

# Latin America

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## INTRODUCTION

THE economic and political situation of the Jews of Latin America, numbering 650,000, was on the whole favorable during the period under review (July 1951 through June 1952), though there were fluctuations depending on the changing political events and the rise and decline of anti-Semitism in the different countries. There was certainly no central direction for these anti-Semitic manifestations, whose common denominator was perhaps an underlying xenophobia, of which anti-Semitism was a part.

To explain the presence or absence, the increase or decrease of anti-Semitic agitation in the different countries by the presence or absence of democracy would produce paradoxical results. Thus, in Argentina, which was usually labeled totalitarian or fascist, Jews lived in freedom as Jews, while in Uruguay, traditionally the most democratic country of Latin America, anti-Semitic tendencies showed a marked increase. The government of Central America's democratic stronghold, Costa Rica, peremptorily declared in the summer of 1952 that it could not curb anti-Semitic agitation, since to do so would mean to curtail the constitutional privileges of freedom of speech and expression; on the other hand, there was practically no agitation against the Jews of countries ruled by military cliques, such as Venezuela and Peru.

It was generally political or economic unrest in the different countries that created a climate in which anti-Semitic agitation could thrive. Contributing factors were the return of German nationals, many of whom had been deported during World War II, and the influence of Arabs, mostly in Chile.

The appeal of Communism was diminishing though it still was effective in certain segments of Latin American Jewry, especially among Brazilian and Uruguayan Jews. However, the sympathy of these groups for Communism was not due to its revolutionary character, but rather to a large extent was the consequence of an adroit propagandistic exploitation of the Soviet Union's alleged role in saving East European Jews during World War II. Zionism continued to be a far stronger movement among Latin American Jewry, and certainly the leading force in Jewish life in that region.

### *Zionist Activity*

Of the very small number of *chalutzim* (agricultural pioneers) who left for Israel after the establishment of the state, roughly one-third came from Latin America, the home of only slightly more than one-twentieth of world Jewry. As of November 1, 1952, 857 *chalutzim* from Latin America had been ab-

sorbed in various *kibbutzim* in Israel. During the same period, 455 *chalutzim* were absorbed from the United States, 317 from other "Anglo-Saxon" countries, and 295 from Western Europe. Similarly, Latin American Jewry's contribution to non-chalutzic emigration to Israel was out of proportion to the rest of the emigration from the free world. Although abnormal exchange conditions reduced the dollar value of its contributions, Latin American Jewry produced some \$5,000,000 for Israel during the period under review, a substantial increase over the previous twelve-month period.

### *Immigration*

Increase through immigration was negligible and was offset by emigration. Most Latin American countries, whatever their ideology and regime, continued to be opposed to Jewish immigration. For a Jew who was not a citizen of the United States or who was not born in the Western Hemisphere, even a tourist visa for some of these countries had become extremely difficult. A few countries constituted a laudable exception to this rule. This opposition was based on economic and psychological rather than racial factors. Most Latin American countries were anxious to obtain European immigrants, but what they desired were people who would cultivate their wastelands, jungles, pampas, and deserts. The rapid success of Jewish businessmen and industrialists, although frequently contributing to the economic growth of the Latin American nations, was accepted with mixed feelings by the local population. Furthermore, in Latin America, Jews were considered by many as an unassimilable alien element, though perhaps a very valuable one.

## ARGENTINA

THE latest estimates put the number of Argentina's Jews somewhere above 350,000, of whom 83 per cent were Ashkenazim (East European in origin), and 18 per cent were Sephardim originating in the Mediterranean countries. Of the 3,402 cities and larger villages of Argentina, 836 had Jewish inhabitants. About 50 per cent (178,000) of Argentine's Jews were native born and 24,500 were naturalized. Some 94 per cent lived in urban centers and 6 per cent in agricultural settlements. (The percentage of rural residents was on the decline.) Two hundred and fifty thousand Jews lived in Buenos Aires. The natural increase was estimated at 5,000 annually.

There were eighty-six Jewish banks or banking institutions. Thirty-seven of these were credit cooperatives, most of them for agricultural purposes.

### *Political Situation*

The regime of General Juan Peron continued its benevolent attitude toward Argentinian Jewry. The opportunism in which Argentina excelled during two World Wars continued to mark the Peronist ideology, which

remained truly elastic. Thus in September 1951 the entry of thirty stateless Jewish intellectuals was facilitated at the same time as refuge was given to more or less prominent German Nazis. Elasticity accounted also for many fervent pro-Israel statements made by General Peron, side by side with his effusive outburst about Argentina's indebtedness to the German army. Peron's pro-Jewish stand, suspect in 1945 when he first came to power, could hardly be considered a device to avoid his being labelled as a Fascist in the seventh year of his government. It had become integral to his politics, which managed to be at one and the same time pro-Israel and friendly to Arab nations.

Accordingly, the Jewish community of Argentina was becoming increasingly reconciled to the regime. Although the government-sponsored *Organización Israelita Argentina* (OIA) still represented only a very small fraction of Argentinian Jewry, the chasm between it and the *Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas* (DAIA), the legitimate representative body for Argentina's Jewry, had narrowed considerably. When an OIA-led Jewish delegation visited the Casa Rosada, Argentina's equivalent of the White House, in the fall of 1951, to ask Peron to be a candidate for re-election, almost all the major Jewish institutions of Buenos Aires were represented. In the elections which followed in November, however, Jewish Peronist Party candidates were defeated, while several Jewish members of the Radical Party were elected, mostly in the Jewish districts. As a result of the election, in which only a part of the Congress was elected, there were four Jewish congressmen: Santiago L. Nudelman, Manuel Belnicoff, Rodolfo Weidman (all *Union Civica Radical*), and David Diskin (Peronist). In addition, there were half a dozen Jewish representatives in the state assemblies. Regardless of the unwillingness of the majority of Argentinian Jewry to support Jewish Peronist candidates, the Jewish community, as a whole, could not avoid being pleased by the legislative outlawing of racial agitation (which the DAIA was seeking to have implemented by bylaws), and Argentina's commerce with Israel which made her Israel's chief provider of meat. Argentina permitted a certain proportion of the money obtained from Israel for its meat to remain in Israel and to be used for investment or barter purposes. It is noteworthy that Argentina continued its shipments of meat to Israel in moments of stress when, due to shortages, she was forced to suspend her meat shipments to England.

### *Economic Situation*

Since most Argentinian Jews were city dwellers who had benefited from the shift of wealth and the industrialization brought about by the Peronist regime, they watched with apprehension the general economic deterioration during 1951-52. The government's ambitious program of nationalization of foreign-owned railroads and other services, its huge expenditures for armaments and public construction, and perhaps also the mismanagement of public funds had previously emptied Argentina's foreign exchange reserves and inflated its money. But during 1951 and 1952 Argentina suffered from

droughts which killed millions of heads of cattle. The result was a shortage of beef, Argentina's main export item, and the introduction of two meatless days a week throughout the world's largest per capita meat-consuming country.

Nevertheless, the situation of Jewish manufacturers and businessmen, active mostly in the textile, clothing, leather, furniture, food, and other consumer goods industries and trades, as well as in real estate, continued to be favorable, although the free market exchange value of their accumulated pesos had come down to one-seventh of what it had been in 1945.

### *Immigration*

Although the government engaged in spectacular gestures, such as the granting of visas to exiled Jewish intellectuals mentioned above, it followed the prevailing trend in almost all the Latin American countries of discouraging Jewish immigration. As a result there was only a trickle of 300 Jewish immigrants during the period under review (July 1951 through June 1952).

### *Communal Organization and Activities*

In January 1952 in a somewhat contradictory resolution DAIA expressed its opposition to direct negotiations with Germany on Jewish claims, endorsing at the same time the resolutions on direct reparations which, in the presence of its delegates, had been adopted at the conference in New York. This stand was reversed on June 26, when DAIA fully agreed to the negotiations and their outcome.

A Superior Council of Argentine Synagogues was created in July 1951. The offices of the World Jewish Congress were closed and its tasks were taken over by the DAIA in August 1952. In April 1952 the South American office of the American Jewish Committee, directed by Maximo Yagupsky, started to issue a printed version of its news bulletin *Yedies*, which continued to meet with acceptance in the Yiddish press of Latin America. On February 5, 1952, the DAIA obtained from the local authorities of Salta an injunction against the anti-Semitic broadcasts of the Yugoslav emigré, Blas Stepanic, a Franciscan monk.

### *Zionist Activity*

The Consejo Central Sionista continued to carry on its work as the representative body of the Jewish Agency in Argentina after the closing of the local Jewish Agency office at the beginning of 1951. As a result of the outcome of the elections to the World Zionist Congress, the chairmanship of the Consejo passed in the fall of 1951 from Mateo Goldstein to Isaac Arcavi. Fourteen delegates from Argentina participated in the Twenty-third Zionist Congress in Jerusalem, where Mateo Goldstein and Isaac Arcavi were elected

vice-presidents and Israel Yagupsky, who replaced Simon Mirelman as chairman of the United Israel Campaign, was elected to the Steering Committee. Zionist life continued to center around Israel's envoy, Jacob Tsur, who served at the same time as Minister to Uruguay, Chile, and Paraguay. In addition to numerous families that emigrated to Israel, about 160 *chalutzim* from different Zionist movements left for the collective farms of the Jewish State. An Association of Middle Class Jews was formed in mid-1951 to establish an agricultural and industrial settlement in Israel, and in June 1952 an office of this association, which claimed to have some 2,000 members, was opened in Tel Aviv.

Two shipments of clothing, for which a special permit was obtained through the good offices of Eva Peron, reached Israel in 1951. The Jewish National Fund and the DAIA inaugurated a drive for the planting of a forest in Israel named after Argentina's national hero San Martin, and the first saplings were planted in Israel in August 1951 in the presence of Argentina's Minister, Pablo Manguel.

The drive for a Casa San Martin Annex to the Weizmann Institute in Rehovoth, whose cornerstone had been laid previously, continued in Argentina. Abraham Mibashan was appointed South American representative of the Institute.

In June 1952 a Pan American Conference of the world Mizrachi movement with delegates from the United States, Brazil, Uruguay, and Israel participating, was held in Buenos Aires.

Monsignore Gustavo Franceschi returned from a visit to Israel and published enthusiastic articles on the new state which received the widest attention.

### *Cultural Activities*

Argentina continued its role as the publishing center of Spanish and Yiddish literature in Latin America. Dos Farlag fun Poylishe Yidentum claimed to be the largest Yiddish publishing house in the world and published its eighty-sixth volume.

The Argentine Section of the World Congress for Jewish Culture published the sixth of the projected ten-volume set in Yiddish of Dubnow's *History of the Jewish People*, and a monumental book by S. Niger on Y. L. Peretz.

In May 1952, with the cooperation of the Culture and Education Department of the Jewish Agency, a Cultural Council was added to the Israel Legation with the purpose of strengthening the cultural links between Israel and Argentina.

Visitors from the United States included I. N. Steinberg, who had been connected with attempts to obtain territories in Australia and Surinam for Jewish mass settlement, and the Yiddish author Joseph Opatoshu, who arrived in May 1952. In April 1952 the French Jewish artist Mané Katz arrived in Buenos Aires for an exhibition of his paintings which received the highest praise from the local critics.

### *Education*

Jewish school enrollment increased by 2,023 to a total of 11,320. Of this number 6,102 students attended elementary schools, 3,134 kindergartens, and 505 the Teachers Seminary. On October 15, 1951, the cornerstone of the new Dr. Teodoro Herzl Talmud Torah was laid in Buenos Aires. The new building of the Bialik School in Villa Crespo was dedicated on November 18, 1951. The new building of the Scholem Aleichem school in Mataderos was opened on October 14, 1951.

ORT Argentina instructed 149 students in technical trades during 1951. A new building was opened in Buenos Aires at the end of 1951, combining under one roof all the ORT courses.

### *Personalia*

The community suffered a great loss when Mattias Stolier, director of the *Yiddische Tzaytung*, died in July 1951. In January 1952 the body of Jacob Hellman, who had lived in Buenos Aires for many years as head of the South American office of the World Jewish Congress, was taken to Israel, accompanied by two representatives of the community.

## URUGUAY

URUGUAY, rightly considered the most democratic country in South America, introduced a new feature to make its government still more impersonal in contrast to the personal leaderships and dictatorships flourishing in several South American countries. The position of President was abolished in March 1952, and the government was headed by a collegium of nine with a rotating Presidency.

Certain incidents that took place during 1950-52 were unpleasant for the Jewish community. The first occurred in 1950, when a member of the Jewish community charged that the committee conducting the Haganah campaign was using blackmail to obtain contributions. This accusation was widely discussed pro and con in the press, and the newspaper *El Debate* demanded a judicial investigation, while repudiating any anti-Semitic motivation. The committee was cleared by the courts in July 1952.

The other incident occurred when Professor Enrique Fabregat, who had been one of the authors of the Palestine partition plan, temporarily left his position as representative of Uruguay at the United Nations to run for the Senate. After his election he returned to the United Nations, leaving his alternate to take his Senate seat. The opposition press charged the government with exploiting Fabregat's popularity among the Jews by bringing him back temporarily for the election. There was widespread discussion in the press on the role of the "Jewish vote" and the dangers of minority block voting in general in February 1951.

In a decree published January 28, 1952, the province of Canelones, where the Jewish cemetery of Montevideo is located, imposed a tax of 120 pesos (approximately \$50) on each funeral in a private cemetery, as compared with a tax of 3 pesos for funerals in the public cemetery. As the Jewish cemetery was the only private cemetery in Canelones, the measure was obviously discriminatory. The Comité Central Israelita de Uruguay protested against the measure, and the press almost unanimously took the side of the Jews. Nevertheless, in October 1952 the tax was still in force, although there were hopes that it might be revoked, once the provincial government could discover a means of saving face.

Uruguay still remained one of the freest countries in Latin America, and in spite of these incidents, Uruguayan Jews had every reason to feel themselves at home, although a new political party, the National Revolutionary Movement, had an openly anti-Semitic platform.

### *Jewish Population*

Territorially the smallest republic in South America, Uruguay had Latin America's third largest Jewish population. This was estimated at around 40,000. The Jews of Uruguay, as in other Latin American countries, were divided into a majority of Ashkenazic Eastern European Jews and a minority of German-speaking and Sephardic Jews. Less than 5 per cent of the Jewish population lived outside Montevideo. The number of Jews remained static during the period under review. Immigration to Uruguay continued to be very difficult, and was balanced by the emigration of younger elements to the United States and Israel.

### *Communal Activities*

The Comunidad Israelita de Montevideo (Kehilla) held its General Assembly on October 28, 1951, but it was not until December 4, 1951, that Moises Milies was re-elected chairman after a very sharply contested election. Milies, one of the oldest settlers and founders of Jewish community life and the Zionist movement in Uruguay, died forty-seven days later, on December 21. On December 16 the Kehilla started the official registration of religious weddings and circumcisions.

On February 19, 1952, the sport club, Maccabi-Hakoah, officially opened its new center.

On March 11 the Comité Central Israelita, after prolonged conversations with the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of the Immigration Police, obtained the abolition of the system of re-entry permits, which were previously needed by every naturalized Uruguayan if he left the country.

### *Zionism and Israel*

On July 18, 1951, the Uruguayan Government appointed Juan Carlos Arizti as its Minister to Israel.

On January 25, 1952, Rabbis Zweig and Rom, emissaries of the Israel Ministry of Religion, arrived to supervise the *kashrut* of the meat being bought for Israel. Their brief stay provoked a wave of criticism in the religious circles of Montevideo as well as Buenos Aires, which considered their mission as highly unnecessary and a vote of nonconfidence in themselves. On March 24, the annual congress of the Zionist youth of Uruguay convened, and on April 4, the new home of the Jewish National Fund was dedicated. On May 14, the Committee for the 1952 Pro-Israel Campaign was formed and Samuel Kobrin, president of the Comité Central Israelita, was re-elected as its chairman.

### *Cultural Activities*

Helmut Holtz represented the Zionist Youth Federation of Uruguay in the Uruguayan delegation to the World Youth Assembly which took place in August 1951 in New York.

On September 10 and 11, 1951, Maurice Schwartz, American Yiddish actor, was presented in the Teatro Solis. On October 16, I. N. Steinberg spoke on "Saints and Sinners in the Revolution" in the hall of the Kehilla. On October 28 an exhibition of engravings on Jewish themes by Manuel Blumstein was opened. Blumstein had received several prizes in national and municipal exhibitions in Uruguay. On December 19 the Yiddish singer, Chayele Groba, gave a recital in the Teatro Artigas. On April 17, 19 and 22, three separate meetings in remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising were organized by the Comité Central Israelita, the Bundists, and the Zionists, respectively. On May 8, 1952, the Yiddish writer, Joseph Opatoshu, gave a lecture to a full house at the Kehilla on "Redemption and Diaspora." The period under review concluded with a series of lectures on historical and cultural themes by Zalman Shazar, ex-Minister of Education of Israel and Executive Member of the Jewish Agency.

### *Communism*

The Communists of Uruguay made a strong effort to gain control of Jewish community affairs. The Jewish leadership felt it necessary to dissociate itself from the Communist elements. After receiving a strong protest note from the Consejo Central Sionista, the Jewish radio hour of Montevideo dropped the material of the Communist group from its programs in January 1952. The Communists continued to publish their daily *Unzer Fraynt*.

## BRAZIL

**B**RAZIL's population of 42,000,000 was estimated as including 120,000 Jews. About three-fourths of this number was concentrated in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; the remainder lived in the larger and smaller cities through-

out Brazil. Brazilian Jewry continued its important economic role; its contributions to the intellectual and political life were somewhat less significant. One exception was Horatio Lafer, who continued as Finance Minister in the cabinet of President Getulio Vargas. Brazil continued to have little anti-Semitic agitation.

### *Relations with Israel*

Although the establishment of a Brazilian Legation in Israel was decreed on April 12, 1951, the actual exchange of ministers did not take place until 1952. The Israel envoy to Brazil, General David Shaltiel, presented his credentials to General Vargas in May 1952. Brazil appointed J. Fabrino as its minister in Israel. In June Minister Shaltiel visited São Paulo and paid his respects to the Governor.

### *Educational and Cultural Activities*

The Jewish school system of Brazil was directed by a Vaad Hahinuch, which supervised thirty schools with a combined enrollment of 4,000 and a combined teaching staff of 370. There were Jewish schools functioning in all large cities of Brazil.

Brazil received the lion's share of the program of the Department for Culture and Education of the World Zionist Organization under which grade school and kindergarten instructors from Israel were sent to Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile, while thirty-four Jewish teachers from Latin America completed a winter seminar in Israel. Nahum Levin of the Education Department of the Jewish Agency headed the teachers selected by local Brazilian committees while they were visiting Israel. The teachers from Israel had previously received special courses on the Latin American countries and the Jewish communities in these countries.

An exhibition of paintings by Lazar Segall and the publication of a Portuguese version by Jacob Ginsburg of S. Ansky's play *The Dybbuk* were highlights in the cultural life of Brazilian Jewry.

Two Yiddish newspapers, *Yiddishe Presse* of Rio de Janeiro and *Der Nayer Moment* of São Paulo, and the Portuguese-language *Jornal Israelita*, which was published in Rio de Janeiro, appeared several times a week. In addition, there were three magazines: the monthly *Brazil-Israel*, founded by Bertha Kogan; the weekly *Aonde Vamos*, edited by Aron Neumann; and the illustrated monthly *Jornal Israelita Ilustrado*. In addition, there was a Portuguese-German bimonthly *Cronica Israelita*.

## CHILE

THE Chilean Jewish community, with about 40,000 members was the fourth largest Jewish community in Latin America but perhaps the best organized. The bulk of Chile's Jews lived in Santiago and a smaller group in Valparaiso.

Although there was no official discrimination, almost no Jews were admitted as immigrants during the year ending June 30, 1952. Chile continued to be one of the few countries of Latin America where Jews participated actively in political life.

### *Anti-Semitism*

A disagreeable incident which occurred in the resort village of Zapallar, notorious for its inhospitality, forced fifteen Jewish families who spent the hot season there to leave after a siege of the houses they occupied. A mob of youngsters stoned these houses. These Jews were unable either to purchase food or to use telephones to get in touch with their families. Though this incident was patently anti-Semitic, with hostile slogans painted on the walls and shouted at night demonstrations, it could be regarded as a strictly local affair.

### *Jewish Education and Zionist Activities*

The eighth convention of the Vaad Hahinuch gave evidence of great progress in Jewish education in Chile. Cornerstones were laid for a stadium and model high school administered by the Vaad.

Chilean Jewry's all-encompassing organization was the Zionist Federation, headed by Leon Gomberoff. Israel maintained a legation in Chile headed by Jacob Tsur, the Israel Minister to Argentina, who resided in Buenos Aires. Samuel Goren, who formerly headed the Political Department of the Zionist Federation and the Comité Representativo de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile, served as counselor and charge d'affaires of the legation.

Zionism and Israel continued to dominate Jewish life in Chile. In July 1951 the University of Chile sent the Hebrew University a Torah Scroll and a substantial quantity of Chilean books for its library through Israel Drapkin, who attended the World Zionist Congress as a delegate. In 1951 Chilean Zionists held their thirty-second local Zionist convention and the eighth local convention of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO).

The Chilean Government appointed its first Minister to Israel, Jorge Bar-riga Errazuriz, who presented his credentials to Acting President of Israel Joseph Sprinzak in June 1952.

Nahum Goldmann, chairman of the Jewish Agency, attended the sixth Jewish Convention of Chile under the auspices of the Zionist Federation and the Comité Representativo, and opened the United Israel Campaign for 1951. During the stay of Professor Alexander Rosenfeld, the Chilean Association of Friends of the Hebrew University was founded. The Chilean-Israel Cultural Institute added a Youth Department to its organization.

### *Personalia*

The noted poet Moises David Guiser died in Santiago, where he had resided for many years. His fame had spread beyond the borders of Chile. Some of his poems were used as school songs in Israel.

## MEXICO

UNDER the government of President Miguel Aleman, Mexican Jews continued to live in complete freedom and equality. As in many other Latin American countries, it was impossible for Jews to come to Mexico, either as immigrants or as visitors, if they were not United States citizens or natives of the Western Hemisphere. But the resident Mexican Jewry continued to prosper. While the older generation was successful in business, the younger generation made its mark more and more in the liberal professions. In March 1952 some semi-official results of the national census of 1950 were made known. According to these figures, the population of Mexico was 25,000,000; the highest estimates place the number of Jews near 25,000. While the general population had increased by 6,000,000 during a decade, the increase of the Jewish population during the same period was 9,500, of which the largest part must be attributed to natural increase.

### *Communal Activities*

In September 1951 a local branch of the B'nai B'rith was established in the city of Guadalajara, providing the occasion for a three-day demonstration of philo-Semitism and sympathy for Israel in that town, which is considered to be one of the most Catholic of Latin America. In October 1951 the cornerstone was laid for the main building of the Jewish Sports Center in Mexico City. This center occupied vast grounds and had more than 2,000 members. During the same month the B'nai B'rith lodge of Beverly Hills, Cal., proclaimed President Miguel Aleman of Mexico the "man of the year" for 1951.

In March 1952 the enlarged Casa de Reposo was inaugurated in Cuernavaca. This institution could accommodate 100 aged persons and social welfare cases.

### *Zionist and Pro-Israel Activities*

On July 25, 1951, Congress authorized Dr. Adolfo Fastlicht to accept his appointment as Honorary Consul of Israel. The decree was signed on August 9 by the President.

Of the four Mexican delegates who attended the World Zionist Congress three were elected to the Actions Committee—Carlos Landau, Theodor Resnikoff, and Leon Dulzin.

Mexican Zionists raised \$250,000 for the United Israel Appeal of 1952. In addition, Israel bonds to the amount of over \$300,000 were sold in the Sephardic community alone. The Israel Bond Drive in the Ashkenazic community began in June 1952, and its results were still uncertain at the time of writing (July 1952).

In June 1952 Moshe A. Tov visited Mexico as an Israel Ambassador on a special mission. During his stay, which was devoted mostly to economic nego-

tations, an exchange of full diplomatic representatives between the two countries was agreed upon. A Mexican-Israel Chamber of Commerce was created, and a commercial treaty between the two countries signed.

### *Educational and Cultural Activities*

In the celebration of the fourth centenary of the University of Mexico, one of the two oldest institutions of higher learning on the American continent, the delegate of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Abraham Halevi Frankel, gave the rector a scroll from the Hebrew University. In October 1951 thousands of people attended the dedication of a monument in the Pantheon Israelita commemorating the European Jewish tragedy of the last decade. The frescoes showing the martyrdom of the six million Jews were painted by the artist Jony Fain. In December 1951 the annual Zvi Kessel awards for the three best literary works in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Spanish on Jewish topics were awarded to I. J. Trunk of New York City for his book *Simche Playte fun Markove*, to Joseph Rojel of Montreal for his book *Auschwitz*, and to Shimshon Meltzer of Israel for a volume of poems and ballads. The United Anti-Defamation Committee sponsored a new series of programs entitled "Dramatic Lives: Those Who Worked for Humanity," which an important radio station started to broadcast in February 1952. A new weekly, *Prensa Israelita*, made its appearance during the same month. In April the conclusion of the ten-volume *Encyclopedia Judaica Castellana* which, in addition to covering everything of Jewish interest, placed special emphasis on Jewish communities in Latin America, was celebrated with the participation of the Mexican intellectual world. A Faculty of Philosophy and Letters was added the same month to the Colegio Israelita, which had consisted until then of a kindergarten, elementary school, and college. The faculty was incorporated in the National University. High functionaries of the government and the university attended its inauguration. The same month the fellowships of the nonsectarian Albert Einstein High School were distributed. This school, which was built and equipped by the Jewish community and given to the government as a unit in its program of a school construction, had 2,250 pupils enrolled in three sessions. Eighty-five per cent of Jewish school children were enrolled in Mexico City's seven Jewish schools.

## CUBA

CUBAN Jews continued to live quietly under the regime of President Carlos Príos Soccoras, whose ouster in a coup d'état by General Fulgencio Batista in March 1952 did not affect their situation.

### *Population*

Since immigration to Cuba was extremely difficult, the number of Cuban Jews remained static at about 11,000, concentrated mostly in Havana. The

greatest part of the Jewish population belonged to the large Ashkenazic community, which continued to cling to Yiddish culture more strongly than did the Jews of other Latin American countries. About one-tenth of the Jewish community was of Sephardic origin; in addition, there was a small American colony. With the exception of the members of the last group, almost all Jews resident in Cuba had become Cuban citizens.

### *Political Status*

Relations between the Jewish community and the government and between Israel and Cuba were extremely cordial. Several members of the community, including Adolph H. Kates, Sender M. Kaplan, director of the Spanish-Yiddish magazine *Havaner Lebn-Vida Habanera*, Marco Pitchon, president of B'nai B'rith, Abraham J. Dubelman, correspondent of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and the poet Eliezer Aranowski, received medals for their participation in the centenary of the Cuban flag. The Cuban Secretary of State and the Minister of Information greeted the Jewish community on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the State of Israel. Israel was represented at the cinquentenary celebration of the Republic of Cuba by Arthur Lourie, who arrived on May 13, 1952, with the rank of Ambassador. His short stay in the country was celebrated enthusiastically by the Jewish organizations. The Minister of Justice participated in a celebration of the semicentennial at the Centro Israelita. The Sephardic Union Hebrea Chevrat Achim and the Colegio Autónomo also organized a celebration.

In June 1952 Sender M. Kaplan, for many years the representative of the Jewish Agency in Cuba, was recognized by the Cuban Government as Honorary Consul of Israel.

### *Communal and Zionist Activities*

The Tuberculosis Committee, a Jewish philanthropic organization working with an annual budget of from \$15,000 to \$25,000, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary on February 23, 1952. The Centro Israelita de Cuba also celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, publishing a commemorative Spanish-Yiddish almanac of 172 pages entitled *Jewish Continuity in Cuba*. The \$500,000 building of the *patronato* project, which was intended to house all the Jewish institutions of Cuba and which was begun by the *patronato* committee on June 17, 1951, was partially completed.

The Union Sionista held its elections in December 1951 and elected Isaac Berezdivin as president. A youth instructor, Ben Gefen, was brought to Cuba from Israel by the Zionist Federation. He started his activities with a seminary for youth leaders in which thirty students between the ages of thirteen and eighteen participated. A new Zionist youth organization, Bnai Zion, came into being on May 31. As in previous years, in 1951-52 Cuban Jewry contributed \$100,000 for the United Israel Appeal. In addition to this, \$250,000 worth of Israel bonds were sold in a drive which was opened on October 11, 1951, by Miron Sheskin.

## Cultural Activities

*Havaner Leben-Vida Habanera* remained the only Jewish magazine appearing regularly.

The Jewish artist, Simcha Glazer, the only Jew participating in the 1952 Exposition on Painting and Sculpture of the Circulo de Bellas Artes, received the first prize.

The Cultural Committee of the Centro Israelita proclaimed the year 1952 as Y. L. Peretz Year, in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Yiddish writer's birth. A pamphlet on *The Peretz Legend* by Leifer Rau was issued in Spanish and Yiddish on this occasion, which was also celebrated in the schools and at cultural meetings.

## BOLIVIA

THE 4,000 Jews of Bolivia had to face uneasy times when, at the beginning of 1952, hostile radio propaganda and anti-Semitic slogans written on walls and printed on paper money joined other expressions of a more latent anti-Semitism to which they had already become accustomed. The attitude of the Bolivian government to these incidents was ambiguous, resulting in a strong feeling of insecurity among the Jewish population. But a bloody revolution during the first week of April 1952 brought Víctor Paz Estenssoro to power and put an end to this situation. Although Paz Estenssoro, who had been a minister in the government of President Villaroel, was rumored to have had links with the Axis powers during the war years, he had made some friendly statements on Jews before and after becoming an exile. When, during one of the speeches he made upon his arrival in La Paz, shouts against "Jewish speculators" were heard, he promised action against all speculators, "be they Bolivian, foreigners, or Jews." The President later assured Arieh Tartakower of the World Jewish Congress that Jews would not be discriminated against by his government.

## COSTA RICA

COSTA RICA's latent anti-Semitism, which had always been based on the jealousy of local businessmen, became overt in May 1952 when the small but vociferous Junta Patriótica Costarricense started operating a sound truck and posting signs in support of a bill to be introduced in Congress which would restrict the right of engaging in commercial activities to native-born Costa Ricans, or residents who had been naturalized for more than fifteen years. Several attempts to bomb the homes of members of the Jewish community, which consisted of 250 families, added to the panic of Costa Rican Jewry. The climax was reached when the Junta Patriótica scheduled a street demonstration in support of the above-mentioned bill. Noticing the con-

cern with which these developments were reviewed abroad, the Costa Rican Government withdrew its authorization for the street manifestation. As this report was being written (July 1952) the anti-Semitic campaign seemed to have lost its impetus.

## ECUADOR

THE Jewish community of Ecuador had been reduced by June 1952 to some 2,000 persons monthly because of emigration to the United States. The community was quite disturbed when Ecuador's liberal President, Galo Plaza Lasso, as a result of the illegal activity of a single individual, refused for some time to sign naturalization papers for Jewish residents and ordered his immigration authorities to check on the activities of all immigrants who, in order to be admitted to Ecuador, had promised to devote themselves to specific occupations. These measures, however, were not put into effect. In June 1952 the twice-ousted Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra was elected President. He had an excellent record of sympathy for the Jewish people.

## COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA, PANAMA

COLOMBIA's 9,000 Jews dwelt mainly in Bogota, Cali, Barranquilla, and Medellin. Although living under a repressive government and in a state almost of civil war, the Jewish inhabitants were relatively unaffected. During the period under review, the Jewish school system in Colombia was considerably expanded.

The number of Jews in Venezuela was calculated as being approximately 5,000. Most of this number lived in Caracas; smaller Jewish communities existed in Maracaibo, Valencia, Maracai, and San Cristobal. The very prosperous community of Caracas continued the construction of its school building, which was expected to seat 400 pupils. Israel bonds to the amount of \$500,000 were sold, in addition to the traditional Zionist fund-raising activities.

There were some 2,500 Jews in Panama, most of whom resided in Panama City, and a smaller number in Colon. Of these, only 300 were left out of a community of East and West European Jews which had been much larger during and immediately after World War II. The remainder were of Sephardic extraction, subdivided into Oriental Jews and those of Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese extraction, who had been living in Panama for generations and were highly assimilated. Community life centered around Rabbi Nathan Witkin in the Canal Zone, Harry Kris in Colon, and Aron Eisen and Carlos Rennert in Panama City.

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