

VI. LATIN AMERICA

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THE Good Neighbor Policy enunciated by the late President Roosevelt in his first inaugural address in 1933 and operative throughout the twelve years of his Administration has become a basic principle of inter-American relations. Recognition of the interdependence of the Americas assumed even greater importance with the outbreak of the war in Europe and still more with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Faithful to their agreements to consider an act of aggression against one nation an attack against all, the nations of the Americas supported the United States and fell in step with their Northern neighbor in the prosecution of the war.

This hemispheric progress, marked by a number of successful inter-American conferences, received more binding affirmation by the Act of Chapultepec adopted at the Inter-American Conference held in Mexico City in March 1945.

Aware that the Americas still faced the danger of secret Nazi-Fascist infiltration and extremely sensitive to the fascist tendencies at work in Argentina (the Act was later signed by Argentina, which agreed to abide by all its measures), the twenty American nations present in Mexico City agreed to prevent, by combined force if necessary, any attack on their territory or political integrity.

These desirable political objectives were accompanied by an equally progressive economic platform which covers the main problems of the post-war period: development of natural resources; increased industrialization; modernization of agriculture; development of power facilities and public works; and lastly, the improvement of labor standards and working conditions, including collective bargaining.

Seeking to eradicate fascist influence on all levels, and recognizing the danger of anti-Semitism as the thin edge of the wedge for contemporary would-be dictators, the Con-

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ference passed a resolution against racial and religious discrimination which reads as follows:

“1. Whereas the practices of racial discrimination are not only contrary to scientific principles but are also in flagrant contradiction to the Christian doctrine upon which our civilization is based; and whereas

2. A durable world peace cannot be maintained unless man is able to retain his essential rights without distraction of race or religion.

Be it be resolved 1. to affirm the principle recognized by all the American States of equality of rights and opportunities for all men, regardless of race and religion; 2. to recommend to the Governments of the American Republics that, without prejudicing the freedom of the spoken or written word, they make in their respective countries every effort to prevent all acts which tend to provoke discrimination between individuals by reason of their race or religion.”

The Conference also adopted a resolution recommending that the “international American institutes for the protection of children give special attention to the manner in which the American republics may help in taking care and providing homes for the European children who are homeless.”

Post-War Immigration and Refugees

Argentina, which finally subscribed to the Act of Chapultepec, may find difficulty in reconciling the resolution on homeless European children with that denouncing racial discrimination. True, the Argentine Institute of Population has passed a resolution recommending the admission of one million children from Europe, but this most handsome offer contains a racial catch: there is a slight qualification that the children must belong to “those races which have already proved their assimilability on our soil.” This racial reservation takes on added meaning when one remembers that Argentina has not found it possible to bring in the 1,000 Jewish children whose immigration the Government had authorized in November 1942.

This confirms a policy enunciated by Argentina during the meeting of the Pan American Demographic Conference held in October 1943, when the Argentinian delegation contended that race should be the basis on which immigrants are selected, Dr. Luis Sirt declaring, "while recognizing the economic factor, demography is essentially ethnical."

Bolivia, whose adherence to democratic principles has become increasingly suspect with the increased influence of the National Revolutionary Movement in the Villaroel Government, may likewise circumvent the Act by disguising its racial discrimination behind the phrase, "selected immigration." Declaring at the Pan American Demographic Conference that his country was prepared to receive 20,000 immigrants, a member of the Bolivian Senate explained that Bolivia would allow only a "selected immigration," preferably farmers.

The above sentiments, implying that immigrants other than farmers are undesirable because of their unproductive nature, do not reflect the opinions of all groups in Bolivia.

Following an industrial exhibition organized by the Society for the Protection of Jewish Immigrants in La Paz, which displayed such items as precision instruments, microscopic medical implements, electrical articles, and silk tissues, *Ultima Hora*, a La Paz newspaper, had the following to say: "Those who from instinct or sentiment of generosity have aided the Jews, now behold with profound satisfaction what the Jews can do. The Jews have indeed shown themselves to be one of the fruitful foreign settlements which give the full strength of their ability and their creative initiative in the service of our national progress." Further comment was made that such industries would not otherwise have been established in Bolivia for many years, since they do not exist in any other South American country. The paper especially mentioned a Hungarian Jew, Labator, who has manufactured presses, lathes, wire netting, and similar articles.

In another editorial in October 1944, this liberal La Paz newspaper strongly regretted the fact that a number of Jews were leaving Bolivia to settle elsewhere following the kidnapping of the Bolivian Jewish tin magnate, Mauricio Hochschild, who was later released.

It should be noted here parenthetically that the preference

for agriculturists is not always intended as a racial-screening process. Venezuela has, for example, announced a large scale post-war immigration program that will be directed towards the colonization of land southwest of the capital of Caracas, in the state of Cojedes. Economic leaders point out that Venezuela's agriculture has suffered from a steadily decreasing agricultural population. That this is not intended as a discriminatory policy is evident from the fact that in August 1944, President Medina Angarita authorized the Venezuelan Government to issue instructions to its legations in Europe to grant visas to Jewish refugees regardless of the age of the applicant.

The benefits to be realized from immigrants other than those who will become farmers, is also recognized by Brazilian commercial leaders, who in the *Correio Paulistano*, stated that among a number of immigration mistakes made in the past, the most grievous was the exclusive acceptance of farm laborers. Brazil, they pointed out, will decide on an immigration policy capable of attracting the foreigner who is in a position to assist and promote Brazilian progress. To this end Brazilian labor needs hands; industry needs technicians; culture requires professors; science needs chemists, physicists, and specialists in every line.

Moreover, in keeping with the Act of Chapultepec, Brazil's Foreign Minister, Leão Velloso, declared that Brazil's post-war immigration policy would be free from discrimination against any race or religion. The Brazilian Government also agreed to admit 500 or more refugee children from Europe.

Mexico, which in September 1944 exhibited a laudable attitude when it consented to establish a "free port" for 400 Jews residing in Hungary, similar to that provided by the United States for war refugees in Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York, continued to maintain a liberal immigration policy. Praising the contribution of refugees to the Mexican economy, Francesco Trujillo, Minister of Labor for Mexico, stated on May 9, 1945, in the course of an audience with Henry Shoshes, Latin American representative of the HIAS: "The new immigrants from Europe created new industries and new trades in Mexico. They have developed new labor opportunities which helped to develop the natural resources of this rich and virgin country."

This judgment tended to counteract somewhat the feeling that post-war immigration from European countries to Mexico would be practically impossible following the publication of a decree in October 1944 by Miguel Alemán, Minister of the Interior, which contained a number of restrictive qualifications. Moreover, on February 2, 1945, the Mexican Government approved the immigration of 100 Jewish refugee children from Europe.

That admission of immigrants is not only a humanitarian gesture, but also represents a good investment, seems to be the consensus in other Latin American countries which have seen gratifying evidence of the benefits of immigration.

Citing the settlements of the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) in Argentina as an example, *El Mercurio*, a leading Chilean newspaper, published an article in October 1944, urging the opening of the country to post-war immigration and emphasizing that Chile with a population of only 6,000,000 has good reason to be interested in such immigration.

It might be noted here that in the past year the Jewish community of Chile donated an automatic signal-system to the city of Santiago. Washington Bannen, a high Chilean Government official, congratulated the Jews and the Jewish Central Committee for their efforts to modernize Santiago.

Reaffirming his humanitarian and liberal attitude toward the Jews, Ecuador's President, José María Velasco Ibarra, stated on April 8, 1945 that while he is President, "the doors of Ecuador will be open to every honest foreigner, regardless of race or religion. Jews, who wish to establish an industry in Ecuador, or cultivate our fields, and who bring their capital, large or small, will be received with satisfaction. And the Jews who cross our frontiers seeking protection from hatred and persecution, will receive shelter even though they have not one cent."

Jewish immigration found a most ardent advocate in the person of George Regeros Peralta, vice-president of the Colombian Senate, who stated in May 1945: "I am convinced that Jewish immigration into Latin American countries would be beneficial to the lands to which the Jews would be admitted. The Jewish immigrants are fulfilling a progressive function which will yield fruits in Colombia much

earlier than expected, as was the case also in Chile and in Argentina, both in the cultural and economic sense."

Prospects for post-war immigration into Latin America may be said to be favorable in view of the aforementioned official utterances and plans, especially in light of the endorsement of the Act of Chapultepec, but the "open door" policy may suffer considerable whittling down by the introduction of criteria of "assimilability" and "selectivity."

Anti-Semitism

The need for implementation of the Act of Chapultepec became most evident upon an examination of the anti-Semitic manifestations that took place in the year under review. Observers on the scene point out that the Jews, having been singled out for vehement and constant attack since the advent of Hitler in 1933, now loom large in the Latin American picture although they number only 600,000 living among 132,000,000.

Argentina maintained its unenviable lead with respect to disturbances against the Jews. In October 1944, considerable apprehension was felt for the safety of the Jews in Argentina, particularly in the province of Entre Rios, a border province with Brazil, where over 10% of the agricultural population is today Jewish. For months nationalists had been given a free hand to issue anti-Semitic propaganda. Jewish houses were marked with large red letters "J" or "Death to the Jews," or "Keep out of Jewish business." All Jewish school teachers, numbering 120, were dismissed from public schools largely on unfounded grounds of communism. On high holidays Jews had great difficulties in keeping stores closed because of threats of the local police; and only by appeal to higher authorities were they permitted to close.

In Jewish colonies, the gathering of more than three persons for other than religious meetings required special permission, thus causing serious youth behavior problems.

Gradually however, the situation in Entre Rios improved with the annulment of a number of decrees; and, generally speaking, the official attitude of the Argentine Government throughout Argentina is quite tempered by the need for appeasing the United States in particular and the world in

general. Thus on March 27, 1945, Vice-President Juan Perón was reported to have said that the "Jews in Argentina are all good citizens and good patriots," and "there is no Jewish problem in our country, and we have nothing against the Jews." Comments in the Jewish press on political conditions have been of necessity reserved.

In Peru, anti-Semitism found proponents in the legislative chamber. Congressman Calle who had once proposed expulsion of Jews from Peru, declared that Jews monopolize business to the detriment of Peruvians. Senator Dasso introduced an anti-Jewish clause in certain legislation on the ground that Jews lack requisites for national progress. The harm done by these anti-Jewish statements is readily seen in the fact that the Peruvian Parliament rejected the proposal that fifty Jewish children be maintained by the Jewish community and permitted to find refuge in Peru. It is encouraging to note however, that Pedro C. Beltrán, Peruvian Ambassador to the United States, declared on January 11, 1945, while in New York City, that "no nation should be admitted to any kind of world security organization unless it is ready to guarantee to its inhabitants absolute equality before the law and equal opportunity to all without any sort of discrimination."

In Panama, an attack was made upon Jewish businessmen in an advertisement published by the Association of Panama Industrialists in Panamanian newspapers. The advertisement said in part: "Gradually Chinese, Japanese, Hindus and *Polakos* [this term is used for Jews] have come, taking hold first of all of our commerce," and further it is said that "the principle contained in the Constitution of 1941, which restricted participation in commerce to nationals of Panama, was the realization of a very old and just national aspiration."

In Costa Rica, plans were formulated in September 1944 by the Minister of Agriculture, Peralta, to take measures against those immigrants (referred to as "Poles" and in another instance as multi-millionaire German Jews) who came in with a promise to enter agriculture and instead went into business. This action, applauded by the newspapers, *Diariode Costa Rica* and *La Tribuna*, was used as a springboard to engage in vituperative attacks against undesirable

immigrants who form a "nation within a nation." The liberalism of President Teodoro Picado fortunately prevented any legislative action.

Although there was also considerable criticism in Ecuador directed against immigrant Jews who have failed to engage in agriculture despite their promises, President Velasco Ibarra declared that failure to keep these pledges was not at all reprehensible, for often the "lack of adequate facilities for colonization in the countries of refuge are to be blamed."

In Mexico, racial and pro-fascist literature such as the magazine *Sinarquista*, organ of the outlawed Sinarquist movement, was openly distributed in many places. A presumably innocent theological work also appeared which was filled with anti-Semitic slurs. At a convention of the Latin American Federation of Labor in December 1944, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, its president, declared that reactionary forces were prepared to use anti-Semitism to promote national disintegration. During the past year, a Mexican Committee Against Racism, headed by Enrique González Martínez, was established to combat all racist theories and to counteract propaganda in the local anti-Semitic press aimed at limiting the rights of citizens and preventing the entry of refugees.

The Jews of Latin America found it necessary to be alerted this past year against anti-Jewish propaganda from a source that had hitherto been relatively quiet, the Arabs' sector, which comprises a large number variously estimated at from 300,000 to 900,000. Following the lead of the Arab League which was established in Cairo in February 1945, the Arabs of Latin America have issued warnings against any modification of the 1939 British White Paper in favor of the Jews.

Jewish Community Life

The meaning of Jews sharing a "common fate" throughout the world is most strongly reflected in the reactions of the Jewish community to two events coming almost upon the heels of each other in the year under review: the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the announcement of V-E Day. A survey of the Jewish newspapers in Spanish and

Yiddish reveals that practically every one of them, wreathed in black, carried a portrait of the President of the United States, and an accompanying eulogy lamenting his loss as the standard-bearer of democracy. The announcement of V-E Day witnessed a similar unity of action, for synagogues throughout Latin America held special thanksgiving services.

Related rather significantly to the above was the general observation of the fast day of March 14, 1945, proclaimed by the Palestine rabbinate on behalf of the 5,000,000 Jewish victims of Hitlerism, and the third anniversary of the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto on April 19. Typical of the meetings held to commemorate the world-wide fast day was that held by Argentinian Jewry where 18,000 persons filled Luna Park in Buenos Aires. In Chile, more than 10,000 Jews, carrying banners recalling the Jewish victims of the Nazis, participated in a victory parade on V-E Day through the streets of Santiago.

These emotional responses were supplemented by more concrete contributions. In Argentina, both the *Junta Judia de Ayuda Judia* operating through the Joint Distribution Committee, and the *Comité Central pro Socorro a los Victimos Israelitos de la Guerra*, operating through the World Jewish Congress, conducted intensified campaigns which netted considerable sums for the relief and rehabilitation of the Jews in Europe. The Joint Distribution Committee, which began its operations in Latin America but two years ago when it opened its office in Buenos Aires in July 1943, conducted successful and intensive campaigns in a number of countries. The Jewish National Fund and the Keren Hayesod, as in previous years, found the Jews of Latin America most responsive.

This reviewer noted last year the number of Jewish organizations in Latin America which celebrated anniversaries indicative of both maturity and newness. With respect to the latter, this past year witnessed the holding in Montevideo, Uruguay, of the first Latin American Zionist Congress. Three hundred delegates were present at the opening session addressed by Dr. Abraham Mibashon, South American representative of the Jewish Agency. The deliberations were not devoted solely to problems related to Palestine, but encompassed the specific problems facing Latin American

Jewry. Special sessions were devoted to a discussion of the alarming decrease in the number of rabbis and Jewish educators, and a resolution was passed appealing to the Yishuv in Palestine to send more teachers. Establishment of a Kehillah in the respective countries to deal more effectively with Jewish community problems also came in for considerable discussion.

Illustrative of the maturity alluded to above was the celebration of the following events: the 30th anniversary of the daily *Yiddische Zeitung* of Buenos Aires; the twenty-five years of journalistic activity engaged in by Jacob Botoshanski, leading columnist for *Die Presse*, which also celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday; the fiftieth birthday of Melech Ravitsch, famous Yiddish poet in Buenos Aires and active in the foundation there of the branch of the Yiddish Scientific Institute.

Very few literary works appeared in Yiddish and Spanish, though Malkah Rabel's book, *At the Entrance of the Ghetto*, dealing with Jewish immigrant life in 1936 in Paris in the famous Belleville quarter, received considerable praise. Most noteworthy was the publication of a *Jewish Anthology* containing outstanding selections of Argentine Jewish writers, prepared especially for the jubilee anniversary of *Die Presse*. N. Fruchter completed his second volume of the history of Argentina in Yiddish. *Semana Israelita*, in an editorial on February 6, 1944, deplored the dearth of Jewish books, pointing out that with the exception of a few volumes a year, most of them translations of novels, the book production of Jewish publishing firms is negligible. Although the above accusation has some merit, it should be pointed out that the publishing house, "Israel," published a most noteworthy translation in Spanish of Mordecai M. Kaplan's *Judaism as a Civilization*. In further extenuation of this criticism it should be noted that the recently established publishing house, "Yiddish," which aims to publish modern and classical Yiddish writings, has just issued the first six volumes of a contemplated eighteen-volume edition of J. L. Peretz's writings.

Here it should be noted that, although Yiddish is permitted for publication purposes, it is banned from public usage except in private conversation. The DAIA, leading

Jewish organization in Argentina, has made numerous representations to the Argentine Government concerning this ban, but to no avail.

Yiddish reading circles in Chile celebrated the first anniversary of the appearance of *Das Yiddische Wort*, a Yiddish weekly which first appeared in April 1944, following considerable difficulties. In *Mundo Judío*, Spanish-Jewish weekly which has just completed its tenth year of publication in Santiago, it was announced that a Chilean Jewish Year Book will appear in September 1945, which will contain a record of the Jewish Community of Chile for the year 5705. *Berman Al Servicio del Pueblo* is the title of a book containing a history of the parliamentary career of Natalio Berman, Jewish deputy in the Chilean Parliament for a number of years.

The gradual ascendancy of Spanish over Yiddish among the Jews of Latin America was made manifest by the translation into Spanish of the three volumes on Jews of the *Algemeine Yiddische Enzyklopedie* published by the Yivo in the United States. Solomon Kahan writing in *Der Weg* of December 23, 1944, remarked that the translation was an epoch-making event for it provided the Spanish-speaking Jews with a cultural treasure that would otherwise be denied them. Moreover it provided the non-Jews with a reliable source of information. Also indicative of this trend was the publication of a new monthly magazine in Spanish under the editorship of Eduardo Weinfeld, and the appearance of a novel in Spanish on a Yiddish theme by Aba Engel. In this connection it is also interesting to note that the Jewish Telegraphic Agency opened an office in Mexico City in September 1944, and is issuing a daily news bulletin in Spanish which is reaching all Latin American countries.

It is impossible within the limits of this article to survey even cursorily the extensive cultural activities of all the Jewish committees in Latin America. There is an insatiable desire to be informed of all that is taking place in Jewish life throughout the world, best measured by the numbers who throng to meetings addressed by Jewish personalities from the United States, Palestine, and elsewhere. With this dread of isolation from the currents of Jewish life, there is also, however, the growing sense of the need for self-creativity and self-reliance in all fields of endeavor.