Latin America

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND *

For most of Latin America the year from July 1, 1957, to June 30, 1958, was one of economic crisis and in a number of countries it was one of political crisis as well. Inflation was widespread, and the largely unsuccessful efforts to bring it under control frequently precipitated sharp social and political conflicts. As an unfavorable balance of payment and depleted exchange reserves compelled ever more painful readjustments, the various sectors of society sought to shift the incidence of the resulting sacrifices on to one another. Hence a number of countries experienced periods of serious political instability. In several Latin American democracies, general strikes, revolutionary plots, and other major social disturbances led to the temporary imposition of martial law or the suspension of certain civic guarantees.

Nevertheless, not only was no democratic government overthrown in the course of the year, but also democracy was significantly strengthened on a number of fronts. Argentina and Colombia, which had previously freed themselves from dictatorships, successfully accomplished the transition from provisional revolutionary regimes to democratically elected governments. The Venezuelan dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, whose oil revenues had enabled it to lend financial support to anti-democratic forces throughout the hemisphere, was overthrown by a revolution in which all sections of the civilian population and some elements of the armed forces took part. More or less significant limitations on political freedom were removed in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, and Peru. There were reports of some tendencies toward relaxation in the dictatorships of Paraguay and Nicaragua. In Cuba the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista faced increasingly effective resistance from the revolutionary forces of Fidel Castro.

A noteworthy aspect of the democratic trend in Latin America was the active role played by the Catholic clergy in a number of countries in the fight against dictatorship. ( Exceptions to this trend, such as the Dominican hierarchy's support of Trujillo, were increasingly rare.) This was sometimes, although not invariably, associated with the development of Christian Democratic political movements on the pattern familiar in Europe. The fall of Juan Perón in Argentina and of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in Colombia had followed sharp conflicts between them and the Catholic Church. Similarly, in the period immediately preceding the overthrow of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the Venezuelan dictator had come under sharp criticism from church circles for his suppression of freedom and the unjust distribution of the national wealth,

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and he had retaliated by imprisoning or exiling a number of priests as well as lay Christian Democratic leaders. In Costa Rica, the late Archbishop Sanabria had played an important part in the development of a democratic labor movement, which, despite its Catholic inspiration, was affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions rather than the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions; he had also helped to preserve Costa Rica’s well-established democracy when it had been threatened by an attempted coup. In Paraguay, church leaders called for democratic reforms. In Cuba, the Catholic hierarchy had publicly protested against the repressive measures of the Batista regime and had sought to bring about the formation of a government of national unity to end the civil war and restore freedom. And in September 1957 it was reported the Vatican had established an institute of Latin American studies in Rome for the purpose of training democratic leaders and combatting both Communism and right-wing dictatorships.

Relations With the United States

Relations between the United States and its southern neighbors were subject to a number of strains during the year. Several Latin American countries felt themselves injured or threatened by certain United States economic and political policies and measures. Among those cited were measures protecting American producers and exporters at the expense of Latin American business interests, the smallness of American economic aid to Latin America, the shipments of arms to countries headed by dictators, as part of the United States military aid program, and, in general, the friendliness and support extended by American diplomats and business men to dictatorial regimes in Latin America.

Both political and economic resentments found expression during Vice President Richard M. Nixon’s tour of South America in May 1958. He first went to Buenos Aires to represent the United States at the inauguration of Arturo Frondizi as president of Argentina. Partly, perhaps, because of the nature of the occasion, he met with no serious difficulties in that country, although there was some heckling from students when he visited the University of Buenos Aires. But in Peru he faced violently antagonistic student demonstrations, and in Venezuela the car taking him to Caracas from the airport was attacked by a mob and he was in some personal danger. Both Peru and Venezuela had recently recovered their freedom from dictatorships, and in both countries there was a widespread feeling that the United States had shown inappropriate warmth toward the former dictatorial regimes. Both countries also were seriously affected by United States policies in regard to their major products—Venezuelan oil and Peruvian minerals. It was charged that Communists had played an important role in the anti-Nixon demonstrations. But most observers, including the vice president himself, felt that no Communist efforts could have produced incidents of the type which occurred if there had not been a very real resentment against United States policy. The vice president therefore recommended, on his return, that United States policies be directed to convincing the people of Latin America that the United
States desired to see all of them, and not only a favored few, enjoy the same freedoms and the same material benefits as its own citizens.

Argentina

Argentina was largely occupied during the year under review with the re-establishment of normal political life after the period of provisional government following the overthrow of Juan Perón. Sharp political divisions developed within the traditional Argentine parties. The most important of these, the Radical party, split into the relatively conservative People's Radicals, led by Ricardo Balbín, and the Intransigent Radicals, led by Arturo Frondizi. A parallel division occurred in the Socialist party between a group led by Américo Ghioldi and one which followed Ramón Muñiz and Alicia Moreau de Justo. Essentially, the Balbín and Ghioldi groups rejected everything which the Perón regime had done, gave unconditional support to the policies of the provisional government, and based themselves on the middle class. The Frondizi and Muñiz-Moreau de Justo groups, in contrast, sought to retain the social reforms introduced by Perón and to win back the workers from Peronism, and they were very critical of the economic and labor policies of the provisional regime.

Twice during the year there were national elections. The first, for a constituent assembly, took place on July 28, 1957, and resulted in a victory—though not a majority of the assembly—for the People's Radicals. The Frondizi Radicals came second, and a number of small parties held the balance of power. Peronist groups were not allowed to participate, and Perón called on his followers to cast blank ballots. Hence the number of these—approximately a fourth of the total eligible voters and more than any single party's vote—was perhaps the most significant aspect of the election. It was also widely believed that many of the votes received by the Frondizi radicals came from Peronists who had disregarded their leader's instructions. The constituent assembly accomplished little except to declare that the constitution of 1853, rather than the new one introduced by Perón, was the basic law of the land.

On February 23, 1958, Argentina elected a president, the congress, and provincial governments. The Peronists, still unable to run candidates of their own, followed Perón's urging to vote for any candidate who would oppose "tyranny"—i.e., who would support an amnesty for Peronists and permit their return to political life—and nearly all voted for Frondizi, who won with a large majority. His followers won in both houses of the congress and gained control of every province. The successful candidates included four Jewish members of the congress and two Jewish provincial governors; all parties ran Jewish candidates. On May 1, 1958, Frondizi was inaugurated and the provisional regime came to an end.

Throughout the year, Argentina suffered from serious inflation and faced balance-of-payments difficulties. The provisional government's attempt to halt the inflationary spiral by holding wages down resulted in repeated strikes. Some of these were Peronist-led and had political as well as economic aims, but the economic factor was primary. The provisional government on several occasions responded by declaring a state of siege, forbidding strikes for limited
periods, and arresting strike leaders and sometimes large numbers of strikers. One of the first acts of the Frondizi administration was to raise wages and salaries to 60 per cent above 1956, to make up for the increase in the cost of living since then.

Many of the restraints which had been imposed on Peronist activities were removed in the course of the year, and a number of Peronist political prisoners were freed and Peronist exiles permitted to return. In November 1957 the courts held that a 1956 decree outlawing Peronist propaganda was unconstitutional. In May 1958 the new congress passed an amnesty law covering the great majority of Peronists, but left it to the courts to decide in individual instances whether criminal charges were justified. A week later, a Buenos Aires judge ruled that a charge of treason against Perón himself was justified, thereby barring him from the amnesty. A number of individual Peronists who had been imprisoned for their activities against the provisional government were pardoned by Frondizi. At the end of the period under review, openly Peronist political groups were increasing their activity.

Brazil

Politically, the period from July 1957 through June 1958 was relatively uneventful for Brazil. The government of President Juscelino Kubitschek remained firmly in office, though its policies often faced difficulties in a congress in which Kubitschek's Social Democratic party and Vice President João Goulart's Labor party were often at odds, so that the president's supporters were frequently in the minority. Perhaps the most important political development of the year was the increasingly open activity of Brazil's Communist party, the largest in the hemisphere. It had long been illegal, but its strength was so great that other parties were ready to bid for its support by offering Communists places on their own tickets. In October 1957 the Communist leader Luis Carlos Prestes emerged from hiding and challenged arrest, and in March 1958 the courts threw out the warrant for his arrest which had been issued in 1950. Thereafter, the Communist party's technical illegality merely meant that the party could not claim official recognition, its activities no longer being subject to any special restraints.

Brazil's economy continued to suffer from inflation and from balance-of-payments difficulties, caused by the costs of ambitious and not always successful industrial-development projects, by world-market difficulties for coffee, by drought in the north, and by the cost of petroleum imports.

Chile

In the period from July 1957 through June 1958, as for many years previously, Chile preserved a stable democratic government, although economic difficulties led to some major clashes between the government and organized labor and between the executive and the congress. In the latter part of the period under review, much attention was devoted to preparations for the presidential elections in September 1958. In May 1958, on the recommenda-
tion of President Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, the congress voted to legalize the Communist party.

Chile was hard hit by the United States recession of 1957–58, which seriously affected the export of copper, her major source of foreign exchange despite the efforts of the government to establish new industries through the Chilean Development Corporation. This resulted in large-scale unemployment, as well as balance-of-payments difficulties. In an effort to meet the economic crisis, the government adopted rigid deflationary policies, centering around a wage freeze. This slowed but did not halt the rise in the cost of living, but it also widened the gap between wages and prices.

**Colombia**

In May 1957 the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla was overthrown. Years of civil war and two dictatorships had made a return to normal democratic processes extremely difficult. To bridge the antagonisms between the two traditional parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, bipartisan rule for a period of ten years was agreed on by the two parties and approved in a plebiscite, held on December 1, 1957, by a vote of approximately 20 to 1. Congressional elections were set for March 16 and presidential elections for May 4. In the congressional elections the Liberals received about three-fifths of the vote. In the May 4 elections the Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo overwhelmingly defeated a dissident Conservative extremist, Jorge Leyva. Just before the elections the military police attempted a pro-Rojas coup, kidnapping four of the five members of the ruling junta, but they were defeated and disarmed.

**Costa Rica**

Of Costa Rica's population of about a million, some 250,000 lived in the capital San José, the rest being unevenly distributed in a few small cities and numerous villages. The majority were small independent farmers; literacy was almost universal.

Costa Rica's present constitution, which came into force in 1949, abolished the army as a permanent institution. Costa Ricans boasted that they had "more teachers than soldiers."

Costa Rica's economy was based primarily on agriculture, coffee, cacao, and bananas constituting 90 per cent of all exports. Machinery, textiles, some foodstuffs, fuel, and drugs were imported.

Elections held on February 2, 1958, resulted in a defeat for the candidate supported by outgoing President José Figueres and the election of the Conservative candidate, Mario Echandi, as a result of a split among Figueres's followers. In turning over his office to his successor, Figueres declared that the defeat of his party in a free election represented a victory for democracy. The new president had in the past made statements which were susceptible of an anti-Semitic interpretation, but there was no indication that he had any intention of taking any action inconsistent with Costa Rica's tradition of equal justice.
Guatemala

Of Guatemala's 1958 population of three and a half million, the great majority were of Indian or mixed blood. An upper-class minority of about 10 per cent was of Spanish descent. The poverty of the majority was in sharp contrast to the high standard of living of the ruling whites. The official language was Spanish, although about two-thirds of the Indian population could not speak it. The capital, Guatemala City, had 350,000 inhabitants.

Guatemala's precarious political balance was disrupted in July 1957 by the assassination of President Carlos Castillo Armas. In an election for a successor, held in October, the left-wing candidate, Manuel Méndez Montenegro, was barred from the ballot, leaving a contest between the administration candidate Miguel Ortiz Passarelli and General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, generally regarded as an ultra-rightist. Immediately after the election, General Ydigoras charged fraud. Riots, in which his followers joined with left-wing groups, resulted in the replacement of the government by a junta which promptly annulled the elections. In new elections, held in January 1958, Ydigoras won a close contest from Ramón Cruz Salazar, who represented the followers of the late Castillo Armas, and Méndez Montenegro, who was now permitted to run. Since Ydigoras had not won a clear majority of the popular vote, the final decision in the election rested with congress, in which Cruz Salazar's partisans still held a majority. There was some fear that they would thwart the popular will by rejecting Ydigoras, but at Cruz Salazar's urging, his followers voted to confirm Ydigoras's elections. Contrary to expectations, Ydigoras showed no dictatorial tendencies; on the contrary, he restored most of the civil liberties which had been suppressed by Castillo Armas and permitted the return of many of the exiles who had fled the country after the overthrow of the leftist administration of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán.

Panama

Panama's population of one million depended largely on activities related to the Panama Canal for employment and income. There was little industry, except for some wood and leather manufacturing and certain consumer goods for local needs. Agriculture and mining were largely undeveloped.

Over a fourth of the population lived in Panama City and about 60,000 in Colón. The rest of the people were in small towns and villages.

Paraguay

The dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner remained in power in Paraguay during the year under review (July 1957–June 1958), extending its term of office by a plebiscite in February 1958, but it appeared to be facing increasing difficulties. In part, these reflected political developments in Argentina, which exerted a strong influence on Paraguay. The Perón and Stroessner regimes had maintained very close relations, and Perón had taken refuge in Paraguay until Argentine pressure forced his departure. In April 1958 Gen-
eral Stroessner charged that Argentina had armed rebels against his regime. But Argentina was not the only source of his difficulties. Internal opposition was also rising. A few days before the plebiscite, Stroessner felt it necessary to close the newspaper *El Orden* for condemning it. And there was increasing criticism of his regime from church circles. The Rev. Ramón Talavera, who was especially active in this respect, was reported to be forming a Christian Democratic movement, and in March a pastoral letter of Archbishop Juan Mena Porta called for national unity and condemned the concentration of excessive power in the hands of the government.

**Peru**

The restoration of political freedom in Peru under the administration of President Manuel Prado y Ugarteche was symbolized by the reopening in July 1957 of the newspaper *Tribuna*, organ of the previously outlawed Partido del Pueblo (better known as the Apra, from the initials of its former name.) In the same month the party's exiled leader, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, returned to Peru. But economic difficulties, arising principally from decreased United States imports of Peruvian ores, led to serious strikes. In November a wave of strikes led to the suspension of civil guarantees for 30 days, and in February 1958 a police strike caused the imposition of a state of siege for a week. In March a revolutionary plot was discovered, and a temporary ban was placed on political meetings. Riots occurred when a new Christian Democratic group attempted to defy the ban. Vice President Richard M. Nixon's visit to Lima in May was also the occasion for riots (see above), and three Communist leaders were arrested on charges of having fomented them; they were, however, acquitted.

**Venezuela**

At the opening of the period under review (July 1957–June 1958), the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez seemed firmly entrenched in power. Despite a drop in United States imports of Venezuelan oil, petroleum still gave Venezuela the highest revenues per capita of any Latin American country, and the loyalty of the well-paid armed forces seemed assured. But at the beginning of January 1958 a revolt broke out in the air force, many of whose officers had imbibed democratic ideas while being trained in the United States. This revolt was suppressed, but a few days late another revolution, primarily civilian in character, began. Part of the armed forces joined it, and after a few days of bloody fighting, Pérez Jiménez fled. He was replaced by a military-civilian junta under the presidency of Admiral Wolfgang Larrazábal, which restored civil liberties and began preparations for free elections. The new government soon discovered that the Pérez regime had not only succeeded in squandering or stealing all the oil revenues, but had run up foreign debts of a half billion dollars.

These events did not specifically involve the Jewish community in any way, but they did result in a sharp drop in Jewish immigration.
HERE WERE no major developments specifically affecting the Jews of Latin America during the period under review. The atmosphere of economic crisis did not create a favorable climate for large-scale immigration, and the policies of some governments reflected this, but none cut off immigration altogether. Organized anti-Semitism remained unimportant and found little local response. It took the form chiefly of mail campaigns originating with Ku Klux Klan groups in Texas and Swedish anti-Semites. These were protested in May 1958 by the DAIA (see below, Argentina) in presentations to the United States embassy and the Swedish minister in Buenos Aires. Profanation of a synagogue in Chile was also found to have been instigated by members of the Klan from Texas.

Economically, the Jews of Latin America tended to benefit from the rapid industrialization, for which they were able to supply needed skills. Their growing prosperity was reflected in increasingly generous donations for Israel. The tenth anniversary of that state was celebrated enthusiastically by Jewish communities throughout Latin America.

American Jewish Committee Delegation

During August 6 to 26, 1958, a delegation of eight American Jewish Committee leaders, headed by President Irving M. Engel and Honorary President Jacob Blaustein, undertook a survey and goodwill mission in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru. They conferred with government officials, United States and Israel ambassadors, Christian prelates, and leaders of Jewish communities and organizations, including President Arturo Frondizi of Argentina, Israel Ambassador to Brazil Aryeh Aroch, José Maria Cardinal Caro, Archbishop of Santiago, Chile, and United States Ambassador to Peru Theodore C. Achilles.

Upon its return, the delegation made recommendations for improving relations between Latin America and the United States including economic aid, information and educational programs, and fellowships and scholarships for students, scientists, and other intellectuals for study and work in the United States. For the Jewish community the delegation found a need for more Jewish education, especially the type exemplified by the Hillel Foundations on American campuses. In general, the delegation found a desire among South American Jews to participate in their countries' affairs while retaining their Jewish identity, religion, and culture.

ARGENTINA

Jewish Population

Argentina's Jewish population was estimated at 400,000; it was exceeded only by the United States, the Soviet Union, Israel, and perhaps Great Britain.
About nine-tenths of Argentina's Jews lived in Buenos Aires. Many of them were descended from settlers in the agricultural colonies founded by the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) at the end of the 19th century. Only about three thousand families remained in those settlements.

Most of the gainfully employed Jews were in business, either as entrepreneurs or as employees, and many were in the professions. Businesses in which Jews were active included textiles, clothing, shoes, furniture, chemicals, and the export-import trade. While many Jews held prominent places in Argentine life, the social and organizational life of the majority, especially of the first generation, was largely confined to the Jewish community. The younger generation was gradually becoming more acculturated, but at a slower pace than in North America.

Community Organization and Education

The representation of Jewish interests was largely entrusted to the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), a central body uniting and coordinating the activities of most of the country's Jewish organizations. About a quarter of the Jewish population belonged to the Wa'ad ha-Kehillot, or Federation of Jewish Communities. Its 1958 budget was 42,000,000 pesos—equivalent, at the time of its adoption, to about a million dollars—for partial support of welfare and educational activities in the capital and some 90 other cities and towns.

There were about 60 Jewish schools in Buenos Aires, with approximately 14,000 pupils and 800 teachers; of the latter close to 500 were native born. In addition, there were two teachers' seminaries in Buenos Aires and three yeshivot, run by the Agudat Israel and the Mizrahi, with about 300 pupils. An approximately equal number of schools in the provinces, many of them with only one teacher, had a total of about 5,000 pupils. The schools in the capital were supervised by the Buenos Aires Kehillah, those in the provinces by the Wa'ad ha-Kehillot. Most of them were conducted by the various Zionist parties, corresponding on the whole to the Israeli parties.

Other cultural activities were also conducted largely along party lines. Thus there were eight Jewish publishing houses in Buenos Aires, each associated with a political party. During the year under review, their total output came to some 50 books, mostly in Yiddish. Buenos Aires had two Yiddish dailies, Yiddishe Zeitung and Di Presse. The latter celebrated its 40th anniversary during the year and received the congratulations of other newspapers and officials, including the Argentine president. On the other hand, a Spanish-language Jewish daily which was started during the year lost so much money that it had to close down after several months. There were numerous Jewish magazines in Yiddish and Spanish, published weekly, monthly, or at longer intervals.

Close contact with Israel was maintained through Zionist parties, the Jewish Agency, and the cultural attaché of the Israeli embassy. Fund raising for Israel continued to increase.

Argentina served as host to a number of inter-American Jewish conferences during 1957–58. In addition to conferences of the various Zionist political parties held during the year, two meetings of special interest were a regional
conference of the World Jewish Congress in July 1958 and a conference of Conservative rabbis from all the American countries in August 1958.

**BRAZIL**

*Jewish Population*

It was estimated that Brazil's 1958 population was about 61,000,000, including about 125,000 Jews. Approximately four-fifths of the Jews were of Ashkenazic and one-fifth of Sephardic origin. Most lived in Rio de Janeiro (about 45,000) and São Paolo (about 50,000). There were also some 15,000 in Porto Alegre, 3,000 in Recife, and 1,500 each in Bahia, Belo Horizonte, and Curitiba. The remainder were scattered in smaller communities throughout the country.

About half of Brazil's gainfully employed Jews were small shopkeepers or peddlers, with an average income of $120 to $180 a month. Perhaps a tenth of the Jewish population were in industry, notably in textiles, the needle trades, furniture, chemicals, plastics, paper, and jewelry. Jews were also active in the export-import trade and in large-scale retail business. They were well represented in the professions: there were about 500 Jewish engineers, 350 physicians, 300 teachers, 200 dentists, 150 lawyers, and 100 architects.

*Community Organization and Education*

The only organized representative body of Brazilian Jews was the Federação das Sociedades Israelitas Brasileiras, with over a hundred affiliated organizations. Most Jewish educational work was financed, supervised, and coordinated by ha-Mo'etzah ha-Artzit le-Tarbut we-Hinnukh (Federal Council for Culture and Education) with headquarters in Rio de Janeiro. Many of the teachers in the network of Jewish schools (about 35 in all, with 5,000 students) had come from Israel under the sponsorship of the Jewish Agency. The curriculum included Hebrew and Yiddish. In accordance with the requirements of Brazilian law, general subjects were taught in Portuguese.

Jewish religious life was relatively neglected. Rio de Janeiro and São Paolo each had several synagogues, divided between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities, and there was usually a single synagogue in each smaller center. But there were only about a dozen rabbis in the entire country. There was usually a Talmud Torah associated with each synagogue, and some 50 pupils attended a yeshivah in São Paolo.

In recent years Brazil had absorbed more Jewish immigrants than any other Latin American country, and in some years more than all others together. Approximately a fourth of the country's Jewish population were postwar immigrants. United HIAS Service (UHS) and local welfare groups, particularly in Rio de Janeiro and São Paolo, played an important part in assisting the new arrivals. Recent immigrants were chiefly from Europe (including Hungarian refugees), Egypt, North Africa, and Israel.
The policy of the government in admitting refugees was reaffirmed by President Kubitschek at a reception tendered in his honor on May 28 by the major immigration societies of the country, including the United HIAS Service. Approval of the government policy was also expressed on this occasion by Archbishop Helder Câmara of Rio de Janeiro.

**Chile**

There was no religious discrimination in public office or the professions. The Chilean congress included a Jewish senator and a Jewish deputy. Some 20 Jewish professors taught in the universities, the director of the Symphony Orchestra of Chile was a Jew, and there were numerous Jewish writers, actors, artists, engineers, architects, physicians, and lawyers.

In 1957–58 about 350 Hungarian Jewish refugees were admitted. Average annual immigration to Chile since 1945 was unofficially estimated at 3,000 to 4,000. The immigration law adopted in 1953 facilitated the entry of immigrants with technical skills needed for the industrial development of the country.

**Jewish Population**

By 1958 there were over 30,000 Jews in Chile’s total population of 8,000,000. About half were of Central European origin and half East European or Sephardic. The majority lived in Santiago, with about a thousand families in Valparaiso, 300 in Temuco (the oldest Sephardic community), 200 in Concepción, and 100 each in Valdivia and Serena.

**Community Organization and Education**

The first Jewish organization, the Sociedad Unión Israelita de Chile, was established in Santiago in 1909 and in 1916 the Talmud Torah congregation was founded by an orthodox group. By 1927 many of the Sephardim from Temuco had moved to Santiago and had organized a Sephardic community there, which subsequently exerted considerable influence.

The well-organized Jewish community of Santiago conducted two schools (one Hebrew, one Yiddish), attended by 1,500 children, the newspaper *La Palabra*, social and cultural clubs, and numerous fraternal and other organizations. All these were federated in the Comité Representativo de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile.

**Zionist Activities**

The community was strongly Zionist. The youth in particular were stimulated by the establishment of the State of Israel, where more than 200 young people settled permanently. In many cases their parents followed. Magbit, the
fund-raising agency, established a goal of 400,000,000 pesos (about $500,000) for 1957–58, with 81 per cent to go to Israel, and the remainder for local needs.

**COLOMBIA**

**Jewish Population and Immigration**

Colombia's population of 13,000,000 included 9,000 Jews, virtually all living in the major four cities. Bogotá, with a population of a million, had a Jewish community of 4,500; Cali, Barranquilla, and Medellín, each with 400,000 to 500,000 people, had respectively 2,400, 1,500, and 550 Jews. Colombia's Jews were to be found mainly in the textile, tobacco, chemical, and export-import industries, and in retail trade.

Jewish immigration to Colombia was always small, mainly because of the high cost of living, low level of wages, and slow industrial development of the country. Current government policy was to permit the entry only of family-reunion cases and engineers, technicians, and skilled textile workers.

The Bogotá Jewish community comprised 2,000 Jews of East European origin, 1,500 German Jews, and 1,000 Sephardim. In the three other major cities of Jewish population, there were very few German Jews, the majority being East European and a substantial minority Sephardic.

**Community Organization and Education**

Bogotá had three Jewish community organizations: the Centro Israelita de Bogotá (East European), the Asociación Israelita Montefiore (German), and the Comunidad Hebreo Sefardí. The three organizations, which had at one time cooperated in a federation for fund raising for Israel and other philanthropic purposes, had drifted apart in recent years, and conducted their fund raising and other activities separately. But one school, operated by the Centro Israelita, was attended by most of the Jewish children. There were two semi-monthly publications, the *Menorah* (East European) and *Das Blatt* (German).

**COSTA RICA**

**Jewish Population**

The 1,500 Jews in Costa Rica were Ashkenazim, except for a half-dozen Sephardi families. This lively and flourishing community had grown gradually from World War I. Most of its members came from Poland, Rumania, the Baltic countries, Russia, and the former Austro-Hungarian empire.
Community Organization and Education

The Centro Israelita in San José had a synagogue, a Talmud Torah, and a club house. In the Talmud Torah, about 150 children to the age of 16 received religious education and coaching in secular subjects. The Talmud Torah also provided adult education, including Hebrew and other language courses and lectures on various subjects.

GUATEMALA

Community Organization and Education

The Jewish community of about 1,000 was organized in three distinct congregations: German-speaking, Polish- and Yiddish-speaking, and Sephardi. Though separate in ritual and customs, they were more united in efforts of common concern than in other Latin American countries. The largest group, the 400 Germans, had no synagogue or community center, attending the synagogues of the other two groups. Nevertheless, they furnished much of the leadership for the entire community.

The Sephardi congregation had about 250 members. Besides a thirty-year-old synagogue, it had a social center which served all three groups for weddings, parties, gatherings, and lectures. The Centro Hebreo, the community of the Yiddish-speaking group and its children, had a small synagogue, club, and a school, the Colegio Guatemalteco Israelita. The school was recognized and subsidized by the state. About 35 to 40 children attended the kindergarten and the first grades of primary school.

PANAMA

There were about 2,500 Panamanian Jews, of whom 90 per cent lived in Panama City. Colón had some 60 Jewish families, and in various smaller towns there were 20 to 30 Jewish families.

Community Organization and Education

Jewish community life was organized in separate groups according to origin. The community of Portuguese or Holland Jews, founded in 1876, later affiliated with the (United States) Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It numbered 300 to 400 persons. This Reform congregation's synagogue and social center were poorly attended. Intermarriage was frequent. A recently built, ultra-modern Jewish school, however, attracted many children of mixed marriages.
The Ashkenazi Beneficencia Israelita de Panamá, with 200 members, was also known as the Kehillah. This group consisted of settlers who came to Panama in the period between the two world wars from Poland, Rumania, and Russia, as well as from Germany and Hungary. Most of them were well-established, successful business people. They supplied the leadership in most communal affairs. They had their own synagogue with a rabbi and sought to transmit Jewish traditions and customs to the new generation.

The Levantine Sephardi community—the Sociedad Israelita Shevet Ahim, often called the Turks—was the largest and most flourishing group, with 700 to 800 members. They had immigrated before or immediately after World War I. To a large extent, they maintained their ancient customs. There were also some recent immigrants from the Near East.

These organized Jewish communities remained socially separated, each congregation with its own synagogue, burial society, and cemetery. They nevertheless united in such events and programs as fund raising for Israel, celebration of Israel’s 10th anniversary, and the creation of the Instituto Albert Einstein in 1954. The building, provided with the most modern equipment, housed a nursery and kindergarten, a primary school, and three high-school classes, and there were plans for its expansion.

The Jews of the Canal Zone, consisting of some 400 American civilians and 400 army personnel, were an important complement to the Jewish community in Panama.

Paraguay

Paraguay’s total population of 1,500,000 included about 2,000 Jews. Practically the entire Jewish population lived in Asunción, the capital and principal city. The majority were from Eastern Europe, chiefly Poland; the rest, except for a dozen Sephardi families, were German.

In the first years after World War II, Paraguay was an important transmigration country for Jews, thousands of Jewish displaced persons passing through on their way to Argentina.

Community Organization

The Jewish community included an East European Hevra Kaddisha and the German Sociedad de Alemanes. The Unión Hebraica, representing both groups, operated a community center and a school attended by 100 children. B’nai B’rith and the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) were also active. Of the $15,000 expected proceeds of the 1957–58 fund-raising campaign, 95 per cent was to be for Israel and 5 per cent for the school.

Although the community maintained two synagogues, there was no rabbi, and the Jews of Paraguay looked to Argentina for cultural and religious guidance. Many went to Buenos Aires for Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur.
PERU

Jewish Population and Immigration

Out of a total population of 10,000,000, the Jews of Peru were estimated at between three and four thousand. Ninety per cent of the Jews lived in Lima, the country's metropolis. About half were East Europeans who arrived after World War I, a fourth were German Jews who came in the 1930's, and the remainder were Levantine Sephardim who came after World War I.

Most Peruvian Jews were in manufacturing or in the export-import business, either as owners or as managers or salesmen. Very few were in retail or service trades.

Immigration to Peru in recent years was slight, because of the country's turbulent political history and economic difficulties.

Community Organization

The Jewish community of Peru consisted of three distinct organizations—the Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita (Sephardic), the Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita de 1870 (German), and the Sociedad Unión Israelita (East European) —each maintaining a separate synagogue. However, the three groups were united in the B'nai B'rith, the Zionist organization, and in a federation, the Asociación de Sociedades Israelitas del Perú.

The Asociación sponsored an impressive Jewish school in Lima, the Colegio de León Pinello. Six hundred students (80 per cent of all Jewish children), ranging from kindergarten to high-school age, attended the Colegio. In 1957, of the $200,000 raised for Israel and local needs, 20 per cent went to the school.

The community was strongly Zionist, most of the funds raised going to Israel. In celebration of Israel's 10th anniversary President Prado gave a reception in honor of the Israeli minister on April 29, 1958, and both houses of the Peruvian parliament paid tribute to the new state.

VENEZUELA

Jewish Population

Of Venezuela's population of five million, between 6,500 and 8,000 were Jews, with about 5,500 of them living in the capital, Caracas. There were 700 in the oil center of Maracaibo, while most of the remaining 300 lived in Valencia and Maracay. About 60 per cent were Ashkenazic, the remaining 40 per cent being mostly Sephardim from Morocco. About two hundred Hungarian Jewish families entered the country during 1957.
Community Organization

In Caracas and Maracaibo there were separate synagogues for the Sephardic, East European, and German communities. In Caracas each group also had its own community center, but in Maracaibo all three groups were united in one community center.

Caracas also had the Asociación Israelita de Venezuela (representing the entire Jewish community), the B'nai B'rith, the Centro Israelita de Caracas, and the Centro Israelita Pro-Refugiados, besides WIZO and ORT.

In Caracas the Herzl-Bialik School was attended by about 60 per cent of the Jewish children of school age, mostly of Eastern European origin. The children of German and Sephardic Jews for the most part attended the public schools and received supplementary religious education in the Talmud Torahs. In Maracaibo all Jewish children attended the Jewish day school maintained by the community center.

A Spanish-language Jewish weekly, *El Mundo Israelita*, was published in Caracas.

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