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April 1st, 1975

David Geller
Jacob Kovadloff



URUGUAY - Brief Political Comment - 2nd Seder in Montevideo
Attended by Christian Churchmen

In former memorandums and telephone communications I reported to you that the "Comité Central Israelita del Uruguay" -the main central body of the Jewish community in that country- had recently applied to our Office for counsel and, particularly, for participation in its activities. It certainly was an unprecedented attitude which the Uruguayan Jewish organization adopted out of its wish for a change, as a reaction in the face of the critical situation our neighbouring community is living through.

Uruguay -one of the smallest countries in South America- happens to be now in a peculiar political situation. Although still governed by a presidential regime, the real power is exerted by the Army which fully controls the most critical areas, including foreign affairs and the press. The parliament has been closed down and all the political parties have been abolished. About 600.000 Uruguayans have left the country because of the mounting economical crisis. This is a fairly alarming proportion if considering that the whole population of Uruguay numbers around 3.000.000.

The tense atmosphere prevailing under such circumstances has been exploited by the Arab countries, eager to profit from the Uruguayan sympathy and its vote, through their already classical "investment threats" policy. But neither Arab money has come in nor the oil supply has been eased (Uruguay is depending on import for its whole oil needs). On the other hand, the Arab markets have not yet absorbed the meat, cereals and leather the European Common Market has stopped buying in Uruguay.

Therefore, the Uruguayan vote -although not entirely unfavorable to Israel- has not met the honorable democratic tradition of this country, which at the proper time appeared as a most fervent and unconditional supporter for the establishment of the Jewish State. It can be said that the Uruguayan public opinion as a whole is still backing everything concerning the Jews--from the Israel subject to the cause of Soviet Jewry.

However, the Uruguayan Jewish leaders have seen with increasing uneasiness the growth of anti-Semitic expressions and activities. Two months ago they met with President Bordaberry in connection with these worries. They were then reassured that the Uruguayan government would not tolerate any discrimination. The President also acknowledged the great contribution made by the Jewish community in all walks

of Uruguayan life. It was also taken for granted that Uruguay would not sacrifice its links with Israel, but at the same time this would not imply any inhibition to promote links with the Arab countries as well, and to support them in their "just claims", namely, Uruguayan support for the Resolution 242 of the U.N. and the Palestines. By common consent, this meeting was not made public and remained at a strictly confidential level.

It is worthwhile pointing out that this meeting was in its contents very similar to the meetings of local Jewish leaders with the presidents of Brazil and Argentina.

Within this picture, the Catholic hierarchy in Uruguay has undergone its own crisis. (In this country the Church is set apart from the State -contrarily to what happens in Argentina- but is wholly supported by the great majority of the population). Its most conspicuous leaders have unhesitatingly joined in the criticism of the present governmental system and claimed for measures leading to social changes and a more fair distribution of wealth. They favoured everything that might imply justice and social advancement. All this brought about several incidents and clashes between members of the Catholic hierarchy and governmental officials, although a spirit of conciliation by which both parties agreed to live together in peace, finally prevailed. However, quite a number of priests are among the Uruguayans who emigrated. Religious processions have been banned from the streets of Montevideo by the same prohibition of the government which has ruled public meetings to take place only under roof. The head of the Uruguayan Catholic hierarchy, Msgr. Carlos Partelli, is always remembered for his corageous homilies and sermons, among them one he delivered time ago in behalf of the agrarian reform. Many a time this outstanding prelate publicly supported Jewish causes. Among others, he condemned the attacks of Munich and Ma'alot, and even made a call for the freedom of Soviet Jews. He also regretted in a statement the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur. war.

Notwithstanding that, the interreligious activities with the Jewish community -a successful and positive program in the 60's- had been totally forsaken. When a few months ago I met with Mr. Leonel Verissimo, a journalist and writer closely connected with the Uruguayan Catholic hierarchy, as well as an active member of the "Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana Uruguaya" (Christian-Jewish Brotherhood in Uruguay), he hinted that the reticence to go on with the activities in this field had been shown mostly by the Jewish side. He also told me of his repeatedly frustrated desire to attend a Passover Seder and get acquainted with its liturgy, a wish in which he was joined by many other Catholic churchmen and laymen. Thus, in my meetings with leaders of the Comité Central to discuss several programs in which I will cooperate with them (such as seminars for community leaders, publications, etc.), I put special emphasis on the organization of this Seder. It was by no means easy, because of the opposition of various leaders of the Comité. But thanks to the efforts of the President, Mr. Samuel Hendel, and the Executive Director, Mr. Moisés Gerber, who finally could overcome all the difficulties with intense fervor, the Second Seder was celebrated

on Thursday night, March 27th, at the headquarters of the "Nueva Comunidad Israelita"—a religious congregation where German-speaking Jews get together.

By the way, it is worthwhile pointing out that Mr. Hendel appears as a deserving Jewish leader, a lively, intelligent and creative man of independent decisions. During his present term in office he had to resign twice in view of arbitrary political situations which are so common with Jewish organizational affairs in South America. He has held top positions in the Uruguayan Administration as an economist. Besides, he is a strongly committed Jew. Of no less value is the personality of Mr. Gerber, a lawyer and judge in the Montevidean judiciary.

It should not come as a surprise that in face of its controversial political life, the Comité had abstained from attending the last Plenary Assembly of the WJC.

Now, going back to the Seder, it was impossible to secure the participation of a rabbi to conduct the ceremony. Rabbi Fritz Winter, a Conservative, declined taking part in it. It was thought that this attitude was due to the criticism aroused by his former participation in activities of the "Confraternidad", as well as to the fact that he is the only rabbi in that country who takes care of conversion cases. Rabbi Mehemias Berman, of the Orthodox Ashkenazic community, had accepted in principle the invitation. But he refused shortly afterwards to come, as a result of a decision of the kehillah he belongs to. It leaked out that during the discussion on the subject it was argued that the celebration of a Seder with Christian churchmen "was of no help in fighting against the problem of mixed marriages." At last, Rabbi Shalom Edery, of the Sephardic community, also refused to conduct the Seder once he learned what his colleagues had decided. In turn he offered to greet the guests at the end of the Seder, being this proposal obviously rejected by the President of the Comité.

But the Seder was finally celebrated and its main goal successfully achieved. The reading of the Haggaddah and the explanations of the meaning of Passover were performed on a deserving level by two Jewish laymen—one ashkenazi and one Sephardi. Among the sixty guests who attended the Seder, there were more than twenty Christian personalities headed by Msgr. Partelli and his coadjutor Msgr. Andrés Rubio. This was not only an unprecedented accomplishment, but it also opened the door for a full-range action in the future. And the Comité Central is ready to undertake it.

The cooperation of the AJC was officially acknowledged. Under separate cover I send you a copy of a letter in this connection, as well as a list of the guests and their standing. I presented each of them with a copy of the Fourth World Haggaddah, a Hebrew-Spanish version issued in London by the WUJS. The Seder ceremony was held in accordance with the Spanish edition of Rabbi Morris Silverman's Haggaddah.

Best regards.

c.c. Morris Fine

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

MEMORANDUM

APR 12 1984

From : Egon Friedler
 To : Jacobo Kovadloff
 Re : Structure of the Jewish Community of Uruguay

The two recognized leading bodies of Uruguayan Jewry are the Jewish Central Committee and the Zionist Organization. The basis of the Jewish Central Committee are still the Communities : the Ashkenazi, the Sefaradi, the NCI (from Jews coming from Germany and Central Europe) and the small community of Hungarian Jews. But in the last years the J.C.C has been enlarged with organizations such as Hebraica-Macabi, representatives of the Jewish School boards (Escuela Integral Hebreo-Uruguay, Amal and Yavne) Benei Berith, CEFIDU (Confederation of Jewish Women organizations) and Zionist Organization and Youth Zionist Federation.

Though the more or less official figure for Uruguayan Jewry is 40.000, some people believe the real figure is near to 30.000. One of the reasons of pride of Uruguayan Jewry is its high record of Aliah. Between 10 and 12.000 Uruguayan Jews have emigrated to Israel in the 36 years of existence of the state. During the past year, 1983, there were 700 Uruguayan olim, comparatively a very high percentage, and the Aliah Department of the Jewish Agency believes it won't go down this year.

All the communities have aged and their numbers shrank in a considerable way. The Ashkenazi Community (Comunidad Israelita del Uruguay) has 4.030 active members, which means more or less 13 to 15.000 souls.

One of the serious problems of the communities is that the younger generations do not become members. The average age in the Ashkenazi community is 57. Other communities did not make this calculation but perhaps their figures are even worse than these. In the last two years, each year 216 members of the Community died. The orthodox rabbi of the Ashkenazi community, Nehemia Berman, performs more or less 40 marriages a year and he extends ~~certificates~~ some 40 or 50 certificates for young couples to marry in Israel annually. This means that many new families start their lives in Israel. Also the percentage of divorces has risen. Only in the Ashkenazi community there are some 20 divorces a year, mostly from the most affluent groups of the community.

The N.C.I (German Jewish Community) has 900 members mostly very old people. But some younger people are running the community and it supports a youth organization (in its own large youth house) with young people who have mostly no connections with any German or Central-European origin. Lately the Community has decided to ask the retirement of its conservative rabbi Dr. Fritz Winter, and hired a new Argentinian rabbi, Daniel Kripper, a ^{graduate} former pupil of the Rabbinical Seminar in Buenos Aires.

The Sefaradi Community has 1873 members and it keeps more or less its figures (some 60 or so people die annually but the Community receives more or less a similar figure of new members). It has the most beautiful synagogue in town, and a relatively large group of middle age activists.

Most pathetic is the situation of the Hungarian Community. It has

120 members most of them, very old people. Youth has gone away and those who stay go to the Minian on Friday nights or play cards on Sunday. This small group is ~~at~~ dissieng away slowly. Also the Jewish communities in the Interior of the country are dissapearing slowly. There are no more jewish communities in places like Rocha and Salto for a long time, though still some Jewish families remain. In Paysandu, once a thriving and important Jewish Community of some 100 families, has no more than 30 or 40. Most of ghem left for Montevideo, and some others went to Israel.

What about assimilation? Abel Bronstein, the manager of the Ashkenazi Kehilah made an investigation. From September 1982 to August 1983 he perused the "Official Paper" looking for Jewish names in marriages. He found during this period 158 couples in which at least one of its members is Jewish. In 79 couples both names were Jewish, which means roughly 50 %. Of course, this is not an exact way of finding out the real figure (some times those with Jewish names are not Jews, and there are some Jews whose names do not look as such). But still it is the best available way of finding out what is happening.

There have been talks to unify the comunitiēs but still conservative and old elements are against it. Of course there is a lot of coloboration also concerning the purchase of land to enlarge the cemetery of La Paz, but there are many reasons which prevent an unification, both administrative and politic (fear of losing identity and power of the smaller communities, the will to avoid trouble with ~~changes~~ changes unwanted by many, in the Ashkenazi community).

The structure of the Cōmmunity, in spite of everything, still

works. The Jewish Central Committee is & widely respected both outside and within the community, though it can not always handle its chronic financial problems. Here and there it is challenged by some other organization (once there were quarrels with the Zionist Organization and lately there were some hard feelings with Benei Berith) but as a matter of fact the political role of the J.C.C. is unchallenged.

Jewish Life in Montevideo still has a certain vitality. The Center of Jewish Studies is doing well. Zionist parties, however small, still engage new people to represent them. When a guest like former President Navon comes to Montevideo he is received by a full Solis Theatre (the largest theatre in town). ~~But~~ Jewish Schools still have at least 25 % of the Jewish children in their ranks.

But people are worried about the future. The Jewish feeling of the younger generations is weakening and some of the best go to Israel.... or become assimilated.

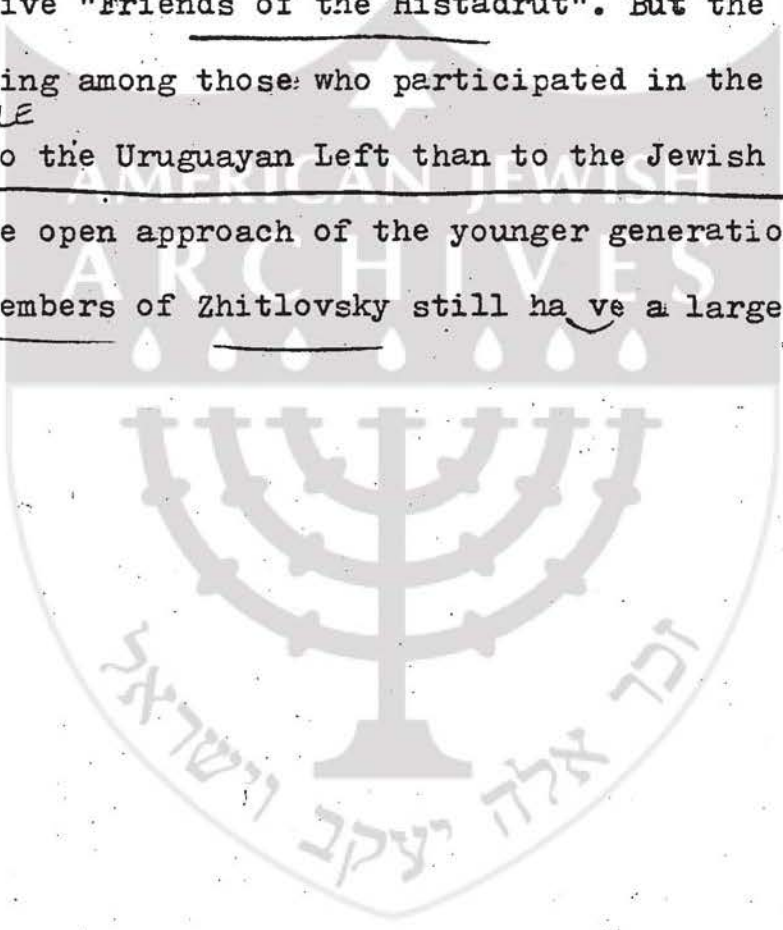
One of the ~~big~~ things Uruguayan Jewry can boast is ~~that~~ that here to be a Zionist does not mean always to collect money to send another Jew to Israel. Last month, the President of the Community, ^{Mr.} Samuel Haendel, a leading economist in the country, made Aliyah and in the last two years leading people in the J.C.C., in the Zionist Organization, and in Zionist parties went to live in Israel. But of course not always people to replace them, can be found.

This report would not be complete without mentioning the "Jaim Zhitlovsky" club, the center of the pro-leftist and pro-soviet Jews, which started intensively its activities in 1983 after almost 10

OF CLOSURE

~~years~~ after having been closed by the authorities of the country. It has some 700 members and it started an active social and cultural life. Before Rosh Hashanah they made an attempt to get closer to the organized ~~and~~ Jewish Community.

There were some more or less secret conversations between representatives of the Zhitlovsky club and representatives of the J.C.C. and of the ~~and~~ small but active "Friends of the Histadrut". But the conversations went nowhere. The feeling among those who participated in the meetings is that ^{ZHITLOVSKY PEOPLE} they are closer to the Uruguayan Left than to the Jewish Community and that in spite of a more open approach of the younger generations, the old "Stalinist" hard-core members of Zhitlovsky still have a large influence.



Montevideo.4.6.84

MEMORANDUM

From : Egon Friedler
To : Jacobo Kovadloff - AJC - NEW YORK
On : Relations between Uruguay and Israel

JUN 08 1984

Few days ago the brand new commander in chief of the Army, Gral. Hugo Medina went to Fray Bentos to take leave of his regiment and there he said in a speech that "SAUDICO has deceived the hopes of the population of Fray Bentos". What the general said was nothing new.

For months the hopes not only from Fray Bentos but also of the whole population were deceived by the Italian-Saudi Arab company. The ~~\$\$\$~~ purchase of the local frigorific by "Arab money" seemed to bring prosperity a year and half ago to the small and picturesque city at the shores of the river Uruguay. But finally the big deal became a monkey business. People who sold cattle to Saudico had to wait for many months to receive by installment their devaluated money. The situation of Saudico is legally very entangled but the only thing that is clear for everybody is that once again Uruguay learned in the hard way that the "real" Arab money is not eager to come to this country.

Even the meat sales to Egypt have become less and less important, since egyptians were able to buy ~~\$\$\$~~ cheaper meat elsewhere. Still, Israel is one of the best costumers for Uruguayan meat. Israel buys meat for U\$S 25 million in the frame of a commercial agreement, but Uruguay only

~~page~~

buys from Israel for U\$S 3 million. There are several endeavours to reduce the trade deficit but still it does not seem easy.

In the political sphere, relations between both countries are excellent. Israeli Ambassador Netanel Matalon thinks that relations could hardly be better. In the United Nations, ~~Israel~~ Uruguay's voting performance on Israeli-related issues is one of the best in the continent.

One of the hard questions now is what will happen after the election on November 25. It is clear that if Blancos win they will try at least to pay lip service to Third World rethoric and they will "cool up" a little their relationship with Israel. There are pessimists who think that even if the "Colorados" win, they won't be as friendly as the actual military Government since they will try some change and they will be ready to appease their leftist ^{wife} group. May be that pessimists may be wrong not only about the "Colorados" but also about the "Blancos". Friendship with Israel is one of the few real traditions in Uruguayan foreign policy. Besides that, all attempts to woo Arabs since 1973-74 did no prove to be very succesful.

In the cultural field there is an agreement between both countries, and the Israeli-Uruguayan Cultural Institute that had been an almost ghostly institution for many years has become a very active one under the presidency of Dr. Julio Jaureguy, a lawyer and a political journalist for the daily "El País". An exhibition on Israel, past and present in the classical place for exhibitions in Montevideo attracted many people and so did the cultural events connected with it.

Next week, Dr. Natan Trainin, the world wide known specialist in

cancer will visit Uruguay. Later this year, Israel will send to Uruguay an expert in Teaching of Mathematics who will help professors in Secondary Schools to find better methods. Since this one of the most serious problems in Secondary Education in Uruguay, if the Israeli expert succeeds to change something it will be widely acknowledged.

Also in the field of Mathematics there is another joint project. It is a competence ^{170"} between high-schools students sponsored by the Uruguayan Ministry of Education and Culture and the Weitzmann Institute in Rechovot. The winner will be invited for a course of a month in Israel.

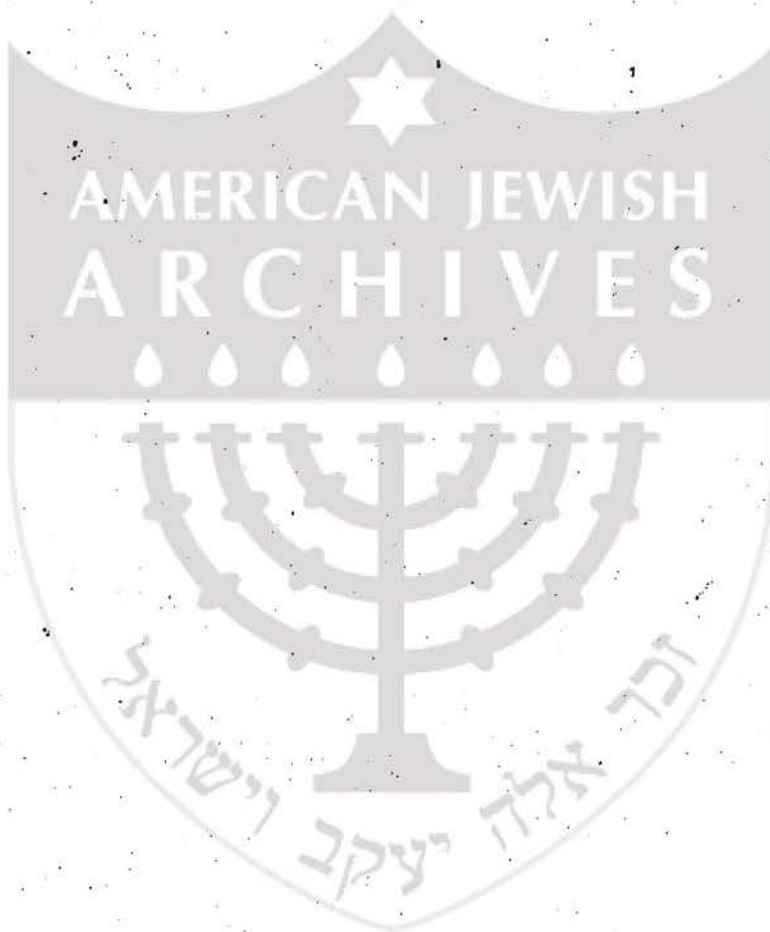
Israeli visitors to Uruguay included former president ~~Itzhak~~ Itzhak Navon and Minister of Communications Mordechai Tzipori this year. Among other personalities invited lately to Israel was Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera, leader of the "Herrerista" Group within the "National" (Blanco) Party.

The well known ~~actress~~ actress Estela Castro, who has already been in Israel in 1982 is going again this year. This time she will take a new show which has been very successful "Vidaamorymuerte" (Life, love and death in one word) with two folk singers Cristina Martínez and Washington Carrasco.

Indeed, the very active and very overestimated Uruguayan Jewish Community plays a role in Israeli-Uruguayan relations. But indeed, the appearance of the left and specially of the Communists in the political arena will mean a serious political challenge. It must not be forgotten, that in Uruguay you may find ~~an~~ an "endangered species" you won't be able to find in many places : a Moscow-oriented Jewish organization, the so-called -"Chaim Zhitlovsky" Club. They too are very active and do the best to prove they

are good Jews since they consistently criticize Israel's Government who is giving a lot of trouble to the people of Israel. Of course, they have never any complaints about Soviet Russia.

Nevertheless, Democracy ~~will~~ ^{may} prove healthful for relations between both countries. At any rate, changes of Government both in Uruguay and in Israel may bring new and interesting challenges, for both countries.



Revised August 11, 1983

The Jewish community in Uruguay numbers 40,000

Uruguay's situation between Brazil in the north and Argentina in the south shaped its history until almost the end of the 19th century. Indeed, the hope that it would serve as a buffer state between those rival powers may be said to be the reason for its independence.

Although a Spaniard discovered Uruguay in 1516, it was the Portuguese who, in 1680, founded a colony there. Soon afterward almost a century of



struggle ensued between Spain, whose colony Argentina then was, and Portugal, ruler of Brazil at that time, for Uruguay. In 1778 Spain wrested the country from Portugal.

Uruguay shook itself free from

conquered by the Portuguese through Brazil. It was not until 1828, as a result of a war between the Uruguayan patriots and Argentina on one side and Brazil on the other, that independence finally was achieved.

Independence was soon followed by decades of factional strife with occasional armed intervention from Argentina and Brazil. It was not until the last years of the 19th century that the turbulence subsided.

A combination of factors — internal turbulence in Uruguay and the greater attractions of Argentina and Brazil — accounts for the fact that Jews did not arrive in Uruguay in any significant numbers until well into the 20th century. Many Jews who came to Uruguay in the 1920s made the country a temporary stop until they could get into Argentina, which at that time had stringent immigration regulations.

In 1909, the Jewish population of Montevideo, the capital city, was only 150. In 1917-18 there were about 1700 Jews in the whole of Uruguay, 75 percent of them Sephardim, the rest mainly

of East European origin.

When Hitler came to power, Jewish immigration to Uruguay increased but just prior to World War II, new limitations were imposed. In 1939, 2200 Jews entered the country; in 1940, only 373.

After the war, displaced persons from Europe began to arrive and during the 1950s Hungarian and Middle Eastern Jews also sought a new life in Uruguay.

The present Jewish population is estimated at about 40,000, almost all of them living in Montevideo. About 70 percent are of East European origin, 15 percent West European, 12 percent Sephardim and three percent Hungarian.

The Zionist movement began with the formation in 1911 of Dorshei Zion, initially an extension of the Argentine Zionist Federation. There is today the Organizacion Sionista, consisting of representatives of all the

Majority of Jews in Montevideo.

Zionist groups.

The Montevideo Jewish community comprises four *kehillot*: Comunidad Israelita de Montevideo (Ashkenazi), Comunidad Israelita Sefardi, Nueva Congregacion Israelita (German-speaking), Sociedad Hungara de Montevideo. They are united under the umbrella organization Comite Central Israelita del Uruguay, which is affiliated with the World Jewish Congress. There are trends toward the unification of the communities and the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities have in the last two or three years jointly initiated some activities for young people, but the separation remains and integration must await the emergence of a new generation.

There are three integrated schools which offer both Jewish and secular education. Among them they have an enrollment of approximately 2400 students. There is also the traditionally oriented Yavne Institute which has a few hundred students. The ORT school has nearly 500 students, many of them non-Jewish.

(Continued on page 24)

URUGUAY

Drift from Jewishness is a problem, albeit the situation is not as bad as in other countries. The community is doing its best to combat it, especially among children who finish schooling at 16 or 17 years of age and often lack a frame in which they can continue some kind of Jewish social life. As noted above, in this area the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities are cooperating. There is an awareness of the importance of the fight against loss of Jewish identity.

There are two primary ways in which the young people express their Jewish identity. The first is through Orthodox Judaism and there is a group of very religious young people. For them Jewish identity has a very clear religious content, but for the great majority of young and not-so-young

(Continued from page 23)
people Zionism is the expression of Jewish identity and is seen as the answer to assimilation.

Anti-Semitism is not a problem in Uruguay at this time. There are, of course, anti-Semitic individuals, but no anti-Semitic movements. The Jewish community maintains vigilance but avoids unnecessary public attention to the problem.

There is one Jewish judge and some Jewish technocrats occupy important positions, but Jews play no significant role in the political life of the country. They are well represented in the professions and are found in the academic world also. The director of the National Theater in Montevideo is Jaime Javitz, a cousin of former U.S. Senator Jacob Javits.

There is a weekly newspaper, *Semanario Hebreo*, published in Spanish and a Yiddish-language monthly, *Do*. There is a daily radio program in Spanish and Yiddish.

*Courtesy "News and Views" of the
World Jewish Congress*

Montevideo. 8.5.84

Memorandum

MAY 15 1984

From : Egon Friedler

CONFIDENTIAL

To : Jacobo Kovadloff - AJC - New York

On : The political situation in Uruguay and the Jewish Community

Elections are due to take place in November 25 this year but still it is not clear which kind of elections these will be and who will be allowed to participate. The Army still insists that Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, the leader of the National Party (or Blanco Party) must face the Military Justice and if he returns to Uruguay he will be prosecuted. The Army also says he won't be allowed by any means to be a candidate. His Party ignores this decision of the Army and proposes Wilson Ferreira and only Wilson Ferreira for president. There has been a lot of maneuvering from the "Blanco" leaders, the latest is the recollection of signatures to force the Government to allow a popular plebiscite to approve or disapprove the restrictions imposed by the military government, but still the Army is not impressed.

Wilson Ferreira Aldunate came some weeks ago to Buenos Aires where he was given an hero reception. All the leadership of the Blanco Party (excluding the minority that does not want Ferreira as a leader) went to the Argentinian capital to give honours to their leader. President Alfonsín received Ferreira and the Blanco leader gave a press conference from the "Casa Rosada", the seat of the Argentinian Government. He proposed to

give up his candidacy for President if the Uruguayan military would eliminate all the restrictions to democratic life. Again, the Government was unimpressed and the Blanco Party went on struggling for the ~~and~~ legalization of its leader.

Why is Ferreira Aldunate so important? Why is his Peron-like political maneuvering so decisory in Uruguayan politics?

The answer is very simple: his Party won the "internal elections" in November 1982 and he is very likely to be the next Uruguayan President if all the restrictions on candidates are eliminated.

As a matter of fact, Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, who lived abroad ~~at~~ since the coup of June 1973, has in his hands the keys of Uruguayan political future. Privately, Colorado leaders resent this situation. They say Wilson Ferreira Aldunate is erratic, flamboyant and self-worshipping ~~and~~; he is playing a radical, irresponsible play. Instead of getting the best possible from the military he is dividing the front of the opposition.

The majority of both parties are leaded by center-left politicians. Colorado and Blanco right-wings have been steadily declining. Former President Pacheco has been losing followers since the elections in November 1982. His poor leadership has weakened the Colorado right-wing which has collaborated with the Military Government. In the Blanco Party, the rival group of Ferreira Aldunate still does not feel strong enough to propose its own candidate, though the name of former senator Dardo Ortiz has been insisistently mentioned.

One of the many contradictory features of the actual situation is

General Seregni's position. The ~~former~~ leader of the leftist "Frente Amplio" (Broad front coalition) was released from jail some months ago and unexpectedly he became a moderating force, in Uruguayan politics.

In spite of the fact that his political activity is banned by the Government he is visited by all politicians, he is consulted by newspapers and TV and he is seen as one of the most important political leaders in the country. His leadership, after almost 10 years in jail, also has become stronger in the Broad Front. If in 1971 he was no more than "primum inter pares" now he is an undisputed leader of the loose leftist coalition. Not all the groups of the "Broad Front" (which is still formally illegal) are happy with this situation. The Communists feel they have lost control and they resent the fact that Gral. Seregni does not listen to them. The more radical groups (whose philosophy is still Revolution at any price) complain about the General's "conservative" views.

As a matter of facts, the groups that still have longing for the Tupamaros "revolution" have appeared again and they have a saying within the powerful worker's movement PIT (Plenario Intersindical). A good example may be what happened with the invitation to the political parties for ^{the} ~~huge~~ First May gathering (some 200.000 people for the second time, the first was a year ago when a First May celebration was allowed the first time under the military government). The Executive Committee of PIT decided to invite all political parties but afterwards a larger forum of worker representatives, where radicals succeeded to have influence, voted to withdraw the

invitation. So delegates of the large popular parties (Blanco and Colorado parties, and also the catholic Unión Cívica) to the 1st. May rally were not delegates any more since PIT had changed its mind. Notice about the change was given only a few hours before the beginning of the meeting.

Ironically, PIT has built its strength under the protection of the legislation passed by the military regime about "professional organizations". As a matter of fact, it is the largest stronghold of the left and any democratic government in the future will have to deal with it. Although the former President of the ~~former~~ CNT (General Federation of Labour, closed by the "Civic-military government" in 1973) ~~and~~ José D'Elía plays a very important role in PIT, the new labour organization is somehow different from the former communist-dominated CNT. Communists have lost their leading influence and there is some true grass-roots democracy. But radical leftists use this fact for their own political aims.

The Histadrut representation for Latin America has succeeded to build a good relationship with PIT leaders. But it is a relationship without illusions. Since the leftist leaders are anti-american and Israel is considered an American ally their basic position is not very friendly. The weekly "Convicción" (recently closed by the Government) published ~~a~~ weeks ago a venomous anti-israeli article. AFTER some angry protests they promised to bring some more poised material. The article on the Middle East they published some weeks later was not much better than the former one, though it was written in a more moderate language. "Convicción" is the mouthpiece of the sindical movement and PIT and ~~and~~ it gets its financing from the European CIOSL.

Though the political forces, including those in the left not yet legal, have a dynamic activity and the process of democratization seems to be under way in any sense, there are certain groups within the military that are reluctant to give up power.

The closure of publications have made a mockery of freedom of the Press. In the last weeks a daily of the leftist "Broad Front" and two weeklies (one of them from the Blanco Party) were ~~closed~~ closed forever by the authorities. The liberal weekly "Búsqueda" was closed for eight editions.

A mysterious right-wing organization attacked the home of the director of the above mentioned closed Broad Front daily, and three shops owned by advertisers of the same paper were half-destroyed by bombs ~~and~~. Some people (a TV actor, a militant of the left of the Blanco Party) received death threats. But the worse episode of the last weeks ~~is~~ was the death of Dr. Vladimir Roslik, from San Javier, some 350 kilometer from Montevideo, while he was investigated for "communist subversion" by the Army.

The Director and the Editor of "Jaque" who wrote after a visit to San Javier that Dr. Roslik was murdered, were called to the military justice. Though the weekly (from the Colorado Left Wing led by Prof. Manuel Flores Silva) is allowed to go on appearing, the journalist may face a harsh punishment, in spite of the fact that everybody in Uruguay is convinced that Dr. Roslik died under torture.

What was behind this "affaire" ? Political well-informed circles are convinced that it was a dirty trick of the "ultras" in the Army to embarrass ^{THE LIBERAL} General Medina (in whose military region San Javier is situated). Gral. Medina is due to become the next chief of the Army within a month and

it is quite clear that the undemocratic forces within the Army are doing their best to thwart democratization.

It is believed that the Enemy No. 1 of the "apertura" (or return to democracy) is President Gregorio Alvarez himself. Political observers stress that Alvarez failed in his purpose to become a real national leader as a President. His performance as President deceived everybody and he has no chances of a political comeback once he will leave his job. Alvarez is said to be blaming everybody but himself for this failure. Now he seems to have given "green light" to small fascist groups to intimidate the left. He also seems to be the "gray eminence behind the "hard line" against the Press and the Mass Media.

The political situation is full of uncertainties. Everyday there are some more or less dramatic news. In the moment of writing this report, the last dramatic news is the closure for three days of Channel 10, one of the four TV Channels in Montevideo. Its "sin" : to make an interview with Dr. Hugo Batalla, one of the more moderate leaders of the leftist Broad Front (Frente Amplio and lawyer of General Seregni.

What is so revolting and absurd in this measure is that Dr. Batalla had been interviewed several times before by all the private TV Channels and nothing happened.

Pessimists within the political parties fear that the enemies of democratization will try to create an atmosphere in which elections won't be possible. Optimists believe that after Gral. Medina will take over the post of chief of the Army next month he will get an easy majority in the "Council of High Officers" (which is more important than the Government in decisive matters) for a clear-cut way towards democracy. Optimists also point

to the fact that the Army has given its word of honour about holding elections in November. A breach of this word of honour would be a very serious matter.

Never before has the Jewish Community been so closely identified with one of the two traditional parties. Traditionally, most Jews have voted for the Colorado Party and particularly for its more liberal wing, the "batllistas" who took their name from the great Uruguayan President of the beginning of the century, Dr. José Batlle y Ordoñez, ~~and~~

The "Blancos" were less friendly towards foreigners, more nationalist and catholic. The Blancos changed a lot. They became a left of the center Party when they were before a right wing party representative of rich landowners. Some of their groups have become friendly towards Jews. But Wilson Ferreira Aldunate himself thinks he lost last elections because he failed to get the Jewish votes, since "Jews" were loyal to the Colorado Party. He may be wrong. Jewish vote was not so important and as a matter of fact, there is no such a thing as a jewish massive and coordinated vote.

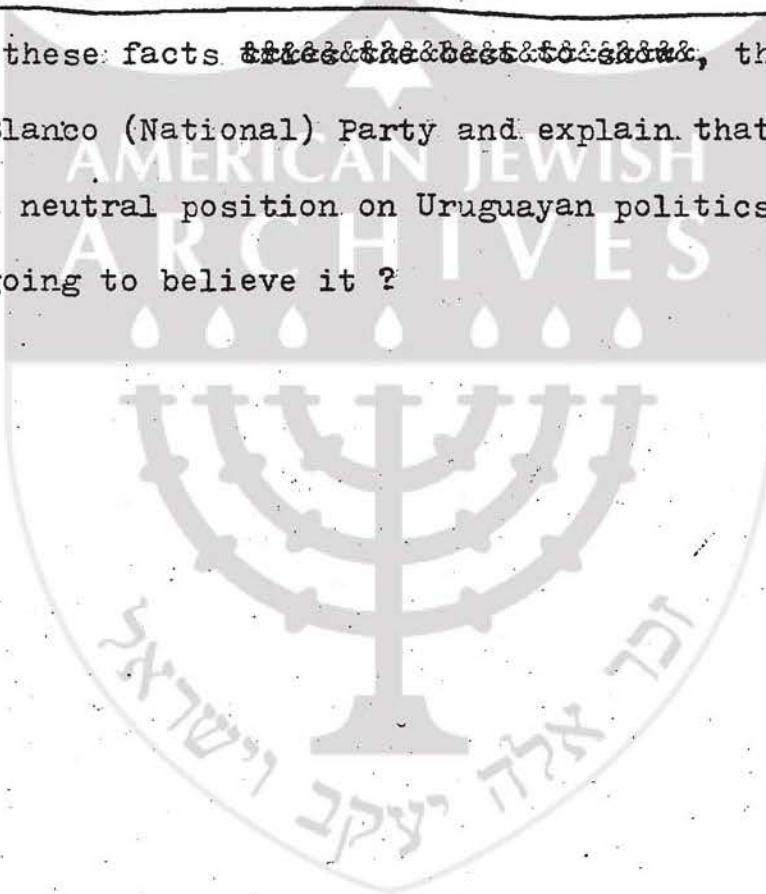
But if he believed this in 1971 he has better reasons to be suspicious ^{now} of the Jewish loyalty towards the Colorado Party and its majority wing, the "batllistas". The two most important leaders of the Party : Dr. Julio María Sanguinetti and Dr. Enrique Tarigo, have very intimate connections with the Jewish Community. Dr. Sanguinetti is a familiar face in Jewish gatherings and he is as acquainted with Israel's problems as any jew. He worked as a lawyer for many Jewish firms and has many Jewish friends. His wife, ~~and~~ a journalist and History teacher, is a very active

member of the Leading Board of the Cultural Institute Uruguay-Israel.

Dr. Tarigo is the President of the Uruguayan Committee for Soviet Jewry and he came back some days ago from a meeting of Latin-American politicians and intellectuals for Soviet Jewry in Mexico.

To complicate the panorama even more : one of the members of the Colorado convention (a caucus of over 500 delegates) is the ~~acting~~ President of the Zionist Organization in Uruguay, Bernardo Olesker.

In spite of these facts ~~which are well known~~, the Community tries to woo the Blanco (National) Party and explain that as an organized community it has a neutral position on Uruguayan politics. The only problem is : Who is going to believe it ?



ADDITION TO THE REPORT

It must be stressed that the reason that has alienated most the population from the Military Government is the situation of the Economy. There is some 15 % (if not more) ~~unemployment~~ unemployment. In the last years, wages have lost 50 % of their worth and Uruguay has known something it had not known during many decades: hunger. In Montevideo, you can find children beggars and small peddlars everywhere. But not only the weaker groups of the population are angry. So are industrialists, landowners and merchants. The economic policy of the Government has not helped anybody.... excluding the Army itself.

N.Y.T. 6-11-84

Tortured in Uruguay

Torture is the dirty little secret of modern politics, and typically, victims are punished not only for real or imagined crimes, but also because they know the secret. They die, or "disappear," or languish in jail for years to prevent their bearing witness against the degrading use of technology to smash bodies and bend minds.

In Uruguay, for example, why else has Hiber Conteris been denied a fair trial in open court? A 50-year-old Methodist minister, Mr. Conteris, was arrested in 1976 on his return from a church conference in Europe. He was charged with "assault upon the Constitution" and "criminal" association with suspect subversives. To secure a confession, he was hung from the wrist, burned and submerged in filthy sewage.

After a "trial," in which he was forbidden to choose his own lawyer, he was sentenced to 15 years, plus five years for "security."

Satisfied that he never advocated or engaged in violence, Amnesty International has adopted Mr.

Conteris as a prisoner of conscience. When 26 United States Senators and 81 Congressmen signed a plea in his behalf, Uruguay's only response was to repeat the vague charges against him.

His plight is commonplace in Uruguay, long a stable democracy but under military rule since 1973. In a country of 3 million, there are 800 political prisoners — the highest ratio anywhere. Torture routinely occurs immediately after detention. At least 96 prisoners have died in custody.

The armed forces originally seized power to subdue a violent, lawless leftist insurgency. That threat ebbed long ago, and elections are supposed to be held in November. But the best-known opposition leader, Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, has been denied a chance to participate. His announcement that he plans to return from Argentine exile has already prompted a fresh round of arrests.

So the miserable cycle threatens to continue: detention, torture, fake trial, prolonged imprisonment. A high price for the dirty little secret.

URUGUAY'S FOREIGN MINISTER PLEDGES CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

MONTEVIDEO, July 1 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Carlos Maero of Uruguay noted the unique relationship between this country and Israel and pledged that it will continue to support Israel because both countries are devoted to democratic ideals.

Maero made that statement at a meeting here over the weekend with Daniel Thursz, executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International who is on a seven country South American tour.

Uruguay has always championed the cause of freedom for Jews, Maero said, adding that the Jewish community in Uruguay is a "cherished and important segment of Uruguayan society." He cited his country's opposition to anti-Semitic attacks on Israel at the United Nations and said Uruguay recognizes the need to urge the Soviet Union to allow those Jews who wish to emigrate.

Thursz also met with representatives of the ruling Colorado Party and the opposition Blanco Party. His meeting with the executive committee of the latter was the first time that the Blanco leadership has met with a representative of an international Jewish

organization. Thursz said the purpose of the meeting was to get first hand information on Uruguay's political crisis.

Thursz, in Buenos Aires last week, met with Argentine government leaders who reaffirmed their support for human rights everywhere and their opposition to terrorism and the use of the UN as a forum for racist and anti-Semitic attacks.

Thursz, meeting with Argentine Vice President Victor Martinez, informed him of the resolution approved last May by the B'nai B'rith Board of Governors praising the new Argentine government for initiatives to "ensure the preservation and advancement of democracy and human rights" in Argentina.

Thursz also met with Ela Kelly, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Horacio Ravenna, the Foreign Ministry's Human Rights Director. They reaffirmed their government's opposition to the UN as a forum for racist and religious attacks and promised that Argentina would "make its voice heard" against such "insidious practices."

(Translated from Spanish)

Re: Latin American solidarity with Soviet Jewry - Opinar, 5/3/84

... On behalf of the Uruguayan delegation consisting of Leopoldo Goldemberg and ourselves, we delivered a communiqué and submitted a report on the problem of the "rejected" or "refuseniks." We began by pointing out that this becomes relevant only if it stems from a liberal belonging to a Latin American country with deep liberal and democratic roots, which unfortunately has been subjected, for over a decade, to an authoritarian government suppressing or curtailing each and every freedom, civil or political, where - for the first time in its history as an independent nation - the very concept of "rejected" has ceased to be an alien notion, and regrettably has become a known and frequently endured reality. We dwelt briefly on the official procedure, not based on any existing rule, whereby Uruguayans are divided into three categories, "A," "B," and "C," and discussed the repercussions ensuing therefrom.

...During these four days, I learned of the permanent shutdown of Somos Idea (We, the Idea) and of the temporary closing of Búsqueda (Search) in Uruguay. This serious and outrageous disregard of one of the most important freedoms has prompted me to voice my solidarity with both publications and to condemn this violation of one of the human rights so emphatically proclaimed in our Constitution.

ENRIQUE E. TARIGO

Shunning a Latin Friend

P-1-84

T-29

By Max Holland
and Kai Bird

WASHINGTON — If a return to democracy is on the agenda in quite a few Latin American countries, the transition from military rule is not always made easier by Ronald Reagan's State Department. Uruguay is a case in point.

Last week the Uruguayan military regime finally recognized the right of several minority political parties to participate in next November's presidential election. But for six weeks now, the leading presidential candidate, Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, and his son Juan Raul have been sitting in prison. After 4,006 days in exile, they had come home to participate in the restoration of democracy in their country. The military Government greeted them with the largest military mobilization Uruguay has seen in this century, and Mr. Ferreira was charged with four offenses against the state, which could bring him a 30-year sentence.

The international response to their arrest was swift but for one critical exception — the State Department. Judged even by the standards of the Reagan Administration, the absence of an official reproach was stunning. Not a word has been heard from our mission in Uruguay. Indeed, when a delegation of United States lawyers arrived recently to discuss the imprisonment, Ambassador Thomas Aranda Jr. was unavailable. The only official response was a routine "press guidance" issued two days after the arrest, expressing confidence in the Uruguayan judicial system.

Why is the State Department content to see Wilson Ferreira — a man with impeccable democratic creden-

The U.S. hinders change in Uruguay

tials, who rightfully should be part of any transition to democracy — languish in jail? The fact is that Mr. Ferreira has not always been willing to follow United States prescriptions for Uruguay. Most important, in the 1970's, he defied the State Department and diplomatic orthodoxy by taking his case to Congress and the American people. His public rebuke of United States policy created ill-will in the State Department — feelings that have only gotten worse under the Reagan Administration.

Mr. Ferreira, the candidate of the Blanco Party, was the leading vote-getter in 1971, the year of the last presidential election before the military takeover in 1973. Forced to flee for their lives, father and son launched a vigorous campaign in Western capitals, working with sympathetic legislators to press the Uruguayan military junta for a return to political legitimacy.

In the fall of 1976, Mr. Ferreira was the first of many political exiles to testify before the House subcommittee on human rights, headed by former Representative Don Fraser, Democrat of Minnesota. Mr. Ferreira complained about a United States "policy clearly conducted to lose friends" and bemoaned the fact that the very nation that had defined his democratic ideals was now supporting the enemies of those ideals.

Today, the State Department

makes little secret of its resentment of Mr. Ferreira. Thus, in early July, when a church delegation visited Elliot Abrams, the Assistant Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs, to press for the Ferreriras' release, he explained that the department was not intervening because it did not "want to be seen as partial" in the electoral process, nor "do anything to upset the democratic transition." Richard H. Melton, the Deputy Chief of Mission in Montevideo, even criticized Mr. Wilson's return as a "complicating" factor in the elections.

Last fall, when it became apparent that elections were inevitable, the State Department moved smartly behind Julio M. Sanguinetti, the nominee of the Colorado Party. His way was paid to Washington, where he held top-level meetings with Administration officials, and when he returned to Montevideo, Ambassador Aranda scheduled frequent and very public meetings with him.

More than anything, the department is leery that a truly open electoral process might result in the election of Mr. Ferreira, whose popularity is now enhanced by the mystique of exile. It is known to be pressing Mr. Sanguinetti's party to remain in the election despite the proscription barring Mr. Ferreira.

The State Department has made it clear that it would like Mr. Sanguinetti to release Mr. Ferreira after the elections, giving him his freedom but having denied him the presidency. If the department prevails, one of the "crimes" for which Mr. Ferreira will be excused is his testimony before the House of Representatives.

In fact, the State Department is committed not to Uruguayan democracy but only to elections won by its favored candidate. To achieve this, the department is willing to see the most popular Uruguayan politician, a proven democrat, languish in prison. □

Max Holland and Kai Bird write a column on foreign affairs for *The Nation* magazine.

background notes

Uruguay



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

December 1982



**Official Name: Oriental
Republic of Uruguay**

PROFILE

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*—Uruguayan(s). **Population** (1982 est.): 2,934,942. **Annual growth rate:** (1963-75): 0.5%. **Ethnic groups:** 85%-90% white, 5%-10% mestizo, 3%-5% black. **Religions:** Roman Catholic 66%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 2%, nonprofessing or other 30%. **Language:** Spanish. **Education:** (1975)—10 yrs. and older: *Attendance*—95%. *Literacy*—94.3%. **Life expectancy** (1979): 71 yrs. **Work force** (1.2 million, 1981): *Agriculture*—16%. *Manufacturing*—19%. *Commerce*—12%. *Utilities, construction, transport, and communications*—12%. *Government*—19%. *Other services*—22%.

Geography

Area: 176,215 sq. km. (68,037 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than North Dakota. **Capital:** Montevideo (pop. 1.2 million). **Terrain:** Plains and low hills. **Climate:** Temperate.

Government

Type: Republic. **Independence:** August 25, 1828. **Constitution:** February 1967 (as modified by constitutional decrees).

Branches: *Executive*—president (chief of state and head of government). *Legislative*—35-member Council of State (presidentially appointed). *Judicial*—Supreme Court of Justice.

Administrative subdivisions: 19 departments with limited autonomy.

Political parties: Colorado, Blanco, Union Civica. **Suffrage:** Universal over age 18.

Central government budget (1980): \$1.728 billion.

Defense (1980): 3.2% of GDP.

Flag: Nine horizontal stripes—five white and four blue with a yellow sun in the left corner. The flag was adopted in 1830. The stripes represent political divisions of that time; the "Sun of May," independence.

Economy

GDP (1980): \$9.4 billion. **Annual growth rate** (1980): 7.2%; 1%, 1981 est. **Per capita income** (1980): \$2,780. **Avg. inflation rate** (1981): 29.4%.

Natural resources: Soil, hydroelectric potential, minerals (minor).

Agriculture (10.7% of GDP, 1980): Beef, wool, grains, fruits, vegetables, fish.

Industries (23.1% of GDP, 1980): Meat processing, wool and hides, textiles, shoes, handbags, leather apparel, tires, cement, fishing, petroleum refining.

Trade: *Exports*—\$1.058 billion: (f.o.b. 1980): meat, wool, hides, leather products, fish, rice, furs. *Major markets*—US 8%, EC 28% (FRG 13%), ALADI 37% (Argentina 13%, Brazil 18%). *Imports*—\$1.231 billion (c.i.f. 1980): fuels, chemicals, machinery, metals. *Major suppliers*—US 10%, EC 18% (FRG 7%), ALADI 37% (Argentina 11%, Brazil 16%).

Official exchange rate (Jan. 1982): 11.67 new pesos = US\$1. 539 (89)

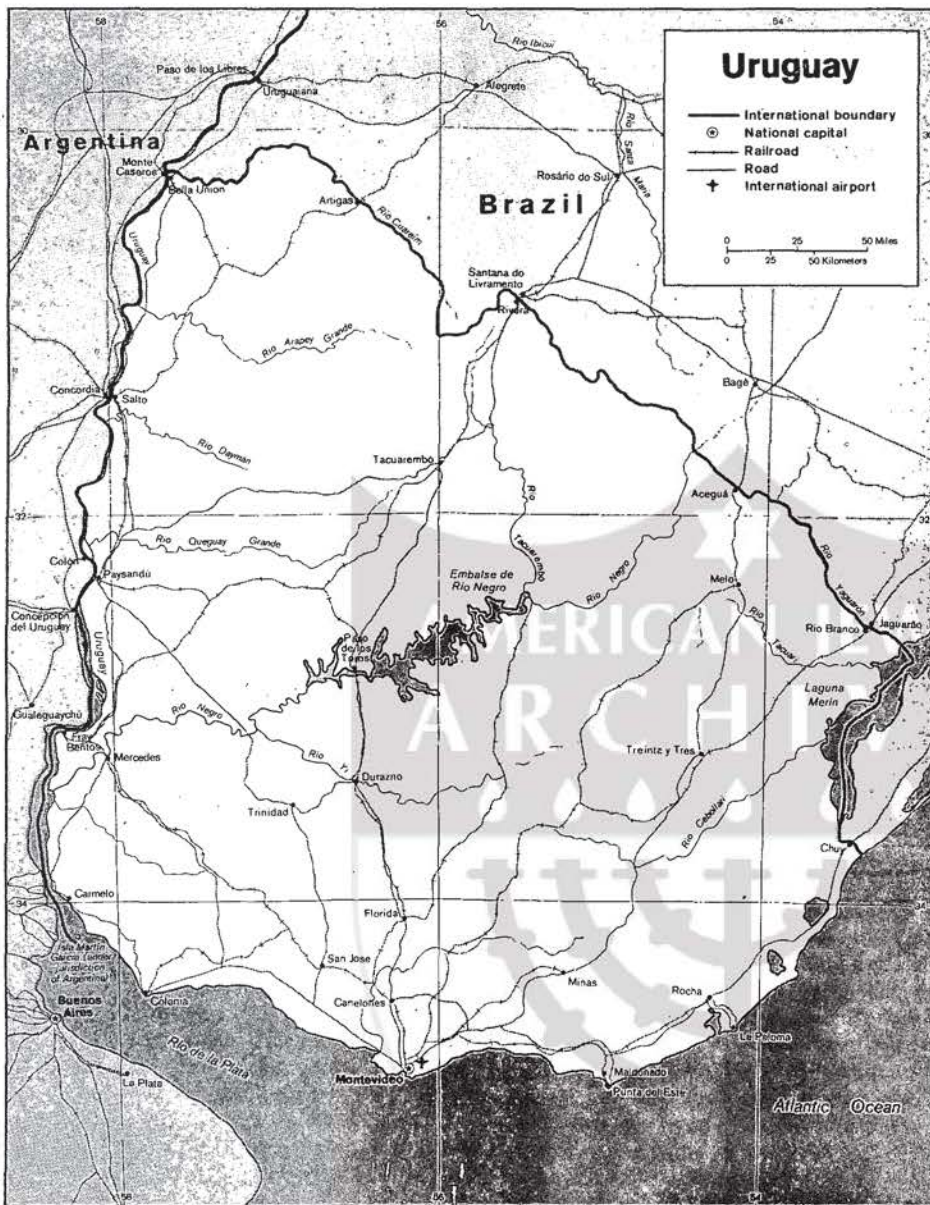
Fiscal year: Calendar year.

Economic aid received: IBRD \$371.4 million (to June 1981); IFC \$20.8 million (to Sept. 1980); IDB \$294.3 million (to Dec. 1980); US \$184.4 million (FY 1946-79).

Military aid—\$89.2 million (1949-76).

Membership in International Organizations

UN and most of its specialized agencies, Organization of American States (OAS), Latin American Integration Association (ALADI).



HISTORY

In early Uruguayan history, Spain, Portugal, and later Brazil and Argentina struggled for control of the area. In 1820, Jose Gervasio Artigas, Uruguay's national hero, led an unsuccessful attempt to gain autonomy within a regional federation. It was not until 1828, as a result of a war by Uruguayan patriots and Argentina against Brazil, that independence finally was achieved.

The new nation continued to be plagued by civil war and foreign intervention until the end of the 19th century. During this period, Uruguay's two traditional parties were formed—the Colorado and the Blanco.

Jose Batlle y Ordóñez, who set the pattern for Uruguay's political development, was elected president in 1903 and again in 1911. He began a program calling for widespread political, social, and economic reforms, such as an extensive welfare program, government participation in many facets of the economy, and a plural executive. Many of these programs continue today.

The Colorado Party controlled the government from 1865 until 1958, the last 55 years of which directly bear the Batlle stamp. Following the 1958 election, there was an orderly transfer of power to the opposition Blanco Party. The Blancos won again in 1962 but were defeated by the Colorados in 1966. In November 1966, the Uruguayan electorate voted to amend the 1951 constitution and to reestablish a presidential system of government, thus ending a 15-year experiment with an unwieldy, nine-member executive council, the National Council of Government (NCG). The NCG had proved incapable of providing the leadership needed to meet the nation's economic problems. The Colorados won again in 1971 in an election so close that it took 2½ months of vote counting and recounting to determine the outcome. In that election, Juan M. Bordaberry was elected president for a 5-year term.

In 1973, amid increasing economic and political turmoil, the military closed the Congress and established a civilian-military regime. In June 1976, Vice President Alberto Demicheli was named interim president, cutting short by 5 months President Bordaberry's term of office. Three months later, Aparicio Mendez was named president for a 5-year term. In 1977, the military announced a timetable for full restoration of democratic institutions by 1985. A new constitution drafted by the military was rejected in a November 1980 plebiscite. Following the plebiscite, the

PEOPLE

Uruguayans share a Spanish linguistic and cultural background, even though 25% of the population are of Italian origin. The predominant religion is Roman Catholic. Church and state are officially separated, and religious freedom is recognized. Uruguay is distinguished by its high literacy rate, relatively high standard of living, and large urban middle class. Metropolitan Montevideo, with about 1.2 million inhabitants, is the only large city. Most of the rest of the population live in about 20 towns. Montevideo has few slums, and although some poverty exists throughout the interior regions,

Uruguayans live well compared with most of their counterparts in other Latin American countries.

GEOGRAPHY

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay is the official name because of the country's location on the east bank of the Uruguay River. With its rolling, grassy plains and low hills, Uruguay enjoys abundant pastureland, a good water supply, and a temperate climate in which freezing temperatures are almost unknown. These factors have contributed to the emergence of stockraising as the economy's base.

armed forces announced a new, accelerated plan for return to civilian rule. The plan calls for reactivation of most political parties, a new electoral law, and a constitutional plebiscite along with national elections in 1984. In September 1981, the military selected a retired general, **Gregorio Alvarez**, as president to serve through March 1985, when power will be returned to the popularly elected president.

GOVERNMENT

Uruguay is a republic with three separate branches of government. Under the 1967 constitution, the president had substantially more powers than the old NCG and was elected to a single 5-year term. Twelve cabinet members, appointed by the president and subject to parliamentary approval, headed the regular executive departments. In addition, a number of "autonomous entities" and "decentralized services" are important in government administration.

The Council of State was created by a presidential decree on June 27, 1973, to replace the bicameral General Assembly.

In 1981, the military also restored independence to the civilian judiciary. The highest court is the Supreme Court, and below it are appellate and lower courts and justices of the peace. The Ministry of Justice is mainly administrative. A Supreme Judicial Council names Supreme Court justices and otherwise supervises the judiciary. In addition, there are electoral and administrative (contentious) courts, an accounts court, and a separate military judicial system.

Uruguay's 19 administrative departments are organized similarly to the central government. The country is also divided into four military regions.

Principal Government Officials

President—Gen. (Ret.) **Gregorio Alvarez**

Ministers

Interior—Gen. **Yamandu Trinidad**

Foreign Affairs—Dr. **Carlos Maeso Rodriguez**

Economy and Finance—**Valentin Arismendi**

Justice—Dr. **Justo Cesar Espinola**

Defense—Dr. **Justo M. Alonso**

Transport and Public Works—**Francisco D. Turrelles**

Agriculture and Fishing—**Carlos Mattos**

Moglia

Planning, Coordination, and

Information—**Gral. Pedro Aranco**

Public Health—**Luis A. Givogre**

Industry and Energy—**Walter Lusiardo Aznarez**

Education and Culture—**Raquel**

Lombardo de Betolaza

Labor and Social Welfare—**Luis A.**

Crisci Berbou

Ambassador to the United States—

Alejandro Vegg Villegas

Ambassador to the United Nations—

Juan Carlos Blanco

Ambassador to the Organization of

American States (OAS)—**Francisco**

Bustillo del Campo

Uruguay maintains an embassy in the United States at 1918 F Street, NW., Washington, D.C. 20006 (tel. 202-331-1313).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Uruguay has two long-established principal parties—the Blancos and the Colorados. The Broad Front, a coalition of several leftist parties and movements, was formed for the 1971 elections, in which it obtained 18% of the national vote. Marxist parties subsequently were declared illegal in 1973 after military intervention in politics.

To counteract the terrorist threat, in 1972 the former General Assembly, with the support of the executive, declared a "state of internal war." In late 1971, the armed forces were charged with controlling the terrorists, and by 1973 had neutralized them. With the closing of the General Assembly and the suspension of political party activity in 1973, the military and the executive formulated a series of social, economic, and political measures designed to create a different system of government. The military still plays a decisive role in Uruguayan politics.

In 1977, however, the military announced its contention to return gradually to the country's traditional democratic institutions. Uruguay is now in transition, and President Alvarez and the armed forces have pledged support for democratic normalization by 1985. Political and individual liberties are being liberalized gradually, and political life, after a 9-year hiatus, is flourishing again. The military has invited civilian politicians to discuss important legislation with them, and the new constitution is to be drafted after consultations with major political factions.

ECONOMY

Several events in Uruguay's economic history since World War II combined to lead the country to its present economic reform program. Among these were economic stagnation, loss of markets for agricultural exports, rising costs of domestic social programs, and large increases in the cost of imported petroleum products.

The major reform program drawn up in early 1978 provides the goals for the current government, committing the country to an export-led development program based on encouraging and diversifying exports, reducing the country's high protection against import competition, decreasing traditionally high inflation, and increasing the efficiency and responsibility of government operations.

Real growth in the gross national product (GNP) increased to more than 8% in 1979 but has slowed steadily since then. Due partly to international development agency lending and partly to export expansion and an influx of private capital, Uruguay's international reserves have grown substantially, and internal inflation has slowed remarkably.

Travel Notes

Clothing—Seasonal clothing, as in the US, is recommended. Although the temperature seldom drops below freezing and snow is rare, warm clothing is essential in winter. Raingear is useful.

Customs—No visa is required for a visit of less than 90 days. No inoculations are required. There are no currency restrictions.

Health—No real health hazards exist. Food handling and sanitation standards are relatively high, and the water supply is well maintained. Montevideo has several good private hospitals and many well-trained doctors.

Telecommunications—International telephone and telegraph service is efficient; however, the local telephone network is overburdened. Montevideo is two time zones ahead of eastern standard time.

Transportation—Several airlines have frequent service to Montevideo's Carrasco International Airport from the US, Europe, and other parts of Latin America. Internal transportation is mainly by bus, as railway service can be slow. Within Montevideo, bus service is cheap. Taxi service is reasonably priced but hard to find during rush hours. Main roads are good, and secondary roads are adequate.

The government's fiscal performance has been nearly in balance for the past 3 years. A progressive opening up of the economy to import competition—set as a reform goal—has led to a more efficient distribution of resources. Meanwhile, new Uruguayan exports have found their way into many markets, including the United States, and include more technical and finished products than in the past.

Uruguay's principal natural resource is its land, 85% of which is suitable for pasture and farmland. Of the 16 million hectares (39 million acres), 15 million are devoted to livestock raising. The livestock population, relatively static for several decades, has reached record size despite ranchers' continued use of traditional methods. No significant mineral resources have been developed, and

Further Information

These titles are provided as a general indication of material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

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For information on foreign economic trends, commercial development, production, trade regulations, and tariff rates, contact the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230. This information is also available from any Commerce Department district office.

petroleum exploration has not been successful. However, major hydroelectric projects are being built. The Salto Grande hydroelectric dam on the Rio Uruguay began producing energy in 1979. Work on the Palmar hydroelectric plant on the Rio Negro was completed recently. Proposals for two dams on the Rio Yaguaron, as part of a program of developmental and technological cooperation between Uruguay and Brazil, are under study.

Wool and meat traditionally account for about 35%–40% of total exports. Agricultural exports, including processed exports, usually produce the major part of Uruguay's export earnings. A sizable industrial complex has grown up in and around Montevideo, devoted mainly to processing the nation's agricultural production. Tourism at the country's seaside resorts is an important source of earnings as well.

Because of the small domestic market, Uruguayan industry must look for outside markets to expand its production substantially. Uruguay has participated actively in the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA—now Latin American Integration Association, ALADI) and has bilateral trade agreements with Argentina, Brazil, and other neighboring countries, which it hopes will open doors to further industrial expansion. Uruguay has a mixed private-governmental banking system dominated by the Government's Bank of the Republic.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In its international relations, Uruguay supports the principle of nonintervention and desires to continue its leading role in the United Nations and the OAS. Uruguay's location between Argentina and Brazil makes close relations with these two larger neighbors particularly desirable.

Uruguay is a party to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), ALADI, Latin American Nuclear Free Zone, and River Plate Basin Treaty.

U.S.-URUGUAYAN RELATIONS

Traditionally, relations between the United States and Uruguay have been based on a common outlook and dedication to democratic ideals.

Uruguay works with the United States bilaterally and in international trade liberalization to foster economic and political cooperation and to improve regional cooperation. The United States works to continue this tradition of friendship, to encourage a return to full democracy and the strengthening of the Uruguayan economy, and to obtain Uruguay's support in matters affecting world peace and freedom.

Principal U.S. Officials

Ambassador—Thomas Aranda, Jr.
Deputy Chief of Mission—Richard H. Melton
Chief, Political Section—Jerome L. Hoganson
Chief, Economic Section—James A. Cheatham
Public Affairs Officer (USIS)—John F. Graves
Defense Attache—Capt. Ramon Alvarado
Commander, Defense Coordination Office—Col. Robert E. Waller

The U.S. Embassy in Uruguay is located at Lauro Muller 1776, Montevideo (tel. 40-90-51, 40-91-26). ■

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