

# Latin America

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## ARGENTINA \*

ALL ATTEMPTS at a census of the Jewish population of Argentina had been unsuccessful. Estimates of the Jewish population of Argentina ranged from 300,000 to 500,000, though there was reason to believe that there were about 300,000 Jews in Buenos Aires alone whose Kehilla (organized community) had more than 50,000 member families. Estimating an average of four members per family, at least 200,000 persons were probably associated with the Kehilla. Adding the Sephardic Jews and the German-speaking Jews who did not belong to the Kehilla yielded an estimate for the Jewish population of Buenos Aires of close to 300,000. In addition, Jews resided in more than one hundred places in the provinces of Argentina. The Vaad Hakehillot (council of *kehillot*) was in contact with almost fifty such *kehillot*.

### *Economic Activity*

In 1889 the first Jewish colonists from Podolya (Russia) arrived in Argentina. They settled in Moisésville, on lands bought by funds allocated by Baron Maurice de Hirsch. The agricultural colonies which developed in the course of the next sixty-five years became an important element in the economic and social life of the Jews in Argentina.

### AGRICULTURAL COLONIES

These colonies were organized along collective lines, cooperatively selling their products (agricultural, cattle, and dairy) and cooperatively purchasing their consumers' needs.

A table showing the development and growth of the six Jewish cooperative colonies follows on page 498.

There had been recent attempts to increase the number of Jewish colonists. The organization of the colonists had begun an educational campaign with the goal of inducing a number of new families to settle on the land. So far the campaign had been unsuccessful. Indeed, a number of factors had combined to cause Jewish families to leave the colonies. These families did not sell out, but often hired laborers to work the land, and themselves became absentee landlords, gradually moving to the cities.

\*Prepared with the assistance of Mordecai Bernstein.

TABLE 1

DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES  
IN ARGENTINA, 1949-53

<i>Name of Cooperative</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Date Organ.</i>	<i>Member-ship</i>	<i>Sale of Products 1939-53 (pesos)</i>	<i>Purchase of Consumers' Needs</i>
Fondo Comunal . . . . .	Domínguez, Entre Ríos	1904	718	63,728,246	20,650,660
La Mutual Agrícola . . . . .	Moisesville, Santa Fe	1908	904	30,159,036	22,509,567
Granjeros Unidos . . . . .	Rivera	1924	402	22,535,732	13,098,350
El Progreso . . . . .	Bernasconi	1929	218	19,073,908	5,434,985
Tamberos Baron Hirsch . . . . .	Rivera	1933	318	5,510,697	—
Ocavi Ltda. . . . .	Alcaraz, Entre Ríos	1936	138	5,735,320	3,118,634
			2,698	146,742,939	64,812,196

## CREDIT INSTITUTIONS

There was a continued growth in the number and importance of Jewish lending banks (*see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 384*). These had been established in many sections of Buenos Aires by a number of *landsmannschaften* (fraternal societies), and operated by social institutions. The loan banks were conducted along cooperative lines. Their purpose was to make small loans at low interest. They were particularly important for small businessmen and workers. There were now more than fifty such banks, and they were assuming a mass character. Some already had thousands of patrons.

## BUILDING ACTIVITY

During the year under review many institutions acquired their own buildings, both in the capital and the provincial communities.

In Buenos Aires twelve Jewish educational institutions acquired their own buildings, some of them laying the foundations for new buildings. These included the Israel-Argentine Culture Institute; a number of Zionist youth organizations, like the Hashomer Hatzair, the Poale Zion, and the Noar Zioni; the Jewish Socialist Bund; and the Jewish People's Bank. The Buenos Aires Jewish community now possessed some five hundred buildings and quarters of its own.

The provinces were also in the midst of institutional construction. Rosario was putting up many new buildings for its institutions. Beside building a new temple and a youth house, Córdoba laid the foundations for a new home for Hebraica, a youth organization.

## *Community Organization and Activity*

The chief problems of the Jewish community in Argentina were two. The first was to coordinate the activities of the three segments of the Jewish population—the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim from Eastern Europe, the German-speaking Jews from Central Europe, and the Sephardic Jews who had come from the Mediterranean area; the second problem was to establish *rapport* with the separate and far-off smaller communities and to draw them into a nation-wide Jewish activity in Argentina. To the latter end a Vaad Hakehillot (council of communities) had been set up in September 1952 to coordinate the activities of the Jewish communities throughout Argentina. As of the time of writing (July 1954), close ties had been achieved with forty-eight places in every province of Argentina. A beginning had been made in the organization of cultural tours, lectures by Jewish writers, and artists, and artistic programs in the provinces. Cultural emissaries sent by the Vaad Hakehillot from Buenos Aires had visited dozens of small places.

On September 21-23, 1954, the second national congress of the Vaad Hakehillot took place, having been preceded by five regional meetings.

### *ASHKENAZIC Kehillot*

In 1894 a Chevra Kedescha Ashkenazi had been established in Buenos Aires. This developed into the present Ashkenazic Kehilla, the Asociacion Mutual Israelita Argentina de Buenos Aires, the only one of its kind in the world. In July 1954 the Kehilla numbered more than 50,000 member families, and was self-governing. The original Chevra Kedescha had had the single function of providing a Jewish burial for its members; the Kehilla's activities embraced all fields of Jewish communal life: cultural, educational, social aid, religious, liaison with the non-Jewish Argentinian community, and with the Jewish communities abroad.

The second largest Jewish community was the Ashkenazic community of Rosario, established in 1904. In 1954, the Rosario Jewish community had a membership of 2,451 families, including almost the whole local Jewish population.

### GERMAN-SPEAKING JEWS

Most of the German-speaking Jews had come to Argentina from Central Europe in the wake of Nazism in the 1930's. The number of German Jews was estimated with some accuracy at between 45,000 and 50,000. A very small proportion of this group resided in the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) colonies which were established in 1937, the largest of which was Avigdor, located in Entre Ríos.

The most important institution of the Central European Jews was the Asociacion Filantropica Israelita, a roof organization which included a women's aid society, a children's home, an old folks' home, a clothing warehouse, a

library, and a monthly journal. In addition, the Asociacion maintained a rest home for children, called Kinderland.

A second Central European Jewish institution, the Jüdische Kultur Gemeinschaft, was involved in cultural and educational activities. The Kultur Gemeinschaft had departments in the fields of literature, music, and sports, and conducted educational courses for adults and young people. A network of societies and institutions of a philanthropic character completed the activity of the Kultur Gemeinschaft.

Still a third group of Central European Jews was completely independent of both the Asociacion and the Kultur Gemeinschaft. This was the Kehilla Achdut Israel, a strictly Orthodox community with its own organization, synagogue, and its own rabbi, Joseph Oppenheimer, brought over from Amsterdam in September 1953.

These various organizations of Jews hailing from Central Europe maintained a network of lesser institutions, societies, and clubs (often on a regional basis). Their links with the larger Ashkenazic Eastern European Jewish community were relatively closer than those of the Sephardic Jews. There were frequent meetings between these two segments of the Jewish population for Jewish activities of general interest.

#### SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY

Argentinian Sephardic Jewry had intimate ties with Sephardic communities throughout the world. The Sephardic Jews in Argentina were members of various smaller independent communities, and their relations with the dominant Ashkenazic sector of Argentinian Jewry were consequently all the more restricted.

The Sephardic Jews resided in a number of places in Argentina. Their chief center was Buenos Aires, where there were five distinct over-all Sephardic organizations, each with its own temple, and some with separate cemeteries. Each of these organizations maintained its own philanthropic institutions, educational institutions, and clubs. In May 1948 a Sephardic central committee had been set up at a convention of all the Sephardic communities in Argentina to aid the Palestine Foundation Fund (Keren Hayesod). In addition, the Sephardic Jews maintained an institution called Delegacion de Entidades Sefaradies Argentinas (DESA), consisting of the delegates of Sephardic groups in Argentina, whose function was to coordinate the activities of the Sephardic Jews throughout Argentina.

However, DESA itself was divided functionally. One department of DESA concerned itself solely with the religious interests of the Sephardic groups and another department with their secular interests; the connection between the two departments was very loose. This exclusiveness was a clear reflection of the social organization of Sephardic Jews in Argentina, who limited their social lives to their own regional and family groups, frowning on intermarriage with other Sephardic groups. The liaison between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in Argentina was limited to meager cooperation in Zionist activities.

*Educational Activities*

There were two central Jewish educational organizations in the Ashkenazic community in Argentina—the Vaad Hachinuch of the Buenos Aires Kehilla, which supervised the schools in the capital, and the Vaad Hachinuch Harashi, which supervised the schools in the provinces.

During 1954 there were 53 five-day-a-week elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 37 kindergartens in Buenos Aires. There were 355 teachers, of whom 200 were in the elementary schools, 32 in the middle schools, 74 were kindergarten teachers, and 49 were kindergarten assistants. Table 2 below is a breakdown of the enrollment in 1953 and 1954 in the Jewish schools in Buenos Aires.

TABLE 2  
ENROLLMENT IN JEWISH SCHOOLS, BUENOS AIRES, 1953, 1954

<i>Type of School</i>	1953	1954	<i>Increase</i>
Folk Schools			
Elementary schools . . . . .	5,580	6,264	684
Kindergartens . . . . .	2,648	3,097	449
TOTAL . . . . .	8,228	9,361	1,133
Middle Schools			
Teachers' Seminaries . . . . .	583	683	100
College for Jewish Studies . . . . .	54	65	11
School for Women Teachers . . . . .	60	95	35
Normal School . . . . .	64	92	28
Sholom Aleichem School . . . . .	78	101	23
TOTAL . . . . .	839	1,036	197
Special Courses			
Technical ORT Schools . . . . .	56	30	-26
Central European Community . . . . .	286	230	-56
Histadrut Ivrit . . . . .	240	450	210
Sholom Aleichem Teachers Courses . . . . .	39	42	3
TOTAL . . . . .	621	752	131
GRAND TOTAL . . . . .	9,688	11,149	1,461

At the beginning of 1954 the Vaad Hachinuch Harashi conducted 67 schools and 22 kindergartens in the provinces, with more than 3,500 students and 130 teachers.

In educational work the Sephardim lagged far behind their Ashkenazic and Central European brethren. Their four schools were quite poor, the curriculum limited to the teaching of a few religious concepts, benedictions, laws, and very little Hebrew.

## *Religious Life*

Religious institutions continued to be concentrated in the capital. There was only one rabbi in all of the provinces (Rabbi Jacob Lerner of Córdoba). In Buenos Aires three rabbis attended to the religious needs of the entire Jewish community: the rabbis were Amram Blum, Jacob S. Glücksberg, and Najman Zigman. Curiously enough, there was not a single kosher restaurant in all of Buenos Aires. There was only one Orthodox school, Heichal Hatorah, and two Talmudic academies. Some 250 children were students in the Heichal Hatorah, and some 50 young people attended the Talmudic academies.

Of the twenty-seven most important provincial communities, twenty-six reported having houses of worship; twenty-one had cemeteries; fourteen had ritual slaughterers; seven had cantors. However, in only one community was there a rabbi, and even there he was not attached to any congregation.

## *Zionist Activity*

The Zionist movement was centralized in the Federacion Sionista Argentina, which included all Zionist shades of opinion in Argentina. Each member organization had its own office or building and educational institutions. Most of the fifty-three schools supervised by the Vaad Hachinuch were conducted under the aegis of various Zionist groups. The chief activity of the Zionist movement as a whole was conducting a fund-raising campaign for Israel that encompassed the entire community. Each of the Zionist organizations had its own youth movement, and maintained *hachsharah* training farms to prepare young people to emigrate to Israel. During the period under review, 120 emigrants to Israel were sent out by the Zionist organizations.

There were also several women's Zionist organizations, the largest of which were Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) and the Organizacion Sionista Femenina Argentina Pioneer Women.

The Sephardic community maintained a series of Zionist clubs, Zionist youth organizations, *chalutz* groups and other organizations, cooperating to a minor extent with the Ashkenazic Zionist groups.

## *Cultural Activity*

Argentina was now the leading Yiddish publication center in the world. The Farlag fun Poylishen Yidntum, which concentrated on publishing literature dealing with the destruction of the European Jewish communities under Hitler and their renaissance, as well as *belles lettres* produced by Jewish refugees, published its hundredth book during the period under review. At the time of writing (July 1954) five new books were being prepared for publication by 1955.

It is noteworthy that very few of the authors of these hundred books

were Argentinians. More than thirty of them resided in the United States, some fifteen in Israel, and the rest lived in France, Canada, Australia, and other places. A new publishing house, YKUF, under the auspices of the Poale Zion-Hitachdut, had published three books; a second series of three books was in the course of publication.

The publishing house Yiddishes Buch, which was distinguished for its publication of serious literature, raised its output to ten books during the period under review. Again, the authors of these books resided in the United States, Israel, Switzerland, and Australia.

Editorial Israel, the oldest Jewish publishing house to publish books in Spanish, was a nonprofit organization resembling the Jewish Publication Society of the United States. Two new publishing houses, Candelabro and Acervo Cultural, also published books of Jewish interest in Spanish. Among the books published in Spanish during the year under review were *Psico-análisis del Antisemitismo*, a translation of the *Studies in Prejudice* published in English under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee, and *Breviario del Odio*, a translation of Leon Poliakov's French work *Bréviaire de la haine*.

During the year some twenty Jewish books, almanacs, and communal records were published under various auspices.

## JOURNALISM

A number of Jewish periodicals were published in Argentina. In Yiddish there were two dailies, three weeklies, six bimonthlies, ten monthlies, and eighteen quarterlies and irregular publications. In Spanish there were one weekly, one bimonthly, twenty monthlies, and five publications which appeared at irregular intervals. In Hebrew there was one monthly; two other Hebrew magazines appeared irregularly. There were also one German weekly, one German monthly, and one Hungarian weekly.

Among the new periodicals in Spanish mention should be made of the quarterly *Comentario*, which began appearing in the fall of 1953, under the sponsorship of the Instituto Judío Argentino de Cultura e Informacion.

The institutional courses, lectures, Oneg Shabbat (Sabbath eve celebrations) and similar enterprises, had grown tremendously. Every week during the cultural season an average of more than fifty lectures were presented under the auspices of the various societies.

Art exhibitions by Jewish artists had become a permanent fixture. The most important were those given by the Yiddish Scientific Institute—YIVO, at whose headquarters nine exhibitions by painters and sculptors took place; in addition, the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina had a permanent gallery, which presented new exhibits monthly of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and photographs.

## VISITORS

In addition, mention should be made of the visits to Argentina during the period under review of some hundred emissaries and visitors from Jewish

organizations throughout the world. Emissaries from Israel arrived for the fund-raising campaign; artists, singers, and painters came from the United States and Israel. All these visits, generally in connection with public meetings, strongly influenced the social and cultural life of the Jewish community in Argentina.

## BRAZIL

TWO IMPORTANT national events took place in Brazil during the period under review (July 1, 1953, through June 30, 1954): the celebrations which began on January 25, 1954, of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city of São Paulo, and the intense Congressional election campaign. The local Jewish population did not participate as an organized group in the various celebrations; however, it did attempt to influence the elections. At the beginning of 1954 special election committees were organized to encourage the participation of Jewish citizens in the general elections, in order to secure the election of candidates within the various parties who would defend the interests of Brazilian Jews. The Confederation of Jewish Institutions of São Paulo even went so far as to organize a census of all São Paulo Jews, with the aim of discovering and registering eligible voters. However, the supreme Brazilian election tribunal interpreted the Brazilian constitution as enjoining naturalized citizens from holding office. Hence, it was doubtful whether the naturalized Jewish citizens would be able to hold office, even if elected.

### *Jewish Population*

The Jewish population of Brazil consisted of approximately 70,000 individuals, out of a total population of 52,000,000, according to the Brazilian national census of 1950. The Brazilian census did not inquire into ethnic identification; the figures on Jews had been derived from the category on religious adherence. The Jewish community estimated that there were about 120,000 Jews in Brazil. The actual figure lay somewhere between these official statistics and the communal estimate.

### IMMIGRATION

On August 7, 1953, Vicente Ráo, the newly appointed minister of foreign affairs, published a special order to the diplomatic representatives and consulates of Brazil not to refuse visas on the basis of race or color. The order also provided that prospective immigrants were not to be asked their ethnic origin. This order was based on Federal law No. 1,390 (July 1951), which punished with imprisonment and fine every act of discrimination because of race or color (*see* AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1952 [Vol. 53], p. 257). This ministerial order was evoked by reports that an old secret circular from the ministry of foreign affairs to all its consulates, ordering

them to deny visas to Jews, was still in force. The new ministerial order somewhat eased the difficulties of prospective Jewish immigrants, and there was some increase in Jewish immigration. But new difficulties arose. A few hundred immigrants, mostly Jews, who arrived in Brazil during the first few months of 1954 with valid entry visas were prevented by the immigration authorities from landing, on the ground that they were stateless and therefore lacked the necessary legal means of validating their entry visas. The immigrant groups appealed to the courts of Brazil for writs of *habeas corpus*. But the judges rendered varying decisions, so that some of the groups of stateless persons were successful in remaining in Brazil, while others were forbidden to do so. The question was still before the courts on appeal. Several of the leading newspapers of Brazil protested against the undefined situation of the stateless immigrants, who had received valid visas in the Brazilian consulates abroad, but found that these visas were not recognized by the immigration authorities in Brazil (e.g., *O. Estado de S. Paulo*, May 28, 1954, and August 4, 1954).

Jewish public opinion divided into two camps on the question of emigrants to Israel who came back from that country at their own expense or through the assistance of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). Their number was estimated at more than 1,200 persons, or 500 families. The United Zionist Organization demanded<sup>1</sup> that this category of immigrants not receive public assistance to help them get settled in Brazil. There was also friction between the Confederation of Jewish Institutions of São Paulo, where almost all the immigrants from Israel arrived, and JDC and HIAS over the funds which each had agreed to give in order to support these immigrants. Later the influx of returnees halted. Most of the arrivals settled down, while there was a perceptible tendency among others to return to Israel, because they were disappointed in their hopes of immediately finding easy conditions of life in Brazil.

### *Anti-Semitism*

During the period under review a few anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist comments appeared in the more important publications, which were on the whole liberally disposed towards the Jews. In February 1954, anti-Semitic or anti-Semitically colored articles and commentaries appeared in various periodicals, including the liberal *O Globo*, *Correio da Manhã*, and *Tribuna da Imprensa*, in connection with a discussion of Jewish immigrant organizations. A sharp attack on the naturalization of Jews was published on July 1, 1953, in the widely read Rio de Janeiro evening paper, *Diário da Noite*. Naturalized Jews who were candidates for the Brazilian national Congress were attacked in letters from readers, sometimes supported by editorial comment, which maintained that the right to office ought to be confined to native-born Brazilians. These attacks were answered not only by those directly under attack, but also by respected Brazilian journalists. Reports from

<sup>1</sup> *Yiddische Presse*, January 1, 1954, Rio de Janeiro.

Arab sources were published to the effect that the State of Israel was persecuting Christians. The respected periodical *Jornal do Brasil* on November 22, 1953, printed an article charging that Catholic churches had been dynamited in Israel. But on December 1, 1953, the same paper printed a denial by the diplomatic representative of Israel in Rio de Janeiro.

### *Community Organization and Activity*

The Confederation of Jewish Societies of Brazil, which comprised more than one hundred communal institutions distributed throughout the country, was the central representative body of religious Jewry. Since its establishment in 1951, it had been making efforts to become the actual representative body of Brazilian Jewry, particularly in external affairs. At a session held in October 1953, the executive committee of the Confederation decided to ask the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (CJMCAG) for \$2,750,000 for the cultural and material rehabilitation of Jewish victims of Nazism residing in Brazil. The CJMCAG had requested that Brazilian Jewry present its claims on behalf of Nazi victims resident in Brazil, in accordance with the agreement reached in Luxembourg on the indemnification of Nazi victims outside of Israel. The Confederation published a notice in the Brazilian Jewish press to all Nazi victims in Brazil to present their claims with the proper documentation.

The Confederation busied itself mostly with external affairs. The direction of the cultural, religious, and ideological aspects of Jewish internal communal life remained in the hands of the Confederations of Jewish Institutions in the larger cities of Brazil.

### *Jewish Education*

In the capital of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, there were in 1954 ten Jewish institutions of learning, attended by more than 1,500 students. The educational system was under the supervision of the education department of the United Zionist Organization of Rio de Janeiro.

In São Paulo, the second most important city in Brazil, and its suburbs, there were as of 1954 thirteen Jewish institutions of learning attended by 1,433 students, of whom 342 attended the kindergartens, 1,000 the elementary classes, and 91 the middle-school classes. All thirteen of the institutions of learning were controlled and financially supported by the Vaad Hachinuch, which functioned under the supervision of the Confederation of Jewish Institutions of São Paulo.

These school systems had for the past few years been under the control of educators sent from the State of Israel by the Jewish Agency, and consequently Zionist in approach. Both in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo the non-Zionist elements had separate schools. There were also a small number of schools in the larger towns of Brazil. Many Jewish schools were located in their own buildings. The general subjects were taught in Portuguese and

followed the official curriculum of Brazilian schools: two or three hours a day were devoted to Yiddish and Hebrew studies. All of the Jewish schools had kindergartens and elementary schools. Two of the institutions in Rio de Janeiro and two in São Paulo had middle schools as well. Since 1945 the ORT technical school had been functioning in Rio de Janeiro, in a building of its own, with sixty-six students; in São Paulo one of the thirteen schools was a Teachers' Seminary attended by fifty students.

### *Zionist and Pro-Israel Activities*

Almost the entire educational system, and the largest part of the Jewish communal and cultural work in Brazil, was closely tied with Zionism and the State of Israel. During the period under review there were national congresses of the organizations of the Poale Zion-Hitachdut (June 1953), the Revisionists-Betar (July 1953), and the Hashomer Hatzair (October 1953). In October 1953, a national conference on national-religious education took place under the auspices of the Department of Religious Education of the Jewish Agency, and with the participation of the rabbis of São Paulo and Rio.

Of the 2,000 young people who were members of the various Zionist youth organizations, several groups emigrated to Israel during the period under review, each group consisting of some dozen young people. Some hundred young people emigrated in all.

Zionist activities in Brazil were strongly stimulated by *shelichim* (emissaries) from Israel, as well as by visits of deputies from the Israel Knesset and occasional government ministers. Important visitors who came to Brazil from Israel during the period under review included: Minister of Posts Joseph Burg (March 1953), Deputy Chaim Landau (July 1953), Deputy Jacob Chasan (May 1954), Minister of Communications Joseph Serlin (May 1954), and Mrs. Vera Weizmann (June 1954).

An Israel-Brazilian cultural institute was inaugurated in the palace of the Brazilian Foreign Minister Vicente Ráo, under his chairmanship, on April 28, 1954. The institute began its activities by establishing scholarships for Brazilian students who wished to study in the State of Israel; the institute aimed to popularize the literatures of both countries through translation.

### *Cultural Life*

During the period under review there were no important developments in the cultural life of Brazilian Jewry. Isolated cultural activities were improvised for various occasions. The most popular such undertakings were those which were arranged in connection with the visits of such foreign figures as Jacob Shatzky and the poet Abraham Sutzkever in August 1953.

The Yiddish-Portuguese weekly *Jornal Israelita* celebrated its tenth anniversary; celebrations began in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Yiddische Presse*, the weekly founded by the late Aron Bergman and presently edited by David Markus.

The Confederation of Jewish Institutions in Rio de Janeiro sponsored a free course in Jewish scholarship for the third successive year.

### *Personalia*

Important Jewish individuals who contributed to Brazilian life during the period under review were: Deputy Horacio Lafer, former foreign minister, and an important industrialist; Col. Arthur Levy, president of Petrobras; Levi Neves, president of the city Board of Aldermen of Rio de Janeiro; and Wolf Klabin, leading industrialist.

ELIAS LIPINER

## URUGUAY

THE REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY was still the strongest democratic bastion on the South American continent. A constitutional amendment adopted in 1952 had abolished the office of president and substituted a nine-member national governmental council. This governmental council was composed of six members of the Colorado (Liberal) Party, which had been in power for more than fifty years, and three members from the Blanco (Conservative) Party, which had been the constant contender for power. The nine members selected a chairman from their own number, and constituted the cabinet. The laws of Uruguay did not discriminate against any group because of race or religion, nor did they distinguish between native and naturalized citizens.

### *Jewish Population*

The Jewish population of Uruguay was estimated at approximately 40,000. Some 28,000 were Yiddish-speaking Jews whose countries of origin were in Eastern Europe, some 6,000 were German-speaking Jews from Central Europe, and 6,000 were Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean countries.

The Jewish population was growing by natural increase. There was a mortality of one-half per cent and a birth rate of approximately one per cent. Only 140 Jews had immigrated into Uruguay during the period 1952-54. More than half of these immigrants originally came to Uruguay as tourists, and brought in some capital. Some 95 per cent of the Jewish population lived in Montevideo, a city whose total population was 1,200,000. The period 1952-54 saw a marked movement of Jews from the provinces to the capital.

### ECONOMIC LIFE

The period 1952-54 had been a period of stagnation in the economic life of the Jewish population of Uruguay. This change in the economic situation was partly a consequence of a general economic contraction in Uruguay. The expansion of the war and postwar years had halted, and there was a surplus of goods, a shortage of foreign exchange, and a rise in the cost of living.

The Jews of Uruguay were particularly active in such industrial and commercial fields as furniture, furs, men's and women's clothing, oil, and factoring. Since 1952 these industries had grown considerably. Approximately 10 per cent of the Jewish industries in Uruguay had been developed during 1952-54.

Uruguayan Jewry had a significant professional element serving non-Jews as well as Jews. There were about 200 Jewish professionals (physicians, lawyers, notaries, engineers, chemists, pharmacists, teachers, and professors). Some of them occupied responsible positions in the government and high communal offices.

### *Civic Status*

The Jews of Uruguay were accorded the same civic duties and rights as other residents. Officially there was no discrimination, and there had been no anti-Semitic outbreaks. Nevertheless, the autonomous local administration of the city of Canalanes, in a district where the Jewish cemeteries of Uruguay were located, had passed a law under which Jews had to pay for the privilege of burying their dead in their own private cemeteries at the rate of 100 pesos per body, approximately fifty times more than the fee for burying non-Jewish bodies.<sup>1</sup>

### *Communal Organization*

Communally the Uruguayan Jews were organized in three *kehillot*. The Ashkenazic sector included about 6,000 families, and there were approximately 2,500 German-speaking Jewish families and about 2,000 Sephardic families. All three *kehillot* were affiliated with the Jewish Central Committee, which represented them in external matters. The Central Committee had a subcommittee which devoted itself to defense against anti-Semitism, disseminating information about Jews, and safeguarding Jewish rights. It served as the link between Uruguayan Jewry and other Jewish communities.

### *Religious Life*

The largest *kehillah* in Uruguay was the Ashkenazic, which was organized along both national and religious lines. Five Orthodox rabbis served the Ashkenazic group. With the aid of their respective religious councils they supervised every aspect of local religious life: *kashruth*, marriage, circumcision, divorce, burial, etc.

In addition, the German-speaking *kehillah* had its own rabbi and the Sephardic *kehillah* its own *haham*. The petty ambitions of the rabbis and the rivalry among them made it impossible to select a chief rabbi who would bridge the division in the religious life of Uruguayan Jewry.

<sup>1</sup>On November 16, 1954, the district of Canalanes published a decree completing revoking the decree described above, which had originally been published on January 28, 1954.

## *Jewish Education*

The Ashkenazic *kehillah* was responsible for the Jewish education of youth and children of its membership. Under its auspices a Vaad Hachinuch supervised nine schools in Montevideo and three in the provinces. These schools were attended by 1,300 children, divided into four grades. Almost every school had a kindergarten. Forty teachers and one school inspector constituted the professional staff. The school budget was 140,000 pesos (\$73,600) per year, of which 50,000 pesos (\$26,300) was contributed by the *kehillah*; the fund-raising campaign for Israel gave the Vaad Hachinuch approximately 40,000 pesos (\$21,000), and tuition fees and community donations covered the balance. All the schools were supplementary schools, giving two and a half hours of instruction daily for ten months a year. Yiddish, Hebrew, tradition, history, and literature were the subjects of instruction. There were three kinds of schools: Orthodox, national-religious, and national-secular. During the 1953-54 school year one school began to conduct one class on a full-time basis. At the time of writing (July 1, 1954), there were fifteen students in this class.

In addition, the German-speaking community maintained a one-day-a-week religious school, and the Sephardim one school where Hebrew was taught for two hours daily.

For older children there were evening courses in Hebrew and literature. The Zionists conducted classes for their *hachsharah* training farms for their youth organizations, and classes for adults.

## *Zionist Organization and Activities*

The Zionist activity of Uruguayan Jewry was organized by a central Zionist council representing all the Zionist parties: General Zionist, Labor Zionist, Mapai, Revisionist, Orthodox Mizrahi, and leftwing Mapam. The Central Council was the only representative of the Jewish Agency in Uruguay. The council developed a lively program of Zionist propaganda and a vigorous cultural activity, in addition to its involvement in Jewish education. The council set up an annual United Israel fund-raising Campaign.

The United Israel Campaign represented the physical link between Uruguayan Jewry and the State of Israel. The contribution of Uruguayan Jewry to the State of Israel was 750,000 pesos (\$395,000) in 1951; 850,000 pesos (\$447,000) in 1952; and 800,000 pesos (\$421,000) in 1953. In 1954 it was hoped to collect 1,000,000 pesos (about \$526,000). During 1953 Uruguayan Jews bought Israel bonds to the amount of 300,000 pesos (\$158,000).

The Federation of Zionist Youth included Hanoar Hazoni, Hatechiah, Maccabi-Hakoah, Hashomer Hatzair, Bnei Akiva, Betar, and Dror. The organization maintained three *hachsharah* farms where young *chalutzim* who wished to settle on Israel collective farms were trained. During 1952-54 fifty-six young people emigrated to Israel to settle there permanently.

On August 14, 1954, the Maccabi Hakoah sport organization celebrated

the laying of the cornerstone for its own sports place. The Montevideo municipality donated the field. The Zionist women had their own organizations, the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) and Pioneer Women, which were very active. WIZO had some 4,000 members, and had collected 100,000 pesos (\$50,000) for Israel during 1953 to support the educational institution in that country which WIZO sponsored (Beth Uruguay). The Pioneer Women had a membership of 2,500.

#### ISRAEL REPRESENTATION

Arieh Kubovy was the official representative of the State of Israel in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay, with his permanent residence in Argentina. The Israel Legation in Uruguay was headed by the Israeli diplomat Levi Aryeh Alon. Alon had succeeded in establishing close ties of friendship between his country and Uruguay.

#### *Social Welfare*

In June 1953 the Ashkenazic *kehillah* in Montevideo opened a modern medical cooperative institute to serve indigent patients. The medical institute had 3,000 members. The Ashkenazic *kehillah* had been rendering large financial aid to the medical institute, which also offered medical aid to members of the *kehillah*.

In addition, there were a number of traditional philanthropic agencies in the metropolitan places of Uruguay: a ladies aid society, dowry society, old age home, orphanage, and a relief fund.

#### *Cultural Activity*

Uruguayan Jewry had a significant cultural life. The older generation sustained Yiddish and Hebrew cultural activities. Beside two daily newspapers in Yiddish which were imported from nearby Argentina, there were two dailies one weekly, and a number of bulletins. During 1953-54 two Spanish-language publications to serve the younger people made their appearance: *Gazetta Israelita* and *Semana Hebrea*. These publications appeared every Friday and reflected the whole cultural life of the Uruguayan Jews, carrying news of Israel and Uruguayan and Jewish youth activities. Some 10,000 copies of each paper were circulated.

There were several permanent Jewish cultural organizations in Uruguay: the cultural section of the *kehillah*, YIVO, the Joseph Mendelsohn Culture League, Kadimah, and the cultural department of the Central Zionist Council. All these organizations maintained public libraries, of which YIVO's had the largest readership.

From time to time visitors from Israel, the United States, and Argentina came to Uruguay to address conferences and give readings on Jewish themes.

In February 1953 a new society called Hebraica was established in Montevideo. This society had far-ranging ambitions for the development of Jewish

culture among its members. It had already accumulated a capital of several hundred thousand pesos and had bought a large site on one of the main streets of Montevideo on which to build a large cultural center for Jewish families who wanted to spend their free time in a Jewish cultural milieu. Beside the cultural activities of these organizations, the Zionist Council Central Committee and the Ashkenazic *kehillah* sponsored national and cultural activities. A large number of persons attended these meetings.

There were also radio cultural programs in Montevideo. A Jewish radio troupe devoted a popular weekly program to Jewish scholars, artists, writers, and authors. A daily Jewish radio hour brought its listeners Jewish songs and folklore, and was well received.

LEON HALPERN