Review of the Year: Foreign

1. LATIN AMERICA

By Elsie F. Zala

POLITICAL SITUATION

Despite domestic difficulties and conflicts such as the revolution in Paraguay, the coup d'état in Nicaragua and the abortive coup in Venezuela, the outlines of the political scene in Latin America have become clearer. President Truman's statement of June 3, 1947, declaring that the Argentine government had finally fulfilled its commitments under the Chapultepec Agreement, opened the way for renewed friendship between the two countries. About the same time Mr. Truman also announced the United States plan of helping the Latin American countries arm for the purpose of joint hemisphere defense. A new Inter-American Conference for Continental Peace and Security is due to be held in Rio de Janeiro on August 15, no such conference having been held since the spring of 1945 by reason of the tension existing between the United States and Argentina.

But while a measure of stability was emerging in hemispheric international relations, confusion still prevailed in the domestic policies of many Latin American countries, with far-reaching consequences for the Jews.

Argentina

The situation in Argentina, with the largest Jewish community in Latin America, produced the utmost uneasiness. Federal, as well as most provincial governments were dominated by the party of President Juan Peron. Peron came to
power in 1946 as an epilogue to a dictatorial, revolutionary regime dominated by a militarist group, as the nominee of the "Labor Party," a party Peron himself created and led. The "Labor Party" was composed of workers, dissidents of the old democratic radical party and of the ambitious, fascistic group known as the "National Liberty Alliance." The latter were anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, and anti-United States.

Although the Argentine government gave lip service to the constitutional forms, the basic guarantees of the Constitution were regularly violated. Freedom of the press was curtailed as when it dared to criticize the government. La Prensa, the most important newspaper in Argentina, was attacked by organized mobs with police connivance. This limitation on freedom of the press, affecting all the opposition papers, called forth the condemnation of the world democratic press. The New York Times of March 21 commented editorially:

If President Truman were to call openly and repeatedly for an advertising and circulation boycott of newspapers opposing his Administration; if he were to predict that this action would cause them to change their policies; if he were to try to cut off their bank credit and their newsprint supply; if he were to inspire local police to harass their drivers, it is not likely that he would be believed when he declared that "there exists in the United States today complete freedom of the press." But this, and more, is what President Juan D. Peron is doing in Argentina. This week, through the Peronista party, he is endeavoring to subdue one of the world’s great dailies, La Prensa of Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires is plastered with boycott posters because La Prensa charged that independent newspapers were being attacked "if they do not agree with everything the government party does or favors."

Members of the Supreme Court were dismissed. Opposition members of Congress were attacked. University professors and school teachers suspected of opposition to the Government or the Peronista party were dismissed regardless of merits or tenure. Catholic instruction was made obligatory in the public schools. Large scale anti-Jewish propaganda was carried on, causing growing insecurity within the Jewish
community. Anti-Jewish slogans increasingly appeared in the streets; synagogues and Jewish schools were repeatedly attacked and damaged in broad daylight, the perpetrators frequently remaining unpunished.

The representative Jewish body of Argentina, the DAIA, repeatedly complained of these attacks to the government. President Peron on each of these occasions expressed his regret. These acts were obviously encouraged by police negligence. The following protest memorandum submitted by the DAIA to the Chief of Police April, makes this clear:

In a note December 24, last, we informed the Chief of Police of a series of criminal anti-Jewish manifestations which had been going on since March 1946, and which provoked a natural state of insecurity in the Jewish community.

To our regret, we are now compelled to add in to those, others which occurred during recent months. Last January, there appeared on the walls of various sections of the city, signs and inscriptions inciting to crimes against the Jews, many of which bore the initials of the National Liberty Alliance; last March 26 a criminal attempt was made on the home of a Jewish citizen on Serrano Street. We have well-founded reasons to suspect that it was intended for a neighboring building which houses the Jewish School "Scholem Aleichem" and which has been the object of similar attacks on many occasions in the past. On the fourth of this month, inflammable liquid was thrown on the streets causing large blazes of fire in the Jewish Temple on Lavalle Street. On the 16th of this month a bomb caused considerable damage to the Synagogue and Jewish School "Baron Hirsch" on Billinghurst Street. Only on two of the occasions cited did the police succeed in apprehending the perpetrators.

The very enumeration of these incidents points to a systematic campaign of provocation and intimidation against the Jewish community and its cultural and religious institutions.

The memorandum listed only a few of the many anti-Jewish incidents. In addition, widespread discrimination was directed against Jewish university students.
Peron’s immigration policy was administered by Immigration Director, Dr. Santiago Peralta, whose fascist and anti-Semitic record was widely known and even recorded in a book he had published several years earlier. Since Peralta’s assumption of office, it has been almost impossible for Jews to immigrate into the country. According to official statements, the Government was seeking large-scale immigration and had appointed for this purpose a special “Selection” Commission. The Commission, presided over by a Catholic priest, centered its activities in Spain and in Italy. Few DP’s in general, and Jews in particular, were expected to be admitted.

During 1946 and the first three months of 1947, only 400 Jewish immigrants succeeded in entering Argentina. This figure was augmented by another 47 admitted on the intercession of the Jewish community by President Peron who bypassed Immigration Director Peralta. These 47 immigrants had originally come to Brazil but were unable to land because their visas had expired.

Brazil

Although the new Brazilian constitution strictly forbids discrimination on grounds of race and religion, small, sporadic incidents have suggested the presence of an anti-Semitic undercurrent. One such occurred November 8 in Sao Paulo when a railway station, Estacao da Luz went up in flames, and an evening paper published an alleged statement by an important railway official to the effect that Jewish terrorist groups were responsible. The Jewish Federation of Brazil protested this statement to the President, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra. After an investigation, it appeared that a casual remark had been exaggerated by a sensation-hungry reporter.

The most recent Brazilian immigration law confined quotas to agriculturists, technicians, and qualified workers, and preference was granted to Catholics, and to “assimilable” Latins.
Dr. Oswaldo Aranha, head of the Brazilian delegation to the United Nations, addressing the Special Session of the General Assembly on Palestine, declared that positive steps should be taken to aid in the resettlement of all refugees, and that “if distributed among all nations, a million immigrants would not be excessive, in view of the fact that many countries, including many of Latin America, want new settlers.”

Last year only 600 Jewish immigrants were admitted into Brazil and 640 more arrived in the first three months of this year. Several hundred entry permits were cancelled and, according to reports, no new visas were being issued. Brazilian immigration authorities claimed that this was necessitated by the transition from the old to a new immigration law.

Ecuador

In Ecuador, the attitude of President Dr. Velazco Ibarra toward Jews was sympathetic. Important government groups, however, as well as public opinion, exhibited increasing unfriendliness. The outspoken conservative majority of the government, through its connection with clerical groups, was openly anti-Semitic. For example, an official textbook published by a parochial school and circulated by the thousands, levelled violent and ugly accusations against Jewish immigrants. The community finally succeeded in removing the book from circulation but considerable damage had already been done.

Another book entitled El Judaismo edited by Dr. Navaez, an important banker in Quito, was a Jew-baiting publication of the lowest type, comparable only to Streicher’s Stuermer. The press tried to link economic difficulties with the growing Jewish immigration and accused the immigrants of communist activities. As a result, government circles were becoming increasingly critical of immigration. Nevertheless the government, during the past year, granted 729 immigration visas to persons from all over the world, the Far East included. The government’s policy was to give preference to industrialists and agriculturists.
Chile

No signs of anti-Semitism were reported from Chile. Government officials gave many indications of friendliness towards Jews. Last January, for example, President Gabriel Gonzales Videla issued a directive granting the Santiago ORT school the status of a public school. On January 21 of this year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raul Juliet Gomez, stated that the government of Chile was anxious to open its doors to surviving Europeans regardless of race or religion, taking into account only their adaptability and the degree of kinship to relatives in the country.

At the time of writing, a new immigration law was being devised in Chile. The possibilities for Jewish immigration were still limited, aside from relatives of residents (parents, children, husbands, wives and aged relatives). A few hundred technicians were to be permitted to enter on the basis of labor contracts, as well as farmers who were to reside in colonies away from the capital.

Peru

Peru, headed by a Conservative government, had in its parliament a powerful representation of the Aprista party under the leadership of Haya de la Torre. The Aprista party with its socialist program was not, however, able to counterbalance the reactionary forces in the government. Although the president had often shown understanding of the Jewish problem, he did nothing to stop the growing wave of anti-Semitism.

Among the chief anti-Semites was Oscar Medlius, publisher of the magazine El Intransigente. One of his articles, published April 18, 1947, in Lima, was an attack on Jewish immigration. The article predicted persecution if Jews were allowed to enter Peru. It gave carte blanche approval to the Nazi persecutions. It also approved Britain's policy in Palestine, urging cancellation of the Mandate and conversion of the country to semi-colonial status. Another exponent of anti-Jewish xenophobia was Gonzalez Olaechea, writer for the newspaper
El Comercio of Lima, belonging to an old Peruvian Catholic family. A few Jewish immigrants arrived in the country during the past year, brought over by resident relatives. The government policy was to grant preference to "Aryans."

Mexico

The new Mexican government, headed by President Miguel Alemán, continued the democratic and liberal line established by his predecessor. In this sense, the official government attitude towards the Jews continued to be friendly. Despite this, Jewish immigration was rendered almost completely impossible. It was difficult to predict whether the restrictions would be relaxed or not. In the past year, according to reports, only 400 Jews came to Mexico. In addition, last November, the Mexican government cabled authorization to its embassy in Warsaw to issue 100 visas to Jewish war orphans.

The liberal, democratic policies of the present government in Mexico were, moreover, hampered by reactionary forces. The Sinarquista Party followed an anti-Semitic propaganda line with typical nazi-fascistic features. A growing number of anti-Semitic articles and publications appeared daily. An old xenophobic group, known as the Yellow Shirts (los dorados) came to life again, preaching against immigration and identifying Jews with communists. On the whole, however, the Mexican people still retained their democratic loyalties. Prominent men in the government and professions showed their sympathy for the Jews in many ways, by contributing articles, for example, to the Tribuna Israelita, organ of the United Anti-Defamation Committee.

Colombia

Although anti-Semitic riots and incidents of former years have not recurred in Colombia, the government, dominated by the Conservative Party, continued policies unfavorable to the Jews. In Bogota, the authorities made no efforts to curb
the sporadic attacks on members of the community, their buildings and their businesses. Not a single statement condemning these acts was forthcoming from any member of the government. Paradoxically, however, a statement was made in February of this year, by Arnoldo Borgenicht, Colombian Jewish philanthropist and community leader, to the effect that the entry of 3,000 European Jewish refugees had been authorized by the government.

Uruguay

The democratic candidate, Tomas Berreta, won the presidential election held in Uruguay last November. The election was preceded by a heated campaign during which the reactionary parties manifested great strength. These parties were encouraged by the success of similar forces in neighboring Argentina which had put Peron in power. Their anti-democratic propaganda was accompanied by anti-Jewish fabrications. In the main, however, the elections demonstrated that the Uruguayan people had retained their democratic traditions and stood adamant against racial and religious discrimination.

Bolivia

The present Bolivian Government which rose to power last year in consequence of a spectacular revolution, enforced a liberal regime and made sincere efforts to follow a democratic pattern. Guarantees of order and security were given the Jewish population, and permission was granted for the entry of a number of Jewish DP’s. However, to date not even the 500 who were referred to in one of the government’s statements have entered the country. Nonetheless, the character of the government offers hope for the future.

The pattern was similar in Venezuela where a revolutionary socialist regime was in power. A promise was made to permit the entry of 8,000 Jews. In practice, however, it was difficult even for naturalized American Jews to get transit visas.
Paraguay

The revolution in Paraguay by a militarist group against the President, General Higino Morinigo, put the entire situation in the country in a state of confusion, eliminating the meager prospects for Jewish immigration. This revolution was prevented from assuming the proportions of a civil war by the pressure of neighboring governments.

In Central America, reactionary movements increased their influence. Nazi influences were clearly evident from the widespread distribution of anti-Jewish articles and of Spanish editions of the anti-Semitic Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

By and large, the attitudes of the Latin American republics towards the Jewish problem reflected some degree of sympathy and understanding. This was exhibited during the Special Palestine Session of the United Nations General Assembly, which met from April 28 to May 15. The Brazilian representative, Dr. Oswaldo Aranha, who presided over the session, as well as most of the other Latin American delegates reaffirmed, in one way or another, their recognition of Jewish rights to Palestine. President Aranha and most of the Latin American delegates, resisted the efforts of the Arab representatives to frustrate impartial consideration of the problem. Cuba and Mexico, however, while not hostile, indicated an ambivalent and confused attitude. The Argentine representative, Dr. Jose Arce, displayed a similar attitude, at one time siding with the Arabs, at another seeking to conciliate the two viewpoints. Towards the end of the Assembly meeting, however, his position corresponded with that of the other Latin American republics.

JEWISH COMMUNAL AFFAIRS

Argentina

The bulk of the Argentine Jewish community, comprising some 350,000 persons, is concentrated in Buenos Aires, where headquarters of all the national organizations are
situated. Buenos Aires is also the principal center of Jewish commerce and industry.

The contributions of Jewish merchants and industrialists to the economic progress of the country are considerable. In the textile, furniture, garment and leather industries, Jews played a very active and important role. Buenos Aires is the religious, cultural and educational center of the country, setting the pace and tone for the Jewish communities in the smaller cities and in the agricultural colonies.

Among the important communal developments of the year, was the unification of the two major war relief organizations and the election of representatives to the World Zionist Congress in Basle. Until March 1947, the two relief organizations, one connected with the World Jewish Congress and the other with JDC, functioned independently. Friction between the two organizations had reached such bitter proportions that the need for an understanding became imminent. This was finally effected and David Groisman was elected president of the new organization.

The community was well represented at the Basle Congress, sending 7 delegates: 3 Poale-Zionists, 2 General Zionists, one Revisionist and one representative from the Hashomer Hatzair. The results of these elections indicated a decline in the influence of the middle class which heretofore occupied the dominant positions in the communal organizations. Also, in the last Chevrah Kadischa (Jewish community) elections, a battle ensued between three groups with the leftist group achieving victory over the Zionists and the middle-class groups. In the same fashion, in the last elections of the Hebrew Society of Argentina, the leftist group won out, despite the fact that this important social organization owes its existence to a group of Jewish philanthropists whose connection with the present leadership is very remote.

Besides the appeal campaigns for relief to war victims, certain other appeals yielded comparatively large sums for the Keren Kayemeth, the Keren Hayesod and various other charities (e.g., orphan asylums, hospitals, etc.). Separate campaigns were also held by the Mizrachi Organization, WIZO and the Histradruth.
Jewish educational activities were centered in Buenos Aires, where they were controlled by the Vaad Ha-Chinuch, supported by the Chevrah Kadischa of Buenos Aires. Jewish education in the provinces was in the hands of the Jewish Religious Schools, sponsored by the Argentine Jewish Congregation. This organization also supported a Yeshiva in Buenos Aires, called the Higher Institute of Jewish Religious Studies. There were 129 synagogues and temples in the country (23 in the city of Buenos Aires and 106 in the provinces) and 138 Jewish schools of various types, 56 of which were in Buenos Aires and 82 in the provinces.

Considerable progress was made in Jewish cultural life. This was encouraged, in part, by the output of the publishing houses, one of which (Israel) published books on Jewish themes in Spanish. The two most important newspapers in the country were the *Idische Zitung* and *Di Presse*.

**Brazil**

The two most important communities of Brazilian Jewry were in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. The lesser communities were under the influence of these two important centers in matters of culture, religion and charity.

In Rio de Janeiro the organizational activities of the Oriental Jews and the European Jews were still carried on almost entirely separately. The Oriental Jews were associated with the Brazilian Hebrew Center, affiliated with the WJC, and the Europeans with the Hebrew Benevolent Association. This latter played an active part in the relief work for war victims and placed special emphasis on domestic charity work. The educational field was hampered by an extreme shortage of teachers and the lack of a central board of education.

Both the JDC and the World Jewish Congress conducted successful fund-raising campaigns. The Zionist campaigns had greater success than ever before. The three principal Zionist groups were the General Zionists, the Poale-Zionists and the Revisionists. All were represented at the World Zionist Congress at Basle.
In Sao Paulo, the trend towards consolidation among the organizations resulted in the creation of the Federation of the State of Sao Paulo. The stated aims of the Federation were to represent the community, conduct defense activities, further Jewish cultural and educational work, and share in the building of Palestine and the rehabilitation of European Jewry.

Following the policy inaugurated by the Buenos Aires' South American office of the JDC, the Auxiliary Committee of the JDC in Sao Paulo commenced its activities in June, 1946. The aim was to distribute responsibility for the JDC's activities among all Jewish groups. Up to that time, the Sao Paulo Jewish Congregation, consisting mainly of immigrants from Central Europe (chiefly Germany), organized 10 years ago, had been regarded as the JDC group here. Now, the Landsmanschaften were drawn into the work of the JDC.

As a result of the legal suppression of the Zionist movement by the Vargas regime, the Keren Hayesod could not form its own local bodies. In May 1946, for the first time, a real Central Committee of the Keren Hayesod was formed, consisting of representatives of all Jewish points of view. The Zionist movement, freed from legal restrictions, reestablished itself as the United Zionist Organization of the State of Sao Paulo. In this body, the various groups, such as the General Zionists, the Poale Zionists, the Hashomer Hatzair, the Zionist Youth Organization and the WIZO were joined under a single board.

The trend towards unity reflected itself in the activities of the Sephardim, who organized a central body, the Community of Sephardic Jews of Sao Paulo, in which six Sephardic groups were merged. In addition a Central Union of Polish Jews was founded, combining the Union of Polish Jews and the Relief Organization of Polish Jews.

Both the communities of Rio and Sao Paulo had several religious schools and synagogues. Until recently only one Jewish periodical was published in Sao Paulo. In March, 1947, however, a Jewish-Portuguese weekly came into being.
An important book of Jewish interest published in Portuguese during the year was *Os Judeus e o Mundo de Hoje* (The Jews and the World of Today), by Friedrich Oppler. The Rio community published a newspaper in Portuguese and another in Yiddish.

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2. GREAT BRITAIN

By Joseph Leftwich

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THE PALESTINE SITUATION

The Jews of England in common with Jews elsewhere, followed events in Palestine during the past year with unflagging attention. But for Anglo-Jewry these Palestine developments bore a special interest extending beyond the Yishuv and its immigration possibilities. The domestic position of the Jews in Great Britain itself was vitally affected.

The Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, had warned of the danger of a wave of anti-Jewish feeling in Great Britain if terrorism in Palestine went unchecked. The *Jewish Chronicle* referred to the "scare propaganda based on outrages in Palestine and attempts to make British Jewry the scapegoat and butt of public indignation." During an address before the World Zionist Congress in Basle in December 1946, a member of the Zionist Executive, Professor Selig Brodetsky, pointed out that he was also President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Alluding to speeches in support of resistance made by Zionists from other countries, he stated that "it is not easy for a British Jew to say such things." He went on, "I warn you not to underestimate the effects of anti-British agitation on anti-Semitism in England. It is a crime. The Jews of Britain are as precious as Jews anywhere else."

This statement explains why, on the whole, British delegates at the Zionist Congress supported Dr. Chaim Weizmann's