schools with a total of 1,775 pupils in Rio de Janeiro. In São Paulo there were eight primary and two secondary schools, with an enrollment of 1,100 pupils; in Porto Alegre, one school with 217 pupils; in Curitiba, one primary school with 110 pupils; and in Niteroi, one with 48 pupils. Curitiba and Niteroi were typical of the smaller communities in the country.

These were all schools in which both general and Jewish education programs were conducted. As a result, some of them included a small percentage of non-Jewish students. In Curitiba, there were 18 non-Jews among 110 students; in Porto Alegre, 21 non-Jews among 217 pupils. The *Colegio Hebreu Brasileiro* in Rio de Janeiro included 5 non-Jews in its student body of 400.

It is noteworthy that almost all these educational institutions were housed in buildings which were, for the most part, community property. S. Gelman

and L. Fleitich deserve particular mention for their generosity in making educational facilities available.

#### PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION

In addition to the usual financial problems, these schools faced two fundamental difficulties.

First, motivated by Brazil's concern with national defense against foreign colonies of Germans and Japanese, Brazilian law prohibited the teaching of foreign languages in primary schools, and religious instruction was limited to two hours a week. Hence it was necessary to teach Hebrew outside of school hours.

Second, there was a pronounced shortage of teaching personnel. The number of teachers available was very small and they frequently had to divide their time among several schools. To remedy this situation, a teachers' seminary was organized in São Paulo three years previously. In Rio de Janeiro one such seminary was opened at the beginning of the 1949 school year. The faculties of these seminaries consisted of the teachers in the local schools, who gave up their evenings to make the seminaries possible.

#### *Religious Life*

During 1948-49 there were forty-one synagogues in Rio de Janeiro, twenty-six in São Paulo, and five in Porto Alegre. There were two rabbis in Rio, three in São Paulo, and one in Porto Alegre. These three cities also had other religious functionaries, such as ritual slaughterers and circumcisers. In the smaller towns, where synagogues usually were located in the Jewish school buildings, there were no rabbis and very few other religious functionaries.

Dietary laws were observed by a small number in the three large centers, where there were several kosher butcher shops. In general, the smaller the town, the less the observance. On the other hand, such basic rites as circumcision, religious marriage, and burial were strictly observed by the large majority, although the Sabbath and festival observances were not.

There was a noticeable intensification of religious life, as evidenced in the large percentage of Jewish children attending schools of a religious character. In Rio de Janeiro they formed 23 per cent of the total enrollment of Jewish students and in São Paulo, 35 per cent.

#### *Cultural Life*

The various communities made vigorous efforts to preserve Jewish culture and to interest the younger generation in Yiddish and Hebrew literature.

There were three Jewish libraries in Rio de Janeiro, two in São Paulo, three in Porto Alegre, and one in each of the other important cities.

Some efforts were made to make Judaica accessible in Portuguese in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Enrique Yussin founded the Jewish Book Lovers' Club, a publishing venture which at the time of writing had issued Simon Dubnow's abridged Jewish history, a translation of the Song of Songs, the Passover Hagadah, and a history of the Jews in Brazil. A Portuguese trans-

lation of the Old Testament was announced for early publication. Each edition included 300 de luxe copies for the subscribers of the Book Lovers' Club, a device that permitted the sale of the popular edition at reasonable prices. A collection of short stories translated from the Yiddish appeared in São Paulo, and other similar volumes were in preparation.

The Jewish press included two Yiddish weeklies in São Paulo: *The Jewish Press* and *Our Voice*. There was also a Portuguese weekly, *Aonde Vamos*, edited in Rio de Janeiro by Aaron Neumann. Argentine Jewish publications in Yiddish and Spanish had a wide circulation in central and southern Brazil, while in northern Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro the Yiddish press of the United States was widely read. A bulletin in Portuguese and German was published by the Jewish Religious Association, which represented the community of German-speaking Jews of Rio de Janeiro.

### *International Relations*

Despite the fact that they belonged geographically to Latin America, Brazilian Jews did not identify themselves with the communities of the continent. Though there is little difference between Spanish and Portuguese, it was nevertheless sufficient to form a barrier between the Jewish communities speaking the two languages in Latin America.

Moreover, Brazil is geographically closer to Europe and the United States than to Argentina, which has the largest Jewish community in Latin America, and the Brazilian Jewish leaders were more influenced by Israel and the United States than by Argentina.

There was a lively exchange of visitors between Brazil and Israel. Brazilian Jewish merchants and industrialists visited Israel during the first year of its independence, and young people went to Israel, some to settle there, others to complete their education.

Almost all of the emissaries of the Jewish Agency who came to South America visited Brazil.