



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 66, Folder 8, Latin America, 1981-1988.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date 20 February 1981

to Foreign Affairs Department

CONFIDENTIAL

from Jacob Kovadloff

subject Meetings in Washington: Human rights; Argentinian Affairs;
Hispanic programs; Cuban trip.

During my four-day stay in Washington, I had discussions with officials at the State Department, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Apostolic delegation, and the Israeli Embassy, among others. The main subject of these conversations was the plight of political prisoners in Chile and Argentina.

I met with Msgr. Purcell, assistant to Papal Nuncio Pio Laghi in Washington, to request his help in the cases of two young prisoners-- Jose Miguel Benado Medvinsky and his companion, Claire Francis Wilson-- being held in Chilean jails. Since the Vatican recently mediated an Argentinian-Chilean border dispute to Chile's satisfaction, I decided this would be a good opportunity to broach these human rights cases with Msgr. Purcell. Laghi, whom I know well (but who was in Manila while I was in Washington) worked for years with great success in freeing political prisoners in Argentina, and one hopes that Vatican efforts on behalf of the two Chileans will prove as helpful. I also informed Msgr. Purcell about AJC activities aimed at furthering Jewish-Catholic dialogue with Hispanics in this country, a program in which he expressed great interest.

...

At the Department of State I met with several officials, including Ray Jorgensen of the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. In a two-hour meeting, I exchanged information with this career diplomat who now handles South American cases. He is aware of the plight of the two Chileans and some of the Argentinian desaparecidos whose names I mentioned and said he would raise the matter with the appropriate State Department desks. In Jorgensen's view, the U.S. won't be out of the human rights picture under the Reagan Administration, although human rights will not be viewed as an issue separate from other American foreign policy interests. Jorgensen was anxious to learn from me what I knew about developments in Argentina and elsewhere in South America.

At the South American desk, I spoke with Gerald Whitman, head of the Argentina section, about the latest anti-Semitic incidents there, and with Peter Whitney of the Chile desk. I also saw George Lister, the human rights expert who is adviser on human rights to the legal Division of the State Department.

The plight of political prisoners and desaparecidos in Argentina was also the subject of my discussion with Ambassador Quijano, who represents Argentina in the OAS. I told Quijano that there is widespread expectation of a more favorable American attitude toward South American countries, among the new Administration officials, but that is precisely why we feel the Argentinian Government should do its part to demonstrate real progress on matters such as the liberation of political prisoners and explanations concerning the fate of those who have "disappeared," to make the new Administration's job easier. Quijano said these changes are not likely to occur before General Viola assumes the Argentinian presidency next month and new Ministers are appointed.

...

Incidentally, I was told again in Washington that one of the three leading candidates for the position of Foreign Minister in Argentina is Rafael Martinez Raymonda, a lawyer who is a close personal friend of mine. I am happy to report that Martinez worked closely on certain matters with AJC's Buenos Aires office and attended several of our conferences on human rights. He believes strongly in democratic ideals and may initiate important changes in areas of concern to us in Argentina.

For the time being, however, the situation of the desaparecidos continues to worry us and others. At a meeting of the AJC and the International Associates that I attended while in Washington, human rights activist Rabbi Marshall Meyer of Argentina said he believes approximately 2000 desaparecidos are still alive. But the Executive Director of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission of the OAS, Dr. Edmundo Vargas Carreño, told me that he's not so confident about this. Vargas is very knowledgeable about the entire situation and, in fact, got a call from Mrs. Bronfman, the mother of one of the Chilean prisoners, while she was visiting with AJC's Nives Fox in Paris. Vargas told me he thinks new action in favor of Argentinian political prisoners will follow Viola's assumption of power.

But human rights are not the main concern of Argentinian leaders, according to the new Naval Attaché to the Argentinian Embassy, Capt. Julio Garza, with whom I met. He spoke of the government's concern with economic problems, including rising unemployment and cost-of-living and the fact that 26 banks went bankrupt in a 6-month period. These economic difficulties could, he feels, lead eventually to social unrest.

...

Another central theme in my discussions was the series of AJC projects involving Hispanics in America, including a mass media conference about the image of Hispanics in the press, and Hispanic-Jewish conferences in various parts of the country. I spoke about these projects with Andrew Baker, newly-appointed director of the Washington Chapter of AJC, and with Joe Aguayo, former President of Latinos in Communications, who introduced me to half a dozen Hispanic radio, television and press personalities in Washington, and advised me about foundations that might assist AJC in our Hispanic projects. Before leaving for Washington, I spoke with Ambassador Alejandro Orfila, Secretary-General of the OAS, who, upon hearing of our Hispanic programs, spontaneously offered OAS cooperation. In Washington, the Deputy Director of Administrative Affairs for OAS, Ronald Scheman, promised to advise me and to help in the procurement of OAS support.

At the Israeli Embassy, Secretary Victor Harel, who is also an observer to the OAS, discussed with me the situation in Latin America and also the impending visit of 15 American Hispanic journalists to Israel, on which I had advised him several months ago.

Lastly, I spoke with Ralph Braibanti, head of the Cuban Desk at the State Department, about my forthcoming visit to that country. He advised me that there is no real danger involved in such a mission; provided I stay out of the spotlight. The Cubans would surely not jail me, he said, at most, they would ask me to leave the country. He promised, nonetheless, to report on my plans to Wayne Smith, who represents US interests in Havana.

JK/sg
xc: Bert Gold
edited by Yadin Kaufmann

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING

AJC Annual Meeting May 12, 1982

Chairperson: Rita E. Hauser

MINUTES

I. Report by Howard Friedman on South American Trip

Mr. Howard Friedman briefly described the recent trip of a high-level AJC delegation to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. The participants included -- in addition to*Mr. Friedman --*Maynard Wishner, Philip and Bee Hoffman, Rita Hauser,*Theodore Ellenoff and*Bert Gold and Jacob Kovadloff from the staff. In each country the delegation met with high government officials -- including the Presidents, the Israeli and American Ambassadors, principal Jewish leadership (the President of Chile's Jewish Community, Mr. Gil Sinai, was present at the Annual Meeting), journalists and Christian clergy.

Though each country is different and faces a different set of problems, there are several common features: in each of the four there is concern re political unrest resulting from severe economic problems. Yet in general the AJC delegation found strong, vital Jewish communities with a broad range of communal institutions and activities. There are some 600,000 Jews in all of Latin America: 150,000 in Brazil, 35,000 in Uruguay, 30,000 in Chile and between 300,000-350,000 in Argentina. These communities, Mr. Friedman stated, are secure and are resentful of American Jews who portray them as being in danger.

The trip -- whose purpose was to renew relationships, share our concerns, and communicate AJC's agenda to government officials -- was, in the view of those who participated, a success. But this does not mean that no problems remain. For example, though all four countries are Catholic, especially in Argentina does the Catholic Church really play a dominant role in society as part of the establishment. This has meant that though Argentine Jewry is free to maintain its institutions and carry on its activities, it does not participate in many areas of Argentine life. There are few Jewish judges though there are many Jewish lawyers; few Jewish faculty, etc. (The group was told that other non-Catholics, such as the Protestant community, are in a similar situation.) The Argentine Government has condemned incidents of anti-Semitism such as cemetery desecrations and also some anti-Semitic literature; but there has been little effort to arrest the vandals or to curtail the circulation of anti-Semitic material. The group specifically mentioned these problems in its meetings in Argentina.

* accompanied by wives

Another of the issues raised by the AJC delegation in Argentina was human rights in general. In meetings with the President and the Minister of the Interior the delegation urged that the government consider a general clemency for some 650 prisoners, some of whom have been in jail for years without charges. The Interior Minister responded that about half were hard-core fanatics whom it would be dangerous to release, but that the remaining cases would be reviewed with a view to possible release. Subsequently, it was learned that of the 13 specific cases brought to the Minister's attention by the AJC delegation, four were released from prison two days later.

The AJC group also raised the issue of Jewish chaplains for Argentine soldiers of the Jewish faith; as a result the Argentine Government has, for the first time, authorized the appointment of three Jewish chaplains to the army.

Mr. Friedman commented with regard to Chile that the military junta appears to be settling in for a long stay in power before any restoration of democracy. While Jews have been affected as all other citizens, qua Jews, they remain secure.

The group came away with the impression that Uruguay represented the best bet for the future -- already the process of restoring democracy has begun, and there is a relatively young and vital Jewish leadership.

Mrs. Rita Hauser remarked on the Timerman controversy, noting that the Argentine community people with whom the AJC delegation met felt that Timerman had greatly exaggerated the situation in Argentina. Still, she said, if not for Timerman the rest of the world would be ignorant of the situation of Argentine Jewry and Argentina in general. All the attention prompted by Timerman's book has put the government on the defensive and evoked protestations of goodwill toward the Jewish community. But one must bear in mind that Jews are not fully integrated into Argentine society, even if they are third-generation Argentines. Mr. Friedman added that while there is no doubt as to the accuracy of Timerman's account of his ordeal in prison, there is bitter controversy over his analysis of Argentine Jewry, and the AJC delegation saw nothing in the course of the trip to support Timerman's reading of the situation.

II. Update on Central America by Sergio Nudelstejer, Director of AJC Office for Mexico and Central America

Mr. Sergio Nudelstejer gave a brief account of some recent developments in Central America. In Costa Rica, the new president, Dr. Luis Alberto Monge, is a good friend of the local Jewish community and of Israel (he was Costa Rica's first ambassador to Israel), and there are great expectations that he will improve the domestic situation. (Note: Already the new government has announced its intention to restore its Embassy in

Israel to Jerusalem.) In Guatemala, the unrest and guerrilla clashes continue; and the new military junta has allowed the circulation of some anti-Semitic material. In Mexico, where there are severe economic problems (currency devaluations, high unemployment), anti-Semitic literature is being distributed; recently there was a bomb scare at a Jewish school, and generally there is fear that the leftist groups in the country will become active in pro-Arab and pro-PLO causes (Mexico has allowed the PLO to open an office). Recently leftists picketed the Israeli Embassy, protesting Mexico's sale of oil to Israel and asking for a cut-off of relations.

In El Salvador, many Jews have left, but with the nomination of a new civilian president it is expected that the political situation will stabilize and Jews may return. In Nicaragua, there is basically no change; only two Jews remain in the country (the majority of the community left long ago), and the synagogue is closed. The Mexican Government has been trying to promote relations between Nicaragua and Israel -- there are de facto but not de jure relations.

Mrs. Hauser mentioned that AJC has set up a subcommittee on Latin American affairs, with Dr. Howard Greenberger (of N.Y.U. Law School) as chairman.

III. Reports by Dr. M. Bernard Resnikoff and Gershon Avner of AJC's Israel Office

Dr. Resnikoff reviewed some highlights of AJC's Israel Office activities in the last year. Among them was the arrangement reached with the Ministry of Education to sponsor an in-service training program for social studies teachers on American Jewish history; sponsorship of a series of lectures at Bet Hatefutsot on Diaspora Jewry; sponsorship of a conference on religious plurality and tolerance among secular and observant Jews (the proceedings were published in Hebrew and will also appear in English); and sponsorship of a course to train police in how to deal with American blacks arriving in Israel.

Gershon Avner, the Director of Political Affairs in AJC's Israel Office, analyzed the current mood in Israel after the return of the remainder of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and assessed the chance of success of the negotiations on Palestinian autonomy. Today, Mr. Avner said, the mood in Israel is bitter and solemn (especially so in contrast to the euphoria following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem). Israelis feel that the world is indifferent to the great concessions they made in the Sinai; they see a new ruler in Egypt who is tilting toward the Arab world, and the very slow progress in normalization of relations. There is great fatigue with the Palestinian problem and a wish that it would just "go away"; there is still a national consensus that a Palestinian Arab state would constitute a mortal danger to the future of Israel, while at the same time there is a realization that Israel will now have to deal with this problem somehow.

Israeli bitterness is heightened by international pressure for a Palestinian state while the sale of sophisticated arms to hostile Arab states continues to erode Israel's military margin of safety.

In this situation it is likely that the autonomy talks will result in stalemate. Prime Minister Begin's policies enjoy wide support in Israel, much wider than the slim parliamentary majority; his position of "no more concessions" is shared by many, far beyond his own political party. Israel's concept of autonomy -- defined narrowly -- is very far from that of Egypt, which wants a very broad autonomy which will lead eventually to a Palestinian state. So the impasse is not likely to be resolved soon. In Israel there is talk of another war, for the first time since Sadat came to Jerusalem. And outside pressure will only harden the Israeli position. Still, Mr. Avner said, one must remember that there are many positive things going on in Israel, and American Jews should help lighten the external burden so Israelis can concentrate on continuing to improve their internal situation.

Mrs. Hauser asked what would happen if the West Bank were annexed. Mr. Avner responded that he felt Mr. Begin was in no hurry to annex the West Bank formally. He is committed to Camp David and to the autonomy talks. He wants the negotiations to continue but wouldn't mind if they didn't, since it is his policy to gradually enlarge the Jewish presence on the West Bank, on the ground.

Mr. Bookbinder asked about the Peace Now movement in Israel, which had recently sponsored a demonstration in which 30,000 people showed up. Mr. Avner commented that the Peace Now movement is not a dominant one, and the majority, as already stated, share Begin's views and not those of Peace Now. One must be realistic in gauging what lies ahead and look at the majority's presence, whatever one's personal opinions.

On the question of whether the Arab states truly desire a Palestinian state, which could threaten them as much as it would Israel, Mr. Avner remarked that the Arabs are serious about wanting to set up a Palestinian state. Jordan, which might harbor doubts about this, is in an equivocal position, but not a decisive one in terms of Arab politics.

After the conclusion of Mr. Avner's remarks and discussion, the Commission briefly considered the draft Middle East statement to be taken up Sunday morning at the plenum. Mrs. Hauser announced the publication by AJC of a new and important study on the Palestinian issue, The Palestinians in Perspective, edited by Dr. George Gruen, and also two forthcoming reports on the Falashas.

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Submitted by Lois Gottesman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, N.Y. Dec. 20....Passions in Mexico's Jewish community, roused by a recent vicious anti-Semitic diatribe in the nation's Chamber of Deputies, have been quieted by the condemnation and repudiation of the statement by government authorities, according to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

The League, which was consulted from the inception of the incident, quoted Mexican Jewish leaders as being satisfied that the "outrageous anti-Semitic speech" by Miguel Olea Enriquez, the Deputy from Chihuahua, is "an isolated example of bigotry and does not represent the views of the government or the Partido Revolucionaria Institucional (PRI), his political party."

The anti-Semitic remarks by Mr. Olea Enriquez were made in the midst of a general debate in the Chamber December 1 on stiffer penalties for violators of currency control measures. While the deputies denounced the widespread violations by many industrialists, Mr. Olea Enriquez singled out Jews as "experts in such matters."

Julio Torenberg, president of Tribuna Israelita, the Jewish community's human relations agency, told ADL that the Jewish community was

(more)

pleased that all the members of the PRI majority in the Chamber joined Leopoldo Enrique Soto Izquierdo, the party's secretary, in a statement of repudiation. The statement, he noted, emphasized that Enriquez' remarks were "racist and contrary to Mexican law and tradition."

Mauricio Lulka, president of the B'nai B'rith Human Relations Commission in Mexico, reported that in a meeting with Jewish leaders, Manuel Bartlett Diaz, secretary of Gobernacion, and senior minister in the President's cabinet, had communicated the disavowal of anti-Semitism by President Miguel de la Madrid and his assurance that the Jewish community has nothing to worry about.

In summing up the matter, Messrs. Torenberg and Lulka said that their organizations and the Comité Central Israelita, the Jewish community's central communal agency, would like to put a lid on the matter because Mexico's executive and legislative officials "have clearly demonstrated the traditional Mexican respect for minority and human rights."

AJ, LAJ, LAP-FOR, LAP-US, BHLA-83

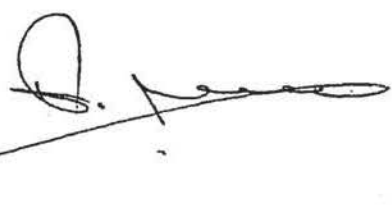
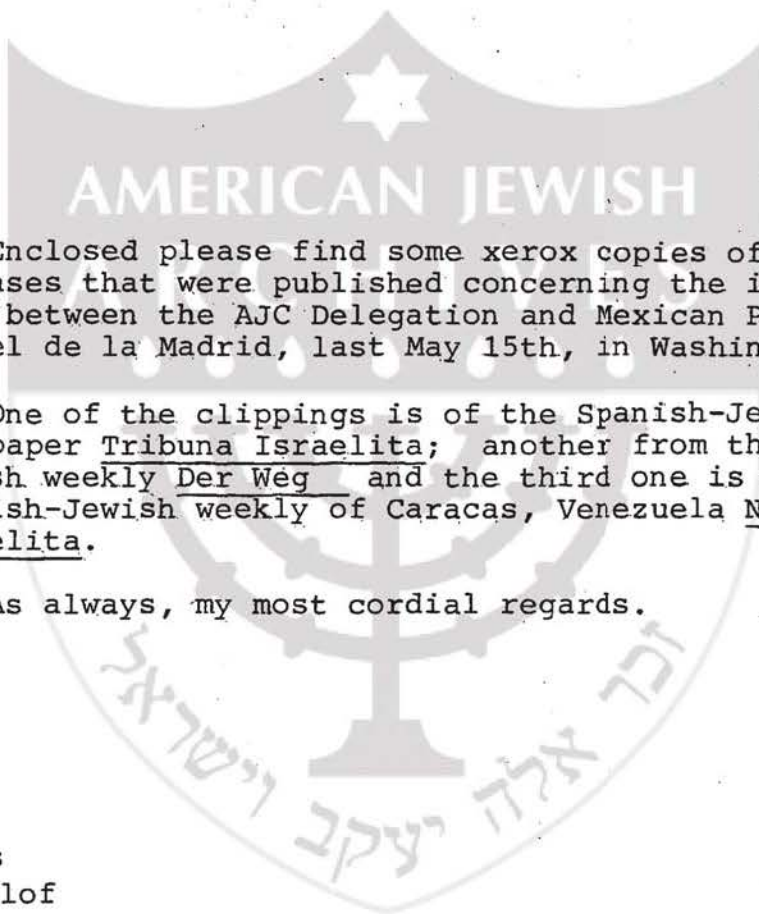
JUL 19 1984

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date : July 11th, 1984

to : Marc H. Tanenbaum
from : Sergio Nudelstejer

subject

Enclosed please find some xerox copies of press releases that were published concerning the interview held between the AJC Delegation and Mexican President, Miguel de la Madrid, last May 15th, in Washington D.C.

One of the clippings is of the Spanish-Jewish weekly newspaper Tribuna Israelita; another from the Mexican-Jewish weekly Der Weg and the third one is from the Spanish-Jewish weekly of Caracas, Venezuela Nuevo Mundo Israelita.

As always, my most cordial regards.

cc: David Harris
Jacob Kovadlof

SN/eeg

PRENSA ISRAELITA

cultura

México, D. F., 6 de Julio de 1984

México reafirma su amistad hacia el pueblo judío

WASHINGTON.—El presidente de México, Miguel de la Madrid dijo a dirigentes del Comité Judío Americano que "México tiene una actitud permanente de amistad y respeto por el pueblo judío" y que se considera "un amigo y defensor de Israel".

De la Madrid recibió a la delegación durante su reciente visita oficial a Washington, en la única audiencia concedida a un grupo judío.

Respondiendo a la bienvenida ofrecida por el presidente de la Junta de Gobernadores del Comité, Theodore Ellenoff, el presidente De la Madrid expresó: "México es consistente en su filosofía histórica hacia la comunidad judía mexicana. En México apreciamos a los grupos diversos que componen nuestra sociedad".

Reafirmando su declaración hecha el pasado octubre, repudiando el antisemitismo en México, el mandatario mexicano dijo: "Somos amigos de la comunidad judía de México y apreciamos profundamente la cultura de donde provienen los judíos. Los judíos en México son totalmente mexicanos y en la sociedad tienen igualdad plena".

Al referirse al Medio Oriente, De la Madrid señaló: "Desde la creación del estado de Israel, hemos defendido a Israel... Aunque México no siempre está de acuerdo con la política de Israel, hablamos abiertamente de nuestras diferencias.

"Francamente creemos que es esencial encarar la cuestión del pueblo palestino. A menos que el

problema de los palestinos se resuelva, se perpetuará el conflicto con las consecuencias trágicas que conocemos", dijo el presidente.

La delegación del Comité, a la par que reconoció la importancia de resolver la situación de los palestinos, dijo que la paz en el Medio Oriente depende de una cuestión crítica, la negativa de los países árabes y de la Organización para la Liberación de Palestina a reconocer el derecho de Israel a existir como una nación independiente.

El presidente Miguel de la Madrid respondió indicando que "el gobierno y el pueblo mexicanos apoyan el derecho de Israel a vivir como un estado soberano. Enfocamos este problema de la misma manera que otras cuestiones internacionales, siempre estamos a favor de las soluciones pacíficas".

"Creemos en las soluciones diplomáticas en lugar de las militares en el Medio Oriente lo mismo que en América Central y en todas partes. Defendemos la sobe-

ranía de todas las naciones, considerándola inviolable".

La delegación escuchó luego al presidente pasar revista a los temas analizados con el presidente Ronald Reagan incluso las relaciones entre ambas naciones; las diferencias de política hacia América Central; la situación económica mexicana, la necesidad de aumentar el intercambio; el turismo, y los problemas de los trabajadores mexicanos indocumentados en Estados Unidos. De la Madrid dijo que "Hay problemas reales entre Estados Unidos y México pero las relaciones en general son buenas".

El director del departamento de Relaciones Internacionales del Comité Judío Americano, rabina Marc H. Tanenbaum, preguntó al presidente si México "intervendría decididamente en favor de Andrei Sakharov y su esposa, Yelena Bonner, que enfrentan una muerte inminente a menos que las autoridades soviéticas les permitan obtener el tratamiento médico debido".

Agregó que "estamos preocupados por la suerte de Anatoly Shcharansky, Ida Nudel y otros judíos disidentes, hostigados y perseguidos, a quienes se les niegan sus derechos humanos en violación a los acuerdos de Helsinki y a los pactos de las Naciones Unidas".

El presidente De la Madrid respondió que siempre tiene muy presente las preocupaciones en materia de derechos humanos y dijo que "hará todo lo posible para asistir a Sakharov, Shcharansky, Nudel y otros".

Junto al presidente de México estaban los ministros de Hacienda, Jesús Silva Herzog y de Comercio y Desarrollo Industrial Héctor Hernández, además del embajador de México en Washington, Jorge Espinosa de los Reyes.

Ambos grupos acordaron mantenerse en contacto durante los próximos meses.



En la foto, aparece de izquierda a derecha: el Presidente Lic. Miguel de la Madrid, el Lic. Theodore Ellenoff y el señor Sergio Nudelstejer, durante la reunión con el Comité Judío Americano.

Además de Ellenoff y Tanenbaum, la delegación del Comité estuvo integrada por Howard Greenberg, Presidente del Comité de Acción sobre América Latina; el presidente del Comité Ejecutivo Nacional, Alfred Moses; Leon Sil-

verman; Gordon Zacks, ex presidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Internacionales; Hyman Bookbinder, representante en Washington y Sergio Nudelstejer, representante para México y América Central del Comité Judío Americano.

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דער וועג

ערב שבת, דעם 26טן מאי 1984

א דעלעגאציע פונעם אמעריקאנער יידישן קאמיטעט האט געשמועסט מיטן מעקסיקאנער פרעזידענט

בעת זיין לעצטן כאווד אין ווא-
שינגטאן, האט דער מעקסיקאנער
פרעזידענט מינעל דע לא מאדריד גע-
האט דעם 15טן ד"ה א פריינטלעכן
שמועס מיט א דעלעגאציע פונעם
אמעריקאנער יידישן קאמיטעט,
בראש וועלכער עס איז געשטאנען
דער באדימטער אדוואקאט טעאדא-
עלענאו אוו האביי מארל טענענבאום.
די דעלעגאציע האט כאגלייט ה' סער-
כיא נודעלמשעכער, רעפערענטאנט
פון א"ד קאמיטעט אין מעקסיקע,
צענטראל-אמעריקע, קאנאמביע אין
ווענעזועלא.

דער שמועס איז פארלאפן אין א
פריינטלעכן אטמאספערע. דער מעקסי-
קאנער פרעזידענט האט גערעדט וועגן
דעם עקאנאמישן מצב אין לאנד און
די אנשטרענגונגען פון זיין רעגירונג
פארבעסערן די לאגע.
צווישן דער סוויטע פונעם פרעזי-
דענט איז געווען דער פינאנס-מיניס-
טער לויס בעסוס סקווא-הערעזא, און
פון קאמערץ און אינדוסטריע -
לויס העקטאר הערנאנדעז. סערוואנ-
טעס און דער מעקסיקאנער אמבאסא-
דאר אין וואשינגטאן ד"ר בארבע עס-
פינאזא דע לאס רעיעס.

NUEVO MUNDO ISRAELITA

Caracas, 18- 25 de Junio de 1984

MEXICO REAFIRMA SU AMISTAD HACIA EL PUEBLO JUDIO

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"Creemos en las soluciones diplomáticas en lugar de las militares en el Medio Oriente lo mismo que en América Central y en todas partes. Defendemos la soberanía de todas las naciones, considerándola inviolable".

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JUL 31 1984

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

July 26, 1984

Dr. Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director
International Relations Department
The American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

Recently the Departments of State and Defense published the enclosed background paper on Nicaragua. It contains a good deal of useful information and I thought I would send it along to you.

Sincerely,



Elliott Abrams
Assistant Secretary for Human
Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

Enclosure:

As Stated.

For your information

From the desk of:

JACOB KOVADLOFF

Director, South American Affairs

9/26/84

To: M42



"EL AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE JAMAS SE DEJO ATRAPAR POR LA CAMPAÑA DIFAMATORIA CONTRA LA DIRIGENCIA JUDEOARGENTINA"

AFIRMO EN DIALOGO CON "MUNDO ISRAELITA" EL RABINO MARC TANENBAUM

Argentina democrática no puede votar contra la única democracia del Levante

Entrevistó ARIEL PLOSHCHUK



TANENBAUM: visión objetiva

"Los judíos norteamericanos se sienten felices por la recuperación de la democracia en la Argentina, y en las conversaciones que mantuve con el presidente Alfonsín y el canciller Caputo les expresé nuestro firme apoyo a los esfuerzos por afianzar el gobierno constitucional y el imperio de los Derechos Humanos. Pero también dejé en claro que ese espontáneo anhelo se vería amargamente desalentado si persistiere el inexplicable apoyo de la Argentina democrática a votaciones, virulentemente antisraelíes, orquestadas por los países árabes y sus seguidores oportunistas en los foros internacionales, especialmente en la UN. La verdad que resulta incomprensible que un gobierno democrático, como el surgido felizmente en la Argentina, preste su espaldarazo a propuestas burdamente discriminatorias, que tienden a destruir a la única democracia existente en todo el Medio Oriente, como es el Estado de Israel".

Estas categóricas palabras fueron enunciadas, con la cabal precisión que es su característica, por el rabino Marc Tanenbaum, titular de Relaciones Internacionales del American Jewish Committee, en un diálogo exclusivo con MUNDO ISRAELITA. Como hemos informado en una edición anterior, el nombrado dirigente estuvo días atrás en esta capital, en su primera visita a nuestro país, acompañado por el director de asuntos latinoamericanos de dicho organismo, el por nosotros bien conocido Jacobo Kovadloff, quien tiene en su haber una profícua trayectoria al servicio de las cosas institucionales en nuestro medio.

El rabino Tanenbaum es una figura de relevantes perfiles en los altos niveles del liderazgo judeonorteamericano. Por su formación judía y sentir civilista —tan propio del espíritu convivencial de los Estados Unidos— concentró sus mayores esfuerzos en el campo del entendimiento interconfesional y la lucha contra las prevenciones religiosas y raciales en todas sus formas y alcances. Baste recordar, como testimonio de la importancia de su gestión en tan sensibles esferas, que asistió, como único rabino, en condición de "observador especial" a las deliberaciones del Concilio Vaticano II e integró el primer grupo

de dirigentes judíos que fueron recibidos por el papa Juan Pablo II, a poco de asumir la máxima jefatura de la Iglesia Católica.

Espíritu sensible y abierto a todas las reclamaciones judías, despliega, como es obvio por las responsabilidades que conllevan sus funciones, una intensa labor en defensa de la imagen e integridad de la vida judía, y no sólo en la Unión sino más allá de sus fronteras, en América latina, con el énfasis colocado, hoy por hoy, en la "caliente" área centroamericana, que también se proyecta "sensible" en la visualización judía.

No es de extrañar, entonces, la resonancia que su breve visita despertó en nuestro medio, tanto en el ámbito comunitario como, más señaladamente, en las esferas gubernativas, políticas y eclesásticas. Es obvio, por lo tanto, que este periódico entrevistara al huésped para recabar sus opiniones sobre sus gestiones en la metrópoli y condensar sus reflexiones sobre algunos temas más que acuciantes para la vida judía de esta hora, especialmente en lo atinente a nuestra comunidad, al cabo de sus encuentros aquí. El rabino Tanenbaum, pese a sus múltiples compromisos y su "agenda llena", dio marcada preferencia al diálogo con MUNDO ISRAELITA, en una conversación que se extendió mucho más del tiempo inicialmente fijado, "ya que el imperativo primordial del dirigente judío es estrechar la comunicación con nuestro periodismo", según su certera aseveración.

Desde luego, la pregunta inicial que le hacemos a nuestro interlocutor se refiere a las impresiones recogidas luego de sus entrevistas con el presidente de la Nación, doctor Alfonsín y el canciller Dante Caputo.

El rabino Tanenbaum, tras puntualizar los conceptos que expresara al primer mandatario y al titular del Palacio San Martín, y que consignamos en el comienzo de la presente nota, agregó:

— Tanto el presidente Alfonsín como el ministro Caputo coincidieron en repudiar terminantemente toda forma de agitación antisemita o de prejuicios religiosos o raciales. Por un elemental principio moral de la democracia, hemos de combatir el antisemitismo en la Argentina, expresaron coin-

cidentemente el presidente y el canciller. Los dos me aseguraron que no escatimarán esfuerzos para extirpar el odio antisemita en todas sus formas y tácticas agitadoras. En ese sentido, he sido informado que en los próximos días el gobierno enviará al Congreso un proyecto de ley que tiende a introducir un instrumento legal para sancionar la acción disociadora del antisemitismo y el odio racial.

— Esto en cuanto a la "clásica" agitación antisemita. ¿Y qué habló sobre la no menos importante cuestión que

hace a la actitud oficial ante Israel y la campaña distorsionante antisraelí a nivel mundial?

— Como era de esperar —y como también señalamos precedentemente— me hice intérprete de la inquietud de los judíos de los Estados Unidos por la lamentable posición argentina en los últimos años, al apoyar iniciativas agresivamente antisraelíes, lanzadas en el contexto de difamar a Israel y, por extensión, a todo el pueblo judío. Destaqué la extrema sensibilidad judeonorteamericana por

posturas arbitrariamente antisraelíes y con satisfacción puedo decir que tanto el presidente como el ministro afirmaron que, en adelante, se retomará la tradicional política de equidistancia argentina ante la situación de Israel y el Medio Oriente. Le manifesté claramente a mis interlocutores que hay que terminar con el chantaje obstruccionista árabe en las conferencias mundiales. No puede ser que encuentros tan importantes como el reciente sobre la cuestión demográfica internacional o

asambleas convocadas para analizar preocupantes temas económicos, sociales, culturales o estrictamente técnicos sean explotados, sistemáticamente, para denigrar a Israel y al sionismo, en una aberrante desnaturalización de tales convocatorias internacionales. Tengo la impresión ahora que el gobierno democrático de la Argentina procurará rectificar los pasos equivocados de un

(sigue en pág. 16)



La Argentina democrática no puede votar...

(viene de pág. 5)

reciente pasado, y promoverá una política para superar tal acción chantajista, especialmente en el confuso Tercer Mundo.

—Usted se reunió también con dirigentes de la DAIA y de otros sectores institucionales. Por otra parte, ha seguido de cerca la vida judeoargentina y mantuvo contacto en distintas oportunidades en Nueva York con sus voceros representativos. Así las cosas: ¿puedo darnos su opinión sobre la campaña difamatoria de que fue objeto la dirigencia comunitaria judía de nuestro país por parte de elementos interesados, a raíz de su conducta durante el sombrío pasado, no tan lejano, vivido en la Argentina?

—Como visitante no soy el más indicado para emitir apreciaciones sobre la cuestión. Sólo es del caso recordar, como pauta definitiva de conducta judía, una sabia sentencia de la Guemará: "No juzgues a tu prójimo si no estás en el lugar de los hechos producidos". La comunidad judeoargentina atravesó entonces por días críticos y muy difíciles, y es incuestionable que la dirigencia comunitaria judeoargentina estuvo a la altura de sus deberes judíos y luchó con entereza y dignidad por la defensa de los intereses judíos, dentro de las posibilidades de la grave emergencia. Esa tenaz acción ha tenido el reconocimiento de todo el mundo judío. Pero, insisto, sólo los judíos de la Argentina son los que tienen la autoridad natural de juzgar a sus dirigentes. Es de recordar, dentro de ese contexto y salvando, por supuesto, las distancias, que también se lanzaron enconadas acusaciones contra los dirigentes judíos de Occidente (especialmente de Estados Unidos), por su presunta "negligencia" en producir los máximos esfuerzos para rescatar a nuestros hermanos del Holocausto. De toda forma, quede bien en claro, el American Jewish Committee jamás se dejó atrapar por la campaña difamatoria aludida.

"ANALIZAR RACIONALMENTE"

—A la luz de la dramática experiencia de estas últimas décadas y luego de lo sucedido con las comunidades en Cuba, Nicaragua y, más todavía, en los países de la ór-

bita soviética, ¿existe algún "espacio político" para desarrollar una vida judía bajo un régimen comunista?

—Por tratarse de un problema muy delicado, éste debe ser analizado muy racionalmente y no caer en apocalípticas generalizaciones. Yo estuve, sin ir muy lejos, días atrás en Hungría. Allí viven unos 80.000 judíos, remanentes de la populosa comunidad de preguerra. Pude observar ciertas formas de actividad comunitaria. Hay una comunidad bien organizada, que cuenta con libertad para cultivar nuestros valores religiosos. Incluso funciona un seminario rabínico, al que también concurren jóvenes judíos de otros países del bloque soviético, en un esfuerzo formativo de futuros dirigentes espirituales para esa zona. Como se ve, esos judíos pueden moverse con "cierto margen operativo", siempre y cuando que no incurrieren en lo político "y sus alcances concomitantes". También desde el polo opuesto del espectro político, vemos que en un régimen autoritario derechista, como el uruguayo, también se mantiene en plenitud la vida judía. Esto, sea dicho, sin dejar de reconocer que el totalitarismo, por su misma naturaleza denigrante, rebaja la dignidad humana y, por lo tanto, contradice los prin-

cipios humanistas judíos.

—Y en cuanto a Nicaragua?

—El rabino Tanenbaum, protagonista de una encendida controversia sobre la posición del régimen sandinista frente a los judíos, tras una breve reflexión, afirma:

—Vea, en Nicaragua, país que visité algún tiempo atrás, sólo quedan actualmente tres familias judías. Por lo tanto (y sin entrar en el análisis del "éxodo" producido), no tiene sentido hablar del "problema judío" en ese país centroamericano. Allí, en esas condiciones, el antisemitismo no existe en su versión "clásica". En cambio, funciona una activa oficina de la OLP, con cerca de un centenar de agentes profesionales, al servicio de la agitación antisionista y antiisraelí en toda la convulsada zona.

Ese es el grave peligro que, desde la óptica judía, encierra la Nicaragua sandinista para nosotros. Por consiguiente, estamos ante una amenaza de un antisemitismo distinto, de carácter político. La lucha para enfrentarlo también debe adecuarse a lineamientos políticos y no convencionales.

—No produjo preocupación entre los judíos norteamericanos el avance de

Jesse Jackson?

—Sí, su prédica suscitó visible amargura, especialmente la lanzada por el líder negro Louis Farrakhan, aliado de Jackson. Sin embargo, hay que señalar que la estridencia publicitaria de éste es manifiestamente superior a su verdadera gravitación. La convención democrática no aprobó ninguna de las cuatro propuestas del precandidato negro, incluso la que abogaba por el "estado palestino". Esto es un síntoma alentador de la madurez política de la Unión, por otra parte, los líderes responsables negros toman distancia de las posturas demagógicas de Jackson, y son conscientes de su peligro para los derechos civiles en la Unión. En cuanto a los dos candidatos —Reagan y Mondale— ambos se destacan por su probada amistad por Israel y apoyo a sus reclamaciones de seguridad.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

: October 29th, 1984

date Jacobo Kovadloff
to Sergio Nudelstejer
from

subject

Please find enclosed clippings of some of the press releases published in Spanish by the weekly Jewish Newspaper Prensa Israelita.

Among these, stands out two stories on your recent visit to Argentina and Brazil, and the comments made by Marc H. Tanenbaum.

As always,

Cordially yours.

cc: Marc H. Tanenbaum /
David Harris

PRENSA ISRAELITA

MEXICO, D. F. 20 DE OCTUBRE DE 1984
SUUKOT 5745

Brasil, un gigante durmiente, y la paz del Medio Oriente

por el Doctor
Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director
del Departamento de Relaciones
Internacionales del Comité Judío
Americano.

¿Cuáles son sus imágenes de Brasil?

Antes de ir a ese país mis preocupaciones del Brasil estaban hechas de imágenes de la jungla del Amazonas, el carnaval tumultuoso en Río de Janeiro, sambas, café, los desesperadamente pobres de las favelas y juntas militares opresivas. Brasil es todas esas imágenes, pero es mucho, mucho más que lo que esas figuras fragmentarias sugieren.

Brasil ocupa casi la mitad del Continente Sudamericano y tiene la sexta población del mundo. Esta nación gigantesca está pasando ahora por una serie de cambios políticos, económicos y sociales que pueden influir seriamente en las relaciones Norte-Sur y aun la paz en el Oriente Medio.

En agosto visité Brasilia, esa capital de la arquitectura surrealista, para observar a los partidos políticos avanzar desde un régi-

men militar a una forma democrática de gobierno. Cada vez más sensible a la cuestión de los derechos humanos, discutí con varios funcionarios brasileños nuestra preocupación por las recientes acciones antisemitas y anti-Israel realizadas por una conferencia de la Organización para la Liberación de Palestina en Sao Paulo.

Un alto funcionario del Ministerio de Justicia me dijo que recientemente prohibió una revista de la OLP que era flagrantemente antijudía. Dijo que "Brasil no tolerará la importación de la intolerancia del conflicto del Oriente Medio".

Paradójicamente Brasil que es el quinto exportador de armas del mundo, es un gran proveedor de armas a la Arabia Saudita y a Irán.

Sería aconsejable que los judíos y los cristianos estadounidenses desarrollen un conocimiento mucho más realista de ese gigante durmiente que es el Brasil. Cuando el Brasil comience realmente a despertar, nos afectará a todos.

MEXICO, D. F., 13 DE AGOSTO DE 1984

Un premio para "Jewish Dimension"

NUEVA YORK. Jewish Dimension, el programa de entrevistas producido por el Comité Judío Americano en el canal 11 de televisión de Nueva York todos los miércoles de 10:30 a 11:00 a.m. ha ganado el Premio Olive por Logros Notables en Servicios Locales de Televisión.

El Consejo de Iglesias de la ciudad de Nueva York, que otorga el premio, seleccionó la emisión titulada "Aprendiendo a Enseñar".

El programa, transmitido el 2 de noviembre de 1983, relata "la familiarmente trágica historia de los niños cuyos problemas de aprendizaje han sido mal diagnosticados a un grado tal que fueron calificados 'imposibles de educar'."

Laurie Chock, la conductora del programa, visitó el Centro Judío para Educación Especial en Brooklyn, la única "yeshiva" que recibe gustosa a niños cuyos padres han sido informados que no pueden continuar estudiando en las "yeshivot" regulares. Chock entrevistó a Aharon Hersh Field, el psicólogo que fundó el centro hace ocho años y que ahora es su decano.

Jewish Dimension ya había recibido el Premio Angel por excelencia en la televisión local otorgado por Religión en los Medios de Prensa. El programa tiene el mayor porcentaje de audiencia entre los 11 de interés público presentados por canal 11, con más de 150,000 televidentes semanales en la zona de Nueva York.

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Oberammergau: sigue la orientación antijudía

MUNICH, Alemania Occidental. —La representación de la Pasión en Oberammergau continúa "manchada por una orientación antijudía profunda y penetrante", opina una delegación interreligiosa de Estados Unidos que asistió al estreno de la versión 1984 de la obra.

La delegación, auspiciada por el Comité Judío Americano incluyó a dirigentes del Comité y a dos destacados expertos cristianos: la profesora Eva Fleischner, teóloga católica y autora de libros tales como *La Imagen del Judaísmo en el Cristianismo Alemán* desde 1945 y el reverendo William Harter, miembro de la Consulta sobre la Iglesia y el Pueblo Judío del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias; miembro del Comité sobre Relaciones Cristiano-Judías del Consejo y pastor de la Iglesia Presbiteriana Falling Spring en Pennsylvania.

La delegación, encabezada por el director de Asuntos Interreligiosos del Comité, rabino A. James Rudin y la presidenta de la Comisión de Asuntos Interreligiosos del Comité, Mimi Alperin, pidió esfuerzos más decididos para "erradicar la difamación de los judíos y el judaísmo que persisten en el drama, pese a revisiones en el texto".

Rudin declaró que el libreto 1984 de la Pasión "tiene fallas

fundamentales y aun perpetúa el mito pernicioso de que los judíos son eternamente culpables por la crucifixión de Jesús". Agregó que la advertencia que se hace al principio de que todos deben ver su culpa en los eventos que siguen, queda "debilitada por la obra en sí, que se centra en maquinaciones judías, ignora en gran parte la opresión romana y exculpa a Poncio Pilatos, ocultando su papel".

El Comité Judío Americano ha realizado tres estudios notales sobre el texto de la Pasión de Oberammergau, ha enviado delegaciones a reunirse con funcionarios de la ciudad en 1977 y en 1980 y ha transmitido su preocupación sobre los elementos antijudíos del drama a dirigentes eclesiásticos alemanes y estadounidenses.

La delegación dice que aunque se han realizado algunos cambios, la obra continúa presentando una "caricatura" de los judíos contemporáneos de Jesús. "Son presentados como antagonistas malignos de Jesús, dominados por dirigentes corruptos y cínicos, movidos por una Ley inmisericorde y de venganza. No se presenta ninguna interacción positiva entre Jesús y su gente y se distorsiona y suprime el hecho de que Jesús era un judío enseñando a otros judíos. Los estudiosos responsables del Nuevo Testamento han rechazado estas caricaturas".

El doctor Harter dijo que "los dirigentes y educadores cristianos tienen la responsabilidad de indicar a nuestra gente que el drama, tal como se presenta en Oberammergau, no es una representación verdadera o justa de la historia de la Pasión". Destacó que la obra "selecciona mucho los episodios del Nuevo Testamento que presenta, que ignora pasajes de las Escrituras" y que "se aleja de las Escrituras totalmente de manera significativa".

La profesora Fleischner, recordó las Normas y Sugestiones para Aplicar la Declaración Conciliar "Nostra Aetate", emitida por la Comisión Vaticana para las Relaciones Religiosas con los Judíos, que dice:

"El judaísmo en la época de Cristo y sus apóstoles, era una realidad compleja, que incluía muchas tendencias diferentes y muchos valores espirituales, religiosos, sociales y culturales.

"El Viejo Testamento y la tradición judía que se basa en él no debe ser enfrentado con el Nuevo Testamento de manera que la primera no sea vista sólo como una religión de sólo justicia, temores y legalismo, sin un llamado al amor de Dios y al vecino".

Fleischner dijo que "la representación de la Pasión de Oberammergau no cumple con lo fijado por el Concilio Ecuménico Vaticano II en esas normas".

Además de los nombrados la delegación estuvo integrada por Kurt Kelman e Irving B. Levine, ambos miembros de la Comisión de Asuntos Interreligiosos del Comité y el rabino Alan Mittelman, especialista en programas del Departamento de Asuntos Interreligiosos.

MEXICO, D. F., 20 DE OCTUBRE DE 1984

EL PRESIDENTE ALFONSIN NECESITA NUESTRO APOYO MORAL Y PRACTICO

por el Doctor
Marc H. Tannenbaum, Director
del Departamento de Relaciones
Internacionales del Comité Judío
Americano.

El presidente de la Argentina, doctor Raúl Alfonsín, es una persona muy especial. Cuando en agosto me concedió una audiencia en la Casa de Gobierno me senti inmediatamente conmovido por su calidez, sinceridad y autenticidad.

Durante nuestra conversación le dije al presidente que estaba profundamente impresionado por el impacto que su elección tuvo en

Brasil, Uruguay y otros países latinoamericanos.

Argentina ha sufrido por años una dictadura militar opresiva y pudo ir pacíficamente hacia una democracia constitucional que respeta los derechos humanos. Esto ha sido una inspiración para la mayoría de los países latinoamericanos con historias similares.

Compartí con el presidente Alfonsín mi impresión de que el pueblo estadounidense también ha celebrado su liderazgo y apoya con decisión sus esfuerzos para restaurar la democracia. El presiden-

(Pasa a la Pág. 11)

El Presidente

(Viene de la Pág. 4)

te Alfonsín mostró su genuina emoción. Siento que mientras él lucha con sus problemas económicos fuertes y las presiones internas, merece y necesita todo nuestro apoyo moral y práctico.

Junto con mi colega argentino, Jacobo Kovadloff, también discutimos con el presidente y con su experto ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, licenciado Dante Caputo, dos temas de preocupación especial para el pueblo judío. Nos aseguraron que pronto presentarán al parlamento un proyecto de ley proscribiendo la discriminación religiosa y racial.

Con relación a Israel, indicaron claramente que no permitirán que su servicio exterior tome posiciones arbitrarias anti israelíes en las Naciones Unidas y en cualquier otro foro.


El presidente Alfonsín terminó la reunión con una actitud franca y reconfortante: "Mantendremos nuestros principios morales y no cederemos ante amenazas políticas, económicas o al "chantaje".

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date April 5, 1985
to Dr. Marc Tanenbaum
from Jacobo Kovadloff 
subject Letter from Rabbi Brenner

Rabbi Pynchas Brenner from Venezuela sent me copies of a letter he wrote to John Paul II and an essay published on the daily "El Universal" of Caracas.

He asked me to share this materials with you. Therefore, please find enclosed the copies of the translations from the Spanish language into English of both pieces.

JK/mc
 encl.



(Transl. from the Spanish)

C.R.I.S.E.V. COMITE DE RELACIONES ENTRE IGLESIAS Y SINAGOGAS
ESTABLECIDAS EN VENEZUELA.
(Committee on Relations between Churches & Synagogues
Established in Venezuela)

Caracas, February 12, 1985

His Holiness John Paul II
Vatican City

Esteemed and revered John Paul II,

The representatives of CRISEV, the Committee on Relations between Churches and Synagogues Established in Venezuela, and particularly the undersigned, were deeply honored and privileged to have been present at the meeting with you the afternoon of Sunday, January 27, at the Nunciature of Caracas. Somehow, the meeting symbolized the warm and reverent welcome tendered you by the Venezuelan people as a whole, fully aware of your high ecclesiastical investiture and your inspiring moral leadership the world over. Your response to the greetings I conveyed to you at the time deeply moved us all, because of its spontaneity and straightforwardness. Some of us felt that you would have wished to say much more, but in view of your tight schedule, you had to leave it for another occasion.

During your stay in Venezuela, all the media were saturated with news and comments giving a full account of everything related to your pastoral visit. Even after your departure for other South American countries, the echo of your stay and of your message to us is still reverberating.

While I am certain that you are fully aware of the particular nature and sui generis of our status as Jews, and because I had the opportunity to meet you personally and was immensely impressed with the manifold aspects of your personality, permit me to focus once more on some of the issues I consider of paramount importance. I am doing so also in my capacity as co-chairman of the WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS Interreligious Commission and as a member of the Executive of the INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS.

For us Jews, religion and belonging to the Jewish People are physically inseparable. We are an amalgam of traditions and customs, of family and religion, and this explains, perhaps in some mystical way, why each one of us knows that he shares his future with that of all ^{the} other members of this brotherhood called Judaism. Our history is replete with suffering and anguish, with moments of heroism and decades of martyrdom. You are no doubt aware of the deplorable relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish People during the period of the Dark Ages, of persecutions and intolerance. Born in Poland, both of us are cognizant of the discrimination and slander to which the Jewish People was exposed for centuries, and of the Holocaust -- beyond any human understanding (including whatever theological interpretation there may be) -- to which we were subjected during World War II. It is imperative to remember all this, so that such deadly errors and injustices may not ever be committed again.

The creation of the State of Israel is of the most far-reaching significance for the Jewish People. Jewish history, spanning the last two thousand years, can be divided into the period preceding Israel's establishment and that following it. We have not the slightest doubt that the Nazi atrocities would never have reached their inconceivable proportions, had Israel been in existence at that time.

We must, however, emphasize also that since the Second Vatican Council, a new phase in the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish People has set in. Although not all the Council's guide lines have as yet permeated all levels and territories of the Church, we are confident that with the passage of time, these basic changes in perceiving Judaism will be world-wide, for the Church as well as its leaders and ideological and theological spokesmen.

Over the last few years, particularly after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when the Arab world was forced to admit that Israel could not be destroyed by weapons -- two stances have emerged: those who would like to come to an understanding with Israel, as was the case with Egypt; the others who, for reasons they themselves know best, who refuse to recognize Israel's existence under any circumstances. The latter have since tried to find ways and means to delegitimize the State of Israel. A classic example is the equation of Zionism with Racism, whose approval

by the United Nations they succeeded in obtaining. Israel's current struggle is in the political arena of the world's nations, and this is where the Catholic Church, and you, John Paul II, personally, can play a crucial role which would assure you a place of honor in the annals of Jewish history. The establishment of official relations between the Vatican and the State of Israel is the answer to the ill-omened campaign aimed at delegitimizing Israel.

For us, it would be an act of great historical justice that you, John Paul II, a man stemming from the heart of Poland -- a country which co-existed with Judaism during a millenium -- you, who are on the throne of John XXIII, be the guiding hand in this step, of far-reaching significance for Jewish-Catholic relations.

Together with the entire Jewish People, I trust that you will not let this historic occasion go by, one which will enhance the Church and do justice to the Jewish People.

May I reiterate my respect and admiration for you personally as well as ^{FOR} your spiritual guidance.

SHALOM.

Fraternally yours,

Pynchas Brener

R.I.S.E.V.

COMITE DE RELACIONES ENTRE IGLESIAS Y SINAGOGAS ESTABLECIDAS EN VENEZUELA

Caracas, 12 de Febrero de 1985

Su Santidad Juan Pablo II
Ciudad El Vaticano

Apreciado y respetado Juan Pablo II,

Para los integrantes de la representación de CRISEV, el Comité de Relaciones entre Iglesias y Sinagogas Establecidas en Venezuela, y especialmente para el que suscribe ésta, fue un gran honor y un privilegio muy especial participar en el encuentro que sostuvimos con usted la tarde del Domingo 27 de Enero en la Nunciatura de Caracas. En cierta forma este encuentro fue simbólico de la calurosa y respetuosa acogida que le extendió todo el pueblo Venezolano, conciente de su alta investidura eclesiástica y de su inspirado liderazgo moral en el mundo. Su respuesta a la salutación que le dirigí en aquella ocasión nos llenó a todos de profunda emoción por su espontaneidad y sinceridad. Algunos sentimos que hubiera querido decir mucho más pero que debido a su apretado horario tendría que dejarlo para otra oportunidad.

Durante su permanencia en el país todos los medios de comunicación social estuvieron colmados con las diferentes noticias y comentarios que describieron extensa y detalladamente todos los pormenores de su visita pastoral. Y así en los días posteriores a su salida rumbo a otros países sudamericanos, los ecos de su permanencia y del mensaje que usted nos dejó siguen escuchándose.

Aunque estoy seguro que usted está plenamente conciente de la naturaleza especial y sui generis de nuestra condición Judía, aprovecho esta oportunidad de haberlo conocido personalmente y de sentirme extraordinariamente impresionado con las numerosas manifestaciones y características de su personalidad, para repetir algunos conceptos por considerarlos de importancia capital. Hago esto también en mi calidad de Co-Chairman of the Interreligious Commission of the WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS y member of the Executive of the INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWS. Para nosotros religión y pertenencia al Pueblo Judío no son condiciones quirúrgicamente separables. Somos una amalgama de tradición y costumbres, de familia y religión, que en alguna forma, tal vez mística, hace que cada uno sepa que comparte el futuro con todos los otros miembros de esta fraternidad que es el Judaísmo. Nuestra historia está llena de sufrimientos y de angustias, de momentos de heroísmo y décadas de martirio. Seguramente que no se le escapa la triste relación entre la Iglesia Católica y el Pueblo Judío durante

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Unión Israelita de Caracas

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Iglesia Luterana
Pbro. Amador Merino
Iglesia Católica Romana
Obispo Baltasar Porras
Iglesia Católica Romana
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Miguel Angel Capriles
Gustavo Cisneros
Morris Curiel
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Marcos León Holcblat
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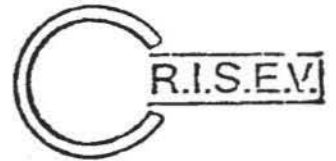
siglos de oscurantismo, de persecuciones e intolerancia. Como nacidos en Polonia, ambos sabemos por conocimiento personal la discriminación y calumnias que sufrió el Pueblo Judío por siglos, y el incomprensible holocausto (incluyendo cualquier interpretación teológica) al que fuimos sometidos durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Es necesario recordar todo esto para nunca incurrir en estos fatales errores e injusticias nuevamente.

La creación del Estado de Israel para el Pueblo Judío tiene la más grande trascendencia. La historia de los últimos dos mil años del Pueblo Judío se divide actualmente en la anterior al establecimiento de Israel y la posterior a este evento. No hay la menor duda para nosotros que los crímenes de las Nazis nunca se hubieran producido en la magnitud por todos conocida e incomprensible, si Israel hubiese existido para aquel entonces.

Debemos destacar, al mismo tiempo, que a partir del Concilio Vaticano II se ha abierto una nueva etapa en las relaciones entre la Iglesia Católica y el Pueblo Judío. Aunque todas las directrices de este Concilio no se hayan filtrado aún a todos los niveles y geografía de la Iglesia, somos optimistas y estamos seguros que con el pasar de los años estos cambios fundamentales de apreciación del Judaísmo serán universales tanto para la Iglesia como para sus dirigentes e intérpretes ideológicos y teológicos.

En los últimos años, especialmente después de la Guerra de Yom Kipur de 1973, cuando el mundo árabe tuvo que concluir que no se podía destruir a Israel a través de las armas, han surgido dos posiciones que se pueden observar. Aquellos quienes desean buscar un acomodo con Israel, tal como Egipto lo ha hecho; y aquellos quienes, por razones mejor conocidas por ellos mismos, no están dispuestos a aceptar la existencia de Israel bajo ninguna condición. Estos segundos se han dedicado desde entonces a buscar las maneras y oportunidades para deslegitimizar el Estado de Israel. El ejemplo por excelencia es la equiparación del racismo con el sionismo que lograron fuese aprobada por las Naciones Unidas. La lucha actual del Estado de Israel está en el campo político del seno de las naciones del mundo. Y es aquí donde la Iglesia Católica y usted personalmente Juan Pablo II pueden jugar un papel decisivo que le asegurarían una posición de eminencia en los anales del Judaísmo. El establecimiento de relaciones formales entre el Vaticano y el Estado de Israel es la respuesta a esta nefasta empresa de deslegitimización de Israel.

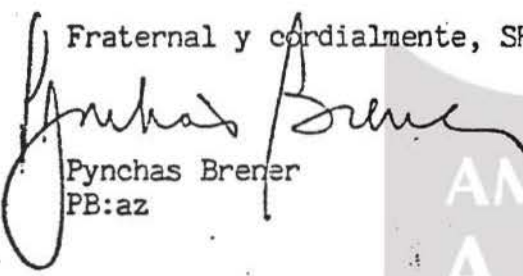
Para nosotros, sería un acto de gran justicia histórica que sea usted Juan Pablo II, un hombre que sale del seno de Polonia, nación que convivió con el Judaísmo por un milenio; que sea usted, el que ocupa el trono de Juan XXIII, quien lidere este paso que sería trascendental para las relaciones entre el Judaísmo y el Catolicismo.



Confío y conmigo todo el Pueblo Judío que usted no desaprovechará esta oportunidad histórica que engrandecerá su Iglesia y hará justicia al Judaísmo.

Le reitero mi respeto y admiración por su persona y liderazgo espiritual.

Fraternal y cordialmente, SHALOM,


Pynchas Brener
PB:az



(Translated from the Spanish)

EL UNIVERSAL, Caracas, Monday, February 25, 1985

JOHN PAUL II AND THE JEWS

by Pynchas Brenner

According to a popular anecdote, a professor asked his students to write an essay on the elephant. The British student titled his paper "The Elephant Hunt." The American student called it "Increased Efficiency in the Multiplication of Elephants." The Jewish student chose as the title "The Elephant and the Jewish Dilemma." The moral of the anecdote is that we Jews perceive things through a particular prism; hence we are hyper-sensitive and overreact to certain situations. Notwithstanding the foregoing, I shall proceed to discuss the title of the present essay.

The recent visit of Pope John Paul II was extraordinary in every way. Those of us who were privileged enough to talk with him personally, shall treasure the memory of his kindness, human warmth, and sharp intelligence as an unforgettable experience of great worth. I headed the delegation of CRISEV, the Committee on Relations between Churches and Synagogues Established in Venezuela, which met with John Paul II at the Apostolic Nunciature. ^{In/}his spontaneous and cordial response to the greetings I conveyed to him, the Pope touched upon several issues I am about to discuss.

John Paul II mentioned, in the first place, that he was moved because he had been welcome^d by a son of the Chosen People of Israel, the people responsible for initiating the dialogue between God and all of mankind. Second, he referred to my birthplace, Poland,^{as} a heroic nation. Finally, he reiterated that he considered the Second Vatican Council's statement on relations between Christians and Jews as binding for him and the Church as a whole, an inspiration of the Holy Spirit and a divine message.

Nostra Aetate has become the cornerstone on which a new relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish People can be built, for two primary reasons: First, Vatican II recognizes the legitimacy of other religious faiths, thus preventing the Church from being the only one in quest of religious truth. Second, it declares that Jesus's crucifixion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor can the Jews belonging to later generations be blamed, which is highly significant for the Christian world. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this new stance taken by the Church.

Jewish history is replete with martyrdom and sacrifices which were the direct outcome of a Church without mercy. It is imperative to bring this out in the open, so as to assess the enormous difference between present relations and those of

bygone eras. In Lima, capital of Peru, one of the streets facing the Plaza de Armas, the central square found in most Peruvian cities, is called "Judíos (Jews)." Decades ago, the same street used to be called "Matajudíos (Kill-Jews)." According to historians, the "Marrano" Jews sentenced to the auto-da-fe, to be burnt alive by the Holy Inquisition, passed through this street. 1492 is famous for Christopher Columbus's great discovery; it is also infamous because of the expulsion of Jews from Spain by the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella.

It goes without saying that we Jews will not blame today's Christian world for atrocities committed in centuries past. Why bring it up then? Santayana used to say that those who do not study history may have to relive it. The betterment of a relationship demands an open discussion of any past ills so as to begin a new chapter in the encounter between Christians and Jews.

But something more, of crucial importance, is needed, so that meaningful and lasting relations can be established between both religions. When John Paul II spoke of me as a son of the Chosen People which initiated the dialogue between God and mankind, he used, verbatim, the words from Nostra Aetate. It was the recognition of Christianity's Jewish roots. After all, Jesus was born, lived, preached, and died a Jew. A full understanding of a Christianity based on ignorance of Judaism is impossible. Whenever I attend a Catholic Mass, I ask myself

whether the officiating priest ~~xx~~ fully realizes what he is actually doing. There are many clearly Jewish roots in the Mass. This common heritage should motivate the Church towards a preferential treatment of the Jews.

In the volumes written on Karol Woytila, John Paul II, there is not a single instance of any participation by him in any anti-Semitic act. Quite the contrary, he has always been a man of deep compassion and impeccable ethics. ^{HOWEVER,} ~~But~~ the homeland of John Paul II was the site of pogroms, slanders and ^{KILLINGS} ~~murders~~ which turned into the mass murder of Jews. Percentage-wise, very few Jews survived Nazi terror in Poland. The Nazis chose Poland as the site for the most infamous concentration and extermination camps, because the anti-Semitic climate permitted it. By the same token, there were men and women of noble sentiments in the Poland of yesteryear, and the same holds true for the Poland of today. Among them are 'those who risked their lives so they could save others, and some of them perished because of their daring heroism. Can the Poles of today perchance be blamed for their ancestors' deeds? Indeed not.

An understanding of the nature of the Jewish status requires a terminology different from that used for other peoples or religions. To be a Jew implies much more than a religion. It includes belonging to a large family descending from those who were at the foot of Mount Sinai, in the desert, where they

heard and absorbed the eternal Ten Commandments. For centuries, this people-religious community was a scapegoat of weaknesses from outside, a defenseless pawn at the mercy of despots and tyrants. The establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish State, has completely changed the rules of the game. Jewish blood can no longer be spilled, with the world as an indifferent onlooker. When a plane and its passengers were hijacked to Entebbe, a remote place in Africa, and all were permitted to leave the aircraft except the Jews, Israel, thousands of miles away, sent its troops to rescue them.

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The land of Israel has a deep religious meaning for the Jewish People. Bet Ha-Mikdash, the Holy Temple erected by King Solomon, destroyed by the Assyrian Babylonians, rebuilt, destroyed a second time by the Romans in 70 c.e., can be erected only on a specific mount in the city of Jerusalem. The Jewish tradition has 613 Mitzvot, ordinances, the Pentateuch, and an overwhelming portion of this number can be observed only in the land of Israel. The relationship between the Jewish People and the State of Israel rests on this historical-religious basis, because nearly the entire biblical account took place on its soil as an answer to anti-Semitism, often active and vicious, but always latent. In the final analysis, the State of Israel is the only effective guarantee for the physical safety of the Jewish People.

John Paul II, successor to John XXIII, can strengthen the rapprochement between the Catholic Church and the Jewish People. The concrete proof, of the greatest relevance and importance today, would unquestionably be the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the State of Israel. This is the link which can bring John Paul II and the Jews more closely together.



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Comentarios

Juan Pablo II y los Judíos

Pynchus Brener

UNA tratinada anécdota cuenta que en un salón de clases el profesor encomendó a sus alumnos escribir un ensayo sobre el elefante. El alumno británico escribió acerca de "La cacería de los elefantes". El alumno norteamericano intituló su trabajo "Maneras de aumentar la eficiencia en la reproducción de los elefantes". El alumno judío coloca en la cabecera de su trabajo "Los elefantes y el problema judío". La moraleja de la anécdota es que los judíos vemos las cosas a través de un prisma muy particular y según muchos somos supersensitivos y sobreaccionamos a ciertas situaciones. No obstante lo antedicho, continúo con el título del presente ensayo.

La reciente visita del Papa Juan Pablo II fue extraordinaria desde todo punto de vista. Los que tuvimos el privilegio de charlar personalmente con él, atesoraremos el recuerdo de su amabilidad, calor humano y aguda inteligencia como una experiencia inolvidable y de gran valor. Presidí la comitiva representativa de Crisev, el Comité de Relaciones entre Iglesias y Sinagogas Establecidas en Venezuela, que tuvo un encuentro con Juan Pablo II en la Nunciatura Apostólica. En una respuesta inesperada y sumamente cordial a un saludo que le ofrecí, el Papa hizo referencia a varios puntos que a continuación deseo reiterar.

En primer término, dijo Juan Pablo II que se sentía emocionado porque un hijo del Pueblo Elegido de Israel, el pueblo que dio comienzo al diálogo de Dios con toda la humanidad, le hubiese dirigido palabras de bienvenida. En segundo término hizo mención de mi nacimiento en la Patria polaca y a la heroica nación que en ella habita. Por último reafirmó que el pronunciamiento Nostra Aetate del Concilio Vaticano II que hace referencia a la relación de la Iglesia con el judaísmo es obligante para él y para toda la Iglesia como una inspiración del Espíritu Santo y como un mensaje divino.

Nostra Aetate se ha convertido en la piedra fundamental sobre la cual se puede edificar una nueva relación entre la Iglesia Católica y el Pueblo Judío, por dos razones fundamentales: Primero, el Concilio Vaticano II reconoce la legitimidad de otras confesiones religiosas, privando de tal modo a la Iglesia de la exclusividad en la búsqueda de la verdad religiosa. Segundo, afirma que no se puede culpar a todos los judíos de la época de Jesús de su crucifixión y desde luego que no se puede culpar a los judíos pertenecientes a las generaciones posteriores a este evento, que es de profunda significación para el mundo cristiano. Es imposible sobreestimar la importancia de esta nueva postura de la Iglesia. La historia del judaísmo abunda en martirios y

sacrificios que fueron el resultado directo de una Iglesia brutal. Y esto es necesario decirlo abiertamente para poder apreciar la enorme diferencia entre las relaciones actuales y las de las otras épocas. En la ciudad de Lima, capital del Perú, una de las cuadras que dan a la Plaza de Armas, la central en la gran mayoría de las ciudades peruanas, se llama Judíos. Décadas atrás esta misma cuadra se llamaba Matajudíos. Según los historiadores, pasaban por esta cuadra aquellos "marranos" judíos que habían sido sentenciados a un auto de fe, a ser quemados vivos, por la Santa Inquisición. El año 1492 es célebre por el gran descubrimiento de Cristóbal Colón, pero al mismo tiempo es infame por la expulsión de los judíos de España por los Reyes Católicos Fernando e Isabel.

Desde luego no vamos a culpar, nosotros los judíos, al mundo cristiano de hoy por las atrocidades que fueron cometidas en siglos pasados. Si es así ¿por qué mencionarlo? Santayana solía decir que aquellos que no estudian la Historia están destinados a cometer los errores que ya fueron hechos. El saneamiento de una relación requiere una franca exposición de toda dolencia del pasado para poder emprender nuevos capítulos del encuentro entre el Cristianismo y el Judaísmo.

Pero se requiere algo adicional que es de capital importancia para el establecimiento de relaciones profundas y duraderas entre ambas grandes religiones. Cuando Juan Pablo II expresó que yo era un hijo del Pueblo Elegido que había dado comienzo al diálogo de Dios con la humanidad, utilizó, verbatim, las palabras del texto de Nostra Aetate. Fue un reconocimiento de la raíz judía del Cristianismo. Después de todo, Jesús había nacido, vivido, predicado y muerto como judío. Es imposible un entendimiento cabal del Cristianismo sobre la base de una ignorancia del Judaísmo. En oportunidades, cuando estoy presente en una misa Católica, me pregunto si el sacerdote oficiante conoce a fondo lo que realmente está haciendo. Porque hay numerosas raíces netamente judías en la misa. Esta herencia común debería de impulsar a la Iglesia a una relación muy preferencial con el mundo judío.

En ningún momento he leído en los volúmenes que han sido escritos sobre Karol Wojtyła, Juan Pablo II, que hubiese participado en algún acto antisemita. Muy al contrario, siempre fue un hombre de grandes sentimientos de compasión y de intachable moral. Pero la tierra natal de Juan Pablo II fue sitio de progroms, asesinatos y calumnias que se desataban en matanzas masivas de judíos. Muy pocos judíos, porcentualmente, sobrevivieron al terror nazi en Polonia. Los más

infames campos de concentración y el término fueron ubicados por los nazis en Polonia, porque el ambiente antisemita lo permitía. La Polonia de otrora y actual también goza de hombres y mujeres de sentimientos nobles. Entre ellos hay quienes expusieron sus propias vidas para salvar la de otros, y algunos la perdieron por su osada valentía. ¿Tiene acaso la culpa los polacos de hoy por que hicieron sus antepasados? Definitivamente no.

Un entendimiento de la naturaleza de la condición judía requiere una nunciatura diferente a la que se aplica a otros pueblos o religiones. Ser judío implica mucho más que religión. Implica pertenencia a una gran familia, descendiente de aquellos quienes estuvieron en el Monte Sinaí donde, en el desierto, escucharon y asimilaron los eternos Mandamientos. Por siglos este pueblo de comunidad religiosa sirvió de chivo expiatorio de debilidades ajenas y de punto de defensa en las manos de despreciados. El establecimiento del Estado de Israel, el Estado Judío, ha cambiado las reglas del juego por completo. La sanjudia ya no puede correr más ante la diferencia del mundo. Cuando en Egipto, un lugar remoto de África, un avión con sus pasajeros fueron secuestrados y permitió a todos abandonar la aeronave, menos a los judíos, Israel, desde una distancia de kilómetros envió sus tropas para rescatarlos.

La tierra de Israel tiene honda significación religiosa para el Pueblo Judío. Bet Hamikdash, el Templo construido por el Rey Salomón, destruido por Babilonios Asirios, nuevamente reconstruido, y por segunda vez destruido por los Romanos en el año 70, sólo puede girarse en un monte específico de la ciudad de Jerusalem. En la tradición judía pueden encontrar 613 mitzvot, ordenanzas, en el Pentateuco y un número preponderante de esta cifra tiene vigencia únicamente en la tierra de Israel. La relación entre el pueblo judío y el Estado de Israel tiene esa base histórico-religiosa porque casi la totalidad del relato bíblico se desarrolló en sus tierras, como respuesta a un antisemitismo, de frecuencia activo y virulento, pero siempre latente, el Estado de Israel es, entre otras cosas, el único y efectivo garante de la seguridad física del pueblo judío.

Juan Pablo II, como sucesor de Jesús, puede profundizar el acercamiento de la Iglesia Católica con el Judaísmo. El hecho concreto, que en la actualidad tendría la mayor relevancia e importancia, sería sin duda el establecimiento de relaciones diplomáticas formales entre el Vaticano y el Estado de Israel. Esto es el lazo que puede acercar más a Juan Pablo II y a los judíos.


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memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date September 24, 1985
to Marc H. Tanenbaum
from Jacob Kovadloff 
subject

Attached please find the translation into English of the final statement made by the Judeo-Catholic Encounter in Bogota, Colombia which took place from August 19-21st.

The original in Spanish had appeared in the CELAM Bulletin on August 28th.

It is my personal opinion that it is a very poor piece.

Regards.

JK/BJB
attachment

FROM C.E.L.A.M. Bulletin, August 28, 1985

STATEMENT BY JUDEO-CATHOLIC ENCOUNTER

BOGOTA -

At its final session, the Judeo-Catholic Encounter, held at CELAM's headquarters in Bogotá, from August 19 to 21, 1985, attended by representatives of the Latin American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of the U.S., in behalf of the Jewish community, as well as by members of the Catholic Church, (and) Representatives of the ^{Bishops} ~~Episcopal~~ Conferences of Latin America, issued the following statement:

"We have gathered in order to examine the current status of relations between Jews and Catholics, twenty years after the Second Vatican Council's Nostra Aetate statement. This document explicitly recognized our common heritage of beliefs, expressed regret over our past, emphasized that the crucifixion of Christ must neither be attributed indiscriminately to all Jews then living, nor to Jews living today, and deplored anti-Semitism.

"The friendly atmosphere, spiritual warmth, and openness prevailing at the meeting was conducive to an analysis of what we have in common and what differentiates us, thus making it possible to become better acquainted with one another.

"Topics examined from different angles were: interreligious dialogue, the family and future of the faith, how Jews and Catholics should be presented in the teachings in the respective communities, as well as social problems in Latin America.

"We discussed the situation in Latin America, characterized by dire poverty in many sectors; the external debts of the countries which stand in the way of their development and hinder the democratic process; the lack of a proper perspective in order to rectify the situation; the dissemination of ideas opposed to collective ethics by exclusively emphasizing ^{ON} wealth and individualism, which runs counter to community and family life. Therefore, the two communities, by pooling their spiritual strength, based on faith and God's Word, must take a joint initiative and center the peoples of Latin America around positive values which can be translated into action.

"We believe that education should be based on our spiritual and family values. We recognize that the two communities of belief must favor and give impetus to ethical and spiritual values conducive to action for the sake of mankind, respect, and dignity; to the ability of peoples to exercise their own free will, and to the unity of Latin America centered around our spiritual values.

"We urge that the conclusions of the Holy See's latest document be elaborated upon, so that Jews may be presented accurately in Catholic teachings. We have examined the values set forth in this document, and emphasize that the following topics need further clarification: the land, the State of Israel, and the significance of the Holocaust for Jews and Christians."

"From the meeting place of this Encounter, we should like to send forth a message of peace and brotherhood to all peoples of the Americas, within the framework of respect for the religious identity of all."

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del Boletín del CELAM
Agosto 28, 1985

SIAL No. 243

- 8 -

BALANCE DEL ENCUENTRO JUDEO-CATOLICO

BOGOTA - (SIAL) -

Al terminar el Encuentro Judeo-Católico realizado los días 19 a 21 del presente en la sede del CELAM, Bogotá, representantes de la comunidad judía a través del Congreso Judío Latinoamericano y de la Liga contra la Difamación de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, juntamente con miembros de la Iglesia Católica Representantes de las Conferencias Episcopales del Continente, emitieron el siguiente comunicado:

"Nos hemos reunido para celebrar el estado actual de las relaciones entre judíos y católicos veinte años después de la Declaración del Concilio Vaticano II. "Nostra Aetate" que explícitamente reconoció nuestro patrimonio común de fe, lamentó nuestro pasado, subrayando que la crucifixión de Cristo no puede ser atribuida ni indistintamente a todos los judíos que entonces vivían ni a los judíos de hoy y deploró el antisemitismo.

Un ambiente de gran fraternidad, calor espiritual y franco respeto favoreció la reflexión sobre lo que nos es común y sobre nuestras diferencias, para conocernos mejor.

En esta ocasión los temas tratados desde las respectivas visiones fueron: el diálogo interreligioso, la familia y el futuro de la fe, la presentación de Judíos y Católicos en la enseñanza de las respectivas comunidades y la problemática social latinoamericana.

Analizamos la situación de América Latina caracterizada por la extrema pobreza de muchos sectores; por las deudas externas de los países que imposibilitan su desarrollo y obstaculizan la democracia; la falta de perspectiva para subsanar esta situación; la difusión de conceptos que atentan contra la moral colectiva que al poner énfasis exclusivo en las riquezas y en el individualismo, atenta contra la vida comunitaria y familiar. Frente a esta situación las dos comunidades con el aporte de su fuerza espiritual, basada en la fe y en la Palabra de Dios para así hallar soluciones concretas, deben tomar una iniciativa en común para unir a los pueblos del Continente en valores positivos que inspiren su acción.

Queremos propender por una educación fundamentada en nuestros valores espirituales y familiares. Reconocemos que las dos comunidades de fe debemos favorecer e impulsar valores éticos y espirituales que animen las acciones en favor del hombre, del respeto a su dignidad; la libertad de los pueblos a su libre determinación y propender por la unidad continental alrededor de nuestros valores espirituales.

Es urgente elaborar las conclusiones del último documento de la Santa Sede para una correcta presentación de los judíos en la enseñanza católica. Reflexionamos sobre los valores de este documento y destacamos como temas a profundizar los relativos a la tierra, al Estado de Israel y el significado del Holocausto para los Judíos y Cristianos.

Desde esta sede del Encuentro queremos dar un mensaje de paz y fraternidad a todos los pueblos de las Américas, en el marco del respeto a la identidad religiosa de todos".

THE DAILY JOURNAL

Venezuela's English-language newspaper

Founded by Jules L. Waldman in 1945

Now in our 40th anniversary month

Caracas, Friday, October 4, 1985 — Vol. 40 No. 338

Jews and Catholic leaders celebrate

By Robert Seavey
Daily Journal Staff

Caracas' Catholic and Jewish leaders broke bread and drank toasts Thursday to commemorate what one official said was the most significant modern development between the Jewish people and the Catholic church.

Rabbi Pynchas Brener, president of the committee on relations between churches and synagogues in Venezuela (CRISEV), told guests at the Union Israelita of Caracas that the church's position acknowledging the innocence of Jews in relation to the death of Jesus Christ was a "historic stand and a key element in the future relations between Jews and the Catholic Church."

The event, which drew people from a variety of faiths in Venezuela, commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate* as well as the Jewish holiday the Feast of the Tabernacles.



RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER — Prominent Jews and Catholics met Thursday. From left to right are Sergio Hudelstejer, Rabbi Pynchas Brener, Cardinal Jose Ali Lebrun and Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum.

(DJ photo by Felipe Ojeda)

The Vatican document for the first time formalized the Catholic position that Jews could not be held responsible for the death of Christ. The document also acknowledges the possibility of communication with God by people who are not Christians.

Cardinal Jose Lebrun of Venezuela said he was present at the Vatican council in 1965 when the section related

to Jews was approved by the vast majority of voters, and said he takes pride in being among those approving.

Lebrun pointed out that one of the immediate benefits of the document was the development about 13 years ago of CRISEV.

Lebrun said he would soon return to Rome to discuss the results of the entire Vatican council.

EL NACIONAL

Depósito Legal pp76-0536/Lunes a viernes Bs. 2,50/Sábado y domingo Bs. 3,50/Afiliado a su tarjeta de crédito

AÑO XLIII—Caracas, Viernes 4 de Octubre de 1985—Número 15.120

El XX Aniversario de la "Nostra Aetate" Iglesias agrupadas en "Crisev" celebraron la decisión ecuménica

R.U.

Bajo una "Suca" (Cabaña conmemorativa) compartieron "fraternalmente y en amistad", el pan y el vino, las máximas jerarquías eclesiológicas y judías, el XX Aniversario de la Declaración de NOSTRA AETATE del Concilio Vaticano II, en la sede de la Unión Israelita de Caracas en San Bernardino.

Este documento de gran importancia para la unidad del mundo creyente, concebido bajo el mandato papal de Juan XXIII, insiste en el establecimiento de una relación de amistad y fraternidad con el judaísmo mundial. En él afirma que no se puede culpar a todos los judíos de la época de la muerte de Jesús, y mucho menos a los judíos de las generaciones posteriores a este acontecimiento.

Interpretan los israelitas que dicho pronunciamiento ecuménico, tácitamente reconoce la probabilidad de comunicarse con Dios fuera del cristianismo, dando por lo tanto, legitimidad a los otras grandes religiones monoteístas.

En el acto que contó además con la asistencia de dos rabinos provenientes de México y Estados Unidos y que vino siendo una reunión extraordi-

naria del Comité de Relaciones entre Iglesias y Sinagogas establecidas en Venezuela (CRISEV), se exaltó la vigencia de este pronunciamiento hecho público el 28 de octubre de 1965.

La frágil cabaña, que constituye un símbolo para los israelíes en estas festividades de los tabernáculos, cobijó al Rabino Marc Tanenbaum, alto ejecutivo del American Jewish Committee de Estados Unidos y a su representante en México el publicista, periodista y Rabino en México, Sergio Nudelstejer, y representantes de la Unión Israelita Luterana, la Evangélica Presbiteriana, la Iglesia Evangélica Libre, la Iglesia Luterana, la B'nai B'rith y otros miembros de Unión.

Por la Iglesia Católica Romana, se contó con la presencia del cardenal José Ali Lebrún Moratino, el Nuncio Apostólico Luciano Storero, el obispo auxiliar y secretario general de la CEV de Caracas, Monseñor José Vicente Henríquez, el obispo auxiliar de Caracas y vicepresidente de Crisev, Alfredo Rodríguez Figueroa, obispo auxiliar de Caracas, Manuel Delgado, el director del departamento de Comunicación Social de la CEV, Amador Merino; el director del departamento de Migración y Turismo, padre Sante Cevellin, el padre Carlos Porras, padre Vives Suria, padre William Delgado, rector del Seminario de El Hatillo y el padre Carlos Luis Sirvent, rector de "El Placer".

El rabino Pynchas Brenner

El momento histórico nos obliga a apuntar hacia lo que nos une

R.U.

Para el rabino Pynchas Brenner, presidente de la Unión Israelita de Caracas, la Declaración Nostra Aetate es un documento que después de 20 años de existencia no se convirtió en un "Documento arqueológico", sino que por el contrario, está "vivo dentro de la iglesia".

Ocasión esta que ayer fue motivo de regocijada celebración por la comunidad israelí y la Iglesia Católica Romana. Varias fueron las consideraciones que el pastor judío hizo en un día de reflexión colectiva amenizado por un almuerzo.

Hace 20 años se promulgó una nueva relación de la Iglesia Católica con el pueblo judío. El Docu-

mento Nostra Aetate claramente indica que no se puede culpar a todos los descendientes y más importante aún, que no se puede culpar a generaciones futuras por la muerte de Jesús. Este documento que vive dentro de la Iglesia marca una nueva etapa entre el pueblo judío y la Iglesia Católica "sobre todo en momentos en que tenemos que enfrentar a una serie de ideologías que están empeñadas en acabar con las religiones monoteístas".

—Creo que en estos momentos tenemos necesidad de paz y convivencia y que debemos de apuntar más hacia lo que nos une que hacia lo que nos separa...

El rabino Brenner recordó a los periodistas que este encuentro lo que hace es poner de manifiesto una amistad cercana que existe aquí en Venezuela entre la Iglesia Católica y la comunidad judía.

El cardenal José Alí Lebrún

Todos los cristianos estamos unidos a la misma cepa del pueblo judío



El cardenal José Alí Lebrún departe con el rabino Pynchas Brenner. A su diestra y en los extremos los rabinos invitados Marc Tanenbaum y Sergio Nudelstejer, de Estados Unidos y México, respectivamente. (Foto Ramón García)

Rosa Ustáriz

"El pueblo judío y la Iglesia son herederos de las promesas que el Señor le hizo al pueblo escogido", afirmó el cardenal Lebrún en el encuentro celebrado en la Unión Israelita de Caracas, para conmemorar el XX aniversario de la promulgación del documento "Nostra Aetate" del Concilio Vaticano II.

Muy satisfecho de asistir a esta celebración se confesó el también Arzobispo de Caracas, por contarse su voto entre los dos mil 221 pronunciamientos positivos que materializaron este deseo de Su Santidad Juan XXIII, "verdadero artífice de este proyecto".

Su disertación ante la nutrida concurrencia versó sobre la cercanía y la procedencia común de la vocación cristiana y judía, quienes reconocen e invocan a Abraham como su Padre.

—El mayor timbre para establecer los linderos es que Jesús es judío y la Virgen Santísima es judía, de manera que toda la tradición está presente en nuestro corazón. Creo que muchas veces nosotros los hombres, somos los que vamos envenenando al hombre y a las razas.

El Cardenal además consideró oportuno recordar que ambas religiones leen la misma biblia "y que bajo la Ley de Nosta Aetate, la relación se ha hecho y seguirá haciéndose más fructuosa lo cual permite ir creando en el mundo ese gran sentido que tenemos de la dignidad de ser hijos de Dios..."

—Las relaciones de la Iglesia Católica con el pueblo judío son esenciales. Todos los cristianos estamos unidos a la misma cepa del pueblo judío.

Refirió el cardenal Lebrún que el Papa Juan XXIII encargó al cardenal jesuita Agustín Bea, rector del Instituto Bíblico, para que propusiera el Documento, el cual se estudió y aprobó en el Concilio Vaticano II en octubre del 65. Su nombre proviene, como el de todas las encíclicas y documentos vaticanos de la utilización de las dos primeras palabras con que se inicia el mismo en el idioma latín y la traducción de Nostra Aetate al castellano es "nuestra edad".

—¿Cree usted que se han cumplido las aspiraciones de ese Documento?

—En cuanto se puede yo diría que se ha cumplido con bastante perfección, no totalmente, pero sí se ha avanzado bastante. Ya no hay aquellas actitudes del pasado que hicieron histórico el maltrato hacia los judíos. Estos inconvenientes a Dios gracias se han ido superando.

OCT 16 1985

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date : October 10th, 1985

to : Marc H. Tanenbaum

from : Sergio Nudelstejer

subject : Celebration in Venezuela of XX Anniversary of Nostra Aetate

I also had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Luis Manuel Carbonell, former Minister of Public Affairs, distinguished lawyer and at present, Chancellor of the University of Caracas. He held a friendly exchange of views on the political situation in Venezuela. After you left Venezuela, the press, radio and T.V. media gave a full coverage of the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council document "Nostra Aetate" which took place under the auspices of the Committee of Relations between Churches and Synagogues in Venezuela (CRISEV) and with the presence of Cardinal José Lebrún and the papal harbinger Monseigneur Luciano Storero, as well as high dignitaries and representatives of different religious faiths. All pointed out clearly your outstanding participation and the presence of Rabbi Pynchas Brenner. One of the most important television network in Caracas mentioned that it is the first time that such an important event between Christians and Jews took place in Caracas.

Similar commentaries were heard among many members of the Jewish Community in Caracas during the Shabbath Services held on Friday night in the Synagogue of the Union Israelita (the Ashkenazi Kehila).

Please find enclosed clippings of different newspapers from Caracas in relation with this activity.

On Friday, October 4th, I held important meetings. At 7 o'clock in the morning I had the honor of inviting for an early breakfast Dr. Luis Manuel Carbonell, Minister of Public Education in the Government of Venezuela, with whom I held a long conversation. Dr. Carbonell congratulated the American Jewish Committee and me for taking the initiative to hold in Caracas the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council document "Nostra Aetate". He was informed of this event through the press and T.V. media.

Concerning other issues, Dr. Carbonell told me that before President Lusinchi of Venezuela left for New York to speak before the U.N. he had the opportunity of meeting with him and of discussing the Human Rights situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union. President Lusinchi was sympathetic and promised to mention this issue whenever he would have the opportunity to do so.

Dr. Luis Carbonell was leaving that same day to a number of European countries, among them Spain and Bulgaria. He assured me he would speak about Soviet Jewry with high ranking officials in Bulgaria. He also promised to meet personally while in Spain with President Felipe Gonzalez with whom he will discuss and support the matter concerning the diplomatic relations between Israel and Spain.

Dr. Luis Carbonell was sorry he did not meet you and I told him that due to previous engagements you couldn't stay longer. For your information, Dr. Carbonell, before being appointed Minister of Education, for many years he was an active member in our Committee on Soviet Jewry in Venezuela and a few years ago he participated in one of the seminars held in Moscow for scientists and met there with Jewish activists and refuseniks.

I also had the chance of meeting with Dr. Efraim Shacht Aristigueta, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, distinguished professor of International Law and, at present, Counsellor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We held a friendly exchange of opinions and of points of view in relation to the issue of Zionism-Racism, during which time he assured me that the policy of the Venezuelan Government is a friendly one towards the State of Israel and that his country would never support an anti-Zionist standing in spite of the fact that Venezuela is a member of OPEC. At the same time, and in his position as President of the Venezuelan Committee on Soviet Jewry, I informed him about the recent meeting of the Presidium in Washington. Dr. Shacht told me that during October and November, they would hold a number of public activities in behalf of Soviet Jewry and that they will also meet with the President of the Venezuelan Parliament to ask him to bring up the subject of Soviet Jewry in the next Latin American Interparliamentarian meeting.

I met with the new Ambassador of Israel in Venezuela, Mr. Oscar Pri-Sar who just recently came to Caracas. I spent more than an hour discussing with him different issues and establishing a good rapport between him and the American Jewish Committee.

I informed Ambassador Pri-Sar about the activities of the AJC at a National and International level, stressing the important work carried out by our Jerusalem office. We agreed to keep constantly in touch and work together in matters of common interest. Ambassador Oscar Pri-Sar was born in Argentina, he is by profession an architect and this is his first diplomatic appointment.

The same Friday night, Rabbi Pynchas Brenner invited me to the Kabbalath Shabbath Services and to speak in the Synagogue before a large audience. Very briefly I spoke about the activities of the AJC, about the struggle of Soviet Jews in these difficult moments, as well as about the catastrophic dimension of the earthquake in Mexico.

Next day I met with Dr. Bernardo Kliksberg, director of the Regional Project of the United Nations for Latin America and the Caribbean, who, in full detail, informed me about the social and political situation of Venezuela and of some of the countries of Central America where he is the representative of the U.N.

Also, I had the chance of meeting with Mr. Ruben Farache, President of the B'nei Brith in Venezuela, a personal friend of mine, from whom I got detailed information on the activities and problems of the Jewish Community of Venezuela.

As you must surely remember, thanks to our intervention, a few years ago, a home for Cuban-Jewish immigrants was opened in Caracas to give them assistance, medical care and lodgings. Many of the Cuban-Jews who stopped over in this home, have left to different countries where they have a family, specially to the United States. The few that remained have made a way of life in Caracas, thanks to the generosity and understanding of the Venezuelan government.

I was able to meet with one of them, Mr. Gregorio Imiac who begged me that the AJC should try to do its best to help out three professionals to leave Havana. These three men, in whose behalf in the past, we also interfered, are the following: Dr. Julio Imiac, whose wife and children are in Venezuela and who asked to be allowed to leave Cuba three years ago; Dr. Salomon Mitrani, whose wife and two children already live in Caracas and who as of 5 years ago is waiting to be able to leave Cuba and Mr. Alberto Fernandez Viña, an engineer, who converted to Judaism and also whose Jewish wife and children live in Caracas. I will try to speak to the Mexican authorities to see if there is any possibility of doing something in behalf of these three men. Will keep you informed on this matter.

I consider that our visit to Caracas was very fruitful and positive. Besides the outstanding celebration of the XX Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the fact that you met with important lay leaders of the Jewish Community of Venezuela, in the special meeting organized by the CAIV (Confederation of Jewish Institutions in Venezuela), we had the chance of renewing our personal contact with distinguished Jewish and non-Jewish personalities.

Please feel free to make any comments you deem necessary.

It was my pleasure to spend some time working together with you. Receive as always my best cordial regards.

[end]

Original documents
faded and/or illegible



OCT 17 1985

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date : October 16th, 1985
to : Marc H. Tanenbaum
from : SErgio Nudelstejer
subject

As per the earthquake, certain information media (press, radio and T.V.) have started to outspread antisemitic information.

Some pointed out that a few days after the earthquake, Jewish businessmen came with trucks, loaded them and carryied out their belongings and machinery from the damaged buildings, while nearby there were still corpses laying around and survivors still under a mountain of debris.

This campaign, which continues till now, is being encouraged and used politically by some left-wing groups who at the moment are trying to organize the seamstresses, which are now jobless, not because they were fired but because the buildings housing the factories they worked in are either in bad shape or have collapsed. Some of these jobless people expect compensations for having lost their work and others expect indemnizations for the ones that died under the collapsed buildings.

The garment industry in Mexico, which suffered very serious losses, is mainly in Jewish hands, and these Jewish businessmen have lost, either totally or partially, their enterprises.

We hope that this antisemitic campaign will not get very far ahead and be stopped in time, before it becomes a general danger to the community.

Will keep you informed on this issue, meanwhile receive as always my best cordial regards.

copies: David Gordis
David Harris

OCT 17 1985

REPORT ON THE EARTHQUAKE IN MEXICO

By Sergio Nudelstejer
Director, AJC Mexican/Central American Office
October 16th, 1985

This is a follow up on my previous report dated September 23rd on the situation in Mexico after the earthquake.

GENERAL VIEW

We cannot consider the number of victims given at the moment, as the exact ones due to the fact that it is very difficult to establish exact figures due to the prevailing chaotic situation in Mexico. It is mentioned that about 100,000 people were left homeless. Five hundred buildings fell down completely and just debris remains; other 700 buildings were semi-destroyed and 7,000 buildings and houses were damaged.

Among the destroyed buildings are a number of schools, therefore in many parts of the city there are no clases going on. Each school building is being checked before allowing it to be re-opened for its normal use. At the same time, a large number of hospitals suffered severe damage, among them the National Medical Center which belongs to the National Social Security, and which at one time was said to be the most complete and modern hospital complex of Latin America and which had a large number of buildings, each for a different medical specialty. Other government hospitals suffered serious damages as well as private hospitals. This leads to a serious situation in so far providing medical assistance to the population.

Last Friday, October 11th, President Miguel de la Madrid signed a decree to expropriate 7,000 properties (buildings and houses) where it is expected that the government will build new buildings or re-build the damaged ones which will be given away or sold to those who lost their homes.

At the moment, there are still open 120 shelters where 30,000 victims of this tragedy -men, women and children- are getting social assistance while waiting to be relocated in other apartments or homes, a process which will take a long time.

It is a tragic sight to see on the walls of the different subway stations, pictures of hundreds of people unaccounted for and of which information is being asked. In the cemeteries, hundred of unidentified bodies have been thrown into a common grave as well as parts of bodies found among the debris of fallen buildings.

The Mexican government has decided to demolish all damaged buildings and plans are on the way for the remodeling of certain parts of the city that were the most affected. The rhythm of city life is slowly getting back to normal, specially in the communications area where phones, telex and telegrams after three weeks of being almost void, are working again.

The government has started a reconstruction program, making an appeal to Mexican citizens to support it financially.

IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Aside of the six Jewish victims, to date we have no confirmation of any other demise within the community.

The building of the Ashkenazi Kehila which suffered serious damage, will have to be repaired and restored. It is being figured out that this will take more than three months and the Jewish Institutions that maintained their offices there such as the Central Jewish Committee of Mexico, the Mexican Council of Jewish Women, the B'nei Brith, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, the Zionist Federation, the Hebrew-Yiddish Seminar for Teachers, the Ashkenazi Kehila, the Rabbinate and the Kosher Restaurant are meanwhile functioning in other Jewish premises.

In the garment district in downtown Mexico, many properties and factories belonging to Jewish families suffered very serious damages and some others totally collapsed. And a problem has arisen with the destruction of some of these factories: thousands of seamstresses and employees lost their jobs.

On Friday, October 11th, a delegation of Presidents of the different Jewish organizations headed by Mr. Bernardo Weitzner, President of the Jewish Central Committee, were received by the President of Mexico, Miguel De la Madrid. In the name of the whole Jewish Community they handed in to the President of Mexico a check on the amount of 500 million pesos (approximately one and a half million dollars) as a first contribution to the Reconstruction Fund.

It is important to stress that for a couple of weeks, many members of the Jewish community, specially Jewish youth helped out working as volunteers in the shelters organized by the Jewish Community as well as with the Mexican Red Cross and in the rescue teams, showing their interest and worrying about their fellow citizens.

During Yom Kippur, the Synagogues were packed full as always, contrary to what was expected, due to the fright and worry that has resulted as per the day of the earthquake. In all the Synagogues throughout the Mexican Republic, special prayers were said for those who lost their lives or disappeared during this tragedy.

The Jewish Community in Mexico is very grateful to all the Jewish Institutions and Communities all over the world, who during those tragic days, expressed through different means their solidarity with Mexico, their interest and worry towards Mexican Jewry.

To: Marc H. Tanenbaum
David Gordis
David Harris

CENTRAL AMERICA: A BACKGROUNDER

Sergio Nudelstejer, Director,
Mexican and Central American Office
International Relations Department
American Jewish Committee

For the last several years, Central America has become a very special focus of attention. With the problems of the international debt crisis, and political and social upheaval in Central America, this area is frequently in the headlines of the newspapers. The principal underlying causes of the conflict are the political and economical instability in the region.

Geographically, Central America comprises the following countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, with Nicaragua the largest (57,143 square miles) and El Salvador the smallest (8,260 square miles). Guatemala is the most populous (7.7 million) and Belize the least (160,000).

The Central American conflict has been accentuated by the social and political ideology of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The attitude of the Government of Nicaragua clearly shows its pro-Cuban and pro-Soviet stance. Neighboring countries such as Honduras and Costa Rica feel threatened by the Nicaraguan army and there have been a number of clashes, which may well lead to an explosion in the region.

The "Contadora" group, formed by representatives of Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, has tried to find a viable solution to the Central American conflict. To this end, it has met a number of times with the governments of the five countries of the area (excluding Belize), looking for a way to reach an acceptable solution. In fact, it is currently meeting and will continue to do so through the first part of November. Recently, the Contadora Group has gained the support of other Latin American countries, known as the "Lima Group," which includes Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay.

When the Sandinistas came to power by overthrowing the Somoza government in 1979, there were no more than a dozen Jewish families left in the country; virtually all the others -- some 40 families -- had departed voluntarily to rebuild their lives elsewhere. Two members of the Jewish community were placed under arrest and accused of being supporters of the Somoza regime, but were later freed. Today there remain only three Jewish couples in Nicaragua.

The one synagogue that exists in the capital city of Managua is at present in the hands of the government and a high-ranking member of the Sandinista Party has officially said that his government is ready to refurbish and restore the synagogue and give it back to the Jewish community. In the absence of a Jewish community, however, the problem is who will accept responsibility for the building.

With regard to the Sandinista Government's relations with Israel, Israel's arms sales to the former Somoza regime have left a bitter legacy in Nicaragua, one which the PLO is continuously using for its anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli purposes. During the revolution against the Somoza dictatorship, the PLO gave military support and training to the Sandinistas and today they maintain an office in Managua with a large staff, seeking to spread their influence to other countries in Latin America.

El Salvador is another country that has for many years suffered the attacks and subversion of strong guerrilla groups whose aim has been the overthrow of the different governments, including the present regime of Jose Napoleon Duarte, who was elected president through democratic elections.

Some other countries in the area are moving towards a democratic form of government. Guatemala, for example, is expected to hold free elections in November, and is seeking to change from a military regime to a freely-elected government. Elections will also soon be held in Honduras and Costa Rica, the latter, of course, being a long-standing model of democracy in Latin America.

The Jewish Communities in the Area

Most of the Central American countries have small Jewish communities. In Guatemala, there are approximately 1,500 Jews; in El Salvador, from an earlier Jewish population of 300 only 100 remain; the Jewish community of Honduras has about 150 people; Nicaragua's original 130 Jewish members now number only seven; the Jewish community of Costa Rica totals 2,500 people; and Panama has the largest Jewish population in Central America -- about 5,000.

More than twenty years ago, a Federation of Jewish Communities of Central America and Panama, known by its acronym FEDECO, was formed with the purpose of uniting the different Jewish communities, improving their programs of education and youth groups, and permitting an exchange of information on developments in the respective communities. From FEDECO's beginning, the American Jewish Committee has collaborated closely and AJC representatives have attended almost all of FEDECO's bi-annual meetings.

Imbued with a deep sense of Jewish identity and concern about their future, especially about the younger generations, some of these communities, with great effort, maintain Jewish schools, synagogues, rabbis, youth movements, Jewish sports centers and a strong feeling of kinship

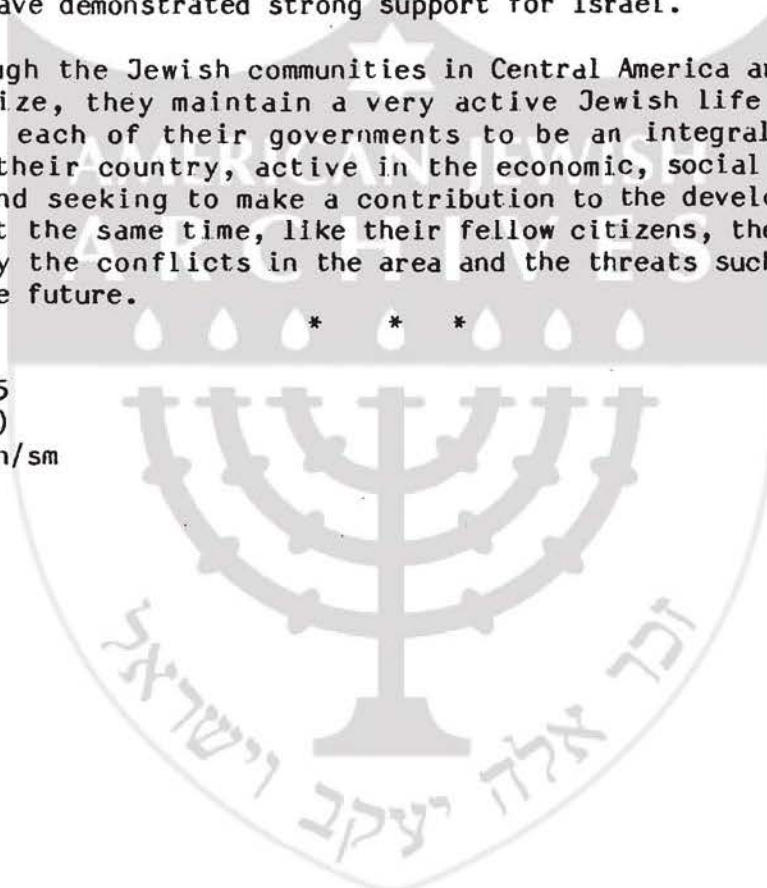
with the State of Israel, as well as very good relations with other Jewish communities in Latin America and in the United States. AJC during two decades has been in permanent contact with these individual communities, trying to assist them through programming, distribution of materials and delegation visits.

It should be noted that both Costa Rica and El Salvador have moved their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the threat of political and economical pressures from the Arab world, and, with the exception of Nicaragua, all the countries of Central America enjoy close bilateral relationships with Israel. At the UN, for example, these countries have demonstrated strong support for Israel.

Although the Jewish communities in Central America are relatively small in size, they maintain a very active Jewish life and are considered by each of their governments to be an integral part of the fabric of their country, active in the economic, social and cultural spheres, and seeking to make a contribution to the development of the region. At the same time, like their fellow citizens, they are deeply troubled by the conflicts in the area and the threats such instability pose for the future.

* * *

October 1985
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Translation of telex - February 25, 1986

For Mr. Steinberg

Re: Mission to South America

This is a first draft program, with a tentative indication of the activities in each place, leaving the timing for when the project is more defined:

Buenos Aires, May 15 to 19

- Reception at the LAJC
- Meetings with DAIA and Vaad Hakehilot
- Visits to Hebraica, Latin-American Rabbinic Seminary, and a school of the Vaad Hachinuch
- Israeli and USA Embassys
- Meetings with members of Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Relations, and Buenos Aires municipality
- Meeting with journalists
- Kabalat Shabat at the Templo Libertad
- Public meeting in the auditorium of the Kehila

Montevideo, May 19 and 20

- Reception at the Comité Central Israelita
- Press conference
- American and Israeli embassies
- Meetings with authorities of the Executive and Parliament
- Visit to a Jewish school

Sao Paulo, May 21 and 22

- Reception at the Confederação Israelita do Brasil
- Israeli and American consulates
- Visit to the Hebraica and a Jewish school
- Meetings with members of Parliament and State and municipal authorities
- Press conference

Rio de Janeiro, May 23 to 25

- Reception at the Jewish federation of the State of Rio de Janeiro
- Press conference

Meetings with State and municipal authorities

- Visit to a cultural institution
- Kabat Shabat at the Associação Religiosa Israelita

Sunday May 25, return to the USA

LATIN AMERICA

BRIEFING SESSIONS at Department of State
Friday, May 16, 2:00 P.M.

South America

The complexity and variety of the problems that characterize the South America of the '70s and '80s make it very difficult to understand the components of their socio-political structures as well as to predict ~~for~~ the future. With 6,881,000 square miles and an estimated population of 271,000,000, it encompasses 11 republics. They are: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Columbia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

There are organized Jewish communities in all 11 countries -- with a total population of 417,900, out of 464,700 Jews in all of Latin America. The largest and oldest Jewish community is in Argentina (283,000) followed by Brazil with 100,000 Jews [American Jewish Year Book, 1985].

Despite the fact that there is a mixture of ethnic groups living in all these countries, including Indians, Blacks and Mestizos, the majority of the immigrants come from European countries. Iberian culture has dominated this subcontinent. Also, 95% of the total population belong to the Roman Catholic church.

Contemporary Jewish immigration to South America started at the end of the last century and was reinforced during World War I and World War II. Jewish immigrants come from a wide range of European and Arab countries. As a distinct minority, Jews have often been seen as an estranged group. Wherever nationalistic and xenophobic trends appeared, Jews have been affected by discrimination and been used as scapegoats. This pattern does not exist in each country (e.g. Brazil), but is most pronounced in Argentina.

In the past few years, with the return of full democratic systems to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Peru and Bolivia, the fact that Jewish politicians were appointed to high positions in the governments underscores the general integration of Jews into the mainstream of society.

Problems which affect the South American countries in general manifest themselves on Jews who, in the main, are part of the middle and lower classes.

Despite the richness of these countries in natural resources, the economic and financial situations are all critical. The external debts are asphyxiating, the rates of inflation are endemic, and there are extreme levels of unemployment which are without precedence. Black markets are threatening all economic programs. The national budgets for education and public health programs have been reduced to a bare minimum.

Protectionism by the traditional buyers of raw materials produced severe balance of payments.

These economic factors are much more threatening to the stability of the older democracies of Venezuela and Columbia as well as the younger ones such as Argentina and Uruguay than the danger of new dictatorships or military coups.

Terrorist groups are still active in several countries (in fact, they consist of small, sophisticated armies). Such is the case of the Maoist Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru and the M-19 in Colombia. Violence, crime, robbery, drug abuse, kidnapping for ransom, etc. are all on the rise in a number of countries.

For both political pragmatism and commercial needs, the relations between the South American countries and the Arab countries have increased enormously in the past. Brazil, for example, a leading arms producer, is selling weapons to most of the Arab countries.

The PLO offices and Arab representatives in Brazil and Peru carry on anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda. On the other hand, relations with Israel are developing normally though the votes in international forums against Israel are abundant.

The Jewish communities are staunchly Zionist and regularly lobby in favor of Israel. Jewish relations with the Catholic church since Vatican Council II have improved significantly, as exemplified by the Catholic-Jewish conference, sponsored by AJC and the Conferencia Nacional de Obispos del Brasil, in San Paolo in November 1985. Among other significant results, the conference passed a resolution denouncing the infamous 1975 "Zionism is racism" formulation.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Several plans were submitted to the Administration advising ways to solve the financial problems of Latin American countries, including the Kissinger Commission and the Inter-American Dialogue headed by Sol M. Linowitz and Galo Plaza. A third came from the Administration itself, known as the Baker Plan which proposed aid in the amount of \$20 billion for the 11 countries most in debt. How did

the countries involved react to this initiative and is any progress being made?

2. Is there any possibility of having the Organization of American States act as mediator to resolve the problems of the region in order to avoid diverse groups from trying to evade the specific role of the highest Latin American forum?
3. What are the expectations for change in the two remaining military dictatorships, Chile and Paraguay?
4. What is the Reagan Administration doing to cooperate with the governments of Columbia and Peru to combat terrorist groups which affect them?
5. Is there any prospect of renewing dialogue/negotiations with Castro's Cuba?

Central America

For the last several years, Central America has been a very special focus of attention. With the problems of the international debt crisis, and political and social upheaval in Central America, this area is frequently in the headlines of the newspapers. The principal underlying causes of the conflict are the political and economic instability in the region.

Geographically, Central America comprises the following countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, with Nicaragua the largest (57,143 square miles) and El Salvador the smallest (8,260 square miles). Guatemala is the most populous (7.7 million) and Belize the least (160,000).

The Central American conflict has been accentuated by the social and political ideology of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The attitude of the Government of Nicaragua is decidedly pro-Cuban and pro-Soviet. Neighboring countries such as Honduras and Costa Rica feel threatened by the Nicaraguan army and there have been a number of clashes, which may well lead to an explosion in the region.

The "Contadora" group, formed by representatives of Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, has tried to find a viable solution to the Central American conflict. To this end, it has met a number of times with the governments of the five countries of the area (excluding Belize). Recently, the Contadora Group has gained the support of other Latin American countries, known as the "Lima Group," which includes Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay.

When the Sandinistas came to power by overthrowing the Somoza government in 1979, there were no more than a dozen Jewish families left in the country; virtually all the others -- some 40 families -- had departed voluntarily to build lives elsewhere. Two members of the

Jewish community were placed under arrest and accused of being supporters of the Somoza regime, but were later freed. Today only three Jewish couples remain in Nicaragua.

With regard to the Sandinista Government's relations with Israel, Israel's arms sales to the former Somoza regime have left a bitter legacy in Nicaragua, one which the PLO is continuously using for its anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli purposes. During the revolution against the Somoza dictatorship, the PLO gave military support and training to the Sandinistas and today they maintain an office in Managua with a large staff, seeking to spread their influence to other countries in Latin America.

El Salvador is another country that has for many years suffered the attacks and subversion of strong guerrilla groups whose aim has been the overthrow of the different governments, including the present regime of Jose Napoleon Duarte, who was elected president through democratic elections.

Some other countries in the area have moved towards a democratic form of government. Guatemala, for example, held free elections in November. Elections were also held in Honduras and Costa Rica, the latter, of course, being a long-standing model of democracy in Latin America.

Most of the Central American countries have small Jewish communities. In Guatemala, there are approximately 1,500 Jews; in El Salvador, from an earlier Jewish population of 300 only 100 remain; the Jewish community of Honduras has about 150 people; Nicaragua's original 130 Jewish members now number only seven; the Jewish community of Costa Rica totals 2,500 people; and Panama has the largest Jewish population in Central America -- about 5,000.

Mexico

One of the key countries in Latin America, Mexico is facing particular challenges that will have substantial implications for the Western Hemisphere. With an external debt of \$98 billion, a loss of revenue from falling oil prices, a burgeoning population, and the devastation wreaked by last year's earthquake, the country suffers from profound economic uncertainty. At the U.S. doorstep, the future stability and well-being of Mexico is a profound importance to Americans. At the same time, Mexico, as a member of the four-nation Contadora Group, is actively involved in the search for a negotiated settlement to the troubled Central American region, an area which, beginning with Guatemala, extends from its southern border.

* * * * *

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What realistic prospects exist for a negotiated regional settlement to the problems arising from the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua? How does the U.S. view the utility of the Contadora process? Is there a possibility of U.S. military action against Nicaragua?
2. What is the future of democratic rule in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras? How serious are the domestic and external threats to the stability of the current freely-elected regimes?
3. What role is the U.S. playing in addressing the current Mexican economic crisis? What more should the U.S. be doing?
4. To what degree should the issue of Nicaraguan anti-Semitism be a factor in the U.S. policy debate on appropriate responses to the Sandinista regime?

JK/BJB
9211-A. M.
4/22/86-gn



BRIEFING SESSION AT STATE DEPARTMENT

LATIN AMERICA

FRIDAY, MAY 16, 1986

- * U.S. concern about events taking place in Latin America and about the future of democracy in this vital region has grown considerably in the last few years as Latin America has undergone rapid political change and taken important steps towards freely-elected governments. Political and economic challenges face the continent and will have implications not just for the countries involved but for the U.S. and the West generally.
- * AJC's involvement in Latin American programs started 45 years ago. We understood then and continue to strongly believe that the well-being of the Latin American Jewish communities is deeply linked with political pluralism and democracy.
- * For this session, we are extremely fortunate to have with us the Honorable Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and former Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. He will brief us on this subject which concerns us as Americans and Jews. What is most important is the fact that Mr. Abrams knows the AJC very well and its commitment to democracy and human rights.

- * A few months ago, when he addressed the Americas Society in New York, Mr. Abrams said: "It is clear that we who live in this hemisphere face a series of problems affecting directly or indirectly, all of us: economic disarray and large debt burdens; the increasingly powerful and lethal alliance of terrorists and narcotics smugglers; the vestiges of right-wing authoritarianism; and communist subversion supported by the Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua."
- * Many other key topics are also implicit in these remarks, such as: the prospects for peace in Central America; bilateral relations with our closest neighbor Mexico, and in general, methods for working together with Latin American countries and seek to avoid the tension that can exist between sovereignty and interdependence.
- * We look forward to Mr. Abrams' insight into these timely, complex and significant issues, and shall entertain questions after he concludes his initial remarks.

5/8/86
JK/BJB

Latin America

Richard Alschuler

Naomi Banks

Roger Bernstein

Judith Brody

William Ehrlich

Reuben Ginsberg

Eugene Goodman

William Gralnick

Estelle B. Hochberg

Jacob D. & Betty S. Hornstein

Dorothy Kellner

Shrub Kempner

Rachel Koch

Milton & Dede Kurtz

Michael Lapin

Colman Levin

Irving B. Levine

Esther Levy

Naomi Matusow

David & Cathy Minberg

Sergio & Tosyd Nudelstejer

Julian Reichman

Edward Ring

Ruth Robinson



Latin America (Cont'd)

Martin H. Rosenberg

Miriam L. Rosenberg

Gittel Shapiro

Manny Smith

Steven L. Swig

Mary Swig

Murray Tye

Elise Waterman

Ruth Weinflash

Jane Wishner

Sidney Zilber



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5/12/86

NEWS FROM THE Committee



The American Jewish
Committee

Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street
New York, New York 10022
212 751-4000

Morton Yarmon
Director of Public Relations

The AJC protects the rights and freedoms of Jews the world over; combats bigotry and promotes human rights for all people; defends pluralism and enhances the creative vitality of the Jewish people; and contributes to the formulation of American public policy from a combined Jewish and American perspective. Founded in 1906, it is the pioneer human-relations agency in the U.S.

81ST ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING
MAY 14-17, 1987
GRAND HYATT HOTEL
109 EAST 42 STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10017
(212) 883-1234

CONTACT: Press- Joyce Kaplan
Janice Hyman

Broadcasting - Haina Just

PRESS ROOMS: BROADHURST & BELASCO ROOMS
(CONFERENCE LEVEL - 2 LEVELS ABOVE LOBBY)

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

FOR RELEASE AFTER 8 A.M.
THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1987

NEW YORK, May 14. . . A group of experts on the Jewish communities in Central and South America today expressed guarded optimism regarding their Jewish continuity.

Speaking at the 81st Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Jacobo Kovadloff, AJC Director for South American Affairs and Spanish Media, said that "the Jewish communities in Latin America are integrated into the general communities. In general, with the exception of Nicaragua, the relations with Israel are cordial and normal."

Nevertheless, Mr. Kovadloff added, despite the atmosphere of freedom and pluralism that characterizes the rebirth of democracies in most Latin American countries, several problems cause anxiety and fear.

"Terrorist and narcotics groups," he said, "are growing in Peru, Colombia and Central America. The painful economic and financial conditions in all these countries are producing unemployment, turmoil and violence."

Moreover, Mr. Kovadloff said, the tremendous external debt and the currency crisis have not found any solutions. As a result, Latin American countries looking for new markets have established strong links with Arab countries and the Soviet Union.

"The PLO has increased its presence with anti-Semitic propaganda and support to extremist movements," Mr. Kovadloff stated, while noting that Mikhail Gorbachev will visit Latin America this year.

Sergio Nudelstejer, Director of the AJC Office for Mexico and Central America, credited the government of President Miguel de la Madrid with seeking to preserve and strengthen the democratic institutions of the country.

/more/

Theodore Ellenoff, President; Leo Nevas, Chair, Board of Governors; Robert S. Jacobs, Chair, National Executive Council; Edward E. Elson, Chair, Board of Trustees.

David M. Gordis, Executive Vice-President

Washington Office, 2027 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington DC 20036 • Europe hq.: 4 rue de la Bienfaisance, 75008 Paris, France • Israel hq.: 9 Ethiopia St., Jerusalem 95149, Israel

South America hq. (temporary office): 165 E. 56 St., New York, NY 10022-2746 • Mexico-Central America hq.: Av. Ejercito Nacional 533/302-303, Mexico 5, D.F.

CSAE 1707

"One of the problems that Mexico views with special worry," Mr. Nudelstejer said, "is the situation of almost four million illegal workers at present in the United States. If they do not qualify for the amnesty of the Simpson-Rodino Law, they might be returned to Mexico, and this will make even more difficult the unemployment situation of the country."

Regarding Central America, Mr. Nudelstejer mentioned the importance of Panama and Guatemala, which, he said, now have democratic governments and fully integrated Jewish communities with active Jewish institutions. Much the same, he added, can be said about the Jewish communities of Colombia and Venezuela.

Rabbi Clifford M. Kulwin, Latin America Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, told the audience that while occasional anti-Semitism in certain parts of Latin America should not be minimized, "in the long run, internal weaknesses will be much more decisive to the community's health."

Among those weaknesses, he said were: the small size and the youth of the community; the arrival attitudes of new immigrants; the status of a minority religious/ethnic community in a monolithic society; and the geographic isolation from the rest of the Jewish world.

"The support of institutions that meld Jewish life with civil life are the key to a healthy Jewish future in South America," Rabbi Kulwin added. "Indeed, much of what is thought of as Jewish problems in South America are really problems facing all South Americans."

To overcome such challenges, he said, is the work in which the Jewish community must engage, and he was confident it would do so.

Bernardo Weitzner, former president of Comité Central-Israelita of Mexico, was equally positive in his assessment of the situation of the Jewish community there:

"There is absolute and total religious liberty in the country. The synagogues and other places of worship are fully recognized by the Mexican government. Jewish-Christian relations are friendly and Cardinal Ernest Corripio Ahumada, Archbishop of Mexico, has visited Israel twice."

In fact, he added, the relations between Mexico and Israel have always been cordial, and there is a Mexican Embassy in Tel Aviv and an Israeli Embassy in Mexico City.

"Commercial interchanges between both countries have been favorable to Mexico," he said. "Both countries have signed commercial, scientific, cultural and technological agreements."

He added that Israel maintains a variety of instruction and study centers in agriculture to which Mexican experts and technicians come every year.

Inside Mexico, the Jewish community, numbering 50,000, is an important factor in the development and progress of the country, Mr. Weitzner said.

The session was chaired by Michael A. Bander, of Miami, who is expected to assume the chairmanship of the Committee's Miami Chapter shortly. The Latin American session was sponsored by the AJC's International Relations Department, whose chairman is Miles Jaffe of Detroit, and whose director is Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum.

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.

AJRZ, HP

6842-(AM)/EL

87-960-94

For your information

From the desk of: 8-2-88

JACOB KOVADLOFF

Director, South American Affairs

To: Marc Tanenbaum



TRANSLATION FROM SPANISH ORIGINAL

Buenos Aires, May 26, 1988

To:

Spanish Media Director

Human Relations Institute A.J.C.

Mr. Jacobo Kovadloff

165 East 56 Street

New York NY 10022

Dear Sir,

it gives us great pleasure to get in touch with you in connection with the Fifth International Congress of Researchers on Latin American Judaism to be held in Buenos Aires August 14-19, 1988.

The Congress is cosponsored by the Buenos Aires Jewish Committee (AMIA) and the Latin American Jewish Studies Association (LAJSA). It is being held under the academic auspices also of the University of Buenos Aires (Resolution No. 2142/88).

For the first time Buenos Aires will be the venue of this important academic event, which will make possible the meeting of outstanding world scholars dedicated to the study of Latin American Judaism from various perspectives: historical, demographic, pedagogical, anthropological, sociological, economic, among others.

At this meeting research works presented by participants in the Congress will be expounded, discussed and analyzed. It is also planned to explore several themes through panels of specialists on Latin American subjects or with reference to the Jewish theme.

In recognition of your constant support and cooperation with research projects in general and your unfailing encouragement and contribution to the Marc Turkow Center for Documentation and Information on Argentine Judaism in particular, as shown repeatedly through your work in the Argentine Jewish community, and in your post on the American Jewish Committee, it gives us great pleasure to invite you to participate, and to prepare a paper for the panel: "The present status and outlook of research on Latin American Judaism."

The coordinator and commentator for this panel will be Mr. Bernardo Blejmar, who will be in contact with you shortly to agree on general outlines, content, objectives and method of operation.

The following have been invited to take part in this panel:

Prof. Haim Avni.

Dr. Daniel Elazar

Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin

Dr. Oscar Shuberoff

Mrs. Ana Weinstein.

Trusting you will find the above satisfactory, we enclose some written information, and we are ready to answer any questions you may have.

With our cordial greetings,

Ana Weinstein
Director of the Marc Turkow Center

Bernardo Blejmar
Institutional Adviser

Dr. Alberto Cukier
General Secretary

Dr. Hugo Osrower
President.

Marc Turkow Center for Documentation and Information on
Argentine Judaism

AMIA

Ayacucho 632, 3rd floor

1026 Buenos Aires

V
**CONGRESO
INTERNACIONAL
DE INVESTIGADORES
SOBRE JUDAISMO
LATINOAMERICANO**

LAJSA
LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH
STUDIES ASSOCIATION

AMIA
COMUNIDAD JUDIA
DE BUENOS AIRES

UNIVERSIDAD DE BUENOS AIRES

AUSPICIO ACADEMICO

Buenos Aires, 14 al 19 de agosto de 1988

JUN 10 1988

Buenos Aires, 26 de Mayo de 1988

Al Director para Medios en Español
Instituto de Relaciones Humanas
A.J.C.
Sr. Jacobo Kovadloff
165 E. 56 St.
N.Y. 10022
U.S.A.

De nuestra mayor consideración:

Nos es muy grato comunicarnos con Ud. en relación al V Congreso Internacional de Investigadores sobre Judaísmo Latinoamericano, a desarrollarse en Buenos Aires, del 14 al 19 de Agosto de 1988.

El mismo está copatrocinado por la Comunidad Judía de Buenos Aires (AMIA) y el Latin American Jewish Studies Association (LAJSA). Asimismo cuenta con el auspicio académico de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (Resolución N° 2142/88).

Por primera vez, Buenos Aires será escenario de este importante acontecimiento académico, que posibilitará el encuentro de destacados investigadores del mundo, dedicados al estudio del judaísmo latinoamericano desde distintas perspectivas: histórica, demográfica, pedagógica, antropológica, sociológica, económica entre otras.

En esta oportunidad, se expondrán, discutirán y analizarán trabajos de investigación presentados por los congresistas. Se ha previsto también el desarrollo de algunos temas a través de la conformación de paneles con especialistas en temática latinoamericana o en lo concerniente a la temática judía.

En reconocimiento a vuestro permanente apoyo y colaboración a proyectos de investigación en general y al continuo estímulo y aporte al "Centro de Documentación e Información sobre Judaísmo Argentino Marc Turkow", en particular, manifiesto reiteradamente a través de su trabajo en la comunidad judía argentina y desde su cargo en el Comité Judío Americano, es que tenemos sumo agrado de invitar a Ud. a participar, preparando una ponencia para el panel: "Estado actual y perspectivas de la investigación sobre judaísmo latinoamericano".

V
**CONGRESO
INTERNACIONAL
DE INVESTIGADORES
SOBRE JUDAISMO
LATINOAMERICANO**

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AUSPICIO ACADEMICO

Buenos Aires, 14 al 19 de agosto de 1988

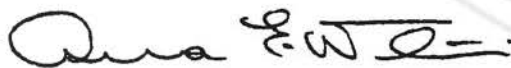
El coordinador-comentarista de este Panel será el
Licenciado Bernardo Blejmar, quién se contactará con Ud. a la brevedad para acordar lineamientos generales, contenidos, objetivos y dinámica de funcionamiento.

Han sido invitados a participar en este Panel:

Prof. Haim Avni
Dr. Daniel Elazar
Dra. Judith Laikin Elkin
Dr. Oscar Shuberoff
Lic. Ana Weinstein

A la espera de su conformidad con lo expuesto y
adjuntándole materiales informativos, quedamos a su disposición para cualquier
consulta.

Saludamos a Ud. muy cordialmente



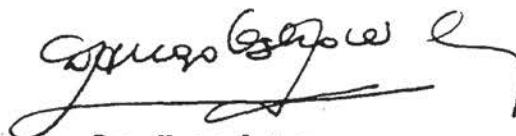
Lic. Ana Weinstein
Directora Centro Marc Turkow



Lic. Bernardo Blejmar
Asesor Institucional



Dr. Alberto Cukier
Secretario General



Dr. Hugo Ostrower
Presidente

Translation of a Letter from AMIA (Jewish Community of Buenos Aires), addressed to Jacobo Kovadloff, dated Buenos Aires, October 1, 1987

=====

Dear Friend:

First of all, we should like to tell you that it was most gratifying for us to have you in our midst, together with the other members of the American Jewish Committee. Encounters of this kind enable us to strengthen the ties between communities separated by distance, but not by their outlook.

The urgency of your return to New York made it impossible for you to find out more and to comment on current plans and organization of the International Research Congress on Latin American Jewry, organized jointly with LAJSA.

Needless to say, your opinion and the commitment of your organization cannot be absent from this important academic and communal event. That is why we are wondering whether you would consider the possibility of coming to Buenos Aires in the near future, so that the support to be given by the AJC, through you, can materialize.

As was the case with the Marc Turkow Center, we are certain that this time both our institutions will be united in support of a common goal.

With every good wish for a happy New Year, and hoping to see you in Buenos Aires before long,

Sincerely,

Dr. Alberto Cukier
Secretary General

Dr. Hugo Ostrower
President



COMUNIDAD JUDIA DE BUENOS AIRES
קהילה פון בוענאס איירעס - קהילה ד'נואנוס אירס

Buenos Aires, 1° de octubre de 1987

OCT 28 1987

Sr.
Jacobo Kovadloff
Director para medios en español
Instituto de Relaciones Humanas
American Jewish Committee
165, East Street, N.Y. 10022
U.S.A.

De nuestra consideración:


Deseamos antes que nada hacerle llegar nuestras expresiones de satisfacción por haberlo podido recibir en nuestra casa, junto con los demás miembros del American Jewish Committee. Encuentros como estos nos permiten fortificar los vínculos entre comunidades alejadas por la distancia, pero no por los sentimientos.

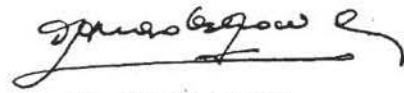
La urgencia de su retorno a New York, impidió que Ud. pudiera conocer más de cerca y dar su opinión sobre los preparativos y la organización del Congreso Internacional de Investigadores sobre Judaísmo Latinoamericano, que en conjunto con LAJSA estamos organizando.

Entendemos que su opinión y el compromiso de su institución no pueden estar ausentes de este importante acontecimiento académico y comunitario. Es por eso que le hacemos llegar nuestro pedido de considerar la posibilidad de venir a Buenos Aires en fecha próxima para poder concretar el apoyo que el A.J.C., a través suyo, brindará al Congreso. Tal como sucede con el Centro Marc Turkow, estamos seguros que también esta vez podrán nuestras instituciones unir sus esfuerzos en apoyo de un objetivo común.

Le hacemos llegar nuestros mejores augurios de un Feliz Año Nuevo y nuestro deseo de verlo en Buenos Aires próximamente.

Cordialmente,


Dr. Alberto Cukier
Secretario General


Dr. Hugo Ostrower
Presidente

Joseph E. Harari

APARTADO 3398
PANAMA 4, REP. DE PANAMA

MEMORANDUM Nº 4-88

Subject: Aspects of the Situation of Panama

Date: June 15, 1988

1. Result of the conversations

Before of traveling to Moscow, Secretary of State George Schultz announced that the conversations between the Reagan's representative and General Noriega had brokendown, since they did not achieve an agreement. Noriega also spoke before the Legislative Chamber, on May 25, during an extraordinary meeting broadcasted on national TV. Noriega said that the failure of the conversations was owing to Panama "does not accept American impositions". He said that Panama persists in enduring and supporting its economy as best as possible.

We recognize that Noriega is doing the best to avoid incidents that justify military operations on the side of the United States, whose troops remain in the Canal area. Because of the control of the Panamanian Government, there were no disturbs in the streets for the last two months.

Many people are thinking in the elections of 1989, as a possibility of change in the political situation. Several political parties are preparing and mentioning candidates for the main positions. Noriega could be a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic. Likewise, his brother-in-law, Raul Siero, is mentioned as the future Chief Commander of the Panamanian Defense Forces.

2. Panamanian Military Council is formed

The creation of a special Military Council within the Panama Defense Forces has strengthened the regime of General Manuel Antonio Noriega and his State Staff. Both Panamanian Government and opposition sources make responsible this Council for the breakdown of negotiations between Noriega and the White House.

The Military Council is a 20-member body formed by majors and captains, which is officially charged with advising Noriega, since he has been mistrustful of his military Staff, whose members were been involved in the coup attempt of March 16. According to an analyst, Noriega prefers to deal and formulate planning with his young captains and liutenants, all of which means that his State Staff is now ornamental. "The Panamanian Defense Forces is run through the Council", said this source.

According to an American source: General Noriega has tripled his personal security force to about 75 members, bringing Cubans and other non-Panamanians to make up the bulk of the unit. The strengthening of the security force has coincided with a "growing influence of Cubans around headquarters" of the Panama Defense Forces, said the Washington Post of Sunday, May 29, 1988.

Since the United States stopped the military cooperation with the Defense forces, Noriega has turned increasingly to Cuba, asking for advise and at least 16 tons of Soviet-desingned weapons. He also has organized the "Nationalist Brigade", a group of 1,800 individuals from popular sectors. This Brigade has appeared in training and TV interviews; they do not deny the Marxist influence among them.

3. An economy without precedents

After the reopened of banks, commerce, industry and all productive activities are trying to come back to normality. There is a drastic falldown of prices in non-eatable products and a gradually increasing of sales.

The checks issued by the Government have continued circulating as internal currency in the country (see our Memorandum Nº 3, of May, 1988). Thanks to this measure, governmental employees and pensioners have survived, thanks to the cooperation of small merchants, principally, stores and markets whose proprietaries are members of the Jewish Community.

In this way, against all the rules of modern economics, the country has survived without banks almost during three months, without great earnings of dollars and avoiding the change of currency.

4. Economical sanctions involved the Americans themselves

The economical sanctions are involving the Americans who live or have to deal any way with Panama, and this situation is worsening. An U.S. official said about the above: "We have set the machinery in motion, and there's no way to pull ourselves out".

Since the sanctions were imposed two months ago, 50 pages of detailed regulations on complying with them are being sent to American companies in Panama, to make taxes and other payments to an U.S. account set up on behalf of deposed President Eric Arturo Delvalle, whom Washington recognizes as Panama's legitimate head of the State. However, many American companies are openly avoiding the sanctions, which they oppose.

On the other hand, about 60,000 Americans are living in Panamá, of which there are 20,000 connected to the U.S. military forces. The South Command frequently report the feasibility of moving for the American inhabitants, according to the local situation (P.M.L.). It is known that the South Command is concerned about the future safety of nearly 2,000 military families who live out of the basis in and around Panama city. They want to move them in the basis, but there is not enough housing to accommodate them.

Ironically, Noriega himself is favored in a business of exporting millions to the United States, of which he is the largest owner; however, he has not been touched by the sanctions. Spokesmen of the State Department stated that a direct intervention in Noriega's businesses could be possible, among the future measures to be adopted for pressuring Noriega's ouster.

In truth, the economical sanctions have not affected Noriega; instead of this, they have strengthened him on the power, while they continue affecting the Panamanians. Because of this, a gradual increase of anti-American feelings could be expected in the Panamanian people.

With the breakdown of the conversations and the Panamanian opposition showing a few signals of life, the United States appears confuse in taking the next step of this saga.

5. Reopening of schools

In June 6, the period of classes began in all the country. This could bring new incidents, since the students of the public schools could provoke disturbs, principally, because of the lack of resources in these schools.

As well as other schools of the private sector, the two Hebrew schools of the Jewish community initiated enthusiastically the period of classes. Despite of the economical situation, the parents feel a great satisfaction for the opening of schools.

6. Worsening of poverty

The situation of popular sectors is worsening because of the increase of unemployment and reduction of salaries, which is affecting thousands of laborers, principally in the construction industry. The Government is trying to impose new protectionist labor rules, both although this measure could gain symphatizers for the Government, also could bring many firms to bankruptcy, increasing the unemployment.

The Director of CARITAS Arquidiocesana (a Catholic Church organization) stated that they are actually giving foods to 32,000 families from very poor sectors; hoewver, they are fear of can not supporting these families for a long time, and, which is worst, the number of poors is growing.

7. A P.L.O. activity

In May 18, the Popular Revolutionary Youth, a branch of the Party of the People (Communist party), called to a meeting in the House of the Journalist, in order to "remembering May 15 as a new anniversary of foundation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.)".

By using the phone, they achieved an attendance of approximately a hundred people, the majority of which were governmental employees. We obtained a copy of a Communiqué distributed by the organizers among the participants, from which we concluded the following:

- 1) The words used in the Communiqué are typical for the Communist-Nationalist group of Panama (Party of the People).
- 2) We can observe slogans internationally used by the FEARAB (Federation of Arab Organizations of Latin America).
- 3) Although the ignorance of the problem is evident, the Communiqué asks to the Panamanian Government "to establish diplomatic relations with the P.L.O."

The Embassy of Israel in Panama was acquainted of this activity.

8. The Jewish Community

The B'nai B'rith of Panama recently organized an interesting activity for the community, with the participation of speakers from the three synagogues. This meeting has been of a great importance for the rejoining of the three groups, which have been dissociated because of internal community quarrels, four years ago.

The majority of the Jewish families who had traveled to abroad are coming back, principally because of the reopening of the schools.

Joseph E. Harari

APARTADO 3398
PANAMA 4, REP. DE PANAMA

MEMORANDUM 2-88

Subject: An Impasse in the Situation of Panama

Date: April 20, 1988

Six weeks after the partial closing of banks, under the United States' economical pressure against Panama, there is an impasse, while General Manuel Antonio Noriega remains as the "strong man" and the economy of the country is more and more deteriorated. In order to give you my impartial opinion of the circumstances we are living in Panama, I have tried to evaluate and condense the principal aspects of this situation.

1. Noriega's character and thoughts

In a recent interview broadcasted by RPC TV Canal 4, General Noriega described himself as "an educated man, Budist, very patient and without fear of the United States". He said that he will continue in the power even if he would have to bring Panama in a Socialist country with "a free economy like the Hong Kong's, where a variety of currency exists".

In fact, several spokesmen of the Government have stated that a national currency could be adopted (US dollar is the free currency in Panama, even if it is named "Balboa"). However, this might be crucial for the economy, which has been basically developed on trading and services/

2. A weak Opposition

The Civil Cruzade appears to be the main opposition group. Basically, their main purpose is to achieve General Noriega's ouster and the disengagement of politics of the Panamanian Defense Forces, in order to bring the country to a more democratic system. However, since this movement originated in the private enterprise, it has not gained sympathizers among the masses nor among important professional groups of middle class which could go against the Government. Consequently, the actions executed by the Civil Cruzade have not been as effective as an opposition movement.

On the other hand, lacking of a leader and purposes, the members of the Cruzade have promoted antagonism among several social-economical groups.

3. Economical pressures against Panama

At the end of February, three senators of the United States declared that it was time to impose mild economic sanctions against Panama, in order to obtain the ouster of General Noriega, and to permit the country "to solve by pacific means their political crisis". Nevertheless, they announced that the measures could require a great sacrifice from the "innocent people of Panama".

As it is known, at the beginning of February, two federal great juries of Florida indicted Noriega of a large-scale drug trafficking and racketeering charges and, as a result of this, Reagan's administration has insistently asked to him resign the power.

On March 1st., President Reagan accepted the report submitted by the State Department, ratifying the embargo against Panama. Shortly after, the United States retained the remittance of American dollars required to support the cash flow of the National Bank of Panama, which operates as a guarantee for the private banks in the country. Consequently, in March 4, the banks closed its public services, jeopardizing the economic activities by the lack of currency and the interruption of importing, exporting and services, including the payment of local debts.

Coincidentally, the closing of banks occurred at the same time as the lockout approved by the National Council of the Private Enterprise, in support of the Civil Cruzade. Approximately 90% of businesses joined this action for fifteen days; however, it was unsuccessful and did not change the situation, as it was expected by Americans and Panamanian opposition.

Among the principal causes of the failure was the fact that the employees of the Government went to work uninterruptedly; public services of transportation also worked and any intention of public meeting was controlled by the Government, who also decreed the suspension of payments to public services such as energy, telephone and water; as well as evictions for delay of rental payments. Because of these measures, people have had more available money to buy foods in opened markets and groceries stores.

4. Consequences of the economic measures

The economic measures imposed by the United States against Panama have been a "boomerang", which is viciously striking at the initiators of this affaire. It is not secret that the American senators were influenced by Panamanians who did not realized that the idea get out from their hands. Consequently, these measures did not cause the ouster of General Noriega, instead, it cause the following effects on the Panamanians as a whole:

- a) Approximately, a 40% of industries are closing because of a lack of sales, cash and raw materials.
- b) A great number of businesses have had to fire employees because of liquidity; others, have reduced the weekly time of work and salaries, and other more have become to bankruptcy.
- c) The unemployment is rapidly growing, principally in the construction industry, which is stopped totally. There is hunger in the popular sectors for this reason.
- d) Both local and imported, necessities such as milk powder and detergents have become scarced. Government spokesmen suggested that food manufacturers and little industries could continue operating with reduced budgets to supply national needs.
- e) The fled of educated people may be observed, principally, young professionals and investors are leaving the country.

5. American troops in Panama

In April 4, 1,300 American soldiers arrived in Panama land, in order "to defend strategic points of the Canal against a possible sabotage", as a spokesman of the Defense Department stated. Noriega amplify his anti-American campaign, while members of the opposition believed that, undoubtedly, the American troops were ready to overthrow the dictator.

However, the troops remain quartered in the Canal area and there was not incidents among Panamanians and Americans, soldiers or citizens. Sporadic incidents have placed among the American troops, that the Panamanian Government stated as "provocations" from the part of the Americans.

6. Human Rights

Noriega's regime has characterized as "moderate" in repressive actions. The astute dictator has commanded a permanent vigilance and control of violence, which has gradually diminished in the country. Paramilitary groups execute the "disagreeable actions", avoiding to involve the Defense Forces. Consequently, despite of the political situation, the Government has not been touched by criticism referred to Human Rights violations.

The most severe violation is the lack of freedom of speech, since the opposition mass media has been closed and the Government has the absolute control of newspapers, radio and TV.

7. The Jewish Community

For first time, during the lockout approved by the private enterprise all the businessmen of the Central Avenue joined the action at the beginning of March. They were estimated by two reasons:

- 1) The majority of the businessmen wanted the ending of the situation as soon as possible, in order to return the country to normality. They thought that by supporting the lockout, the situation would finish soon.
- 2) Some of the businessmen participated for economic reasons. They lost less closing their stores than remaining it opened.

Ranks officials of the Defense Forces met with the Board of Directors of the Sociedad Israelita de Beneficencia Shevet Ahim and also visited some Jewish merchants, pressing to open their businesses, but the Jews were completely agree about joining the lockout.

However, the Civil Cruzade also threatened the Jews: if they succeeded in obtaining the power, they would take reprisals against Jewish merchants who did not bear out the Cruzade. This statement was communicated to the Jewish Community by Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, Director of the A.D.L. for Latin America, who visited Panama in the early days of March. His testimony produced a great worry in the United States.

Throughout the period of time that the crisis has endured, representative members of the three synagogues have been meeting with the Committee of Human

Relations of B'nai B'rith of Panama, recognized by the A.D.L., to the purpose of planning the Community actions and to exchange opinions.

Traditional festivities (bar mitzvas, engagements, weddings, etc.) have been celebrated without ostentation in the Community Hall of Shevet Ahim, as well as in the two other synagogues.

Archbishop of Panama, Mons. Marcos G. McGrath, met the A.D.L. Committee seeking for financial support to the work of CARITAS. The Jewish Community contributed more than twenty thousand dollars of donation, to alleviate hunger in the Panamanian population.

A great number of Jewish families traveled to abroad during the Passover Festivity; a number of wives and children remained abroad for several weeks, because of fearing of riots, but since the calm returned to the country, the majority is coming back.

As well as in the general community, among Jews, news run by word of mouth, because of the lack of credibility in the mass media. Discomfort prevail in the population, sated of rumors, hoping that a solution could be possible. However, we feel that our country never will come to be the same.

8. Reopening of banks

By means of an agreement with the Commission of National Banking, the majority of banks operating in the country have opened to public, under severe limitations, since they can only receive donations. The economic situation remains uncertain, even the clear efforts of all the sectors to bring the country to a relative normality.



The American Jewish
Committee

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Mexico City, June 24th, 1988

Rabbi Robert L. Kravitz
Area Director
AJC Phoenix Chapter
2021 N. 7th Street
Phoenix, Ariz. 85006
U. S. A.

Dear Rabbi Kravitz:

Got your letter dated June 3rd in which you let me know of the interest of a group of members of the Phoenix Chapter to visit Mexico for 3 or 4 days next fall, to promote a better understanding between Hispanics and Jews.

I will welcome such a delegation, and for your information, members of different AJC Chapters have visited us in Mexico and with some of them we have even traveled to several Central American countries.

As a matter of procedure, I would suggest that you write to Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director of the International Relations Department to have an agreement with him on the possibility of such a visit.


On my part, I will welcome the group of the Phoenix Chapter and will prepare for them an appropriate agenda so that they get to know the country, meet with leaders of the Jewish Community in Mexico and have the possibility of meeting with some high ranking government officials.

Hoping to hear from you very soon, receive my best personal regards.

SERGIO NUDELSTEJER
Director of AJC for
Mexico and Central America

CC: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
Ira Silverman

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date July 7, 1988
to Marc Tanenbaum
from Jacobo Kovadloff 
subject Activities in Washington D.C. June 23 and June 25th.

I would like to report to you about the meetings I attended in Washington D.C. on the above mentioned dates.

Meeting with the Ambassador of Spain, Mr. Julian Santamaria

We discussed two main subjects:

A.J.C.'s participation in the "Sefarad '92 Program" and having him as a keynote speaker in the series of forums which our people in Washington are carrying out with foreign ambassadors.

I promised to give him a more detailed program as soon as we have finalized it.

He has also accepted to speak at the AJC's Ambassadors' Forum in D.C. in September because of schedule difficulties in July.

In the evening I attended a reception and dinner given by the Embassy of Spain, celebrating King Juan Carlos' birthday, which gave me the opportunity to meet with important personalities of the diplomatic corps and U.S. officials.

Meetings at the Argentine Embassy

When Minister Ricardez attended our Annual Meeting here in New York he asked me to visit him to exchange opinions and ideas about the Middle East problems and the attitudes and views of the American Jewish community. We had a very long conversation and I gave him several of the AJC materials on the subject.

At the suggestion of Sidney Liskofsky, I met with the chargé d'affaires, Minister Nanclares, with whom I discussed the forthcoming meeting in Geneva on the subject of "The Right to Leave and Return to your Country of Origin". He promised me that he would report to the Argentine delegation at the U.N. in Geneva directly without the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Buenos Aires. I have already sent him the materials.

State Department - Cuban Desk

I met with the head of the Cuban Desk, Mr. Kenneth Skong about the initiative of our Detroit Chapter to organize a trip to visit the Cuban Jewish community. He saw it as very difficult because of the current regulations for Americans wishing to visit Cuba. There can be some exceptions (reunification of families, visiting relatives, researching and studies of scholars, etc.). All authorizations for traveling to the island are given by the Treasury Dept., Office of Foreign Assets. We are trying to find a solution to this problem.

Meetings with Mr. Ran Kuriel (Israeli Embassy)

It was an useful meeting in which we exchanged information on the reaction from the Spanish press in U.S. to the current events in Israel and also the relationship of the Latin American countries with Israel.

Meeting with Professor Sosnowski (University of Maryland)

Following your idea to have in '92, conferences or symposiums at American universities to commemorate the Fifth Centennial of the Discovery of America with special emphasis on Jews in Spain, Jewish contributions to the Spanish culture and of course the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the Inquisition; I met with Professor Sosnowski. His idea would be to have, next October or November, a consultation for the planning for '92, which will be sponsored by his university with the participation of specialists from U.S., Israel and Latin America. He suggests that the LAJSA (Latin American Jewish Studies Association) should also be a co-sponsor. I agree with his ideas and we should work soon to finalize them.

JK/iof

cc: Ira Silverman
David Harris



ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

by Rabbi Roberto D. Graetz

In a vast continent with a total population of somewhat over 300.000.000 people approximately 450.000 Jews have made their home. It is almost an insignificant number to have an impact in the social fabric of the region, by and large they are a part of the middle class (if such a nomenclature can be applied in a situation like Brazil's, where 10% of the people accumulate 90% of the wealth), participating in the liberal professions, middle management levels and business.

Social, economic and political struggles have been the trademarks of the Latin American scene for a long time. Religion, organized religion - to be more specific - has played conflicting roles in this arena. In Argentina, the state religion has been characterized by its pre-conciliar mood, highly conservative, identified with the entrenched economic elite and the military establishment. In Brazil, on the other hand, where there is no official state religion, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has been in the forefront of the struggles for social change, identified with the main principles of Liberation Theology and often in conflict with the established political order. The continent as a whole is nominally Roman Catholic, yet one can see how through the last twenty years the "mainline churches" have declined and the fundamentalist expressions of religion have grown. This is particularly true of Brazil and Chile, where in spite of the strong presence of a "social active" Catholic Church there has been a decline in the number of firm adherents.

As far as the Jewish communities are concerned one of the discernible historical patterns has been that the more integration into the general community the lesser role for the religious expression of Judaism, and the more isolation from the community at large the more religion in its more traditional version. The vast majority of the Jewish population in Latin America integrated into the local culture pays lip service to religion, while the small isolated Orthodox enclaves are perceived as the saviours of Judaism.

Within this pattern there are two unrelated undercurrents of response to which I would like to address myself: On the positive side I would mention the growth of the non-orthodox manifestations of religion in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, opening up the possibility for significant numbers of Jews to gain a dimension of religious identity even as they integrate into the reality of the continent and I will come back to this a bit later.

On the negative

side I would have to mention the strong sense which many Jews expouse of Judaism as a form of "civil religion" and not a "faith religion", this with a particular bent in segments of the brazilian jewish population. The characteristic of this phenomenon is a sense of being Jewish as a social phenomenon having more to do with socio-economic stratification than with a specific religious expression with its corolary of a particular ethic and a system of obligations. And if this phenomenon is known in the rest of the Jewish world, in Brazil it is carried further, with the support of the world view of the general society. It goes beyond the modern and the secular. The need for faith is there, the mystical search does not die out but it begins to take place outside the synagogue and the Jewish context. Within an organized community which pays lip service to traditional Judaism it is possible to lead a socially oriented Jewish life while having meaningful religious experiences outside of it, particularly within the strong afro-brazilian spiritualist cults, without feeling any internal conflict or reproof from the community as such. This phenomenon is different from the North American experience with the "cults". There we had a dropping out of Judaism, while in Brazil one can at the same time participate in the life of the organized Jewish community (schools, clubs, synagogue, Israel, etc.) yet express one's faith needs outside of Judaism. In the strong mystical context of the general society the Orthodox expression appears sealed off to the uninitiated while the non-orthodox expression appears too rational for the mystical searcher. It is at least curious that in a community where until today descendants from Marrano jews look to come back into the fold, well integrated jews in the life of the community secretly worship in non-jewish places.

There is no internal discipline to correct this, which I see as a major malfunction in Jewish life. It seems that the general attitude is "better that he pays magbit, sends his children to the Jewish Day Schools, etc. even though he may pray in a different church". Yet there is no doubt that the long term trend is one of weakening the Jewish links since there is no Tora without the Elohei Israel, and there is no commitment to Israel on the long run that does not spring from the wealth of our religious tradition.

The organized community, not wanting to bother with the religious phenomenon has tacitly decided to leave this area to synagogue and Rabbis. With the exception of the Orthodox Jewish day schools, the rest of the educational system, within which significant numbers of youngsters spend a good deal of their growing years, have opted for no religion (no ideology) in their objectives or curriculum. The traditional segment of the community prefers a "no-religion" attitude to a "non-orthodox" attitude and exerts strong pressure to keep things this way.

What is true of the schools is true of the general community. The existing conflicts between the differing expressions of Jewish religion are resolved by not being religious at all. The end result of all this is that "being Jewish" is not related to creed or conduct but to affiliation. The absurdity of it all is seen in the ham and cheese sandwiches sold in the canteens of some of the Jewish schools or the programming of events during Shabat by clubs and federations. It is no surprise then when on the secular new year in Rio de Janeiro we find large numbers of Jews dressed in white making their offerings on the beach to Iemanjá, the sea goddess of the Afro-Brazilian cult.

One would almost be forced to state that the role of organized religion in the Latin American Jewish experience is very small, almost nil... but this would only reflect on what has been or is, not what it could be. And here I would return to the positive undercurrent to which I made brief mention before. The emergence of non-orthodox manifestations of religion in Latin America during the past 25 years have had a salutary effect on the total Jewish community. The most obvious contribution has been the creation of synagogues which have drawn substantial numbers of congregants mostly

previously unaffiliated. This is the frontier experience - Emmanu-El in Buenos Aires, the Associação Religiosa Israelita (A.R.I.) in Rio de Janeiro, our presence in Porto Alegre and the new explosion of Shalom in São Paulo not only mark the presence of our movement in the most important centers of Jewish life in Latin America but serve as catalysts for the expansion of the movement. Requests flow into our congregation for help in leading, organizing and serving the smaller communities. It is midbar out there and we are called not to conquer but to toil that land, nobody else is looking in that direction. Also worthy of mention is the establishment of a Rabbinical Seminary in Argentina which serves today as a major center from which rabbis irradiate through the continent bringing with their presence a view of what can be, role models who speak the language of the continent, who are attuned to the drama of Latin America and hold a strong commitment to Jewish continuity and the enhancement of Jewish education. The less obvious contribution has been that the emergence of non-orthodox Judaism has forced the orthodox community to retool itself for the challenge. Without making concessions in the area of Halacha or ideology it discovered the need to learn to speak the language, to rejuvenate, to come out of the area of ritual and enter the terrain of education, pulpit and contact with the "amcha". They have been prodded into action! and that is good, for I hold the conviction that there is room for all the manifestations of Jewish religiosity, and that a community becomes enriched when its members can choose out of conviction and not out of convenience. Unfortunately, as in the rest of the Jewish world, not all of us share this conviction that pluralism in religious life can be good. The result has been not alliances, but bitter conflict, not dialogue but acrimonious debate. As these trends continue I fear that we all become weakened. When the authenticity of one is questioned by the other, those who are not within the circles will choose neither. For the uncommitted to become committed to some pattern of religious life we will have to project an image of "elu ve-el..." or subject ourselves to the curse of "a plague on both your houses". (A few years ago I was invited by the largest Jewish club in the city to share the podium with one of my orthodox colleagues in Rio de Janeiro for an evening

of dialogue. 1000 people were in attendance. It was a golden opportunity. Wasted. It soon became clear that we were having no dialogue at all. I, my credentials, my smicha, my synagogue, were all disqualified by my colleague. A keen eye could quickly discover that the large auditorium was now divided in three groups: One rooting for me, another for my colleague, like in a roman circus, with heckling and applause alternating, and a third group, by far the more numerous one enjoying the spectacle, outside the circle, having fun with these two gladiators wounding each other).

Federations, philanthropies, clubs and other institutions have grown and taken an active role in Jewish life, yet none of these have been able to stem the tide of assimilation and intermarriage which have weakened the fabric of Jewish life in Latin America in the last generation. They have grown out of a sense that something had to be done, but thought and developed by well intentioned people with little or no Jewish education. Schools and synagogues are, as far as I can see, the basis for enriching the quality of Jewish life. Schools with an ideological commitment, and synagogues capable of making demands on its members will be able to send out to the general society Jews firmly rooted in their tradition, conscious of a particular "weltanschauung", committed to the continuity of Jewish life, intimately identified with the State of Israel and the notion of one people, am echad.

Low birth rates and assimilation could well lead in the near future to the absence of the needed critical mass which makes Jewish continuity possible. Synagogue and school, religious commitment and education must become the trench from where the fight for meaningful survival of Jewish life in Latin America will be fought.