

# Latin America

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## Argentina

### *Domestic Affairs*

**W**HEN MARIA ESTELA MARTINEZ DE PERÓN, against her custom, stayed late at Government House on Tuesday night, March 23rd, . . . she was advised to take a helicopter to speed her home. In the air, the pilot told Mrs. Perón . . . that one of the turbines was not functioning properly. . . . When the helicopter touched down at the metropolitan airport, three senior officers were awaiting her. . . . One of them told her: "Señora, you are under arrest." Mrs. Perón was asked to give her handbag to an officer. He took a small revolver from it and gave the bag back to her. (Buenos Aires *Herald*, March 26, 1976.)

Thus ended 34 months of Peronist government which had brought Argentina to the brink of bankruptcy, inflated the already overblown state bureaucracy to literally unmanageable proportions, and claimed thousands and thousands of lives—no one will ever know how many—in political violence at the hands of unrestrained leftist and rightist death squads. Ten hours later the commanders of the army, navy, and air force took office as a government junta. Commander-in-Chief of the Army Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla was sworn in on March 29, 1976, in an austere ceremony as the 38th president of Argentina, the eighth military figure to hold that office in the last 30 years. Time proved that the coup had been planned for months. The main concerns of the new régime were reorganization of the government, the crackdown on guerrillas, the recovery of the economy, and recovery from moral bankruptcy.

### *Government*

The Congress building remained open and a Legislative Advisory Council was appointed to discuss and propose new laws to be promulgated by the junta. The Act of Institutional Responsibility of June 23 stripped the deposed President Isabel Perón and 35 others in her government of their political rights and barred them from holding public office. José B. Gelbard, former economy minister, was stripped of his citizenship. On December 6 Federal Judge Tulio García Moritan asked the United States government to order the arrest of Gelbard, who was living in Washington,

D.C., on charges of fraud against the state and a deep involvement in the scandal of the Solidarity Crusade, a nonofficial charity agency; subsidized with public funds, which acted as an extension of the Peronist administration and was chaired by Mrs. Perón herself. At the end of the year, former president Héctor J. Cámpora was still living at the Mexican Embassy in Buenos Aires, which had granted him asylum. The corruption, embezzlement, gross irresponsibility, and inefficiency of the Peronist regime that were exposed after the coup d'état defied description, and hardly a day passed when the daily press did not divulge new crimes.

On December 16 President Videla established a ministry of planning, headed by General Díaz Bessone, who stated that he will need three years to project the future structure of Argentina.

### *Terrorism*

Despite the insistence of government and press that terrorism had been checked, it continued to claim many lives at the end of the year. Official figures on December 23 brought the year's total of those killed in political violence to 1,328. Leading newspapers claimed the real figure was much higher. Some of the most bloody terrorist attacks included the bombing, on July 2, of the headquarters of the federal police security branch, leaving 21 killed and 63 wounded. Federal police chief General Cesáreo Cardozo died in his bed on June 19 when a bomb, planted in his home by a close friend of his daughter, exploded. On October 2, a bomb exploded under a platform in the main army camp, on which President Videla had stood only a few seconds earlier. On October 17 a similar explosion wounded 50 persons in a club for military personnel. On November 9 provincial headquarters was bombed, leaving many wounded and several dead. On December 15 a powerful bomb destroyed the main auditorium of the Planning Department of the Ministry of Defense, killing 13 and wounding 18. This marked the sixth terrorist bomb explosion in top security areas since the March 24 coup.

The most horrifying example of local violence occurred on August 20 when 30 bodies, many of them dismembered by powerful explosives, were found on the outskirts of Pilar, a town some 50 miles from Buenos Aires. It was believed that all were murdered by right-wing death squads. Government sources attributed this act to "the dementia of irrational groups who seek to disturb the peace and tranquility of the Argentine people and also to create a negative image of the country abroad." (Buenos Aires *Herald*, August 21, 1976.)

The country was shocked by the murder of three priests and their two young assistants in St. Patrick's Church in Belgrano, on Sunday morning, July 4. Juan Carlos Cardinal Aramburu, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Papal Nuncio Pio Laghi, and a hundred priests were present at the heartbreaking funeral. Other priests, nuns, and Catholic leaders were murdered throughout the year.

There were in Argentina some 25,000 political refugees, of whom 11,000 were registered with the U.N. Commission for Refugees. In June, 24 of them were

kidnapped, tortured, and threatened with death by 40 armed men who had gained entry to their hotel rooms by identifying themselves as policemen. That was the time, too, when former president of Bolivia General Juan José Torres, politicians Zelma Michelini and Héctor Gutierrez Ruiz, as well as several Uruguayan exiles were murdered in the streets of Buenos Aires. Speculating on the identity of the killers, John Tindall of the *Herald* (June 13) asked: "Could they have been left-wing guerrillas, masquerading as police? or is the old Triple A still around, even if it doesn't leave its visiting cards anymore?" At year's end people were still asking the same question. On December 10 the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, an organization established by church and political leaders, and recognized by the government, addressed a letter to President Videla, asking for full information on security operations, detentions, and prison conditions. The government admitted having released 1,423 political prisoners who had been held by the executive branch of the government since March 24. By the end of the year 114 foreigners, among them several priests, had been expelled from the country.

The most important gain in the battle against terrorism was the confiscation on July 10 of two large libraries and printing plants of the terrorists located in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. According to a government statement, one of the libraries "contained the most important and complete archives and bibliography belonging to the ERP (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo—People's Revolutionary Army) leadership. On the same day, the death penalty for guerrillas charged with killing policemen, soldiers, and government officials became effective. On July 19, in a gun battle in Villa Martelli, ERP leaders Mario Roberto Santucho and José Benito Urteaga were killed.

ERP had operated for six years, and although, at year's end, there were probably some small cells still in action, it was generally thought that the back of the organization had been broken. On September 1 nine illegal arsenals and steel plants manufacturing arms for ERP and the Montoneros, six of them owned by foreigners, were raided by the police. An official army communiqué stated that they were ready to manufacture 10,000 Carl Gustav machine guns. James Neilson of the *Herald* wanted to know (September 5): "who is supposed to use the weapons . . . are there still likely to be 10,000 active terrorists who need the machine guns around? in other words, the security forces' haul was far bigger than one would have expected at this stage of the game."

The Argentine press was in a particularly vulnerable position. In August ADEPA, the Association of Argentine Newspaper Publishers, wrote to President Videla that "the local press has been the target for distortion, pressure, terrorism, and even murder the press must be given freedom to carry out its task." The La Plata *El Día*, whose late editor David Kraiselburd had been abducted and murdered by Peronist terrorists in July 1974, again was the target of terrorism. Kraiselburd's two-year-old grandson David was kidnapped at the beginning of September. Raúl Kraiselburd, the infant's father and present editor of the newspaper, left the country in October, and at the end of the year there was no news about

the kidnapped child or his father. The prestigious Córdoba newspaper *Los Principios* and the Corrientes *Epoca* were closed in September, and *Los Principios's* editor Ricardo Jurado and several members of the staff were arrested for criticizing the Armed Forces.

The following statement in the *Herald* of July 9 summarized the climate that continued to prevail at the end of the year:

Argentines have been cauterized by violence to accept almost anything. A political crime has to be on a big scale or have a peculiarly grisly twist to penetrate the public consciousness. The mere murder of some unfortunate—assumed to have been guilty of something (because otherwise why would anybody bother to murder him?)—is regarded as less significant than some fatuous statement by some fatuous politician.

### *Economic Conditions*

Economy Minister José Martínez de Hoz took over what surely was the most difficult portfolio in the new cabinet. In a two-and-one-half-hour radio and TV address he stated that the rate of inflation had risen by 566 per cent from March 1975 to March 1976. He projected that if the trends at the time of the coup were to continue unabated, it would reach 4,670 per cent (sic) in 1977. Argentina's foreign debt was \$8.35 billion, a total of \$10 billion including interest. The country had an army of 1.7 million pensioners, an incredibly high number for a working force of barely nine million people. There was a housing shortage of some two million units and, according to the minister, a civil service with an excess of 350,000 state workers. There was an unmet demand for 700,000 telephones. In May Ford Motor Argentina initiated a five-week production shutdown because of three months of unsold production.

A new foreign investment law passed in August removed the restrictions of previous legislation and established the basis for attracting foreign capital. The inflation rate for 1976 was 520 per cent, according to the First National Bank of Boston. In September the State Telephone Enterprise reached an agreement with Siemens and Standard Electric, after a contract dispute which began in 1973. In October and November the automobile factory workers and the light and power unions went on strike. Many economic analysts felt that the key problems no longer involved security, but rather economic conditions. The question was how long the Argentine worker would stand for his drastically reduced purchasing power. According to the *Herald* of July 17, "Real wages dropped by 41 per cent in the 34 months between May 25, 1973 (when the Perón government came into power) and March 1 [1976]. During that time nominal wages increased by more than 750 per cent."

The balance of trade deficit for the first seven months of 1976 was \$512.2 million, as compared with \$680.3 million for the corresponding 1975 period. Economists at year's end spoke of a positive trade balance of some \$800 million, as compared with

a \$1 billion deficit in 1975. At the end of the year, Argentina was producing 90 per cent of its petroleum needs, having increased production by 12 per cent in 1976. Money in circulation in December 1976 was 464,826 million pesos, as compared with 3,688 million in December 1966. The United States Department of Agriculture reported a record wheat harvest in Argentina of between 12 and 13 million tons, with seven million tons surplus. The total grain production was 26,300,000 metric tons. Secretary of Agriculture Mario Cadenas Madariaga said in July that Argentina's tillable land could easily be doubled: "After feeding Argentina's 25,000,000 people, there will still be enough left over to feed up to 100 million other people."

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

### *Demography*

The Jewish population estimate of 475,000 continued to be generally accepted abroad, despite the fact that demographic studies by the Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University insist that there are no more than 300,000 Jews in Argentina (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], pp.517-18). The vast majority of Jews continued to live in greater Buenos Aires, with sizeable communities in the provinces, in order of importance: Rosario, Córdoba, Santa Fé, La Plata, Tucumán, Mendoza, and Bahía Blanca. There were some 70,000 Sephardic Jews in Argentina. A new tendency was noted by the Federation of Jewish Communities, namely that Jewish families were moving from small towns to somewhat larger communities in the interior. In the Argentine Mesopotamia (the provinces of Entre Ríos, Corrientes, and Misiones) Jews have moved to four cities: Concordia, Concepción del Uruguay, Paraná and Villaguay. The Jewish population of Trelew, province of Chubut, has also increased, from three or four families a few years ago to a present population of 60 families. The lack of more precise population information underscores the need for serious demographic study of Argentine Jewry.

### *Communal Organizations*

During the year, the most violent in modern Argentine history, Jewish communal life continued normally. Many analysts felt that assimilation was increasing at a dangerous rate. Most Jewish organizations faced severe economic difficulties in the face of the continuing monetary instability and inflation.

The umbrella organization of Jewish communities in Argentina was the Federación de Comunidades Israelitas (Federation of Jewish Communities). Committees to service the members of the community operated in Rosario, Córdoba, Mendoza, Tucumán and Bahía Blanca. José Lieberman, who directed the coordination of Jewish education and communal activities, personally visited these areas throughout the years. Illustrative of the apathy of the community was a report in the weekly

*Hamilá* of Bahía Blanca, in January, that only community officials attended the annual meeting at which new officers were to be elected.

The Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), the 35,000-member central Ashkenazi organization continued to be the largest Jewish organization in the country. The average yearly membership was as low as four dollars! The number of deaths registered by AMIA between January 1 and November 31, 1976, was 2,345. Despite the plan of AMIA president Mario Gorenstein to unite the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities, the two groups maintained separate cemeteries, synagogues, philanthropic agencies, and campaigns in support of Israel.

DAIA (Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas) was the representative body of Argentine Jewry before the national government and the press. Its president continued to be Nehemias Resnizky. *Informativo*, published by DAIA five times during the year, was almost completely devoted to antidefamation material. DAIA also continued to sponsor the Centro de Estudios Sociales (Center for Social Studies).

The Organización Sionista Argentina (OSA) had three presidents in 1976: Lázaro Rubinson, Simón Edenburg, and Segismundo Dresner. Its massive membership campaign in April and May was fairly successful. There were 20,000 members. In May the OSA women's division, Organización Sionista Femenina Argentina (OSFA), marked its 50th anniversary, which was celebrated with a variety of cultural, and literary activities. Its membership throughout the country was more than 30,000.

The Jewish Sports Club in Greater Buenos Aires was next to AMIA in membership. The Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA) which also celebrated its 50th anniversary, was by far the most important, with over 21,500 members. Besides its sports program—in July it opened the only Jewish golf club in Argentina—it offered a plethora of cultural and youth activities. The SHA theatre was the outstanding Jewish theatre in Buenos Aires and was used for many community functions, concerts, dramatic presentations, and cinema festivals. In cooperation with the Jewish Agency, SHA maintained the Escuela de Instructores y Técnicos en Trabajo Institucional (EDITTI; school for institutional leadership training) in cooperation with the Jewish Agency. Its director was Professor Abraham Golek. Among the cultural activities sponsored by SHA was its chorus, its troupe of Israeli dancers, its popular song combo (Manginot Ba-Shirá). It also sponsored a one-hour weekly radio program. SHA's library was the largest found in any Jewish institution, with 35,748 readers, who borrowed a total of 21,720 books written in Spanish and 2,921 more in Yiddish, Hebrew, and other languages, and 10,907 visitors who used its consultation service in 1976.

The more than 10,000-member Club Náutico Hacoah celebrated its 40th anniversary with the dedication of an 11-story building in the center of Buenos Aires. The main sports area for swimming, boating, and athletics was in the Tigre-Delta region, some 35 kilometers outside of Buenos Aires, and occupied some 250 square meters.

Besides its traditional sports and athletics program, Maccabi organized study

groups and university seminars. Its membership exceeded 9,000.

YIVO (Institute for Jewish Research), offered courses in Yiddish, maintained a library and museum, and sponsored research in Yiddish literature.

Other important organizations were: the 76-year-old 240-bed Israelita Ezrah hospital, which was in serious financial difficulties during the year; B'nai B'rith; the Latin American office of the American Joint Distribution Committee; the 61-year-old Hogar Israelita Argentino para Ancianos y Niños, a home for 700 aged people and orphans, which also remained in serious financial trouble; Consejo Argentino de Mujeres Israelitas (CAMI; Argentine Council of Jewish Women), which continued to sponsor its golden-age club and occupational therapy services, and the Asociación Filantrópica Israelita (AFI), which maintained a model home for some 190 German-Jewish aged in San Miguel. The South American office of the American Jewish Committee continued its community services under the direction of Jacobo Kovadloff.

One of the leading Sephardi organizations was the Club Atlético Sefaradí Argentino (CASA), a 15-year-old athletic and sports club with over 10,000 members. It maintained a kosher dining room and was the only club that was closed on the Jewish holidays and on the Sabbath. Asociación Comunidad Israelita Sefardí de Buenos Aires (ACIS; Jewish Sephardic Community of Buenos Aires), which united Jews of Turkish and Balkan origin; Asociación Sefaradí Argentina (AISA), the organization of Jews of Syrian-Lebanese origin; Delegación de Entidades Sefaraditas (DESA), which coordinated Sephardi philanthropic activity in support of Israel, and the Ente Coordinador Sefaradí Argentino (ECSA), which attempted to achieve communal integration among all Sephardim in Argentina.

The Plenario Permanente de Presidentes (PPP), an organization of presidents of the leading Jewish agencies, was founded at the end of 1975. In the course of its many meetings in 1976, it set up the Fondo Unificado Comunitario (United Community Fund), which was to run only one fund-raising campaign a year for both local and Israeli funds. This plan was dropped in August, when Yosef Almogi of the Jewish Agency objected to a combined drive. Nonetheless, in September Mario Gorenstein, the president of the Fondo Unificado Comunitario, officially launched the campaign for local needs only.

### *Communal Activities*

The concern of Jewish leaders over the changes in Jewish life was echoed by Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Harkavi, representing the department of culture of the World Jewish Congress, at a special session of the Wa'ad Ha-kehillot and AMIA in March:

I cannot help but emphasize the tremendous difference between Argentine Jewish life 25 or 30 years ago, with that of today. . . I well remember the tens of thousands of Jews in Luna Park, celebrating their identification with Israel. This is hardly the case today. . . Years ago, one might have thought that Argentine

Jewry was more profoundly rooted in Jewish tradition than American Jewry. The truth seems to be quite different today. Argentine Jewry is better described as "gipsyism." It is absolutely presumptuous to define Argentine Jewry as a replica of Eastern European Jewry.

At the same meeting, Marcos Najlis of Tucumán urgently pleaded for a program of "clarification and the recuperation of our backsliding youth." And Marc Turkow spoke of "the grave tragedy of our youth, which each day is more disorientated and further removed from the reality of Jewish existence." The wholesale abandonment by Jewish youth of the traditional, and even nontraditional, Jewish organizations was the common denominator of most Jewish oratory. Although antisemitic activity in Argentina (see below) was given enormous publicity in 1976, for local Jewish thinkers the most serious issue facing Argentine Jewry was the far less sensational disintegration of organized Jewish life, which manifested itself in apathy and disinterest. Said DAIA president Nehemias Resnizky: "External aggression is not the main problem which is eroding Jewish existence in Argentina, rather, it is internal weakness and corrosion" (*Mundo Israelita*, December 11, 1976).

In January Dor Hemshekh, the educational organization of the World Zionist Organization for the Second Generation, successfully completed a seminar which trained leaders to conduct activities for Jews between the ages of 25 and 40. During the same month the nonaligned movement Hechalutz Lamerchav held its annual convention in Buenos Aires. A convention of Latin American Zionist University Youth, with 80 participants from Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, was held in March in Chapadmalal, province of Buenos Aires.

In April numerous significant memorial meetings marked the 33rd anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. DAIA, AMIA, and OSA sponsored the main event, which took place in the SHA theater. The meeting was marred by an outbreak of catcalls from youths, aimed against the president of DAIA, another illustration of the serious rift within Argentine Jewry.

In May the 70th anniversary of the American Jewish Committee was observed at its annual meeting in Washington, within the framework of the American Bicentennial celebrations. Among various Latin-American Jewish leaders who attended were Nehemias Resnizky, as representative of the Argentine Jewish community, and Jacobo Kovadloff, director of the Committee's Buenos Aires office. Both reported on the political situation and the local Jewish community in Argentina to the Committee and to other American Jewish organizations. In September Kovadloff and leaders of the American Jewish Committee met with Argentine Foreign Minister Rear Admiral César A. Guzzetti, who happened to be in New York to attend the UN meeting, and Carlos Ortiz de Rozas, Argentine ambassador to the UN. De Rozas voiced strong opposition to the antisemitic manifestations in Argentina and rejected the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. Both condemned international terrorism and said Argentina would make a determined effort to preserve civil rights.

In the beginning of May, to usher in Holocaust memorial week, She'erit

ha-Peletah, the organization of concentration camps survivors, held memorial services for the Jewish victims of Nazism at the monument to the martyrs in Tablada cemetery. Other meetings were held in the Ateneo Cultural Moshe Sharett (AMIA's student dormitory), Midrasha ha-Ivrit, and the Comunidad Bet El, as well as in communities of the interior.

Professor Jorge L. García Venturini received the Baron de Hirsch prize in June for his contribution to the clarification of the role of Judaism in Western civilization. Two memorial meetings were held in September, one by the Society of Jewish Writers in honoring the Yiddish poet Melech Ravitch, the other by the Latin-American section of the World Jewish Congress honoring Father Pierre de Contenson.

The third Latin-American Congress of Agudath Israel was held in Buenos Aires in May. In October the 13th plenary session of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) Latin-American office, which celebrated WJC's 40th anniversary, discussed Nazi propaganda in Argentina, as well as Third World anti-Israel tactics, particularly as it applied to Latin America. A month later, it held the first Latin American colloquium on cultural pluralism, with the participation of leading Christian and Jewish intellectuals throughout Latin America. National press coverage of the sessions was favorable.

The Comité Argentino de Estudios sobre la Situación de los Judíos en la U.R.S.S. (Argentine Committee for Soviet Jewry) was represented at the Second World Conference for Soviet Jewry, held in Brussels in February. The Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías en la Argentina ICUF, the Argentine Jewish Communist organization, attacked the conference as "provocative" in the daily *Clarín*, one of the leading Buenos Aires newspapers, and condemned world Jewish preoccupation with Russian Jewry.

In May DAIA sent a strong protest to the Russian ambassador, condemning the Soviet Union's treatment of Col. Efrim Davidovich of Minsk, who died in March 1976 after having been refused an exit visa and stripped of his rank. The 24th anniversary of the murder of the Russian Jewish writers was marked at a well attended memorial meeting in August. In June, Genya Penson, mother of prisoner of conscience Boris Penson, spoke in a number of Jewish institutions, describing the plight of Soviet Jews.

### *Jewish Education*

Abraham Gunberg was the new head of AMIA's Wa'ad Ha-hinnukh (board of education), which administered the Jewish school system of greater Buenos Aires. There were 30 primary schools in the city of Buenos Aires and 15 in the outlying areas of the city, with a total of 7,901 pupils. The interior of the country had 37 primary schools with 2,138 pupils. Another 602 students were nonmatriculated, making the total population of primary all-day-school students 10,641. There were 5,679 children in 46 kindergartens, 4,412 of them in the greater Buenos Aires area.

On the secondary level, there were five all-day high schools, eight complementary high schools, and three Hebrew institutes. The total number of students in these schools was 3,015, of whom 2,259 were in the greater Buenos Aires. Attendance in secondary Orthodox *yeshivot* was 194. Between 1975 and 1976 enrollment in primary and secondary schools decreased by 11 per cent.

Post-high-school Jewish education was offered by the Agnon Institute to 207 students preparing to teach in Jewish kindergarten and by Midrasha ha-Ivrit, AMIA's highest institute of learning to 231 students. In September Rabbi Mordechai Edery, the director of Midrasha ha-Ivrit, offered refresher courses for secondary-school teachers.

In April the Centro de Estudios Judaicos (Center of Judaic Studies), under the auspices of Tel Aviv University, began its first academic year with some 80 students. The director of these courses was Yacov Rubel. The Organización de Maestros Israelitas en la Argentina (Organization of Argentine Jewish Teachers) had some 11,000 members, many of whom, however, were not in teaching posts. At the end of 1976 the school system had a deficit of some \$900,000, approximately one quarter of the entire cost of Jewish education. In June Haim Finkielsteyn, head of the Jewish Agency's Department of Education and Culture for the Diaspora, declared that the Argentine community should finance its own education system and not depend on funds from Israel and other countries. In July the Wa'ad Ha-hinnukh ended earlier fragmentation by establishing a central education department to serve the entire school system.

Courses in the Hebrew language, Jewish literature, and Judaism, sponsored by the South American office of the American Jewish Committee and coordinated by Jacobo Kovadloff, continued to be offered at the School of Oriental Studies of El Salvador Roman Catholic University, Buenos Aires. ORT continued to have morning, afternoon, and evening sessions for some 550 students, many of whom also studied Hebrew.

## *Religion*

Despite certain indications of a limited rebirth of religious activity, for the vast majority of Argentine Jews the synagogue was an all but forgotten vestige of old-world Jewish life. It was estimated that no more than 25,000 Jews attended High Holy Day services in some 55 synagogues of greater Buenos Aires. The many hitherto relatively active Orthodox synagogues had only *minyanim* on the second day of Rosh Ha-shanah. On Yom Kippur, however, the main Orthodox synagogues were crowded. Besides the Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina (Liberat Street Temple), the oldest synagogue in the city, there was the leading Conservative Comunidad Bet El, which had some 4,000 worshipers in its two synagogues. Bet El celebrated its bar-mitzvah year with numerous cultural, educational, and religious programs, directed by its rabbis, Marshall T. Meyer and Mordechai Edery.

The Jewish community received traditional Rosh Ha-shanah messages from Pres-

ident General Jorge Rafael Videla, as well as from other government and church leaders.

The Orthodox rabbinate, headed by AMIA's Chief Rabbi Menachem Fitterman, ran departments of public relations and clarification under Rabbis Menachem Gordon and David Knapheis; family affairs under Rabbi Shlomoh Benhamú, and kashrut under the supervision of all four. In October Rabbi Fitterman returned to Israel. Rabbi Benhamú, who temporarily replaced him as chief rabbi, represented the Jewish community at a luncheon for the country's religious leaders, given by President Videla in Government House.

By the end of the year 17 communities in greater Buenos Aires had become affiliated with the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano, whose dean was Rabbi Marshall Meyer. Rabbi Roberto Graetz (Reform), Latin American director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, served his own synagogue, Emanu-El, as well as the Lamroth Hakol community (Conservative), with Seminario student Eliseo Rozenwasser assisting. Among other spiritual leaders were Rabbi Abraham Skorka (Conservative) of Benei Tikwah; Rabbi Saddia Benzaquen (Orthodox) of the Moroccan synagogue; Rabbi José Oppenheimer (Orthodox) of Ahdut Israel; Rabbi Bernardo Krosinsky of the Max Nordau Temple; Rabbi Itzjak Schebar (Orthodox) of the Yesode Hadat synagogue.

### *Press and Publications*

The dearth of Jewish publications continued in 1976, partly as a result of economic instability, galloping inflation, and lack of demand. The annual book fair of AMIA was held in October/November. Only 7,067 books were sold, compared with 24,356 in 1974. The breakdown was: 4,939 books in Spanish; 1,101 books in Hebrew; 560 religious books; 467 books in Yiddish.

Acervo Cultural published the complete works, in five volumes, of Philo of Alexandria, translated from the original Greek by José María Triviño, as well as Josy Eisenberg's *History of the Jewish People*. Nahum Goldmann's volume on Israel was published under the title *Adónde va Israel?* The Schulbibliothek of the Sholem Aleichem Central School published *De Campo y Bosque* ("From the Country and the Woods"), a book of Yiddish poems by Mates Gal.

DAIA published a number of significant pamphlets during the year, among them *El Legado de San Martin* ("The Legacy of San Martin"); *Retrato de un Antisemita* ("Portrait of an Antisemite"), by Jean Paul Sartre; *Mecánica Mental del Antisemitismo* ("The Mental Mechanics of Antisemitism"), by Sebastian Soler; *Significado del Racismo* ("The Significance of Racism"), by Jacques Maritain; *Antisemitismo y Cristianismo* ("Antisemitism and Christianity"), by Jorge García Venturini; *Modernos Mitos Políticos* ("Modern Political Myths"), by Ernst Cassirer; *Tercera Revolución: la O.E.A. y los derechos humanos* ("The Third Revolution: The O.A.S. and Human Rights"), by Natan Lerner; *Las Minorías Nacionales de la Unión Soviética* ("National Minorities in Soviet Russia"), by Carlos S. Fayt; *Obediencia*

a *Ordenes Criminales* ("Obedience to Criminal Orders"), by Stanley Milgram, and *Qué es el Sionismo? Qué es la DAIA?* ("What is Zionism? What is the DAIA?"), by Yaacov Tsur.

The Latin American office of the American Jewish Committee published three pamphlets: *Cinco siglos de historia: una crónica de la vida judía en la Argentina* ("Five Centuries of History: A Chronicle of Jewish Life in Argentina"), by Alberto Klein; *Aportes de la colonización agraria judía a la economía nacional* ("Contributions of Jewish Farm Settlements to the National Economy"), by José Liebermann, and *Con Brío y vigor: una visión de Ben Gurión* ("With Strength and Spirit: A Vision of David Ben Gurion), by Shimon Peres. The first two were introduced at a special public meeting, sponsored jointly by the American Jewish Committee office, the Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina, the Argentine B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Museum, the Baron de Hirsch Center and the Argentine Jewish Institute for Culture and Information, which served as a tribute to Jewish immigration and to the authors of the pamphlets. The Committee also resumed publication of *Informativo* (Newsletter) for Jewish community leaders and journalists, with four issues published in 1976.

Biblioteca Popular Judía (the Popular Jewish Library), published by the Latin American section of the World Jewish Congress, celebrated its tenth anniversary in April. Thus far, it produced 180 booklets, 12 of them in 1976, with a total circulation of 700,000. WJC also continued to publish its fortnightly news bulletin (OJI) and instituted a special service for non-Jewish newspapers and magazines. The Latin American Zionist University Federation published its third pamphlet, commemorating the Holocaust. The new popular monthly magazine *Plural*, launched by SHA and CASA in August, had a circulation of 15,000. Relatively little space was devoted to Jewish themes.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of *Davar*, SHA in October published a special number, edited by B.E. Koremblit. It was the only issue to appear in 1976.

The AMIA board of directors met in March in a special session, to which a number of Jewish journalists were invited, to discuss the imminent bankruptcy of *Di Presse*, the only Yiddish daily in Argentina. However, at year's end it continued to appear despite persistent rumors of closure. The Jewish weeklies, the German-Spanish *Jüdisches Wochenblatt* and *Mundo Israelita*, organ of the Mapai party now in its 53rd year of publication, continued to appear, as did the Mapam fortnightly *Nueva Sion* and the Spanish fortnightly *La Luz*.

The students of the Midrasha ha-Ivrit published the Hebrew Language *Darom*. The Spanish quarterly *Maj'Shavot*, published by the World Council of Synagogues and the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano, completed its 15th year of uninterrupted publication.

### *Relations with Israel*

In general, the Argentine press reacted extremely favorably to Israel's position on the Palestinians and a reconvening of the Geneva Conference. *La Nación*, in

March, condemned the Palestinian action in Lebanon and warned Israel "to take careful note of their [the Palestinians] actions, which should serve you as an eloquent example."

The former rector of the University of La Plata, Dr. Carlos S. Bianchi, wrote to Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin in January 1976, expressing his most sincere feelings of solidarity with the people of Israel, as well as his total rejection of the U.N. anti-Zionist resolution. In a statement to *Mundo Israelita* in November, Minister of Foreign Relations Admiral César Augusto Guzzetti declared, "should the question of Zionism and racism come up again in the United Nations, Argentina will vote against any such equation."

The entire country, Christians and Jews, was electrified by the success of the Entebbe raid in July (see article on Israel). Without exception, the Argentine press was unstinting in its admiration for Israel's action. The Buenos Aires *Herald*, one of Israel's staunchest friends, stated: "Little Israel has shown the world the proper procedure with international terrorists." Of course, the ICUF criticized the Entebbe action. An estimated six million people watched the TV program, "Around the World," dedicated to Israel in August.

Altogether about 18,000 Argentine Jews have settled in Israel since 1948.

In Argentina, Israel Ambassador Ram Nirgad continued his extraordinarily active and creative diplomatic mission, appearing and speaking at hundreds of private and public meetings, and on television and radio programs. In April Menachem Karmi left his post as minister to the Israel embassy in Buenos Aires to become ambassador to Panama. Argentina's new ambassador to Israel Dr. Enrique Ross was received by DAIA, the Argentine-Israeli Chamber of Commerce, AMIA, and other organizations in September before taking up his post in Israel. An important meeting was held in Buenos Aires in August at which Ambassador Nirgad, Yosef Almogi, and Simon Edenburg, president of the Argentine Zionist Organization, debated the central issues in Argentine Zionism.

The 28th anniversary of the State of Israel was celebrated in all important Jewish organizations throughout the country. The principal gathering was at the Metro theater on May 16 under the auspices of AMIA, DAIA, and OSA. Ambassador Nirgad spoke at all large celebrations, as well as on radio and television. For the first time, a concert in honor of the day, with Israeli pianist Ilan Rogoff and the symphony orchestra conducted by Simon Blech, took place at the Colón theater.

In December, at the ceremony at which Segismundo Dresner was installed as president of the Zionist Organization of Argentina, outgoing president Simon Edenberg stated: "One of our chief problems has been our failure to enlist healthy self-criticism with regard to the activities of the political parties that make up our movement. Another of our failures has been our inability to attract nonaffiliated Jews to our activities."

Among the important visitors from Israel during the year were Yosef Almogi, Haim Finkielsteyn, Colonel Mordechai Bar-On, and Shimon Naveh of the Jewish Agency; David Moushine of the Weizmann Institute; the political leaders Menachem Begin and Moshe Tov; journalist Aryeh Avidor; Keren Kayyemet director

Shimon Ben Shemesh, and Israel Peled and Bezalel Weinshall of the World Maccabi Union.

### *Antisemitism*

The significant rise of virulent antisemitism (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 346-48) continued in 1976 to the point where it occupied the larger part of the space given by the world's Jewish press to Argentine Jewry. There is no doubt that antisemitism was a serious and powerful force in Buenos Aires; but neither is there any doubt in this writer's mind that the problem was taken out of context and sensationalized. No one can deny that there were violent attacks on synagogues and Jewish schools. At the same time, it must not be overlooked that proportionately there were many more attacks on Catholic churches, priests, nuns, and Catholic schools. At a press conference in London in December, Father Patrick Rice, a deported Irish Roman Catholic missionary, stated that he was subjected to electric shocks and water torture during his two-month detention. When he identified himself as a priest, he said, he was beaten and told, "Now you'll find out that the Romans were very civilized towards the early Christians compared with what's going to happen to you."

In January offices of *Di Presse* were daubed with antisemitic slogans under the signature of Patria Argentina Nacionalista Integral (Argentine National Fatherland Movement). The well-known Jew-baiter Horacio Calderón, director of press and public relations of the University of Buenos Aires and author of *Argentina Judía* (AJYB, 1976 [Vol. 76], p. 14), made a violently antisemitic attack on Radio Argentina on January 13, which moved DAIA to protest to the university. In February Calderón went to Bolivia to attend an Islamic-Christian colloquium. He sent a letter to Libya's President Col. Muammar Qaddafi, in which he wrote: "Judaism is the corrupting cancer of all civilization. . . . the Jews have brought our nation to a state of convulsion." The rector of the Buenos Aires university disclaimed any responsibility on the part of the university for Calderón's actions or declaration.

In Santa Fé in January, the Maccabi Club and the Sociedad Hebrea Sefaradí were severely damaged by bombs. During February Radio Argentina continued its antisemitic broadcasts with an hour-and-a-half interview of the consul general of Kuwait. At the end of the month Ediciones La Camisa published a book of viciously antisemitic propaganda, *Venceremos* ("We Shall Overcome"), by Gabriel Ruiz de los Llanos, who was also interviewed on television in March. Another of his books, *El Mejor Enemigo es el Enemigo Muerto* ("The Best Enemy is a Dead Enemy"), appeared in the fall.

In March there appeared in many bookstores throughout the country *Los Protocolos de los Sabios de Sión y la Subversión Mundial* ("The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and World Subversion"), by Aurelio Salleirei, which charges international Jewry with being "the mother of Communist subversion . . . responsible for revolutionary acts, hatred, hunger, and the poisoning of populations." Another

edition of the *Protocolos de los Sabios de Sion* ("Protocols of the Elders of Zion") was issued in August. Editorial Legión published *Un problema mundial, los judíos* ("The Jews: A World Problem"), by Tomás B. Gabriel. There appeared also a new edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, as well as Julio Meinvielle's *El Judío en el Misterio de la Historia* ("The Jew in the Mystery of History").

Editorial Milicia published *La Mentira de Auschwitz* ("The Lie of Auschwitz") in March, and a month later, *El Talmud Desenmascarado* ("The Talmud Unmasked"), by E.B. Pranaitis, whose introduction read: "The author of this book was murdered because he revealed the secrets of Jewish law. Argentine citizen, if you want to know who your real enemies are, read this book before it is too late." At the end of April the same publisher came out with a pamphlet in honor of "the 87th anniversary of the birth of the father of the Occident," with an enormous picture of Adolf Hitler. During May and June, Editorial Milicia flooded the kiosks and bookshops with scores of antisemitic titles of the most violent nature.

Another group in the propaganda front was the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA), which issued a communiqué imploring the Argentine public to "awaken from their lethargy and realize that the press is in the hands of Jewish Marxists." The Arab League, under the direction of Hosni Abdal Wahab, did its share with a series of antisemitic comments, entitled *Cuestiones Arabes* ("Arab Questions").

Two new strongly antisemitic periodicals were launched in 1976: the first issue of *Génesis*, under the editorship of R. Marti, which contained Arab League advertisements, and *Occidente*, which began publication in July with a tremendous swastika on the cover of its first issue. An old antisemitic journal, *Cabildo*, which had suspended publication, reappeared in August. *La Voz de Santa Teresita* of May 1 printed an article dedicated to the Jewish stranglehold on Latin America.

Most likely inspired by the vicious propaganda campaign, a rash of anti-Jewish incidents occurred. Thus, a few days after Francisco Martel said on Radio Carhue (June 26), "If the Jews don't accept Jesus Christ, the Messiah, they will suffer more in the future than they did under Adolf Hitler," a powerful bomb exploded at the Or Chadash synagogue. Several weeks later, in the beginning of August, 28 Jewish stores were attacked by antisemitic ruffians with machine guns and display windows were shattered. A few days after that, bombs were thrown at the Murillo and Camargo synagogues, the Maimonides school, as well as at Jewish cooperatives. And on September 5 the Shalom synagogue, the Hebraica in Buenos Aires, the Jewish bank and the Sephardi social center in Córdoba, and, again, the Maimonides school were targets of bombs. In August, too, five Israeli emissaries and three employees of the Córdoba Zionist Organization were arrested by military authorities on suspicion of subversive activity, but were released after energetic protests by OSA, DAIA, and Ambassador Nirgad.

DAIA responded to each and every printed or physical attack against the Jewish community throughout the year. Many meetings were held with leading government officials, police officers, and Minister of the Interior Albano Harguindeguy. The

liberal national press, especially *La Prensa*, *La Nación*, and, more particularly, the Buenos Aires *Herald* constantly published powerful editorials warning the people against the flood of antisemitic publications and calling attention to every outrage.

Finally, on September 13 the government moved against the hatemongers. It prohibited by law the distribution, sale, and circulation of some publications of *Milicia*, perhaps the worst offender. Its premises were shut down by the police, but later reopened under the name of Ediciones ODAL. Three months later the government outlawed the distribution, sale, and circulation of the book *Del Yugo Sionista a la Argentina Posible* ("From the Zionist Yoke to the Possible Argentina"; Editorial Confederación Nacionalista Argentina), by Walter Beveraggi Allende, one of Argentina's most militant antisemites. The decree pointed to the book's "intentionally unsocial attitude" and "tendency to provoke or instigate illegal or criminal acts against security and public order." Allende, author of the infamous *Plan Andinia* (AJYB, 1972 [Vol. 73], p.439), which was republished in 1976, had been appointed to the law faculty of Buenos Aires University in June, and continued in this post at the time his book was banned.

### *Personalia*

Naum Katzowicz, president of the Hospital Israelita EZRA, active in Argentine Israel trade, and distinguished member of the Council of Jewish Organizations, died in Mar del Plata in April, at the age of 72.

Isaac Kaplan, author and journalist, veteran Zionist, president of Keren Kayyemet le Yisrael for Latin America, vice president of DAIA, died in Buenos Aires in May at the age of 97.

Samuel Daien, university professor, diplomat, and Jewish community leader, died in La Plata in May, at the age of 59.

David Spiegel, who for years had been active in AMIA, the Theodor Herzl Gesellschaft, and Nueva Comunidad Israelita, died in Buenos Aires in June, at the age of 88.

Rodolfo Mondolfo, eminent Italian Jewish philosopher, died in Buenos Aires in July, at the age of 99.

Ezrah Teubal, foremost philanthropist and founder of innumerable institutions, died in Buenos Aires in September, at the age of 90.

Heriberto Kahn, brilliant journalist, died in Buenos Aires in September, at the age of 33.

Herzl Gesang, communal leader active in the World Jewish Congress and the Zionist Organization, and vice-president of DAIA, died in Buenos Aires in October, at the age of 67.

NAOMI F. MEYER

# Brazil

## *Domestic Affairs*

**A**FTER ITS DEFEAT in the legislative elections of 1974, the Brazilian government made all-out efforts to keep the only opposition party, the Movimento Democrático (MDB), from winning a great victory in the November 1976 elections for city councillors and mayors. These efforts, and substantial changes in the laws governing elections, made it possible for the government party, the Aliança Renovadora Nacional (ARENA), to win the majority of votes, though MDB was victorious in the large cities where participation in the political process was greater.

Elections for the Senate, Chamber of Deputies, and state governors were scheduled for 1978. Originally, governors were to be elected by popular vote. President Ernesto Geisel, however, using as pretext the refusal by the National Congress to approve a judicial reform bill because it did not restore the right of habeas corpus to political prisoners, suspended the Congress for 15 days in April 1977. He took advantage of this suspension to decree into law the judicial bill, together with a series of constitutional reforms and measures affecting the electoral process. In this way he practically eliminated the possibility of a victory by the opposition. Among the reforms were the following: the election of state governors and one-third of the Senate by an electoral college, in which the government was assured a majority; the extension of the president's term of office from five to six years, beginning with the forthcoming election; a change in the timetable, starting 1982, to hold all elections on the same day; the reduction of the vote necessary for adopting institutional amendments from a two-thirds to a simple majority; the prohibition of radio and television election propaganda during campaigns. The measures, especially the virtual silencing of the opposition, was a radical departure from the promise Geisel had made on assuming the presidency: that the emergency decrees proclaimed by the revolutionary governments since 1964 would be gradually eliminated.

The economic situation worsened. The foreign debt grew from \$22 billion in 1975 to \$29 billion in 1976. The trade deficit was considerable (\$2.2 million in 1976), taking into account even the high prices of coffee and soy beans. The annual rate of inflation was around 45 per cent. The government struggled to contain inflation, restrict imports, and boost exports. However, the measures adopted tended to reduce GNP growth, causing a slowdown of economic activities and a sharp rise in unemployment, beginning in the more industrialized states like São Paulo in 1977.

In social affairs, the Catholic Church has been a severe critic of government policy, especially on human rights and matters affecting the Indians, leading to several encounters between the Catholic hierarchy and the government in 1976.

Censorship of *O São Paulo*, the magazine published by the São Paulo archdiocese, continued.

The government's education program has made progress in numbers reached, but there still was strong criticism of the quality of education, especially the level of learning in most schools. While the 1970 census had found 36.6 per cent of the Brazilian population above the age of 15 to be illiterate, the percentage dropped to 16.4 per cent, or 10.6 million, in 1977.

The government's health program made progress, with the inoculation of a 90-million population against meningitis and the improvement of workers' health care through the National Institute of Social Welfare.

### *Foreign Relations*

Within the framework of the basic needs of the national economy, the government made efforts to assure essential influx of foreign capital. In 1976 Geisel therefore traveled to France, England, and Japan to negotiate important economic agreements. There have also been approaches to African and Asian countries regarding the export of Brazilian products.

The most important event of the year was the signing of a treaty for nuclear cooperation between Brazil and Germany. As a result of pressure by the American government, which strongly objected to the proposed sale of nuclear technology, material, and equipment to Brazil, a country that has not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty, Germany and Brazil were forced to cancel the agreement. This pressure, as well as President Jimmy Carter's stand on human rights, created a severe crisis in Brazil's relations with the United States. When the Carter administration made United States military assistance dependent on a change in attitude on human rights, Brazil not only refused such aid, but also abrogated the military assistance pact in force since 1952. At the beginning of 1977 the Brazilian government was making every effort to keep the crisis strictly on government level so that commercial relations with the United States, which were vitally important to Brazil, would not be affected.

### *Relations With Israel*

In 1976 relations with Israel were kept relatively cool, as they had been since the Brazilian government changed its position on the Middle East conflict from one that was neither pro-Israel nor pro-Arab to a frankly pro-Arab one, reinforced by its vote on the 1975 UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. However, the almost complete absence of investment of Arab capital in Brazil, and its negligible export to the Middle East countries, gave rise to disenchantment within the government and among the people. The economic crisis, deepened by the heavy increase in oil prices, aggravated the situation.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

### *Demography*

Brazil continued to have an estimated 150,000 Jews, of whom 75,000 lived in São Paulo and 55,000 in Rio de Janeiro. There was some immigration of Jews (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 355), but no total figure was available since no statistics existed on those who entered Brazil without agency assistance, particularly Lebanese refugees. In 1976 HIAS helped 99 Jews resettle in Brazil. Of these, 73 came from Lebanon, four from Chile, nine from Rumania, three from Egypt, five from Morocco, two from the Soviet Union, and three from Argentina. By year's end, HIAS' Latin American office in Rio had on record 2,460 active registrations for family reunion in Latin America, primarily Syrian but also Soviet and other European and North African Jews.

### *Community Affairs*

The organized Jewish community, through the Confederação Israelita do Brasil (CIB; Jewish Confederation of Brazil) and the United Zionist Organization of Brazil promoted several programs to activate community life also in centers outside São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In May the local Jewish federation in Rio Grande do Sul held the first meeting of the communities in that state to stimulate Jewish activities in the small towns. Also in May, the Organização Sionista do Brasil (Zionist Organization) promoted in Recife, state of Pernambuco, a seminar for the local communities of Northern Brazil, in an effort to improve the level of Jewish education in small towns, especially in the north and northeast of Brazil. An important step in the revitalization of the Rio de Janeiro Jewish Federation was the election in July of several young leaders to its board of directors. Professor Eliezer Burlá was reelected chairman of the board.

The national convention of the Jewish Confederation of Brazil took place in São Bernardo do Campo, near São Paulo, in August, with delegates of the São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro do Sul, Paraná, Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, and Para communities participating. Benno Milnitzky was reelected president of the Confederation.

The São Paulo Jewish Federation celebrated its 30th anniversary, with the participation of important personalities in the fields of politics and culture.

Representatives from nine Latin American countries met in São Paulo in November for the second Plenary Assembly of the Latin American Sephardi Federation (FESELA). The Assembly elected Claudio Leon as its president.

Work on behalf of Jews in the USSR went on. A Brazilian delegation attended the Second World Conference on Soviet Jewry in Brussels in February. Solidarity committees were formed in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The visit in May of Gessia Penson, mother of Boris Penson, was the occasion for several coordinated activities

on behalf of Soviet Jews in São Paulo and Rio organized by the respective local federations.

In the first quarter of 1976, State Deputy Dulce Salles Cunha Braga of São Paulo and State Deputy Romy Medeiros da Fonseca of Rio de Janeiro attended the second Congress of Latin American Women in Mexico as Brazilian delegates speaking in defense of human rights for Soviet Jews.

### *Social Welfare*

After four years of negotiations, the São Paulo social welfare organizations OFIDAS, EZRA, and Policlínica Lina Ha-tzedek merged into Brasileiro-Israelita do Bem Estar Social (UNIBES). Accepting a suggestion by two outstanding physicians and researchers, Benjamin Schmidt and Aron Diamant, the São Paulo Federation sponsored the establishment of a committee to study the incidence of Tay Sachs disease among local Jews.

### *Jewish Education*

The number of children and teenagers attending Jewish schools did not change in 1976. In São Paulo, enrollment remained at 5,348 and in Rio de Janeiro, at some 4,500. The Jewish school in Porto Allegre had some 1,560 pupils (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 354). Some schools were forced to close classes because students had transferred to other schools.

The quality of instruction remained superior to most non-Jewish schools. Four students of the Petropolis *yeshivah* in the State of Rio de Janeiro passed their examination for admission to the university, with two on top of the list.

At Ouro Preto University, in the state of Minas Gerais, courses in Hebrew and Jewish history were introduced into the curriculum. Rabbi Henrique Lemle continued to direct Jewish studies at the University of Rio de Janeiro.

ORT maintained the Technological Institute, the only Jewish technical school in Brazil. In the 1976-77 school year the Institute, with an enrollment of 700, offered some professional courses qualifying students in electronics, business administration, secretarial skills, chemistry, and radio and TV broadcasting, in addition to studies in Jewish history, Hebrew, English, and others. The Institute continued its contractual relationship with other Jewish schools, which had to comply with a Ministry of Education order that all high-school students be trained in a technical skill (AJYB, 1976 [Vol. 76], p. 283).

ORT Brazil carried on other projects, such as an information processing center in Rio de Janeiro, for which the American ORT Federation was expected to donate an IBM computer, and creation of correspondence courses, in collaboration with the Van Leer Foundation and official Brazilian institutions.

## *Religious Life*

The important Congregação Israelita Paulista celebrated its 40th anniversary with a series of lectures, debates, and special projects. It released a religious and didactic LP record, published a new prayerbook, *O nosso Shabat*, and distributed a congregational calendar of events. Rabbis Fritz Pinkuss and Henry I. Sobel were joined by Marcelo Rittner and Claudio Kaiser in services attended by the congregation's 3,000 family members. The highlight of the year-long commemoration was on the Sabbath of its founding by the Associação Religiosa Israelita de Rio de Janeiro, at which Rabbi Henrique Lemle was featured speaker.

A close working relationship between the rabbis of the two congregations led to the development of a joint program for the smaller Jewish communities of Brazil. Rabbis Sobel and Lemle conducted a series of meetings throughout the year to maintain contact with communities. The program included periodic visits to the communities by rabbis and emissaries, as well as the distribution of scholarly and popular Jewish literature. The program was coordinated by the Confederação Israelita do Brasil.

The São Paulo Chabad inaugurated its new headquarters, complete with synagogue, library, and *mikveh*, in a most festive celebration, to which Rabbi J. Weinberg brought the blessings and greetings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as his official representative. Rabbi Shabsi Alpern, the spiritual leader of the movement in Brazil, was awarded the title "Cidadão Paulistano" in appreciation of his efforts on its behalf. Jewish and non-Jewish dignitaries participated in the testimonial.

In an ongoing series of public lectures and debates, Rabbis Lemle, Pinkuss, and Sobel have carried on a meaningful ecumenical dialogue with spokesmen of other leading religious denominations.

## *Sports*

Brazil sent a delegation to the Panamerican Maccabiah held in Lima, Peru in July 1976 (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 355). The First Olympic Games of the Immigrants, a sports event organized by the São Paulo municipality, took place during the Brazilian Independence Day celebrations in September. Among participants, the descendants of immigrants from some 30 countries, was a delegation of Brazil's Jewish community. Jewish clubs in Brazil maintain all-year-round sport schools with a total of more than 2,500 students.

## *Zionism and Israel*

In January 1977, 1,500 teenagers participated in a Zionist Organization program of spending three months in Israeli *kibbutzim* to help harvest oranges.

Several Israeli personalities visited Brazil in 1976, among them Leah Rabin, the premier's wife; Itzhak Harkavi, former Israeli ambassador to Brazil and current

director of the World Jewish Congress culture department; Avraham Shavitt, president of the Israeli Federation of Industries, and Jerusalem's Mayor Teddy Kollek. (An important visitor from France was Baron Elie de Rothschild.)

There was a lively artistic exchange program with Israel. Among Israeli artists, who toured Brazil in 1976 and performed in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, and Porto Alegre, were Israel Becker of the Habima Theater; the singers Mati Caspi, Ilanit, and Michal Tal, and the "Israel 76" and Mefalsim groups of dancers and singers. The painter Arië Sartani exhibited his works in São Paulo and Rio.

### *Community Relations*

Participation of Jews in the nation's life remained relatively high. The Chamber of Deputies had three Jewish members: Rubens Medina, Emanuel Vaisman, and Milton Streinbruch. Several Jews were elected to the State Chamber of Deputies in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Francisco Silbert Sobrinho and Mauricio Pinkusfelt to the former, and Alberto Goldman and Jacob Salvador Zveibil to the latter, and to the São Paulo and Rio city councils.

A number of other Jews held important public posts: Mauricio Schulman was president of the National Habitation Bank; Isaac Kerstenetzky, chief of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics; José Barat, secretary of transportation in Rio de Janeiro; Jorge Wilhelm, secretary of planning of the state of São Paulo; Max Feffer, secretary of culture of the state of São Paulo, and Saul Ruiz, mayor of Curitiba.

In a brief ceremony several days before Hannukah, the mayor of São Paulo named a square in a suburb of the city "Praça Festa das Luzes" (Plaza of the Holiday of Lights).

The São Paulo Jewish community paid tribute to Holland on the occasion of Amsterdam's 700th anniversary. It organized a cultural evening at which the Dutch consul in São Paulo received expressions of gratitude for his country's aid to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, and for its support of the state of Israel. The São Paulo and Rio communities also honored the United States on the occasion of its Bicentennial with a cultural evening, attended by the American consul.

### *Press and Publications*

The São Paulo Yiddish and Portuguese newspaper *O Novo Momento*, which had appeared twice a week, ceased independent publication. It was incorporated in January 1977 into the Rio de Janeiro weekly *Imprensa Israelita*, now the only Yiddish newspaper in Brazil. The São Paulo Jewish University Council published *Campus*, which was inserted as a monthly supplement into the widely read biweekly *Resenha Judaica*. It also organized several courses in Jewish history and seminars on contemporary issues. Editora Shalom launched *Shalom Infantil*, a Jewish magazine for children between the ages of seven and 13.

The Federation participated in the International Book Biennial in São Paulo with a display of 300 Portuguese, English, Hebrew, and Yiddish books on Jewish subject.

Quite a number of Jewish books appeared in 1976. The São Paulo Jewish Federation continued its publication program with the third volume of *Caminhos do Povo Judeu* ("Path of the Jewish People"). The Jewish Study Center at São Paulo University published *Sepulturas de Israelitas* ("Jewish Tombs"), by Egon and Frieda Wolf, and *Problemas de Sociologia Judaica* ("Problems of Jewish Sociology"), by Rosa Krausz.

Editora B'nai B'rith, under its director Ernesto Strauss, published *Pirke Avot* and the Passover Haggadah. The former was translated by Eliezer Levin, the latter by Kaethe Windmueller, under the supervision of Rabbi Sobel.

The São Paulo Jewish University Council (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 355) published several pamphlets: *Existirá o Povo Judeu no Século XXI?* ("Will There Be a Jewish People in the 21st Century?"), by Josef Dan; *Judeus durante o Nazismo* ("Jews Under Nazism"); *A Teologia Judaica e a Revolução Sexual* ("Jewish Theology and the Sexual Revolution"), by Dr. Harold Schulwaiss; *A Imagem dos Judeus no Brasil* ("The Image of the Jews in Brazil"); *Do Tesouro do Hassidismo* ("From the Treasure of Chassidism"), by Martin Buber; *O ABC do Kibutz* ("Kibbutz ABC"), by Moshé Kerem, and *As Potências no Oriente Médio: 1945-76* ("The Great Powers in the Middle East: 1945-75") and *Arabes e Judas no Oriente Médio: 1882-1948* ("Arabs and Jews in the Middle East"), both by Reuven Meltzer.

The São Paulo Casa de Cultura de Israel made available to the public a summary of the news and press comments on the Entebbe affair, under the title, *A Lição de Entebbe* ("The Lesson of Entebbe"). The Rio Grande do Sul Jewish Federation published a pamphlet on Zionism to counter the 1975 UN resolution equating Zionism with racism, and a study on the ICA-sponsored Jewish immigration to southern Brazil: *Israelitas do Rio Grande do Sul*, by Eva Nicolaiewsky. Konrad Charnatz, publisher of the newspaper *O Novo Momento*, wrote and published *Pesadelos* ("Nightmares"), a book of his World War II reminiscences. The Brazilian Jewish Historical Archives in São Paulo published a book on Yiddishist author Meyer Kucinski, who died in 1976 and left to that institution his personal archives.

Congregação Israelita Paulista published the congregation's history, covering the period from the arrival in Brazil of the first Jewish refugees from Germany to 1968. The book, *Desafio e Resposta* ("Challenge and Response") was written by Alice Irene Hirschberg and dedicated to her late father, Dr. Alfred Hirschberg.

Other new books were: *A Nau dos condenados*, (the story of the *S.S. St. Louis*), published by Editora Summus; Marcos Margulies, *Sionismo e Racismo* ("Zionism and Racism"); Anatol Rosenfeld, *Mistificações Literárias: Os Protocolos dos Sábios de Sião* ("Literary Mystifications: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"); *O Holocausto* ("The Holocaust"), by Ben Abraham, was first published in daily installments by a São Paulo newspaper.

# Mexico

## *Domestic Affairs*

ON DECEMBER 1, 1976, José López Portillo, the candidate of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI; Institutional Revolutionary Party), succeeded Luis Echeverría as president of Mexico for a six-year term. Just before he became a candidate, he was Secretary of Finance and Public Credit with the reputation of being a practical man who planned and controlled government expense; an authentic ideologue of the Mexican revolution; a forthright pragmatist in politics, and a man of well balanced national convictions.

In mid-1975 Mexico's population, the second largest in Latin America, surpassed 60 million, with an annual growth rate of about 3.8 per cent, one of the highest on the continent. The government has launched a birth-control or "family-planning" education campaign, which, however, was making slow progress and was opposed by certain sectors of society.

The government's oil exploration program, conducted by *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX), a government-controlled enterprise that produced 95 per cent of the country's oil and natural gas, led to the discovery of new oil wells in southeastern Mexico. As a result, the production of crude oil rose from 575,000 barrels per day in 1974, to 717,000 in 1976. As a result of the discovery, Mexico, which in 1974 had to import oil and oil by-products in the amount of \$258 million, exported some \$138 million of oil in 1975. The country's crude oil reserves were estimated at over 3.5 billion barrels and its stock of natural gas at some 11.2 million cubic feet. Its capacity to refine was 950,000 barrels a day at the end of 1976, and was expected to rise to almost 1.5 million a day between 1977 and 1979.

At the same time, however, the country's economy, which for a long time had been the most stable in Latin America, was adversely affected by the worldwide inflation and recession. In an effort to improve the situation, the government adopted a program for 1976, aimed at leveling off Mexico's balance of payments by decreasing the deficit in current accounts and curtailing as much as possible foreign loans applied to the public sector. In this way it hoped to sustain the economy's growth rate without increasing the debt. At the same time, it devaluated the currency in September and, again, in November, and by year's end, the rate of exchange of the Mexican peso was 20 per dollar. The result was sky-rocketing prices.

Traditionally, tourism has been an important factor in Mexico's economy, representing an income of some \$2.8 billion between 1974 and 1976. In 1973 over 3.3 million visitors came to Mexico; by 1974 tourists numbered only 2.9 million, and there was a further, notable decline in 1975 and 1976. Largely responsible for the 1976 decline was said to have been the American boycott of Mexico, declared

immediately after the November 1975 Mexican vote in the UN in favor of the resolution equating Zionism with racism (see section on relations with Israel below). However, it was believed that other causes of the drop in tourism were bicentennial celebrations as well as recession in the United States, rise in prices, and successful attempts by competitive regions such as Hawaii and the Caribbean area to attract tourists.

### *Relations with Israel*

Traditionally, relations between Mexico and Israel have been cordial. A new agreement of cultural as well as technological and scientific exchange was signed in early 1976. Israel Ambassador to Mexico Hanan Aynor, an able, talented diplomat, has done much to foster better understanding and an improvement in trade relations between his country and Mexico.

Mexico's Ambassador Benito Berlín, a young diplomat of Jewish origin and an economist by profession, carried on important work in Israel. However, his mission was undermined by differences following the November 15 Mexican vote at the UN (see below), and he was recalled at the end of 1976. His predecessor had been Dr. Rosario Castellano, well-known writer and poetess, who died tragically in Tel Aviv. The Mexican Jewish community paid homage to her by planting a forest in her memory in Israel.

Friction with Israel first arose when Mexico supported a resolution equating Zionism with racism, adopted by the International Woman's Year Conference in Mexico City in June 1975 (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], pp. 115-16). In August of that year President Echeverría, accompanied by his wife, his minister of foreign relations, and a large Mexican delegation of almost 200, visited 14 countries on four continents, among them Algeria, Kuwait, Iran, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan. During his stay in Egypt, he met not only with President Anwar al-Sadat and other high-ranking officials, but also with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasir Arafat, and, at the end of the meeting, Echeverría agreed to the PLO opening an office in Mexico.

At the invitation of President Ephraim Katzir of Israel, Echeverría paid a three-day visit to that country in August, the first such visit by a Mexican president. The government prepared a full program for the visitors, including visits to historical sites, cultural centers, technological and scientific institutes, agricultural units, and rural areas of socioeconomic development. The program was aimed at strengthening even more the traditionally friendly bonds between the people and leaders of both countries, exchanging ideas on possible solutions to their common problems and working together in search of peace.

The visit was marked by understanding, and, at its conclusion, Echeverría and Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin signed a joint communiqué as well as a trade agreement to promote an increase in economic and trade interchanges between both countries. The communiqué stated in part:

President Echeverría made known to Prime Minister Rabin the deep concern of his government over the Middle East conflict and stressed that, in accordance with Mexico's pacifism and its adherence to the precepts of international law governing relationships between countries, his country fully supports compliance with Resolutions 242 and 338 of the UN Security Council.

Both leaders agreed that the conflict be resolved on the basis of the resolutions. They further agreed it was indispensable that all states intensify their efforts to promote a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and that the parties in conflict take the necessary steps to settle their differences. They also concurred that now was the time for an immediate peace settlement between Israel and its neighbors.

Months later, the Mexican UN representative voted with the Arab-African block<sup>1</sup> in support of the November 10 General Assembly resolution on Zionism and racism. This brought strong protest from the Mexican community (see section on communal organizations) and a boycott of Mexico by American citizens and some Jewish organizations. In an effort to explain the vote, Echeverría sent personal emissaries to the United States and Canada to invite Jewish leaders to meet with him; they accepted, and a meeting took place, and Secretary of Foreign Relations Emilio O. Rabasa was sent to Israel to confer with Foreign Minister Yigal Allon to clear up any misunderstanding (see AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], pp.116-18, for a full discussion). Several weeks after his return home, Rabasa resigned.

There followed other Mexican government actions aimed against Israel, among them a letter addressed to the UN Security Council when the Entebbe incident was being debated, condemning Israel for aggression against Uganda. This once again gave rise to a wave of protest and concern in the Mexican Jewish community.

Yet, relations with Israel continued to be good. At the beginning of 1976 Yigal Allon visited Mexico and was given an official welcome. Oil sales to Israel also continued despite some pressures against it. By mid-1976 Mexico bought five Arava aircraft from Israel for \$7 million, and a Mexican trade delegation formed by a number of businessmen traveled to Israel to arrange for more trade between the two countries.

Also, as a result of Echeverría's interest, an agreement was signed for two direct weekly flights by El Al airline between Tel Aviv and Mexico. At first there was to be only one flight a week, pending an increase of tourism in both countries. The inaugural flight arrived in Mexico City on November 9, 1976 with an official Israeli delegation headed by Israeli Transportation Minister Gad Yaacobi, government officials and journalists. The delegation had a chance to interview Echeverría and President-elect López Portillo. On the first flight from Mexico to Israel was a large

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<sup>1</sup>A year earlier, Echeverría had identified himself with the Third World, advocating its economic, social, and cultural development in a "Charter of Economic Duties and Rights of the Countries." Approved by the UN on December 12, 1974 by a vote of 120 to 6, with 10 abstentions, it proclaimed "the sovereign and inalienable right of each country to determine its own economic, political, social, and cultural systems . . . without interference, pressure or outside threats, and the right of each country to choose its own destiny."

delegation of 60 important Mexicans, headed by Secretary of Public Works Luis Enrique Bracamontes. This delegation, too, had the opportunity of touring the country and meeting with high-ranking government officials.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

### *Demography*

No exact figures on the Jewish population are available since no community census or demographic study has ever been conducted. Although Jewish organizations have been aware of the importance of such a study, it has not been possible to unite all efforts, despite the fact that for some years the Comité Central Israelita de México (Central Jewish Committee); the Ashkenazi kehillah and the Mexican office of the American Jewish Committee have carried on serious talks and have outlined a socio-demographical study.

The Jewish population has been estimated at 45,000 to 50,000, of whom 96 per cent lived in Mexico City and the rest in Guadalajara (140 families), Monterrey (120 families), Tijuana (75 families) and Puebla (12 families). A few Jewish families were scattered in such far places as Yucatán, Sonora, Sinaloa, Veracruz, and others. The growth rate was far below that of the general population (3.8 per cent per annum). There has been no substantial Jewish immigration for three decades, and most of the members of the community were native-born or Mexican citizens.

The community consisted of 55 per cent Ashkenazim from East Europe and 40 per cent Sephardim from the Near East, North Africa and the Balkan countries. In recent years a group of Israeli citizens have settled in Mexico.

According to figures released by the HIAS in Mexico, some 18 Jewish families from Lebanon and other Arab countries, totaling 60 persons, have entered the country in the last three years. Another 12 families, 38 persons, came from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, and other South American countries. During the same period, 22 families emigrated, most of them to Israel, the United States, and Canada, and 12 families who had gone on *aliyah* returned to Mexico.

### *Communal Organizations*

The representative organization of Mexican Jewry, the Comité Central Israelita de México (CCIM), carried on a wide range of activities and has introduced important new programs. CCIM mourned the death of its president, Fernando Jenó, on June 5, 1975, at the age of 54, only a few months after his reelection for a second term. He had been identified with the first native-born generation of Jews and truly reflected the feelings of a vast majority of the Jewish community. After Jenó's death the CCIM decided that its board of directors, chosen to work with him, should carry on activities; no new president was appointed.

*Solidarity With Israel*

The Comité Central Israelita requested a meeting with President Echeverría immediately after Mexico's vote in the UN General Assembly in favor of the November 10, 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism. During a meeting of nearly three hours, which was attended also by Secretary of Foreign Affairs Rabasa and Secretary of Tourism Julio Hirshfield Almada, President Echeverría assured the CCIM delegation that Mexico's vote by no means reflected an anti-Israel or anti-Jewish attitude, and that Mexico would maintain its cordial and friendly relationship with Israel and the Jews. It was during this meeting that the idea arose of having Secretary of Foreign Affairs Rabasa visit Israel to explain Mexican policy to the Israel government. At that meeting, too, the delegation expressed its deep concern over, and disagreement with, Echeverría's authorization for the PLO to open an office in Mexico City, the first of its kind in Latin America.

On November 18 CCIM published in the important, large-circulation newspapers of Mexico, a clear statement of the position of Mexican Jews with regard to Mexico's support of the anti-Zionism resolution and their opposition to the resolution itself. At the same time, CCIM, together with the Zionist Federation of Mexico, arranged a public protest meeting under the slogan "Zionism Is not Racism," which was attended by thousands of people, including hundreds of youths, and had a positive political impact both within and outside the Jewish community.

CCIM also asked for a meeting with the President-elect López Portillo, which took place on July 12, 1976, in a friendly atmosphere. López Portillo showed understanding of the Jewish community and admiration for Israel, with which he promised to maintain cordial relations. In September 1976, during an official visit to President Gerald R. Ford in Washington, López Portillo held a meeting with a large delegation of American Jewish leaders under the chairmanship of Elmer L. Winter, president of the American Jewish Committee.

On December 1, when López Portillo was sworn in as President, a delegation of American-Jewish leaders attended as his personal guests. An invitation to attend the inauguration was also extended to a large, representative group of the Mexican Jewish community. This was the first time in the country's history that a president officially invited a Mexican Jewish delegation and American Jewish leaders to the ceremony.

## ZIONIST ACTIVITIES

A variety of Jewish institutions aimed at strengthening bonds between the community and Israel. The Zionist Federation, headed by Ari Kahan, was the umbrella organization of the Zionist groups in Mexico, with which it cooperated in all specific activities.

The Instituto Cultural Mexicano-Israelí (Mexican-Israeli Cultural Institute) offered a cultural and artistic program of lectures, Hebrew courses, art exhibits, publications, films, etc. and kept in contact with the Shalom Club, the organization

of Mexicans who studied or worked in Israel. In January 1977 the Institute held an exhibition, "Music in the Bible," at the Mexico City Museum of Anthropology at which ancient musical instruments found in Israel were shown. At the same time, it sponsored the planting of a "Bosque Israel" (Israel Forest) in a large area of the country. The Institute's president was Leon Davidoff.

Very active were the various Zionist youth groups which attracted a certain nucleus of Jewish children and adolescents, for whom they arranged visits to Israel or periods of study at the country's various technological schools and universities.

Relations with Israel through educational institutions were maintained by the Mexican Friends of the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, the Technion in Haifa, Bar-Ilan University, Haifa University, and the Weizmann Institute.

In December 1975 a Mexican Jewish delegation attended the Solidarity Conference with the State of Israel in Jerusalem, which had been convened by Prime Minister Rabin.

### *Jewish Education*

Jewish education has been a problem demanding constant attention because of the continued decline in enrollment. Mexico had six Jewish day schools, two *yeshivot*, an academy for girls, and a seminary for teachers of Hebrew and Yiddish. The communities of Guadalajara and Monterrey had their own schools. Courses in Jewish education were offered also at Talmud Torah of Beth El Congregation and at the Sunday School of the Beth Israel Community Center.

A special celebration marked the 50th anniversary of the Colegio Israelita de México, which was in the process of building new facilities.

Most of the Jewish schools in Mexico were integrated with both the official curriculum of the ministry of public education and several hours daily of Jewish studies, such as Hebrew, Yiddish, Jewish history, and Bible. They generally included kindergarten, the primary grades, junior high school, and secondary school. Their graduates were qualified to matriculate in state or private universities.

Enrollment in the various schools was as follows: Colegio Israelita de México, founded in 1924, 1,410 students; Colegio Hebreo Tarbut, founded in 1942, 1,325 students; Colegio Yavne, founded in 1942, 450 students; Colegio Hebreo Sefardi, founded in 1944, 900 students; Colegio I.L. Peretz, founded in 1950, 525 students; Colegio Monte Siná, founded in 1940, 1,000 students; Yeshivá de México, founded in 1960, 65 students; Yeshivá Keter Torah, founded in 1962, 225 students, and the Teachers' Seminary, founded in 1947, 45 students.

The financial situation of these schools has always been a serious problem since all of them had deficits, particularly in the last two years because of a considerable rise in teachers' salaries and maintenance expenses. The deficits were absorbed by the school board, formed by the Parents Association in collaboration with various community organizations, and private aid from those wishing to keep alive Jewish education in Mexico.

There were estimated 160 Jewish teachers, of whom half were Teachers' Seminary

graduates in Hebrew and Yiddish studies; the rest were brought in from various countries, especially Israel.

Strong emphasis has also been put on adult Jewish education. To further the program, the Centro de Estudios Judíos Contemporáneos (Center of Contemporary Jewish Studies), conducted by the American Jewish Committee with the support of the Mexican Jewish community, was created several years ago. It offered a full schedule of lectures, courses, and seminars aimed at increasing knowledge of Judaism. Cooperating in this project were professors, lecturers, and experts from Mexico and abroad. In recent years, the Center has succeeded in interesting a few Mexican universities in its work, and some of them were now offering lectures and special courses on biblical and Jewish subjects.

At the same time, the American Jewish Committee office in Mexico succeeded in having the Comité Central Israelita de México cosponsor the Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls, which has already enrolled a number of students in Mexico and in some Central American countries.

### *Communal Activities*

The first convention of Jewish communities in Mexico, which took place under the auspices of the Comité Central, analyzed vital problems concerning the future of Mexican Jewry. Cooperating with CCIM in its work were several institutions, such as the American Jewish Committee, the Latin American Jewish Congress, and B'nai Brith. On CCIM's board of directors sat representatives of the Ashkenazi community; Union Sefaradí; Alianza Monte Sinaí; Sedaka Umarpe community; Hatikva Menorá community; Beth Israel Community Center; Beth El Congregation; Mexican Council of Jewish Women (Consejo Mexicano de Mujeres Israelitas), and Jewish Sports Center. CCIM represented Mexican Jewry in contacts with the government. CCIM delegations attended the sixth meeting of the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem in February 1975, and various meetings of the Latin American Jewish Congress in Buenos Aires in 1976.

The Mexican Council of Jewish women carried on its important work in collaboration with several welfare agencies. It hosted the Fourth Latin American Workshop of the International Council of Jewish Women in Mexico City, in which representatives of several Latin American countries participated. The president of the Mexican Council was Mrs. Maña Peretzman.

The committee of *Tribuna Israelita*, a bimonthly magazine, gave a dinner in honor of Dr. Gonzalo Comargo (Pedro Gringoire), Mexican journalist and writer, to mark his 60 years of fruitful literary activity. It also gave a reception in honor of Andrés Henestrosa, former president of the Writers Association of Mexico, to celebrate the publication of his book, *De Ixhuatán, Mi Tierra, A Jerusalén, Tierra del Señor* ("From Ixhuatán, My Land, to Jerusalem, Land of God"; Editorial Tribuna). The distinguished Mexican intellectual and writer Senator Martín Luis Luzmán, editor-in-chief of *Tiempo* magazine, received the Latin American Jewish

Congress award (July 1975) for meritorious work on behalf of oppressed minorities throughout the world and, particularly, for his public appearances in support of Soviet Jews.

For more than 15 years, the Annual Festival of Jewish Music has been held at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City under the auspices of the Cultural Commission of the Ashkenazi Kehila Nidje Israel, headed by Tuvia Maizel. It has made an important contribution in imparting better knowledge of Jewish music to larger audiences and in introducing new Jewish musicians from different countries, who have performed as soloists.

Meetings for Mexican Jewish youth were being promoted mainly by CCIM, for youngsters to give them an opportunity to get to know each other and to create working programs that will integrate them into the Jewish community. Such gatherings have been held in Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Mexico City. They have been received with enthusiasm and have had positive results. One practical outcome was that a Mexican Jewish youth delegation attended a meeting organized by the Zionist University Latin American Federation (FUSLA) in San José, Costa Rica, in December 1975.

The Alumá Institute, created in 1974, had much success in training leaders for youth organizations. Enrollment of young boys and girls in the Institute to prepare for leadership roles has been steadily increasing. This Institute, whose headquarters was located in the Jewish Sports Center (Centro Deportivo Israelita), had the full support of a number of community organizations.

### *In the Province*

Although small in number, the communities in the province have been strengthened by their serious efforts to enhance Jewish life. The Guadalajara community recently built a community center with a spacious synagogue and a social and sports center. The center arranged meetings, lectures, and seminars and sponsored youth groups and women's activities. Its president was Eduardo Bross. Similar activities have been carried on by the community of Monterrey, where the president was Soma Cholow. The Jewish community of Tijuana, too, had a social center and a synagogue. Its president was Ivan Ilko. The 12 Jewish families living in Puebla generally have been going to Mexico City to participate in religious and community activities. The four communities were members of the Comité Central Israelita de México.

### *Religion*

In 1975–1976 two new Orthodox congregations, the Centro Cultural Israelita (Jewish Cultural Center) and the Tecamachalco synagogue, established through the initiative of young families in the suburbs of Mexico City. Both congregations had a cantor, but no rabbi.

There were 16 synagogues and houses of worship in Mexico City and three in the

province. With the exception of the Conservative Beth-El Congregation and Beth Israel Community Center, all were Orthodox. Efforts to establish a Reform congregation have so far not been successful.

Attendance at religious services was confined largely to the High Holy Days, and very few families observe kashrut. Mexico's only kosher restaurant, sponsored by the Ashkenazi community, was located in the capital. For Jewish tourists visiting Acapulco, arrangements have been made with a hotel to serve kosher food and have religious services on the Sabbath, especially during the holiday season.

One problem of much concern has been the constant increase of mixed marriages. Although no exact figures were available, the intermarriage rate was estimated at up to 15 per cent.

### *Jewish Press and Publications*

Mexico had three Jewish newspapers. The oldest, *Der Weg (El Camino)*, founded by Moises Rosenberg and currently edited by Chaim Lazdeisky, has been appearing twice a week (Tuesdays and Fridays) in Yiddish; the Friday edition contained several pages in Spanish. Another Yiddish paper was *Die Shtime (La Voz Israelita)*, published since 1936, appeared on Saturdays. Its founder and editor was Moises Rubinstein. The Spanish-language weekly *Prensa Israelita (Jewish Press)*, founded by Sergio Nudelstejer in 1945 and managed by Mrs. Sarah Krongold, appeared every Saturday.

There were also two important Jewish magazines. The *Tribuna Israelita (Jewish Tribune)*, which has been published for over 32 years by the Committee of Jewish Tribune, the anti-defamation branch of the Jewish Central Committee, had a large circulation in all political and cultural spheres of Mexico. The Yiddish-language *Forois (Forward)*, published by the Bund for more than 36 years, has been edited by Yosef Rothemberg. The weekly *Alef-Mundo Israelita* and the monthly *Revista Israelita de Mexico*, both Spanish-language, were no longer published.

Various Jewish organizations had publications of some kind, among them the weekly bulletin and monthly magazine of the Jewish Sport Center, the annual *Tribuna Femenina* of the Mexican Council of Jewish Women; the monthly *Para su Información* of the American Jewish Committee Mexican office; the information bulletin of WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organization), and the monthly bulletin of Beth-El Congregation.

Editorial Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana was closed in mid-1976. It had published a series of very valuable books, among them the 11-volume Jewish encyclopedia in Spanish, *Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana*, and a ten-volume collection *Tesoros del Judaismo* ("Jewish Treasures"). At the head of this publishing house were Eduardo Weinfeld and Isaac Babani.

Thanks to efforts of Mrs. Rosa F. de Jenó, president of CCIM, and her family, the Fernando Jenó Literary Prize fund was recently established. It will consist of three prizes of \$1,000 each, to be awarded annually, beginning March 1977, to the

three best Jewish authors of books published in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Spanish. The fund was to be managed by the Cultural Commission of CCIM.

### *Antisemitism*

Despite intercession by the Jewish community with the authorities, a number of antisemitic books continued to be published in Mexico. Among these were *Los Protocolos de los Sabios de Sión* ("Protocols of the Elders of Zion") and books by Salvador Borrego, a writer representing an extremist right sector sympathetic to neo-Nazism. The Argentine edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was also available.

Lately, antisemitic propaganda has been aimed against Israel rather than against the Jews. One source of such propaganda has been the Arab League office in Mexico, which sporadically published a highly aggressive and poisonous bulletin, with anti-Jewish and anti-Israel content. Allegedly put out by the Association of Friends of the Arab People, it specializes in disseminating antisemitic propaganda, Nazi style, throughout Mexico. At the same time, some of the Arab embassies in Mexico distributed anti-Israel material in the form of pamphlets published in Argentina. Just recently, Mexico was flooded with literature of this type brought in from South America.

A more recent source of propaganda was the newly established PLO office. The man in charge, Marwan Tahhub Fikri, who arrived in Mexico in mid-1976, has begun to distribute publications which foment leftist agitation against Israel and the Jews.

During the last months of 1976, a magazine called *Tahrir* ("Liberation"), proclaimed by its editors as a liaison bulletin between the Arab world and Latin America, began publication in Mexico. It had formerly been published in Spanish in Rome, with the support of PLO. It was extreme leftist and antisemitic in outlook, and openly preached the destruction of Israel.

It is important to stress that no official antisemitism existed in Mexico, and that government policy, in accordance with the Mexican constitution, has been one of democracy and social justice opposed to any kind of discrimination. Still, the Jewish community has found it necessary to establish the Comité de Tribuna Israelita to fight antisemitism and discrimination through its publications, such as *Tribuna Israelita* and the monthly *Actualidad* ("Actualty"), which carried on important information and enlightenment work, with the aid of the American Jewish Committee, B'nai Brith, and other agencies.

### *Support of Jews in USSR, Syria, Iraq*

The Latin American Conference on Soviet Jews, held in Mexico at the end of May 1975, with the well-known Mexican writer Andrés Henestrosa as chairman, was attended by prominent Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals, writers, and artists from various countries who have been in the forefront of demands for human rights in

the Soviet Union. The meetings and the resolutions adopted were given ample coverage by the Mexican press, radio, and television.

For the first time, a delegation of the Latin American Committee for Soviet Jews, consisting of Dr. Benjamín Nuñez of Costa Rica, Dr. Modesto Seara Vazquez of Mexico, Alfredo Concepción of Argentina, and Dr. Salvador Rozenthal of Columbia, visited the Soviet Union. Upon their return they reported at length on their personal meetings with Jews, among them some who were denied requests to emigrate to Israel, in various cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Tbilisi. The report was published under the title, *Misión de Estudios en la URSS* ("Study Mission in the USSR"), under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee in Mexico and Argentina. Soviet Jewish emigrants Sylvia Zalmanson, Esther Markish, Galina Ginsberg, Alexander and Nino Voronel, and Valery and Galina Panov, were invited by the Jewish community and the Mexican Committee for the Rights of Jews in the USSR to come to Mexico and speak to the people about the real situation of Jews in the USSR.

A large Jewish community delegation actively participated in the Second Brussels Conference, February 1976. Mexican intellectuals also attended meetings on Soviet Jews in various Latin American countries, such as Costa Rica and Argentina.

The Permanent Latin American Committee for the Rights of the Jews in the Soviet Union, now located in Mexico, was the umbrella organization of 15 national committees, and coordinated all activities for Soviet Jews in Latin America. Its current president was Andrés Henestrosa and Sergio Nudelstejer its general secretary.

A special commission of the Comité Central Israelita worked on behalf of Jews in Arab countries, mainly Syria and Iraq. It disseminated information to the press and the public on the plight of Syrian Jews, and assisted those wishing to bring relatives in Syria to Mexico.

### *Intergroup Relations*

Catholic-Jewish relations were making slow but steady progress. On the occasion of the Holy Year (1975), the office of the American Jewish Committees for Mexico and Central America published and distributed in Spanish translation a pamphlet, *The Holy Year of 1975 and Its Origin in the Year of the Jewish Jubilee*, by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum. The B'nai Brith Espinoza lodge arranged a lecture by the Archbishop of Mexico, Miguel Cardinal Dario Miranda y Gomez, which drew a large number of Christians and Jews.

The Sisters of Zion, under the direction of Sor Mercedes Calvo, arranged a number of ecumenical activities, among them round-table discussion on "Jewish Tradition in the Understanding of the New Testament," held under the auspices of the Jesuit Universidad Ibero Americana. Participants were Rabbi Abraham Palti of the Mexican Sephardi community; Dr. Salvador Carrillo, director of the Institute of the Holy Scriptures; Dr. Pierre Lenhard of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem,

and Father Manuel Jimenez, expert on the Holy Scriptures.

The Center of Ecumenical Studies, an independent group of clergy and lay persons of all faiths, has accomplished much in advancing better understanding and communication in social and religious spheres. The American Jewish Committee office has actively collaborated with the Center.

### *Personalia*

Dr. George Weiss, a prominent industrialist in Israel, and Mrs. Elias Sourasky, a well-known Mexican financier and philanthropist, were awarded by President Echeverría the *Aguila Azteca* (Aztec Eagle), a high decoration of the government.

Dr. Samuel Gitler, a mathematician, was awarded the 1976 National Science prize; economist Luis Unikel was awarded the Banamex prize in 1975, and Dr. Carlos Gitler, eminent biochemist, received the 1975 Elias Sourasky science prize.

The Jewish community mourned the death of several personalities: Dr. Morris Davis Hoffs, outstanding pediatrician; Sol Wishñack, distinguished industrialist; Elias Jinich, specialist in Jewish education and literature; and Fernando Jenó, president of the Jewish Central Committee of Mexico.

SERGIO NUDELSTEJER

## Venezuela

**I**N TODAY'S VENEZUELA the magic word is oil. Thanks to the hydrocarbon wealth discovered in the 1920s, this South American republic has been transformed from a backward agricultural land ruled by *caudillos*, dictators, into an industrial democracy, fifth among the world's petroleum producers and anxious to assert itself in the forum of nations.

Major problems—widespread poverty, unemployment, bad housing—still exist, however. The challenge for the future, as analysts see it, is whether Venezuela can “sow the petroleum,” that is, use the oil income, which was an estimated \$6 billion in 1976, to help the underprivileged among its 12 million people. At the same time, Venezuela must plan now for the day when the hydrocarbon reserves will be used up.

Since January 1, 1976, the date of the nationalization of the oil industry, all of Venezuela's petroleum profits have gone to the state, as have the revenues from the iron ore industry nationalized a year earlier. The nationalization decrees were signed by President Carlos Andrés Pérez, elected in December 1973 as the candidate of the center-left Acción Democrática (AD) party. He succeeded Rafael Caldera, the Social Christian (COPEI) leader, who had been president since 1969. The orderly transfer of power from one party to another was seen as one more proof of Venezuelan democracy's maturity on a continent little known for its political stability.

Upon assuming the presidency, Pérez embarked on a domestic program of social welfare. He introduced a minimum wage, decreed salary increases for low-income workers, made firing of employees difficult and costly, ordered price freezes, and attempted to create jobs quickly. There were some objections from businessmen who claimed that these measures were fanning the rising inflation, increasing costs, lowering productivity, and thus defeating the president's economic goals. Another major program of the Pérez administration was the Grand Marshal of Ayacucho Foreign Scholarship Foundation, established in June 1974 to finance study abroad for Venezuelan students, in the hope that they will bring home the advanced technology of the industrialized world. In 1976 the government presented an ambitious five-year plan for economic development, called by one source “the boldest ever drawn up in Latin America.”

While “sowing the petroleum” at home has been one of Pérez's priorities, he has not ignored the power of oil on the international front. In 1960 Venezuela had been one of the founders of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). While Venezuela did not participate in the 1973 oil embargo imposed on the West by its Arab OPEC fellows, it benefited from the higher petroleum prices and the greater influence in world affairs acquired by OPEC and its members since then. Evidence of this new Venezuelan prominence, given impetus by the oil and iron

nationalizations, has been the stream of visiting heads of state to Caracas since 1974, among them the Shah of Iran, Canada's Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and King Juan Carlos of Spain. Pérez has also traveled extensively, and was the first Venezuelan president to address the UN General Assembly (November, 1976). Trade agreements have been signed with a number of countries, and Venezuela has pledged financial support for the less developed nations of the Third World.

Increasingly, Pérez was being presented as a "Third World spokesman." Speaking in the General Assembly in 1976, Venezuela's Foreign Minister Ramón Escobar Salom made it clear that his country considered itself part of "the area of solidarity called the Third World." This Pérez reiterated in his own address to the Assembly and declared that Venezuela was "ready to serve mankind."

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

### *Demographic Characteristics*

Because it was not subject to the political and economic turmoil affecting the Jews in other Latin American countries, the relatively small Venezuelan Jewish community of some 15-20,000 (no exact figures exist) has assumed a position of importance in the region. This can be seen in the continuing immigration into the community, the number of important Jewish visitors to Caracas, the various continental Jewish conferences Venezuela has hosted in recent years, and the expansion of communal institutions and activities.

The Jews of Venezuela largely constituted a one-city community. Maracaibo had some 100 Jewish families, with a community center, synagogue, and school, and there were smaller groups in Maracay, Valencia, and Puerto La Cruz. But the vast majority of Venezuela's Jews lived and worked in Caracas. Here were concentrated the major communal institutions: *kehillah* buildings, synagogues, schools, cultural centers, social clubs, and cemeteries. Here, too, were the headquarters of the community's many organizations.

The community's beginnings go back to the turn of the century when Sephardim from North Africa and the Middle East began to arrive in Venezuela. These immigrants, who earned their livelihood as salesmen and storekeepers, were preceded in the 1830s by another group of Sephardim from the neighboring island of Curaçao, who settled in the town of Coro. Though the Coro Jews were able to leave their mark on the commerce, culture, and public affairs of newly independent Venezuela, the smallness and relative isolation of their community did not make for a vital Jewish life. Today, all that remained was the Coro Jewish cemetery, a national historic monument since 1970, and the names of the early settlers: Curiel, Maduro, López Fonseca, Chumaceiro, most of them borne by Venezuelans who, as a result of several generations of intermarriage, were no longer Jewish but still had pride in their Jewish forebears.

Ashkenazim from Central and Eastern Europe came to Venezuela before and

during the World War II period. They, too, established businesses and factories, and progressed materially and socially. The second-generation Ashkenazim and Sephardim were university educated and became today's professionals, mainly lawyers, physicians, and engineers, and some academics, who have been assuming an ever greater role in communal affairs.

Jewish immigration to Venezuela has continued, most recently from other South American countries, particularly Argentina, as an escape from political and economic conditions. Thus the editor of the community newspaper, Pablo Goldstein; the principal of the major day school's Judaic studies department, Abraham Platkin; the director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, Rabbi Samuel Weinberg, and two key employees of the Hebraica sports club were all of Argentine origin.

Venezuela has been proud of its openness and tolerance. Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian immigrants were numerous. There was also a sizeable colony of Lebanese Arabs. On July 25, 1976, Day of the Immigrant, President Pérez announced that he would recommend constitutional changes to do away with existing inequalities between native-born and naturalized citizens. Despite this official posture, however, the press occasionally alluded to dual loyalty, or reminded immigrants to put Venezuela above any old memories or ties.

### *Antisemitism*

Venezuela's climate of over-all nondiscrimination was marred only by an occasional antisemitic incident, radio program, or publication. However, in recent years, the country's Jews have been particularly concerned over the rise of antisemitic activity in Argentina. The communal weekly *Nuevo Mundo Israelita* carried a number of stories on the subject. An editorial, "Alert," in a December 1976 issue asserted that the upsurge of Nazism in Argentina had its effect on Venezuela, where virulently anti-Jewish literature was now being sold "like hotcakes" in downtown Caracas bookstores. Much earlier, in April 1975, the Jewish community had lodged a complaint with the governor of the Venezuelan island of Margarita, where a local publication, *Diario del Caribe*, had carried stories about an alleged Jewish plot to take over the island's commerce. The community was assured by Margarita authorities that they were aware of the inflammatory nature of this "pamphlet," but that it in no way represented the thinking of the island's people.

Anti-Jewish activity related to the Arab-Israeli conflict has also surfaced. In February 1977 the community was alarmed by the presence in Venezuela of Hussein Triki, a Tunisian who had been a Nazi collaborator. His antisemitic activities were known to Latin American Jews particularly from the 1960s, when he had been secretary of the Arab League office in Buenos Aires. Triki was invited to speak at the Central University of Venezuela and before the Venezuelan Press Association, ostensibly to discuss the Middle East situation and to publicize his book, *He aquí Palestina: el sionismo al desnudo* ("Palestine Revealed: Zionism Unmasked"). Intense efforts were made to alert the Venezuelan government to his background and to prevent him from establishing a base of operations in the country. Other than

Triki, Abelardo Raidi, who was of Arab descent, a former congressional deputy, and a columnist for the prestigious Caracas daily *El Nacional*, has been disseminating the pro-Arab line. In June 1975 the walls of the city of Valencia were plastered with posters announcing a mass meeting in support of the Palestinian people and warning against "Zionist penetration in national politics and the economy."

At the end of 1973, during the presidential election campaign, there had been speculation in the community about the possible negative consequences of an alliance between Caldera's COPEI party and Jorge Dáger of the small Popular Democratic Front party (FDP). Dáger, a politician of Labanese descent and former president of the Venezuelan Chamber of Deputies, featured in his *El Nacional* column articles praising Muammar al-Qaddafi and Gamal Abdel Nasser and attacking the "imperialist, expansionist clique" ruling the Jewish State. Although President Caldera had maintained good relations with Israel and the Jewish community, Dáger's possible influence on a new COPEI government was feared. The Acción Democrática victory at the polls removed that threat.

### *Community Organization*

The community agency dealing with an anti-Jewish manifestation was the Oficina de Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Bureau), a department of the Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela (CAIV; Confederation of Jewish Organizations of Venezuela), the umbrella organization of Venezuela's Jews. The bureau was headed by Juan Plaut, with Gilda Szlesinger as executive director. The constituent groups of CAIV, whose president was Gonzalo Benaim, were the Ashkenazi *kehillah*, Unión Israelita de Caracas; the Sephardi *kehillah*, Asociación Israelita de Venezuela; the National Council of B'nai B'rith, and the Venezuelan Zionist Federation. The presidents of these bodies were, respectively, Hilo Ostfeld, Leon Cohen, Peter Mayer, and Walter Chenstochowski. Working closely with CAIV was the Unión de Damas Hebreas, headed by Clara Sznajderman, to which all Jewish women's organizations belonged.

The leadership of CAIV and its member institutions met periodically with high officials of the Venezuelan government to discuss matters relating to the welfare of the Jewish community and Israel. On the occasion of a visit to the synagogue of the Unión Israelita on Yom Kippur 1975, Efrain Schacht Aristiguieta, President Pérez's first foreign minister and now his chief counsel, pinpointed the administration's attitude toward the community when he said there was "esteem" for it in government circles. Schacht, who, like present Foreign Minister Ramón Escobar Salom, was a member of the Venezuelan Committee for Soviet Jewry, also expressed hope for real peace in the Middle East.

### *Israel, Zionism, and the Arabs*

Israel and Zionism have been of primary importance to Venezuela's Jews, who were deeply committed and closely tied to the state. A number of prominent Israeli

figures, among them Joseph Burg, Gideon Hausner, the late Pinhas Sapir, and Shlomo Lahat visited Caracas in recent years. Pro-Israel and Zionist activity was intense, and for many Jews the major expression of Jewish identification. The Federación Sionista de Venezuela unified the various Zionist entities: WIZO, the Zionist University Movement (MUS), Hashomer Hatzair, and others. In 1975 the Federación's president was also chosen to head COSAL, the Latin American Zionist Council.

Zionist activity in the community was stepped up in the 1975-76 period, after the anti-Zionist votes at the United Nations. A Venezuelan Committee for Jewish Solidarity was created in April 1976 to coordinate pro-Israel action. Latin American WIZO held its Zionist Solidarity Congress in Caracas in May of the same year. Raya Jaglom, WIZO world president, attended the conference and met with the First Lady, Blanca de Pérez. Earlier, in November 1975, a mass rally was held to repudiate the UN resolution equating Zionism and racism. Of particular concern to the community was the Venezuela's abstention in this vote, seen by some as an erosion of the traditional friendliness toward Israel. Sources close to the government, however, explained this posture not as indicative of a decline in the support for the Jewish state, but rather as a means of maintaining a balance between backing Israel's cause and the need to have good relations with Arabs in OPEC and the Third World. In other UN votes, such as the 1974 decision to grant observer status to the PLO, Venezuela sided with the assenting majority.

Venezuela's commercial relations with the Arab nations have recently grown. In 1976 a joint Kuwaiti-Venezuelan financial corporation, Araven Finance Ltd., was founded, and a program of Saudi Arabian investments in Venezuelan industry was announced. At the same time, technical and agricultural cooperation between Israel and Venezuela continued. Israeli experts have been working in Venezuela in such areas as regional planning, cattle breeding, and crop improvement, and Venezuelans have been going to Israel periodically to study methods at first hand. Under the Grand Marshal of Ayacucho scholarship program, for example, a contingent of agronomists and veterinarians was sent to Israel in 1975 to receive advanced training in their specialties. An accord was signed in January 1976 by Venezuela, Israel, and the Organization of American States for a postgraduate course in rural-development planning, which was to be given in two parts, one in Israel and the other in Venezuela. Other mutual cooperation agreements were concluded in 1975-76 between the Weizmann Institute and the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Investigation, and between the Hebrew University and the Central University of Venezuela. In early 1977 a Venezuela-Israel Chamber of Commerce was created to promote economic and industrial relations between the two countries. Several prominent Venezuelan businessmen were named to its board of directors.

### *Jewish Education*

Education, from early childhood through high school, has been very much on the minds of Venezuelan Jews. The two Caracas community-sponsored day schools,

Colegio Moral y Luces-Herzl Bialik, located in the heavily Jewish San Bernardino district, and its branch in eastern Caracas, Hebraica-Moral y Luces, were attended by about 90 per cent of all Jewish children. The large Colegio had elementary- and secondary-school departments with some 1,500 students and offered both Jewish and secular curricula, as did the Hebraica with some 500 pupils of primary-school age. Plans were advancing for the construction of a new lyceum adjacent to the Hebraica-Moral y Luces to form part of the extensive educational, cultural, and sports complex known as Hebraica. A nonaffiliated school, Rambam, also operated in Caracas. Maracaibo's Jewish community sponsored the Colegio Bilu, with an enrollment of about 200.

Except for the Yavneh *yeshivah* section of the Colegio Moral y Luces-Herzl Bialik, the schools did not have a religious approach in their Jewish-studies programs. Much of the teaching and supervisory staff in the Jewish departments of the schools was Israeli. There were also teachers and principals of North African and Argentine background. While a large proportion of the personnel in the secular-studies division was non-Jewish, a significant trend in recent years has been the increase in the number of Venezuelan Jews, some of them Moral y Luces-Herzl Bialik graduates, who have chosen teaching as a profession and have returned to work in the communal schools. Currently, the director of the Moral y Luces-Herzl Bialik was a native son of the Venezuelan Jewish community, Professor Benjamin Szomstein, trained in Israel with a scholarship grant from the Union Israelita de Caracas.

The financial health of the schools was of great importance to the community. A Comité para la Educación Comunitaria (CEPEC) was founded in 1973 to help raise funds. Under its auspices, Cepecrédito, an educational loan plan to aid those unable to pay tuition, has been established. The parent-teacher association of the Moral y Luces school (SOPREM) has consistently cooperated with CEPEC in various money-raising projects. Venezuelan Jewry's firm support of education was dramatically reaffirmed in July 1974, when a mass meeting was called by both *kehillot* to discuss the deficit of the schools, aggravated by the government's decrees raising salaries and severance pay of teachers. The meeting reiterated backing for CEPEC and discussed ideas to strengthen local Jewish education.

In recognition of the educational efforts of Venezuela's Jews, Israel awarded the communal schools the 1975 Zalman Shazar prize for Jewish education in the Diaspora.

### *Religious Life*

Besides sponsoring the communal schools, each Caracas *kehillah* had a synagogue in its building. Rabbi Pynchas Brenner was spiritual leader of the Ashkenazi Unión Israelita, and Rabbi Amram Amselem of the Sephardi Asociación Israelita and its Tiferet Israel synagogue. Several smaller congregations were affiliated with the *kehillot*, the exception being one dissident Ashkenazi group. An event of importance in the religious life of Venezuelan Jewry outside the capital was the

inauguration in August 1974 of a new synagogue, also called Tiferet Israel, in Puerto La Cruz to serve the Jews of the eastern part of Venezuela. In Maracaibo, both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi congregations used the Sociedad Israelita de Maracaibo building.

Services in all Venezuela synagogues were Orthodox. The Conservative movement was represented locally by Rabbi Samuel Weinberg, director of B'nai B'rith activities and the Hillel Foundation. There was also a representative of the Lubavitcher *rebbe*. Venezuela's rabbis were foreign-born and received their ordination abroad. Rabbi Weinberg was the only native Latin American, born in Argentina and trained at the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires.

Daily religious practice did not play a major role in the lives of many Venezuelan Jews. Few strictly observed kashrut and the Sabbath. However, circumcision, *bar-mitzwot*, and religious marriages were common, as was observance of the High Holy Days and Passover. Of late, collective *bat-mitzwah* ceremonies have become an annual event, sponsored by WIZO in cooperation with the Unión Israelita.

Venezuela's rabbis, who belonged to the Consejo de Rabinos de Venezuela, were also members of CRISEV, the Council of Churches and Synagogues. Rabbi Brener has served as president and Rabbi Weinberg as secretary-general of this interfaith group. Informal relations were maintained with other Catholic and Protestant clergymen. The Roman Catholic primate of Venezuela, José Humberto Cardinal Quintero, sent an annual Rosh Ha-shanah message to the community.

### *Community Activities*

Besides its religious, educational, and Zionist activities, the Caracas community has hosted other events including a number of continental meetings and symposia, such as the First Seminar for Latin American Sephardi Communal Leaders, in April 1974; the Conference of Latin American-Israel Cultural Institutes, in June 1974; the Congress of Latin-American branches of WIZO, in May 1976, and the Conference of Leaders of the Latin American Maccabi Federation, in January 1977.

Two long-time friends of Venezuelan Jewry were cited for their work on behalf of human rights: Luis Villalba, president of the Venezuela-Israel Cultural Institute, received the Latin-American Jewish Congress 1975 Human Rights prize, while Juan Nuño, a prominent intellectual, was given a similar award by B'nai B'rith Caribbean District XXIII.

Cultural activity has been vigorous in recent years, with lecture series, adult-education classes, art exhibits, and performances by visiting Israeli and other Jewish entertainers, sponsored by the various community organizations. Isaac Bashevis Singer, the noted Yiddish writer, was a guest of the community in June 1974. The Centro Cultural Sholem Aleichem, which dedicated its new headquarters in August 1976, fostered Yiddish culture. Hillel and the Zionist University Movement arranged regular programs for young people, as did other groups. The Centro de Información y Cultura Judaica, sponsored by the Zionist Federation, disseminated

material on Israel, Zionism, and Jewish culture. Hebraica, the sports club formally opened in June 1974, put the community on the Venezuelan sports map and organized cultural activities, including an amateur theater group. A radio program, "Israel Day by Day," was begun by CAIV in 1975. The community's Spanish-language weekly *Nuevo Mundo Israelita* brought local and international Jewish news into Venezuelan Jewish homes. In March 1977 the newly-created B'nai B'rith Family Institute initiated a program of workshops and psychological counseling for parents and children, aimed at strengthening family bonds.

### *Jews in National Life*

Individual Jews, some more and some less closely identified with the community, made contributions to Venezuelan culture. *Abraham*, a novel by José Salzberg, *Nuevo Mundo Israelita's* first editor, appeared in 1975. Alicia Segal, former executive director of the Oficina de Derechos Humanos, published a collection of articles under the title, *Cuarta Dimensión* ("Fourth Dimension"). Another book, *La Educación en Venezuela* ("Education in Venezuela"), was edited by the world-renowned Hispanist Angel Rosenblat. Isaac Chocrón, one of Venezuela's foremost dramatists, represented his country in a literary symposium held at the 1976 Frankfurt book fair. In the plastic arts field, Susy Igllicki, a graphic artist, received first prize at the Third American Biennial held in Cali, Colombia, in 1976. Sofía Imber, a prominent journalist, was director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Caracas.

A few Venezuelan Jews also played a role in the national government, notably Ruth Lerner de Almea, who was vice-minister of education and now headed the Grand Marshal of Ayacucho scholarship foundation. Paulina Almosny, first executive director of the CAIV's Human Rights Bureau, was appointed to President Pérez's legal staff, then became chief of the education ministry's public relations office, and later was named vice-minister of tourism.

### *Personalia*

Various members of the Jewish community were decorated by the government for their contributions to Venezuelan life. Among them were Rabbis Brener, Amselem, and Moisés Bihia, the dean of Venezuela's rabbis, who received the Francisco de Miranda Order in 1974. This medal was also awarded to Drs. Samuel Almosny and Moisés Zisman (1974), and to Alicia Segal and Paulina Almosny (1975). Leonor Mishkin, Esther Benmamán, and Samuel Ajzenberg received the Mérito al Trabajo Order in 1974. Two Jewish scientists, Asher Ludin and Manuel Rieber, were awarded the Andrés Bello Order (1976), while Clemente Cohen, director of foreign information at the Venezuelan Central Office of Information, was recipient of the Diego de Losada Order (1976).

The community was saddened by the deaths in Caracas of Eduardo Sonnenschein,

one of its pioneers and former honorary consul of Israel in Venezuela, on May 29, 1975; Ghenea Glijansky, head of the guidance department at the Colegio Moral y Luces and wife of Unión Israelita leader Natalio Glijansky, on November 24, 1975, and Rosa Oestreicher, long-time WIZO activist and its former president, on November 5, 1976.

EDNA AIZENBERG

## Uruguay

**I**N FEBRUARY 1973 the country underwent a serious political crisis. President Juan María Bordaberry, elected to office in November 1971 by popular vote, had been abandoned by his fellow-politicians, and was forced to surrender to the pressures of the Army and to accept the modest role of co-ruler. The military, under the leadership of Generals César Augusto Martínez, José Pérez Caldas, and Esteban Cristi, published two famous communiqués proclaiming a nationalist, populist, and socializing policy, which was received with hope by the leftist parties as well as by the Communists.

However, tensions between the Congress and the military grew over corruption in the Montevideo City Council and the reluctance of the Senate to oust one of its members who had been accused of complicity with the underground leftist Tupamaro guerrillas. Pressure by the military finally led to the dissolution of the Congress on June 27, 1973, and the end of constitutional government. The Communist-dominated National Confederation of Labor called a general strike, which, however, was broken after 15 days. The Confederation was dissolved, and the syndicalist leaders were arrested or fled the country. Uruguay began to live under what is called a civilian-military government. Some months later the university was closed. The rector and the deans were imprisoned for a short time, all professors who were leftist or tolerant of leftist agitation were removed from their posts, and the university, once a stronghold of antigovernment activities, was depoliticized and reopened in 1974 with newly appointed officials.

From the time the Congress was dissolved until mid-1976, President Bordaberry managed to rule the country together with the military. It was quite a difficult partnership. A stubborn politician, Bordaberry often refused to accept the military's views, and there were many clashes over management and policy issues. Finally, on June 12, 1976, Bordaberry was forced to resign. The official reason given by the military for the resignation was quite astonishing. The people were told by those who had dissolved the Congress and silenced political thoughts in the country that the deposed president wanted to perpetuate himself in office by preventing a return to democracy and party rule. Political observers saw the situation quite differently. In their view, differences within the military made it possible for Bordaberry to improve and strengthen his position. This gave rise to fears that failure to act decisively would transform the president's rule with the military into a rule over the military. They, therefore, forced his resignation only six months before the end of his legal term.

Despite differences between the military and the president, however, the regime had established a clear policy during the three years of shared power. In the

economic sphere, it favored a policy of extreme liberalism, which contradicted the terms of communiqués 4 and 7 of February 1973. Its chief proponent was the gifted economist Alejandro Vegh Villegas, one of the strongest cabinet ministers, who resigned in August 1976. His free-enterprise policy, encouragement of Uruguayan's exports, including nontraditional products, and sponsorship of a generous policy towards foreign investors constituted one of the few real "success stories" of the regime. He was succeeded by a close friend and collaborator, Valentin Arismendi, who promised to continue in the same vein. If Villegas's policy helped to increase the national output and to strengthen the economy, it also widened the gap between haves and have-nots. The impoverished middle class, which years ago had been one of the largest and most influential groups in society, was especially hard hit.

Army officers joined the government, taking over key positions. They were quite successful in some areas requiring largely administrative abilities, such as communications (national airlines and railways), but failed in others involving relations with people. For example, the repression of left-wing teachers and of professors was so far-reaching that it produced a general decline in the level of education. Some of the leading intellectuals had to leave the country.

Uruguayan foreign policy during that period was successfully conducted by Juan Carlos Blanco, a former top officer of the Organization of American States. His low-keyed, poised approach to international affairs helped ease international pressure on Uruguay with regard to human-rights problems. Blanco resigned in December 1976 and was replaced by Alejandro Rovira, Uruguayan ambassador to Israel.

Military leaders have spoken of a gradual return to democratic rule, perhaps in 1981. In August 1976 a caucus of military and civilian leaders selected as Bordaberry's successor Dr. Aparicio Méndez, a strongly right-wing politician who had been a hard-working and efficient minister of public health in an earlier government. He took office on September 1. At the beginning of 1977 there were some indications of uneasiness in the military about their choice. But it was generally believed that Dr. Méndez would remain in office until 1981, when the process of a gradual return to democratic rule was to begin.

### *Relations with Israel*

At the end of 1973 and the beginning of 1974 the Uruguayan government made a serious attempt to attract Arab capital and to establish closer economic ties with Arab countries. Since efforts proved not as successful as expected, the pro-Arab trend in Uruguayan foreign policy became not as strong as the Jewish community had feared. At the same time, little remained of the tradition of staunch support of Israel, which had lasted until the late 1960s. The military, who were the actual rulers, had a more pragmatic and less ideological approach to foreign affairs. Besides, contrary to the politicians whom they replaced, they did not care about votes in general, and Jewish votes in particular.

Since all leftist newspapers and publications were forbidden, many voices hostile

to Israel disappeared from the public scene. The remaining traditional newspapers by-and-large maintained a pro-Israel policy, some of them more consistently than others. Naturally, the mass media lost much of their pre-1973 influence and had only limited possibility to criticize the government. But here and there some voices were raised against the erosion of Uruguay's position in Middle Eastern affairs. The largest-circulation morning paper *Él País*, for example, has of late been critical of Uruguay's voting in the UN, which has been inconsistent with the country's energetic stand against terrorism and tolerance of acts of violence.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

The estimated Jewish population of Uruguay was 45,000, in a total population of 2.8 million. Fewer than 1,000 Jews lived outside Montevideo (mainly in the cities of Paysandú and Rocha, where Jews were organized in communities). Since numerous plans to organize a community census or a demographic survey had to be dropped, population figures were based on community membership lists and estimates of the number of organized Jews. Nor were Jewish emigration figures more exact; but it was generally assumed that in the last five years some 4,000 to 5,000 Jews left Uruguay for different countries, including Israel.

Since there has been no Jewish immigration for almost 30 years, Uruguayan Jewry was increasingly becoming a community of native-born (perhaps between 65 and 70 per cent). The birthrate in certain sectors of the community, among German Jews, for example, has fallen below the death rate.

Despite Uruguay's economic difficulties, large groups of the Jewish middle class improved their economic standing. Some 60 per cent of the manufacturers exporting "nontraditional" goods were Jewish. But although the Jewish poor constituted only a very small percentage of the community, smaller than in other Latin American countries, some of the problems were very severe.

### *Community Affairs*

For the first time in the history of the Jewish community, communal elections came under the control of the police and the Ministry of the Interior. The Jewish community was not singled out for such control. All types of organizations were subject to it as a measure to "prevent leftist penetration." The police removed some of the candidates running for communal office (they had the right to furnish proof that they were not leftist), and others were substituted. After much hesitation and discussion, the elections were held in December 1975. Avodah, the slate with the largest number of "nonapproved" candidates, drew the most votes.

Fortunately, this was the only interference by the authorities in community affairs. Jewish life went on as usual—undisturbed. There was no doubt, however, that government regulations left their mark on Jewish life. After the community's

experience, other institutions were reluctant to hold elections. Community meetings like congresses were delayed, and other functions were arranged in a low-key style.

The elections brought some highly gifted people to top posts in the Jewish community, such as its new president, Julio Kneit, and one of the leading Jewish intellectuals, Professor Manuel Tenenbaum, as president of the Jewish Central Committee. While the new leadership instituted no structural modifications—except for “cosmetic” changes in the organization of the Jewish Central Committee, the representative body of Uruguayan Jewry—the collaboration between the community and organizations improved.

When, in 1975, Uruguay marked the 150th anniversary of its independence, the Jewish community joined in the celebrations. The Zionist Organization organized a large exposition devoted to Uruguayan-Israeli friendship, and the money received from the sale of goods displayed as well as other funds were donated for the construction of a new Uruguayan public school. Jewish women’s organizations, united in the *Comité de Entidades Femeninas Israelitas del Uruguay* (CEFIDU), the umbrella organization, helped build and furnish a community center in the outskirts of Montevideo. The Jewish Central Committee undertook to plant a forest of 10,000 trees in honor of Uruguayan independence.

### *Religious Life*

For the last five years Rabbi Nahemia Berman has been spiritual leader of the Orthodox Ashkenazi community (*kehillah*), Rabbi Schalom Edery of the Orthodox Sephardi community, Rabbi Fritz Winter of the Conservative German community, and Rabbi Beck of the small hasidic community. Religious life, however, continued to be rather weak. In Montevideo there were only six *minyanim* on the Sabbath, and the attendance on Rosh Ha-shanah and Yom Kippur has been decreasing in recent years. A small *yeshivah*, conducted by Rabbi Berman, had 14 students in the last two years.

The opening of a kosher restaurant, approved by the rabbinate, was scheduled for 1977.

### *Jewish Education*

In July 1976 the total enrollment in the community’s four Jewish schools, all in Montevideo, was 2,620. There were 1,180 students in the Hebrew-Uruguayan day school and lyceum, 595 in the traditionally orientated Yavne Institute, 470 in the Ivriah supplementary school and lyceum, and 375 in the Sholem Aleichem school and lyceum (the only school still teaching Yiddish). Another 40 students attended a school in Paysandú, and 20 or 25 a *heder*.

These schools had a total of 70 teachers, of whom ten or 15 were Israelis, who had come to Uruguay as emissaries with the help of the Jewish Agency. The four large schools had Israeli directors. In 1975 and 1976 the Zionist Organization

conducted an intensive campaign to boost enrollment. While the results were not very impressive, they helped maintain the number of students attending Jewish schools, although the increased cost of education had become a heavy burden for many parents.

The chronic financial difficulties of Jewish education were not resolved in the last years, but somehow very active parents committees managed to cope with them. Some schools even extended their facilities: the Hebrew-Uruguayan school erected a new building near the old one; Yavne opened a kindergarten in Pocitos, a residential section where most of Montevideo's Jews lived, and was planning a second building next to the original school in the center of the city, and Sholem Aleichem opened a kindergarten in Malvin, another residential section of Montevideo.

The ORT school, with 485 students in 1976 (many of them non-Jewish), taught electronics, bookkeeping, secretarial skills, and state-approved high-school courses, as well as English, French, and Hebrew. Besides its regular program, ORT collaborated in a leadership-training course organized by the Jewish Central Committee and sponsored by Dor Hemscheh, a department of the Zionist Organization.

## Youth

The two largest youth organizations continued to be the Hebraica-Maccabi club and Nueva Congregación Israelita (NCI; sponsored by the German community), both apolitical, but definitely pro-Israel. The most active ideological movements were Dror, Hanoar Hatzioni, and Betar. While there were many organizations for youngsters between the ages of ten and 18, institutions for young people between 18 and 25 have been in a serious situation in recent years. Kadimah, once the home of Jewish students and a center of full Jewish life, disappeared after prolonged difficulties. Some *hativot*, like the left-wing religious La-mifneh and the Avodah-oriented Rehovot, disappeared after flourishing for a short time. Even the once "revolutionary" and very active Hativah Mordechai Anilevich, has known bad times. After the departure for Israel in 1975 of its last *garin* it died away. Lately, there have been some efforts to revive it.

The *kehillah* organized a youth department that arranged some cultural activities, but the diversity of interests among the young people did not permit the creation of a more permanent body. The next age group (30-45) was more fortunate, since there were many organizations, both large and small, for both social and cultural activities, from the Moadon Hatzioni and the various Zionist parties to organizations like Friends of the Histadrut or Friends of the Hebrew University.

Under the sponsorship of the Jewish Agency Department of Education in the Diaspora, the Pnimiah home for Jewish students was created in 1975 to give young people from Paysandú and Rocha the opportunity to find a Jewish atmosphere and a place to live in Montivideo while pursuing their studies in the city.

### *Publications and Radio*

Despite a very small readership and production difficulties, the Yiddish daily *Haint* continued to appear under the editorship of Abraham Melzer, with considerable financial support from the Ashkenazi community and other Jewish institutions in Uruguay and abroad. The former editor of *Haint*, Schamay Grünberg, has started a new Yiddish monthly, *Do*. The Communist-Stalinist Yiddish-language *Unzer Fraint*, which had been appearing for almost 40 years, was shut down by the government, as were other Spanish- and foreign-language publications of its kind. Curiously, *Presencia*, a Jewish but rabidly anti-Israel bimonthly and strict adherent to the Moscow line was closed in 1975, more than a year later than other Spanish-language Communist publications.

The leading Jewish publication, the weekly *Semanario Hebreo* edited and published by José Jerosolimski, has consistently been Zionist and pro-Israel. Although privately owned, it was considered by many Jews and non-Jews the official voice of the Jewish community.

Jerosolimski was also director of a daily two-hour afternoon program, "Voice of Zion." On Saturdays, the program time was usually bought by the Avodah and Mapam parties. The program, while most influential, was not the only one. There were other, shorter programs, run both privately and by organizations. Among the former were "Informativo Israelita," sponsored by Alejandro Yabes, and "Tribuna Uruguay-Israel," by Mrs. Helena Bouton de Correa Aguirre, the widow of the late Eduardo Correa Aguirre, one of the best friends of the Jews and Israel in Uruguay. In the latter category were a new program of the Zionist Liberal party and the daily German-language program of the German Jewish community (NCI), directed by Dr. Herman Gebhardt.

There also were a few institutional publications: *La Voz Semanal* ("Weekly Voice"), a regular bulletin of the German Jewish community; the irregular Yiddish *Tzait fragn* ("Topical Questions"), published by the small but very active Bund, and so far three issues of a magazine, *Menorah*, published by the Latin-American Federation of Sephardi Communities (FESELA).

### *Support of Soviet Jews*

Two committees composed largely of non-Jews were active in the struggle for Soviet Jewry: the Uruguayan Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, headed by the well-known historian Professor Washington Reyes Abadie, and the Women's Committee for Soviet Jewry, led by Mrs. Elsa Fernandez de Borges, a former senator. Both committees cabled protests and demands to Moscow and to the Soviet embassy in Montevideo, and conducted intensive drives for the support of professionals like artists, lawyers, and intellectuals. The committees, together with Jewish activists and the leading Jewish organizations, also worked very intensively and efficiently with the mass media. Whereas the Committee for the Defense of Human

Rights sponsored the visit of the Soviet-Jewish scientist Boris Rubinstein and the writer David Markish, the Women's Committee was host to Genya Penson, mother of Boris Penson, a painter who was among those convicted in the 1970 Leningrad trials.

Some leading Uruguayans traveled to Latin-American and European meetings on behalf of Soviet Jewry. The Jewish community, through its various organizations (mainly the Jewish Central Committee and CEFIDU) were also very active on this issue. Two delegates from Uruguay attended the Second World Conference in Brussels, in February 1976.

In recent years, pupils of all Hebrew schools in Montevideo sent Rosh Hashanah greetings to Soviet Jews, and the anniversary of the 1952 Stalinist purge of Jewish writers was commemorated on August 12. In 1976 an artistic event lent brilliance to the usual activities. The Clave recording company issued "Testimony of a Slain Culture," a long-playing record, of poems in Spanish translation, by Jewish writers and poets killed in 1952, which were read by three outstanding artists of the National Comedy of Uruguay, Estela Medina, Maruja Santullo, and Jaime Javitz, under the artistic direction of this writer.

### *Cultural Activities*

Books or plays on Jewish subjects, written by Uruguayan Jews, were not very frequent, but in April-May 1973 the German-Jewish playwright Luis Neulender (whose pen name was Luis Novas Terra) sparked a sharp controversy with his play *Yom Kippur*, which was produced by the National Comedy under the direction of Jaime Javitz. The play mixes humor and terror. A rabbi, a beggar, and a former banker are in a concentration camp during World War II. They are forced to entertain the Nazi camp commanders with jokes, which, if funny enough for the Nazis' taste will save them from being killed. The play ends with the death of the three men after they had taken terrible vengeance on a German officer. The play was much discussed, with Jewish and non-Jewish critics divided in their opinions. A non-Jewish woman critic called the play antisemitic, an accusation indignantly rejected by the author, the director, and most of the critics. Several Jewish organizations held roundtable discussions, which became highly emotional.

*Esperando la carroza* ("Waiting for the Chariot"), a drawing-room comedy by Jacobo Langsner, another Uruguayan Jewish playwright, ran for three years—longer than any other play in the history of Uruguayan theatre. Many critics considered Langsner the most outstanding Uruguayan playwright. A third Jewish Uruguayan dramatist, Mauricio Rosencopf, became a leader of the underground leftist Tupamaro guerrillas, and has been serving a long prison sentence.

Ana Vinocur's story of her martyrdom under the Nazis, *A Book Without a Title*, was published in English translation by Vanguard Press.

*Personalia*

Mario Chiz, editor of the Jewish Communist paper *Unser Frint*, died on August 24, 1973. Eduardo Correa Aguirre, secretary of the Uruguay-Israel Cultural Institute, director of the "Tribuna Uruguay-Israel" radio program, former deputy and politician, outstanding expert on Middle Eastern affairs, and a staunch fighter for Israel's cause before Urugayan public opinion, died on April 14, 1974. Daniel Orzuj, a young journalist of the liberal newspaper *El Día*, died on October 12, 1974. Manfred Neuman, president of the Nueva Congregación Israelite, the German Jewish community, died on January 16, 1976.

EGON FRIEDLER