Latin America

ARGENTINA

At the time of writing the overthrow of the Gen. Juan Peron dictatorship in September 1955 had created completely different possibilities and horizons for Argentina as a whole and, inevitably, for Jewish communal life.

It was still too early for a definitive evaluation of the effect of the twelve years of Peron’s regime on Jewish life in Argentina. But just as the previous terror and corruption had involved the Jewish community, so the campaign to clean up Argentinian society was expected to affect Argentine Jewry.

The new situation aroused mixed feelings in the Jewish community—on the one hand, natural joy at the possibility of a new democratic epoch; but on the other, anxiety lest the new democratic freedoms anticipated permit reactionary anti-Semitic elements to begin an intensified anti-Jewish campaign. During the last days of Peron’s regime, during his conflict with the Catholic clergy, some anti-Semitic propaganda appeared surreptitiously. But the new provisional government of Maj. Gen. Eduardo Lonardi resulting from the military insurrection had given reason to hope that it would not tolerate such manifestations.

Immigration

The effect of the Peron regime on Jewish life in Argentina, and the ways in which it sought to win support in the Jewish community, were illustrated in its handling of the question of immigration. Weekly, ships arrived on the shores of Argentina carrying thousands of immigrants. These included both Spanish and Italian migrants, who constituted the majority, and a large percentage of refugees who had fled East Europe and had been placed in German, Austrian, and Italian displaced persons (DP) camps. Some of them had fled Iron Curtain countries because they were political democrats—but these were the exception. Most of the refugees were former Nazi collaborators, some even former SS men or SS collaborators.

But the doors of Argentina were de facto shut for the Jews, except that from time to time Peron would make a gesture which would serve as the basis for tremendous propaganda throughout the world. During 1954-55 the dictator presented Argentinian Jewry with just such a “gift”—he declared that he was allowing 100 families from the DP camp of Foehrenwald in Germany to enter Argentina. But even these 100 families (inconsequential compared to the tens of thousands of immigrants arriving annually in Argentina) turned out to be a complete mirage—propaganda delegations were sent to Eu-
rope (particularly to Germany), and a mere two dozen Jewish refugees came to Argentina. That was the extent of Jewish immigration to Argentina during 1954–55.

Anti-Semitic Activity

Another point which had caused concern to Argentinian Jews during the Peron regime was the legitimized (or rather the open) Nazi activity. Argentina was the undisturbed center of the Nazi world executive. The German-language periodical Der Weg was published in Argentina as a central organ for the world Nazi movement. This periodical published the most horrifying insinuations, à la Der Stuermer, against the Jews. (North America, it said, was in particular need of sympathy because it had been “Judaized.”) But Der Weg was not the only place where there were Nazis. From Argentina the former Nazi Stuka bomber wing commander Col. Hans Ulrich Rudel conducted neo-Nazi activities in Germany. A number of Nazi organizations were active, and in his greeting to a large German conference in 1955, Peron paid his respects to his comrades in arms, “the heroic German soldiers who had died during the second World War for the cause of German freedom.”

The Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista, an armed Fascist organization openly maintained by the Peron government, was intended to be the dictator’s bodyguard. It consisted for the most part of European Quislings and was completely liquidated during the revolutionary battles of September 16–20, 1955.

Jewish Population

During 1954–55 the Jewish population of Argentina remained stable, except for natural increase. The movement from the provinces to the capital was not noteworthy. The migration from the Jewish agricultural colonies to the cities almost ceased—indeed, there was an increased interest in the colonies. Their prestige grew, and they served as a model for the Argentinian economy by their exemplary cooperative organization.

Every colony had its own cooperative, which handled the entire production of the colony. The central organization of these cooperatives, the Fraternidad Agraria, with twenty-four affiliates, celebrated its thirtieth anniversary on May 1, 1955. The Jewish cooperative colonies had become the dominant economic institutions of some areas, in respect to both the raising of grain and the production of cattle. These cooperatives had developed a whole complex of institutions, including clubs, libraries, and other cultural centers; their budgets made provision for local Jewish cultural and philanthropic purposes.

During 1954–55 the Jewish colonies engaged in a program of cooperative industrialization. The first linseed oil refinery was established, and in its first year produced 9,000 tons.

One of the problems of the Jewish colonies was the fact that Jewish colonists, leaving the soil, frequently sold their fields to non-Jewish owners.
The result was a decline in Jewish land ownership. The Fraternidad created a fund to buy out such fields. During 1954–55 there was a decrease in the sale of lands—in fact, land that had been lost was recovered. In some instances, areas adjacent to Jewish-owned ones were bought, as the mechanization of agriculture made it possible to work larger areas.

Community Life

The most important communal organization of Argentinian Jewry was the Kehilla (A.M.I.A.) of Buenos Aires, with more than 50,000 members. The budget of this Kehilla for 1954–55 was more than 20,000,000 pesos (over $1,000,000). Table 1 indicates the nature of its expenditures.

During the course of the year the Vaad Hakehiloth, set up in 1952 to coordinate the activities of the Jewish communities throughout Argentina, held a series of regional conferences in the various provinces of Argentina. The provincial kehillot were served through a special secretariat. A bulletin in Yiddish and Spanish, known as Kehilla un Folk—Comunidad y Pueblo, had recently begun publication. By the fall of 1955, two issues had appeared.

Religious Life

The following statistics cover the fifty-three synagogues which responded to a questionnaire sent to the approximately one hundred existing synagogues in Buenos Aires. All of those that responded served the influential Ashkenazic sector of the Jewish community. They included the largest synagogues in the city.

Between 1862 and 1918 fifteen synagogues had been founded; between 1918 and 1939, eighteen; after 1939, five. During the first period ten synagogues had been established by Russian Jews, the rest by Jews from Romania and Bessarabia; of the eighteen synagogues from the second period, fourteen had been founded by Jews from Poland, two by Jews from Russia, and two by Jews from Galicia. The synagogues founded after 1939 had been established by German Jews.

Of the fifty-three synagogues, forty-one possessed their own buildings, eleven used rented buildings, and one was housed in an establishment belonging to a school. Nine of these synagogues were in the process of erecting special buildings for educational institutions.

Nineteen of the synagogues had no religious personnel; twenty-one of them maintained cantors, five choirs, seven prayer readers, and four rabbis. One of the synagogues maintained a preacher. Four maintained liberal rabbis who conducted public educational courses. There were sextons in only five of the synagogues.

Of the fifty-three synagogues that replied to the questionnaire, twenty-six maintained educational institutions, twenty-six philanthropic funds, sixteen youth centers, and one a cooperative bank. In almost all of them there were special committees for the Keren Kayemeth (Jewish National Fund) and the United Campaign.

Ten of the congregations had groups regularly studying the traditional
Jewish classics. In twenty congregations these study groups met daily, in sixteen every Sabbath.

In thirty-one of the congregations there was worship three times daily; in twenty, services were held on the Sabbath and holidays; in twenty-four, women attended services on Sabbaths and holidays.

The total number of Torah Scrolls in all the synagogues was 300; eleven of them had sets of the Talmud, three possessing two sets and one three sets. Only in one of the synagogues were there no religious volumes at all.

The position of head of the Jewish court, occupied by Rabbi Amram Blum, was abolished by the administration of the Kehilla of Buenos Aires on October 4, 1955—as a result of the changed political situation, rather than because the position was superfluous.

**Jewish Education**

Never before had Jewish education occupied so important a place and attracted so various a circle of interested persons as during the last few years.

Obstacles to the development of Jewish education, common in other Jewish communities, also existed in Argentina: assimilation in the larger centers; the small numbers of children in the provincial cities and the colonies; lack of parental interest; the pressure on children to achieve economic success; the dearth of the needed teachers, etc. But these obstacles were being gradually overcome.

The number of schools in Buenos Aires and in the provinces had grown steadily. A number of new buildings had been completed and others were begun in 1954–55.

There were two central educational bodies: in Buenos Aires, with some 75 per cent of the Jewish population, the Jewish schools were under the supervision of the Vaad Hachinuch of the Kehilla (A.M.I.A.). More than sixty educational institutions were under the Vaad Hachinuch’s supervision. These were of various kinds: Hebrew-Yiddish (where the emphasis was on Hebrew); Yiddish-Hebrew (where the emphasis was on Yiddish); completely Hebrew (only a few); and Talmud Torahs (with some secular program).

Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the development of the schools affiliated with the Kehilla during the period 1940–55. This fifteen-year period saw a five-fold increase. These institutions had some 11,000 students.

There was also another network of schools under the influence of the Yiddisher Kultur Farband (YKUF) with approximately 2,000 students, as well as an ultra-Orthodox Heichal Hatorah, with some 600 students.

Another central educational body, the Vaad Hachinuch Harashi, coordinated the Jewish educational institutions in the provinces of Argentina. It cooperated with the Congregación Israelita de la Republica Argentina.

In order to provide instructors for the schools in the provinces, the Vaad Hachinuch Harashi maintained two teachers’ institutes: one called Machon (preparatory), and a women’s normal school. Most of the students in these institutions were themselves from the provinces. The graduates of these teachers training schools assumed the obligation of working in the provincial schools for a certain period of time.
### ARGENTINA

#### TABLE 1

**KEHILLA (A.M.I.A.) DISBURSEMENTS 1954–55**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount (in pesos)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Aid</td>
<td>1,290,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Institutions</td>
<td>4,790,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Construction</td>
<td>930,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows and Orphans</td>
<td>142,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration to Israel</td>
<td>280,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Activities (directly conducted)</td>
<td>263,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Institutions</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,695,000</strong></td>
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</table>

#### TABLE 2

**EDUCATIONAL NETWORK OF VAAD HACHINUCH, 1941, 1954, 1955**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2,447</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10,800</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### TABLE 3

**VAAD HACHINUCH, JEWISH TEACHERS SEMINARY, 1940, 1954, 1955**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Budget (pesos)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>1,308,000</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### TABLE 4

**VAAD HACHINUCH, NORMAL SCHOOL FOR WOMEN, 1952, 1954, 1955**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women Students</th>
<th>Hours of Instruction</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>Budget (pesos)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>84,000</td>
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</table>
Zionist Activities

As usual, Zionist activities centered around the struggles of Israel, and consisted primarily of work for the United Campaign. During 1954–55 the finance minister of Israel, Levi Eshkol, visited Argentina. An exhibit connected with Herzl year was organized by an emissary from Israel, S. J. Schweig. All the Zionist youth organizations secured buildings in 1954–55, through the aid of the Jewish Agency.

Cultural Activity

During 1954–55 the Yiddish publishing houses put out more than fifty books. The Yiddish publishing houses in Argentina were serving Yiddish authors the world over. Thus, the Farlag fun Poylishen Yidntum had published about 115 books, but of its authors only seven were Argentinian, while almost one hundred were from the United States, France, Israel, and Australia. The Idbuj had put out fifteen books, including only two by local authors. All the books of the publishing house Kiyum had been by authors residing outside of Argentina. Of the three books published by Unzer Vort, only one was by a local writer. The Instituto Judío Argentino sponsored a Spanish edition of Lord Russell's Scourge of the Swastika.

Necrology

Two important communal figures died in Argentina during the period under review.

Ze’ev Zvi Klein, the spiritual leader of the Orthodox German Jews, had formerly been the rabbi of Achduth Israel in Berlin.

Aharon Leib Shusheim, one of the pioneers of Jewish journalism in Argentina, died on February 17, 1955, at the age of seventy-seven. Shusheim began his literary activity in Galicia at the beginning of the century. He was one of the founders of the Poale Zion in Galicia, and the oracle of that party in Argentina.

MORDECAI BERNSTEIN

BRAZIL

The period under review (July 1, 1954, through June 30, 1955) was one of political and military crisis. Getúlio Vargas had dominated the political scene from 1930 to 1954, except for the years 1946 to 1950. In August 1954 he faced a demand by the generals that he resign as President. Vargas made the tragic decision to resolve this crisis through suicide, leaving his country a highly emotional political testament whose authenticity was doubted. The dead president was noted for his dictatorial ideas and acts and his strongly
nationalistic policy. In 1938, he issued a decree which forbade foreigners to engage in any political activity whatsoever under penalty of expulsion from Brazil. A series of limitations on the foreign-language press culminated in an absolute ban on newspapers in a foreign-language in 1941. During the period of Vargas's government from 1938 to 1945, Jewish communal life was almost completely halted. The Zionist organization was forbidden, and the two Yiddish dailies then appearing were—together with other foreign-language publications—shut down, never to reopen. In August 1954, after Vargas's death, Vice President João Café Filho replaced him in accordance with the constitution. Café, while still vice president, used to appear frequently at public Jewish occasions, and visited the State of Israel, where he was received by Ben Gurion. He became the first President of Brazil to salute the Brazilian Jews on their special occasions, when on Rosh ha-Shanah 5715 (September 1954) he sent a greeting praising the Jewish work of reconstruction in Israel, and the contribution of Brazilian Jews to the general life of their country. His friendly attitude toward the Jews and his frequent acceptance of invitations to attend their communal occasions, actually caused him to be labeled "Jew" by the opposition periodical O Radical, on October 23, 1954.

Political Status

The Brazilian constitution of 1946, promulgated under Vargas's dictatorship, pledged equal rights to all native-born citizens without distinction of race, color, or religion. However, the political rights of naturalized citizens were limited and stated in ambiguous language. The inconsistencies of the courts in interpreting the political rights given by the constitution to naturalized citizens were reflected in Jewish communal life during 1954–55. In the elections to the legislature which took place on October 3, 1954, the Jews put forth their own candidates within the various political national parties. Most of these candidates were naturalized citizens. Special election committees were organized to increase the participation of Jewish electors in the general election. Among the naturalized Jewish citizens running for election to the legislature of the city of São Paulo was the president of the Jewish institutions of that city, Moisés Kahan. A few days before the elections, however, there were growing rumors that naturalized candidates would not be able to occupy office even if elected. These rumors, which were later confirmed, apparently induced a certain number of voters to abandon the naturalized Jewish candidates, and none of them was elected. However, a naturalized Jew, Isaac Isaacson, was elected to the legislature of the city of Rio de Janeiro on the Socialist Party ticket. The election court did not permit him to take office and he had to appeal to the supreme court of Brazil. Two native-born Jews were elected Federal deputies: Horacio Lafer, former finance minister of Brazil, and Aarão Steinbruch. Salo Brand, a former Federal deputy and a native-born Jew who took an active role in Jewish communal life in Rio de Janeiro, was appointed to important administrative government offices during the period under review.
Anti-Semitic Agitation

There had never been any anti-Semitic organizations in Brazil. With a few exceptions there were during the period 1953–55 only isolated instances of attacks against Jews in second-rate periodicals, and they were almost always indirect. During the period under review, for example, an unimportant periodical, A Patria of Rio de Janeiro, on September 21 and 22, 1954, published an irresponsible piece on the supposedly dangerous activity of Jews in the national economy. Another form of indirect anti-Semitic manifestation was the election-eve propaganda in which second-rate periodicals waged a war against naturalized Jews who were running for office, or opposed the candidates of certain parties on the assertion that they were of Jewish descent. Thus, for example, a deputy in the Federal parliament accused the successful presidential candidate at the elections of October 3, 1955, Juscelino Kubitschek, of being of Jewish origin. This use of “Jew” as an epithet was sharply criticized by the periodical Correio Radical in its issue of February 26, 1955, for its racial implications.

The first sign of organized anti-Semitism in Brazil appeared in May 1955 as a complete surprise. At that time anti-Semitic pamphlets entitled Jew—National Enemy Number One dated April 1955 and signed by an unknown organization calling itself Aliança Libertadora Nacionalista were distributed through the streets of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Several newspapers reported that the pamphlets had been dropped from airplanes and thrown out of automobiles several days in succession. The pamphlets, in which the classic anti-Semitic calumnies were repeated in regard to the Jews of Brazil, evoked a strong reaction from both Jewish and non-Jewish public opinion throughout the country. The Federations of Jewish Institutions in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo requested the national police to search out the press and the authors of this pamphlet. In the legislature of São Paulo, deputies of various parties demanded on May 12 that the responsible executive agencies find and punish the guilty. Similar demands were made by deputies in the Federal parliament and by the councilors in the municipal chambers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The most important periodicals of the two cities where the pamphlets were thrown also published editorials condemning the anti-Semitic agitation and demanding that those responsible be haled into court. Despite energetic efforts to apprehend the authors, they were not found, and it was still uncertain whether an individual or an organized group was behind the pamphlets.

Communal Life

The Brazilian population of 52,000,000, according to the census of 1950, included 69,957 Jews. Of these, 25,222 lived in the capital, Rio de Janeiro; 22,808 in the second largest city, São Paulo; 5,557 in Porto Alegre; and the remainder in other cities. But it was privately estimated that there were approximately 120,000 Jews in Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo—and to a lesser extent in the smaller cities—communal life was concentrated in the Federations of Jewish Institutions. The Federations in Rio de Janeiro
and São Paulo each included close to fifty institutions, large and small. Since 1951 a Confederation of Jewish Institutions had been in existence with its seat in Rio de Janeiro. To it all the federations in the country belonged. It was the representative body of Brazilian Jewry, particularly in external matters.

The Confederation was responsible for distributing the funds which the Conference for Material Claims Against Germany (CJMCAG) allocated for the rehabilitation of Jewish victims of Nazism in Brazil.

Jewish Education

According to a report published in the weekly *Yiddishe Presse* of March 18, 1955, by the department for education and culture of the Zionist organization of Rio de Janeiro, there were about 4,000 children receiving an education in the Jewish secular and religious schools throughout Brazil. These constituted approximately 20 per cent of the Jewish children of school age. In these schools, mostly elementary schools, general studies were taught in Portuguese and the national curriculum was followed; two or three classes a day were devoted to Yiddish and Hebrew studies. The entire Jewish educational system was controlled and financially supported in Rio de Janeiro by the local Zionist organization and in São Paulo by a special Vaad Ha-chinuch affiliated with the Federation of Jewish Institutions. In the smaller cities of Brazil, Jewish studies were often suspended because of a dearth of teachers; where they did function, they were maintained by the local Zionist organizations or by special parents committees. In Rio de Janeiro a National Advisory Council for education and culture concerned itself with technical cooperation with the emissaries of the Jewish Agency. It also introduced and unified the courses of study of the educational system throughout the entire country, and made decisions and plans in regard to basic educational principles. Representatives of the most important cities in Brazil constituted the executive of the National Advisory Council. Since 1952 there had been some quickening in the Jewish educational system of Brazil, as a result of the decision of the Zionist world executive to participate in Brazilian educational work through pedagogical aids and material assistance. But there had also been cases of minor conflicts of interest between local Jewish teachers and teachers who had come from Israel as part of this plan of the Zionist world executive.

Cultural Life

During 1954–55 a book of stories by Hersh Schwartz called *Der Onhoyb* appeared in Brazil. In May 1955 the literary prize of the Leon and Antonietta Feffer Foundation, established in 1952–53 was awarded for the first time. The prize of $500 for the best works in the field of Jewish life in Brazil was shared between Arnold Wiznitzer for his book *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World*, describing Jewish community life in Brazil in the period of Dutch government, and Moisés Kahan, for his article in the Brazilian Yiddish press on Jewish participation in the development of Brazil from the early colonial period onward.
Press

Beside the large number of individual or irregular publications in Portuguese and Yiddish put out by the Zionist organization or other communal institutions in various cities of Brazil, the following appeared regularly: in Rio de Janeiro—*Yiddishe Presse*, a Zionist weekly which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in a special number dated August 20, 1954; *Di Brazilianer Yiddishe Tzaytung*, a Zionist weekly which first appeared in 1952. In Portuguese, the Zionist weeklies *Aonde Vamos* and *Jornal Israelita* had existed for over ten years; the *Jornal Israelita* also published *Jornal Israelita Ilustrado*, an illustrated monthly.

In São Paulo *Unzer Shtimme*, the weekly and sometimes semi-weekly organ of the “progressive” elements had been appearing since 1947. *Der Nayer Moment*, a Zionist weekly, had been appearing since 1950. *Cronica Israelita* had appeared every two weeks in Portuguese and in German since 1938; *Brasil-Israel* was a Zionist periodical, and *Tribuna Mosaica* had recently begun to appear every two weeks. The last two publications appeared in Portuguese.

**Zionist and Pro-Israel Activity**

The Zionist movement dominated almost the entire Jewish communal life in Brazil, a large and important part of the youth work, particularly the Jewish educational system. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Brazil and Israel took place in 1952, when David Shaltiel presented his credentials as Israel minister to President Vargas. During 1954–55, José Fabrino de Oliveira returned from his post as minister to Israel and in December 1954 the new ambassador to Israel, Nelson Tabajara de Oliveira, presented his credentials to President Ben Zvi in Jerusalem. A Brazilian foreign ministry communique on this occasion stated that the presentation of credentials in Jerusalem was not to be interpreted as a change in the stand of Brazil on the question of the city's internationalization. The retiring minister to Israel, José Fabrino de Oliveira, in a conference held on December 9, 1954, gave a sympathetic picture of life in Israel, where he had spent three years. He also proposed a plan for Israel-Arab understanding which was commented on in the national press.

Zionist activity in Brazil was also stimulated by the *shelichim* (emissaries) from Israel to North America. Among the most important visitors during 1954–55 were Mrs. Vera Weizmann (June–July 1954), who was received by President Vargas and received the Order of Cruzeiro do Sul; Berl Locker, president of the Zionist executive (November 1954), who was received by President Café; and Levi Eshkol, finance minister of Israel (May 1955). Participants in the banquets, held in May 1955 in the larger cities of Brazil to celebrate Israel Independence Day and the 300th anniversary of Jerusalem, included James G. McDonald, first ambassador from the United States to Israel; Irving Miller, president of the American Zionist Council; and the singer, Moyshe Oysher. In October 1954, at the suggestion of the Socialist councilor Raimundo Magalhães Junior, the municipality of Rio de Janeiro
passed a resolution to name a street after Theodor Herzl, in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of his death. The mayor of Rio de Janeiro, it was reported in the newspapers, at first vetoed this decision, but in May 1955 finally signed an ordinance naming a street after Herzl.

Elias Lipiner

URUGUAY

On November 28, 1954, the Progressive Democratic faction of the Colorado party led by former President Luis Batlle Berres, won a clear-cut electoral victory and was continued in power for another four-year period beginning March 1955. Senor Batlle Berres, whose orientation was pro-United States, remained president of the nine-man National Council, which had executive power in Uruguay. The faction headed by Batlle Berres held six seats on the National Council, the Nationalist Party three.

There was no discrimination in Uruguay against Jews, whether citizens or non-citizens of the republic.

Jewish Population

During the year ending June 30, 1955, there was little change in the 40,000 to 50,000 Jews in Uruguay. There were 120 immigrants during the period, a majority of them persons who had left Israel because of economic, health, and family reasons. With the aid of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), local philanthropic health institutions, and personal friends, they were quickly assimilated into Uruguayan Jewry and found suitable employment.

Ninety-five per cent of the Jewish population continued to live in the capital, Montevideo, and 5 per cent in various cities in the nineteen departments which constituted the Uruguay republic. The recent tendency for those in the provinces to migrate to the capital continued. It was believed that in most cases families were migrating for the sake of their children, for whom parents were seeking a Jewish education, and Jewish spouses.

Economic Situation

Forty per cent of Uruguayan Jews were in retail or wholesale commerce. The trades in which they were most active were haberdashery, textiles, fur, ready-made clothing, iron, and furniture. Fifteen per cent were engaged in installment selling; 20 per cent were smaller or larger industrialists, who manufactured furniture, cotton and leather goods, men's and women's shoes, confectionery, etc.; 8 per cent were workers and officials in private enterprises and communal organizations; 12 per cent were professionals, such as physicians, lawyers, engineers, pharmacists, chemists, and certified public accountants; and 5 per cent lived on the income from rent and investments. Almost all of them were in good circumstances.

Uruguayan economic conditions continued poor. The new government
had taken over a deficit of 132,000,000 pesos, accompanied by a surplus of goods, a shortage of foreign exchange, and a rise in the cost of living. However, the situation was not critical.

The Jewish community had two credit institutions. One was the Palestine Uruguay Bank, which had a capital of 4,000,000 pesos, and was paying 10 per cent dividends; the other was the Jewish Bank, which was capitalized at 1,000,000 pesos, but paid no dividends, as it had not been able to recover from the Concordat it had been forced to contract during the war years. In 1940 the Jewish Bank had been required to suspend its normal functions and disbursements. The Concordat made it possible for the bank later to make disbursements in five stages with the aid of a loan from the National Bank.

There were two wholesale cooperatives which provided the Jewish share-holders with good cheap merchandise, and gave them the necessary credit to conduct their installment selling businesses. The capital stock of one cooperative, which was twenty-five years old, was 1,000,000 pesos, with a large surplus and an aid fund for its stockholders. The second cooperative was fifteen years old, and had a capital stock of half a million pesos.

Communal Organization

There was no change during the period under review in the organization of the four Jewish communities: the East European Ashkenazic community, the West European German-speaking community, the Sephardic community, and the Hungarian-speaking community. All four carried on social work within their respective communities. They were united through the Jewish Central Committee, which represented all the communities in external matters.

The Sephardic community was on the verge of completing a new building at a cost of 250,000 pesos ($80,000) to house a temple, school, meeting hall, and administrative offices.

Religious Life

Ashkenazic religious life was conducted by three Orthodox rabbis subvented by the Ashkenazic community; each of them served in a separate city neighborhood. In addition, two rabbis were connected with the Rabbi Kook Yeshiva, supported by the Mizrachi organization. During 1954-55 Mizrachi built a new building for the yeshiva and for the religious school. The Sephardim had a hacham, H. Masliaj, for spiritual guidance, the Hungarian-speaking Jews Rabbi Weisel, the German-speaking Jews Rabbi Winter.

Jewish Education

The Ashkenazic sector of the Jewish community maintained eleven Jewish schools in Montevideo and one in the provincial city of Paysandu. These schools were attended by about 1,200 Jewish children. In addition, there was one Jewish handicraft school as well as three Ulpanim where adults studied Hebrew. In August 1954 the Vaad Hachinuch, which supervised
the entire Jewish school system in Uruguay, opened a Teachers' Training Seminary to offer the Jewish teachers additional instruction in Jewish pedagogy. In July 1955 there were eight teachers attending this seminary. The Vaad Hachinuch subsidized the individual schools to the amount of 120,000 pesos a year, besides maintaining the Teacher's Seminary and an office for the inspection of the schools. Thirty per cent of the Vaad Hachinuch's income came from a 5 per cent share in the proceeds of the United Campaign; another 60 per cent came from the community, and 10 per cent from other sources. Nevertheless, it had a constant deficit.

These Ashkenazic schools were divided into religious, national-secular, and national-religious. The German-speaking community also maintained a religious school on a one-day-a-week basis, and the Sephardic community maintained a Talmud Torah attended by sixty students.

**Social Service**

The Ashkenazic Uruguay Jewish settlement maintained a combined old folks' home and an orphanage, supported by 3,000 members of the Jewish community and having a value of 152,000 pesos. There were seventy residents in this institution, which expended 88,000 pesos for the maintenance of the residents. A woman's aid society expended 60,000 pesos ($18,600) annually; and a family aid society distributed a sum of about 32,000 pesos ($10,000) yearly to the poor and new immigrants.

The Ezra department of the Ashkenazic community also aided indigent families to the extent of 1,000 pesos ($325) a month. In addition, it subsidized the Jewish medical center which offered free medical help to needy Jewish families. Although supported by the monthly payments of those Jews who wished to provide medical service for their families, the medical center also offered medical aid to needy families outside its membership.

The American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) aided Jewish immigrants and the World Jewish Congress organized legal and administrative help for Jewish victims of the Hitler catastrophe.

**Zionist Activity**

Zionist activity was coordinated by the Zionist Supreme Council, consisting of the Zionist Federation, Poale Zion Histadruth, Mizrachi, Revisionists, and Mapam. There was also an organization of young Zionist sympathizers around which were concentrated 350 youths from the Hanoar Hatzioni, B'nei Akiba, Betar, Hashomer Hatzair, Dror, Ichud, and Gordonia.

Hanoar Hatzioni, Ichud, and Hashomer Hatzair also conducted Hachsharah to prepare chalutzim for settlement on kibbutzim in Israel. The Hanoar Hatzioni group purchased a house of its own for its center in July 1955, and was due to occupy it in October 1955.

**Fund Raising**

Since 1948 there had been a United Campaign in Uruguay conducted by a special committee for that purpose. During 1954 one million pesos ($310,-
000) was raised for the State of Israel. The same sum was expected for 1955. In addition, a special Israel Bond Committee sold bonds to the value of $300,000 during 1954; the Jewish National Fund collected about 100,000 pesos annually.

In June 1955 a new national organization came into being as the Non-Partisan Zionist Organization. The new organization undertook to represent all those Jews who, though supporting the State of Israel, did not wish to belong to any specific Zionist party. In July 1955 it had about 150 members. The State of Israel had formerly been represented in Uruguay by its ambassador to Argentina, Arieh Kubovy. In May 1955, Mattathias Hindus, a special Israel representative with the rank of full minister, arrived in Uruguay. The new minister had established a close relationship between the two governments.

Cultural Life

In Montevideo there were two Yiddish dailies, one weekly, two weeklies in Spanish, and one bi-monthly in Spanish. There were also two Jewish radio programs in Yiddish, each broadcasting an hour daily.

A cultural department was maintained by the Zionist Supreme Council, and a similar department by the Ashkenazic community. A cultural coordination committee under the auspices of the World Jewish Congress, the S. Mendelsohn Culture League, and the Yiddish Scientific Institute were also active in the cultural area. These organizations maintained libraries for their members—YIVO's lending books to all Jewish readers in Montevideo. During 1954, 450 regular readers of Jewish books were registered at the YIVO library.

From time to time conferences and symposiums were organized in Montevideo, mostly by the cultural department of the Ashkenazic community.

Beginning in September 1955 the youth organizations initiated a seminar where lectures were delivered two hours a week on Jewish themes.

The Hebraica social club announced in April 1955 its plan to erect a large building where it would be able to develop a broad cultural and recreational program for its members.

During 1954 a society of Jewish writers and journalists was founded with forty-four members.

Leon Halpern

MEXICO

The period from July 1, 1954, through June 30, 1955, was one of complete political security and calm in Mexico. Economically the country was recovering from the effects of the devaluation of the Mexican peso. The reduction of the value of the peso from 8.65 to the dollar to 12.50 in April 1954 had led to a commercial crisis characterized by a decline of bank deposits,
the suspension of credits, and loss of confidence in the peso. From this crisis the Mexican republic was at the beginning of 1955 gradually emerging. During the first half of 1955 there was a renaissance of business and industry. The good harvests and the government's stringent measures to diminish imports and combat inflation increased the foreign exchange reserve, and restored confidence in the national economy.

**Jewish Population**

As in earlier years, there were no exact figures on the number of Jews in Mexico in 1955. The last census which inquired into "religious identification" was in 1950, when the number of Jews was reported as 17,572. Private investigation made in the same period gave the actual Jewish population in 1950 as 23,907 persons. The general population of Mexico was growing tremendously, as the coefficient of natural increase in Mexico was very high; the general population had increased by 33 per cent in ten years. In 1950 it had been 25,769,850; by 1955 it reached 29,675,323, a 15 per cent increase. It is estimated that the Jewish population rose from 23,907 to 25,632, or 6.7 per cent. Jews contributed less than 0.1 per cent of the total population of Mexico, and this proportion was steadily decreasing.

The growth of the Jewish population was due solely to natural increase. No immigration to Mexico took place during 1950-55. The 25,632 Jews in Mexico in 1955 constituted 6,892 families, divided among the three large sectors which composed the Jewish community of Mexico, the Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Arabic-language groups. The largest group was the Ashkenazic, which was socially and culturally the backbone of the Jewish community. There were 15,532 Ashkenazic, and 10,100 Sephardic and Arabic Jews. Of the 6,892 Jewish families, 4,824 were Ashkenazic and 2,068 Sephardic-Arabic. The Ashkenazic family was by far the smaller, the Sephardic-Arabic population increasing much more quickly than the Ashkenazic. For the Sephardic-Arabic groups the rate of natural increase was 19 per 1,000, for the Ashkenazic, only 12. The relation among the age groups was also much more favorable to future increase for the Sephardic-Arabic group than for the Ashkenazic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General Population</th>
<th>Jewish Population</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>19,653,552</td>
<td>18,299</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>25,769,650</td>
<td>23,907</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>29,675,323</td>
<td>25,632</td>
<td>0.086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1955, 21,000 Jews lived in Mexico City, where they constituted 0.67 per cent of the population. From the smaller cities and towns the Jews were in-

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1 For another estimate of the Jewish population of Mexico, see p. 295.
creasingly migrating to the larger cities, particularly Mexico City, but there were still Jewish settlements throughout the country. It was a rare town in Mexico which did not have one or two Jewish families, mostly long-settled Arabic Jews. Not only was there a migration to the capital, but in the capital itself the same process of concentration was taking place in specific neighborhoods. Thus while in all of Mexico City they were 0.67 per cent of the population, Jews in 1955 constituted 5.5 per cent of the population in one newer and wealthier district.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

The general developments of the period 1950–55 had inevitably been reflected in the life of the Jewish community in Mexico. As mentioned above, the economic development of Mexico had been halted by the devaluation of the Mexican peso by almost one third.

The devaluation had for a time paralyzed all economic activities. Jewish economic life underwent a grave crisis. But except for the second half of 1954, there was no wave of bankruptcies or even of temporary cessations of payment or liquidations of businesses. Jewish commerce and industry quickly overcame the crisis. Thus deposits in the Banco Mercantil de México, which served exclusively Jewish customers, were 23,476,705.68 ($1,880,000) pesos on April 14, 1954. After the devaluation there was a great drop in deposits, but on June 30, 1955, they had risen again to 27,643,211.96 pesos ($2,211,000).

Jews continued to enter new branches of the national economy. There was a significant increase in the participation of Jews in such fields as metallurgy, where Jews had previously not been significantly represented. In the garment industry, where Jews had previously constituted an important element, they became even more significant. There was also a growth of Jewish participation in the plastic, dye, and related industries.

The whole economic structure of the Jewish community was still predominately commercial. But a process of transition from commerce to industry was under way, and a class of industrial officials of various kinds was developing. The period 1946–55 also saw a marked increase in the number of Jewish doctors, engineers, architects, economists, and professional men in general. This had been more notable in the Ashkenazic group than in the Sephardic-Arabic. In 1950 free professionals constituted 10 per cent of the Ashkenazic sector but only 4.5 per cent in the Sephardic-Arabic.

The Jewish activity in finance was on a very small scale, being confined to the Banco Mercantil de México and to a number of Jewish communal credit institutions furnishing credit to small merchants and industrialists.

Anti-Semitic Activity

Although there was no official anti-Semitism in Mexico, there were very occasional instances of anti-Semitic manifestations in one form or another. The struggle against anti-Semitism and discrimination was carried on by the United Committee of B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Central Committee.
Communal Organization and Activity

In 1954–55, as in earlier years, the Jewish community of Mexico had a broad network of political, religious, cultural, aid, and educational institutions. There had been various attempts to organize a coordinating body. In 1955 the Jewish Central Committee, Nidche Israel, and the Zionist Federation made an attempt to establish a Kehilla to coordinate all communal activities and be the representative body of the Jews of Mexico. But, as of the time of writing (November 1955) no positive results had been achieved.

Fund Raising

All communal needs were met through collections secured at special public meetings, and from membership dues. There was a joint drive by all the local and international Jewish organizations with branches in Mexico, except the organizations which were working for Israel. This United Campaign for Local and International Jewish Organizations raised 1,000,000 pesos ($80,000) from 1,100 donors during 1954. The United Campaign was the only organized center where all the local aid, cultural, and educational institutions met. The United Campaign covered approximately between 20 per cent and 25 per cent of the budget of the member institutions. The remainder was covered through tuition payments, membership dues, and various special collections.

The Jewish community maintained intimate connections with Jewish life the world over through the many branches of large central Jewish organizations located in Mexico: the Jewish Labor Committee, the Oeuvre pour Secours des Enfants Israélites (OSE), the World Jewish Congress, the World Congress for Jewish Culture, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO), the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Central Yiddish Culture Organization (CYCO), the Organization for Rehabilitation Through Training (ORT), et al.

Religious Activity and Jewish Education

Religious life in the Ashkenazic community centered around the large multi-faceted organization Nidche Israel. In the Sephardic-Arabic communities, it revolved around their synagogues.

Jewish education in Mexico was the cornerstone of Jewish organizational activity. There were four large all-day schools, a teachers seminary, and a yeshiva in the Ashkenazic sector, a large all-day school in the Sephardic sector, and an all-day school and a large Talmud Torah in the Arabic. There was also a combination all-day school and Talmud Torah where children from all three sectors studied. During 1954, 3,425 children were enrolled in the six all-day schools, of whom 1,921 were boys and 1,504 were girls. These constituted 68 per cent of all Jewish children of school age. In addition, during 1954–55, 12 per cent of the Jewish children of school age attended government schools, and 20 per cent private schools. In the Ashkenazic group 78
per cent of the children attended Jewish schools, but in the Sephardic-Arabic group only 56 per cent.

Outside of Mexico City there were two schools: one was in Monterey, the other in Guadalajara. During 1954 the Jewish Teachers Seminary for graduates of Jewish elementary and high schools was reorganized to serve as a central educational institution with a three-year course of study. Its budget was covered by the United Campaign of Local and International Jewish Organizations. During 1955 twenty-nine students attended the Teachers Seminary six hours a day for five days a week, studying both Yiddish and Hebrew subjects.

The total budget for Jewish education during 1954 was 4,500,000 pesos ($360,000): 75 per cent of this sum was covered by tuition payments, the balance by public collections and special donations.

Social Service

A large amount of communal effort was devoted to social service. In 1954 the Jewish community of Mexico allocated $89,000 to this service. A large number of needy persons required communal support. The Ashkenazic community, working through the Hilfsverein of Nidche Israel and the medical center of OSE, served all sectors of the Jewish community. In 1954 it treated 2,646 persons and gave 5,580 free medical services to 5,880 persons. In addition to the work of these philanthropic institutions, an important role was played by the Gmilus Chesed funds, which lent small sums without interest.

Zionist and Pro-Israel Activity

All the Zionist parties were active in Mexico: the General Zionists, Revisionists, Labor Zionists, Pioneer Women, and the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO). The Zionist Federation included all the Zionist parties. During 1954-55 there was a split in the General Zionists when a group of members left and formed the Progressive Zionist Organization.

Beside the regular fund raising of Keren Kayemeth (Jewish National Fund), there was a united campaign known as Keren Hayesod Magbit Hameyuchudet (the United Campaign for the Palestine Foundation Fund). During 1954 this campaign collected 2,200,000 pesos ($176,000). The Pioneer Women and WIZO collected funds for their activities in Israel with great success. The Israel Bond Committee sold more than $1,000,000 in bonds during 1954. The Israel Bond Committee of Mexico was also active in Central American countries. Various youth organizations were also active in liaison activities with Israel. Since 1954 there had been an Israel legation in Mexico headed by Joseph Kessary. This legation also covered Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

The Mexican senate had concluded a commercial treaty with the State of Israel containing a most-favored nation clause on July 25, 1952. The Israel legation published an informational bulletin, Yediot fun Israel, to acquaint Mexican Jewry with developments in Israel. In addition to the Jewish organizations which were engaged in pro-Israel activities, there was a Mexico-
Israel Organization headed by well-known Mexican intellectuals. During 1954–55 this organization engaged in a series of projects to acquaint the Mexicans with the cultural accomplishments of Israel.

**Cultural Developments**

During 1954–55 Jewish cultural activity in Mexico by various political and social organizations continued sporadic. Most of this activity took place in the Ashkenazic sector and was almost exclusively in the Yiddish language, with very little being done in Hebrew or Spanish. The principal organizations engaging in cultural activities were the Sports Center, the Kultur un Hilf Society, the Culture Center, the B'nei Akiba Youth Organization, the Poale Zion Youth, and the Zionist Youth Federation. They sponsored lectures, symposia, concerts, and dramatic presentations.


There were numerous Jewish periodicals in 1954–55. In Yiddish *Der Veg* appeared three times weekly and *Di Shtime* twice a week. At irregular intervals the League for Labor Palestine published *Dos Vort*, the Revisionist organization *Unzer Tribuna*, the General Zionists *Zionistishe Shtime*, and the pro-Soviet Folks Lige published *Fray Velt*. Occasionally publications were put out by Mizrachi, Mapam, and the Jewish Culture Center. *Faroys* was the organ of the Kultur un Hilf Society and the Bundist Organization. In Spanish there was a monthly, *Tribuna Israelita*, published by the United Anti-Defamation Committee, and *Prensa Israelita*. During 1954–55 there were a few issues in Spanish of *La Vanguardia*, published by Hashomer Hatzair, and *Unidad Juvenil*, published by the Poale Zion Youth. The Jewish Sports Center published a monthly journal devoted to its own problems. This journal, which originally was published only in Spanish, appeared both in Spanish and Yiddish during 1955.

The Jewish Sports Center, the newest communal institution, undertook new cultural activities during 1954–55. It conducted several dozen Yiddish-language seminars and symposiums, and began assembling a large library of Yiddish, Hebrew, Spanish, and English works. A special building was built to house this library.

T. Maisel