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Series D. International Relations Activities. 1961-1992.

Box 55, Folder 3, Argentina, 1982-1984.

NEWS

FROM THE

COMMITTEE

aje

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, April 9 ... Foreign Minister Dante Caputo of Argentina today informed a delegation of American Jewish Committee leaders that President Alfonsin's government would introduce within the next two weeks in the Argentinian Congress a series of laws outlawing anti-Semitism, racism, and all forms of discrimination based on religion, race, and sex.

"There will be strong penalties for public discrimination," Minister Caputo said, "and these laws will govern the behavior in the entire Argentine society."

Minister Caputo discussed a broad range of domestic and foreign policy issues with a delegation of American Jewish Committee leaders at the Argentinian Mission to the United Nations. Ms. Rita Hauser of New York, Chairperson of the AJC Executive Committee and a prominent international lawyer, headed the AJC delegation. The meeting was arranged by AJC's International Relations Department, whose director is Dr. Marc H. Tanenbaum.

Joining Mr. Caputo were the Argentine Ambassador to the United States, Lucio Garcia del Solar; the Argentine Consul General in New York, Jose Ramon Sanchis Munoz; Advisor to President Alfonsin, Carlos Nino; Principal Advisor to Minister Caputo, Alberto Ham; and Francisco Diez, private secretary to Minister Caputo.

Discussing foreign policy concerns, Minister Caputo said that "the Government of President Alfonsin condemns all forms of terrorism. I can assure you that both internally and externally, we will insist on all legal means to combat terrorism. We have suffered from all forms of terrorism; it is not an abstraction to us; we know it firsthand. It is an absurd contradiction for us to fight terrorism internally and allow it to go on internationally. Terrorism must be solved by law."

Mr. Caputo was responding to a series of concerns expressed by the AJC delegation over anti-Semitic violence in Argentina as well as over the role of the PLO in Argentina and other Latin American countries.

In answer to criticisms over past votes of Argentinian representatives to United Nations bodies who supported anti-Israel resolutions, including "the obscenity of the equation of Zionism with racism," Minister Caputo said, "We will

....more

Howard I. Friedman, President; Theodore Ellenoff, Chairman, Board of Governors; Alfred H. Moses, Chairman, National Executive Council; Robert S. Jacobs, Chairman, Board of Trustees.
William S. Trosten, Acting Director

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CSAE 1707

seek to rectify our votes on these issues. We will change the erratic, irrational, and improvised character of Argentina's foreign policy. We will not vote at the UN or elsewhere just because others want us to."

Jacobo Kovadloff of Buenos Aires, AJC's director of Latin American affairs, informed Minister Caputo about the forcible closing of AJC's offices in Buenos Aires in June 1977 under the threat of right-wing death squads. Minister Caputo responded forthrightly: "We invite the American Jewish Committee to return and reopen your offices. It would be a good symbol. The reasons which prompted the closing are finished. We not only welcome your return but pledge to give you all the assistance you need to reopen and to function in Argentina."

Minister Caputo also responded affirmatively to an AJC proposal for organizing exchange visits between Argentinian and American delegations, modeled on AJC's successful exchange programs with France and Germany. Mr. Caputo said his government would very much welcome such exchanges and would help in their implementation.

The Foreign Minister also discussed his views on Argentinian-U.S. relations. "The establishment of democracy," he said, "is to contribute to security and avoid polarization. The U. S. policy in Latin American has been short-term and has led to fostering ties with authoritarian governments friendly with the U.S. Authoritarian governments are not stable, and those regimes produced negative votes (toward the U.S. and Israel) in the United Nations and elsewhere.

"To insure democracy, we must create a foundation for real dialogue with the U.S. The U.S. is interested in hemisphere security but forgets frequently about democracy and development. Latin Americans speak about democracy and development and forget about security. As Latin Americans produce things worthy to defend, they will understand security much better."

Speaking of Argentina's economic plight, Minister Caputo told the AJC leaders, "We have a great foreign debt and distortions in our domestic monetary situation. It will take us a few years to deal with it. The Argentine Government will seek to pay its debt but at the same time must be able to produce the necessary wealth. We have had a deep recession during the last eight years that caused a drop in our way of life and a drop in wages. What sense is there to try to establish a democracy in our country if there is more recession, and a drop in wages? We need to increase investments and have an economic success if democracy is to survive."

The AJC delegation consisted of the following:

Ms. Hauser; Philip Hoffman of New Jersey, former AJC president; Richard Maass of New Rochelle, N.Y., former AJC president; Leo Nevas of Norwalk, Conn., chairman of the AJC Task Force on Soviet Jewry; Howard Greenberger, professor of law, New York University, and chairman of the AJC Task Force on Central America; Mr. Kovadloff; Dr. David Gordis, executive vice-president-designate of the AJC; William Trosten, AJC's acting director; and David Harris, deputy director of AJC's International Relations Department

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For your information

From the desk of: 12/17/82

JACOB KOVADLOFF

Director, South American Affairs

To: Marc Tanenbaum



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date December 7, 1982
to Foreign Affairs Department
from Jacob Kovadloff
subject Argentina: Reaction to the events in Lebanon and the PLO--
Arab League diplomatic status

Last October 1st, the Center for Social Studies of D.A.I.A. (the representative institution of the Argentinian Jewish community) published an eight page supplement entitled, "PLO: Victim or Executioner?" in the most important Argentinian dailies. In this way, more than one and a half million copies were circulated throughout the entire country, an occurrence without precedent in Argentinian-Jewish life.

Given the excellence of the D.A.I.A. supplement, the A.J.C. requested authorization to reprint it. They generously agreed. A.J.C. then distributed this reprint widely to the Hispanic media in the U.S. Their initial reaction showed us that the material has been received warmly.

In general, the Argentinian press reported objectively or sympathetically on Israel during the recent events in Lebanon, reflecting the feelings of the majority of the population. But there were other groups critical of Israel and while not important in their numbers, they do include prominent intellectual politicians and leaders, not necessarily all leftist-inspired. It was to counter their influence that lead to the D.A.I.A.'s Center supplement.

Despite the fact that the supplement was printed as a "paid advertisement", each daily permitted the use of its front page logo, and this can be interpreted as implicit support for the contents. One factor in such readiness, probably is Argentina's sensitivity to international public opinion re human rights violations and to terrorist and guerrilla actions to destabilize the country.

The supplement showed a picture of Arafat with the Argentinian guerrilla leaders, Firmenich and Vaca Narvaja (originally from right and left-wing guerrilla groups respectively, but later merged); and printed statements by the Al Fatah, Abu Jihad, and Georges Habash calling for the destruction of Israel; and described world-wide terrorist connections with the PLO; relations between the Soviet Union and the PLO; documentation on terrorist acts such as Munich, Zurich, etc; the PLO activities in Latin America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, the Southern Cone) as well as giving information on the presence of the PLO in Lebanon and anti-PLO statements by Lebanese Christians who suffered PLO occupation.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

-2-

date: December 7, 1982
to: Foreign Affairs Department
from: Jacob Kovadloff
subject: Argentina

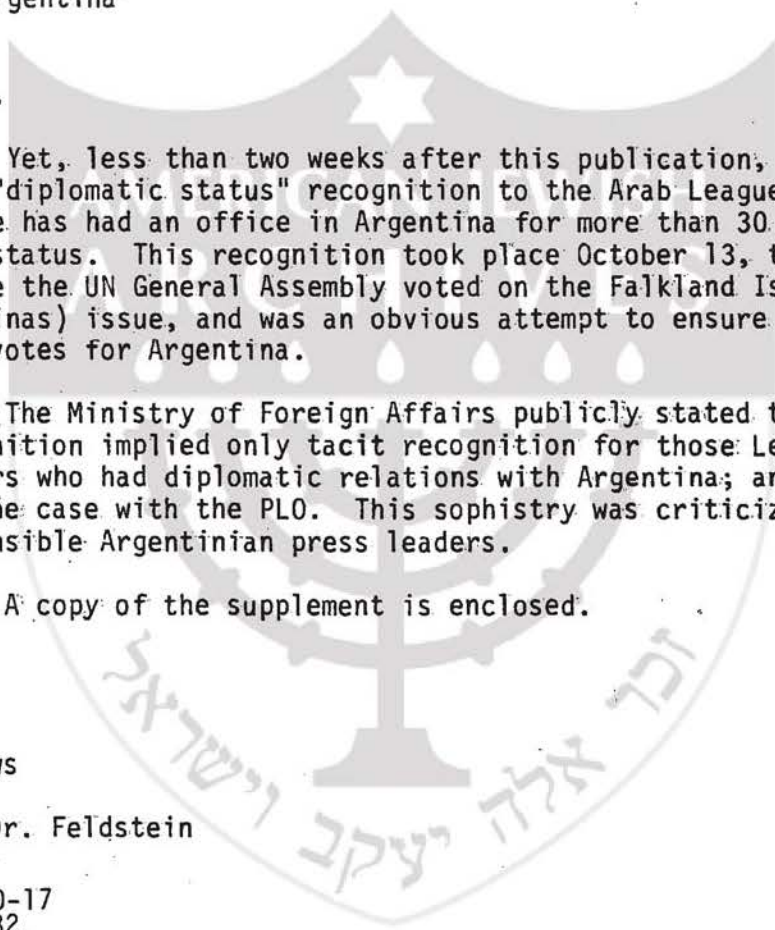
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Yet, less than two weeks after this publication, Argentina gave "diplomatic status" recognition to the Arab League. The League has had an office in Argentina for more than 30 years without this status. This recognition took place October 13, two weeks before the UN General Assembly voted on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) issue, and was an obvious attempt to ensure the maximum Arab votes for Argentina.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicly stated that this recognition implied only tacit recognition for those League members who had diplomatic relations with Argentina; and this is not the case with the PLO. This sophistry was criticized by responsible Argentinian press leaders.

A copy of the supplement is enclosed.

JK: dws
Encl.
xcc: Dr. Feldstein

82-590-17
12/7/82



4/10

MARC -

THOSE IN ATTENDANCE AT YESTERDAY'S MEETING
WITH MINISTER CAPUTO WERE:

- 1) MR. LUCIO GARCIA DEL SOLAR, ARGENTINE
AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.
- 2) MR. CARLOS NINO, ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT
ALFONSIN
- 3) MR. ALBERTO HAM, PRINCIPAL ADVISOR TO
MINISTER CAPUTO
- 4) MR. JOSE RAMON SANCHIS MUNOZ, ARGENTINE
CONSUL GENERAL, NEW YORK
- 5) MR. FRANCISCO DIEZ, PRIVATE SECRETARY TO
MINISTER CAPUTO

Dand



The American Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

DATE: April 13, 1984
TO: AJC Board of Governors
FROM: Howard I. Friedman, President

I thought it would be of value for you to have a detailed report of what transpired during our meeting with Foreign Minister Dante Caputo of Argentina and other Argentinian Government officials, this week on April 9th, at the Argentinian Mission to the U.N.

The enclosed report, prepared by Marc Tanenbaum, contains confidential information, and I would therefore ask you to treat its contents accordingly.

Your reactions or comments would be of interest, I am sure, to the members of the AJC delegation, and I would therefore appreciate your sending me any comments you have.

HIF:RPR

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CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE LEADERS
WITH ARGENTINA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, DANTE CAPUTO
AT ARGENTINA'S MISSION TO UN, APRIL 9, 1984



AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MEETING WITH
ARGENTINA'S FOREIGN MINISTER

AJC Delegation

Rita Hauser, Chair

David Gordis

Howard Greenberger

David Harris

Philip Hoffman

Jacobo Kovadloff

Richard Maass

Leo Nevas

Marc Tanenbaum

William Trosten



Argentinian Delegation

Dante Caputo, Argentina's Foreign Minister

Francisco Diez, Private Secretary to Minister Caputo

Lucio Garcia del Solar, Argentine Ambassador to the United States

Alberto Ham, Principal Advisor to Minister Caputo

Carlos Nino, Advisor to President Alfonsin

Jose Ramon Sanchis Munoz, Argentine Consul General in New York

C O N F I D E N T I A L

MEETING OF AJC LEADERS WITH ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER

Rita Hauser opened the meeting telling Foreign Minister Caputo how pleased the AJC is over the recent election of President Alfonsin and that we support firmly his determination to return Argentina to democracy and human rights. "We think of him as an 'amigo'," she said.

Mr. Caputo said he was pleased to meet with the AJC delegation (the only voluntary and Jewish group he met with apart from his schedule of official meetings in the U.S.).

Mr. Caputo said that during the last years Argentina lived in a state of violence. "We lived under terrorism of the state. These military regimes believe in fighting the devil with the weapons of the devil and Argentina became a hell." He added:

The Alfonsin government believes it is essential to face certain consequences of the past:

1) No democracy can be founded in our country without confronting forthrightly what happened in our past. Democracy is organized on moral and ethical values; a democracy based on sin is destroyed from the start.

From a political point of view, no society could produce democracy if it lives with a sector that wields force independent of the state. One cannot sleep quietly if next door there lives a Frankenstein with his door open.

2) The Alfonsin government is taking a series of measures to punish those who violated human rights.

3) We plan to make our voice heard in defense of human rights. Human rights are neither capitalist nor communist but rest in the dignity of the human person.

4) Human rights must not be used as a screen for political confrontation.

Leo Nevas - welcomed Mr. Caputo's address before the UN Human Rights Commission recently in Geneva, but said he was surprised by Argentina's vote on the Middle East resolution which was anti-Israel.

Mr. Caputo - "I gave precise instructions to our delegate that he was to vote exclusively on human rights issues, and not on any political issues. That is not the place to deal with political issues. The delegate did not follow my instructions. With regard to the vote on Israel, we have made official rectifi-

cation of our position and that rectification is being made public. We have inherited an administrative machinery that is extremely cumbersome and it will take time until we bring order into it."

Mr. Caputo then made a lengthy statement about Argentine-U.S. relations. The establishment of democracy, he said, is to contribute to security and avoid polarization. The U.S. policy in Latin America has been short-term and has led to fostering ties with authoritarian governments friendly to the U.S. Authoritarian governments are not stable, and those regimes produced those negative votes (toward the U.S. and Israel) in the UN. Former President Galtieri was received in the U.S. in a "majestic" way even though he embraced Fidel Castro. It is a paradox.

"To insure democracy, we must create a foundation for real dialogue with the U.S. The U.S. is interested in hemisphere security but forgets about democracy and development. Latin Americans speak about democracy and development and forget about security.

"As I look out the windows of New York and see all the great things you have in this great city, I am aware of how much the U.S. has to defend, the things you might lose. As Latin Americans produce things worthy to defend, they will understand security needs better. I wish to assure you, Mr. Caputo said, that we will change the 'erratic, irrational, and improvised' character of Argentina's foreign policy. We will not vote (at the UN or elsewhere) just because others want us to."

Richard Maass (a comment, not a question) - In defending our interests, the U.S. may lose its soul. Argentina may have something to teach the U.S. about reconciliation, negotiation, as you have done in relation to the Beagle Islands and Malvinas.

Rita Hauser - We are deeply concerned about anti-Semitism in Argentina. When AJC last visited Argentina, we were appalled by the gross anti-Semitic publications on the kiosks, the vicious PLO anti-Israel material. Galtieri had assured us that something would be done to curtail that, but apparently very little has been done.

Mr. Caputo called on his aide, Mr. Carlos Nino, Advisor to President Alfonsin, who identified himself as Jewish, to respond. Mr. Nino said that the Alfonsin government has drafted a series of laws rendering illegal any discrimination based on religion, race, or sex. There will be strong penalties for public discrimination or in private employment. The laws will govern behavior in the entire society. The laws will be introduced in the next week or two in the Argentinian Congress. He added that the Minister of Interior has already announced a wide scope of penalties and "administrative consequences" for discriminatory acts.

Dante Caputo - volunteered, "in my personal opinion there is no anti-Semitic feeling in the larger Argentine population. The right-wing nationalists are the main source of anti-Semitism, but they are also against everybody." Nino added that he feels there is not widespread anti-Semitism in his country.

Nino noted that there were a number of Jews in prominent positions in the Alfonsin government.

Rita Hauser asked if the Peronista party was a significant source of anti-Semitism. Caputo cautiously replied that there is some anti-Semitism among the Peronists. He indicated that a law against discrimination was introduced into the legislature in 1974 but that it was defeated.

Philip Hoffman asked about the Alfonsin policy toward terrorism and subversion. Caputo responded forthrightly: "We condemn all forms of terrorism. We have suffered from all forms of terrorism; it is not an abstraction to us, we know it firsthand. Terrorism must be solved by law."

Jacobo Kovadloff - spoke about the closing of the AJC office in Buenos Aires in June 1977 under right-wing threats, and asked if AJC could reopen its offices there.

Caputo - "You are welcome to return and reopen your offices. It would be a good symbol. The reasons which prompted the closing are finished. We not only welcome your return but pledge to give you all the means to reopen and function in Argentina."

Philip Hoffman - inquired about the current economic and financial situation of Argentina. Caputo replied: "We are in a dramatic situation. We have a great foreign debt and distortions in our domestic monetary situation. It will take us a few years to deal with it. The Argentine government will seek to pay its debt but at the same time must be able to produce the necessary wealth. We have had a deep recession during the last eight years, that caused a drop in our way of life and a drop in wages. What sense is there to try to establish a democracy in our country if there is more recession, and a drop in wages? We need to increase investments and have an economic success if democracy is to survive."

Leo Nevas commented that there was a dramatic increase in terrorism after the PLO's Yasir Arafat was received at the UN (packing a gun at his side), and following the adoption of the "obscene" Zionism is racism resolution. Caputo: "We will seek to rectify our vote on those issues. I can assure you," he added, "that the Alfonsin government both internally and externally will insist on all legal means to combat terrorism. It is an absurd contradiction (for us to fight terrorism internally and allow it to happen internationally.)"

Marc Tanenbaum said that the AJC and the American Jewish community seeks to improve ties between Argentinian and American people, but that the votes of Argentina in the UN and in other international agencies which allied Argentina with the Soviet-Arab bloc in anti-American and anti-Israel votes inhibited the improvement of relations. Caputo said he understood that and that rectification of that record is the policy of the present government. Tanenbaum then asked whether exchange visits between Argentinian and American delegations, modeled on our French and German programs, would be possible. Caputo said his government would very much welcome such exchanges and would help in their implementation.

Rita Hauser closed the meeting, saying that when President Alfonsin comes to the U.S. that the AJC would be pleased to honor him "in a singular way." She expressed gratitude for the exchange of views. Mr. Caputo expressed his appreciation for the meeting and said he looked forward to further, ongoing contact with AJC leadership.


Report prepared by

Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director
International Relations Department
American Jewish Committee
April 13, 1984

MT:ar
U039-IRD



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date April 27, 1984
to Marc H. Tanenbaum
from Jacobo Kovadloff 
subject Statements by President Alfonsín of Argentina

Most of the Argentinian press had published a cable from France Press with statements made by President Alfonsín to the French Jewish magazine L'Arche.

I found it appropriate to have it translated into English. Please find enclosed a copy of it.

Many thanks.

JK/iof
Encl.

xc: Bill Trosten
David Harris
Members of the Latin American
Sub-Committee

LA RAZON, Buenos Aires
Saturday, April 7, 1984.

ALFONSIN: "THE U.C.R. DID NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST JEWS."

Paris (AFP). Jews never felt discriminated against under radicalism, Argentina's President Alfonsin told the monthly of France's Jewish community, L'Arche, which appeared this week.

In an exclusive interview, Alfonsin stated that persons of Jewish origin had been appointed to responsible posts in the present constitutional government and in Parliament as well.

"It could not be otherwise," Argentina's president said, since Jews played a particularly important role during the settlement era, and the presence of some of them, side by side with those who fought for national emancipation, was significant.

"Jewish immigration to Argentina was one of the most important ingredients in shaping national identity, in settling the land, in literature, the arts, politics, industry, commerce, trade unionism, diplomacy," Alfonsin went on to say.

"Obviously, the Jewish community of Argentina need not justify its contribution, and neither does any other community in the country. Quite simply, it exists and represents one of the natural components in Argentina's pluralism," Alfonsin told L'Arche.

"The Unión Cívica Radical which no doubt won the support of the great majority of the Jewish community, had leaders of the stature of Moshe Levensohn, one of our party's most important theoreticians."

However, Argentina's president continued, "there is no pressure by the Jewish community in favor of such and such a party, such and such a candidate or official. Instead, it is somehow on the alert for any kind of Fascism, actual or potential, as well as any traditional authoritarian policies."

Alfonsin agreed that there were probably more Jews in his party than in others, "but this can simply be attributed to our continual appeal in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism."

"Israel's right to exist -- Alfonsin pointed out -- as a free and independent state, with secure borders, is a traditional stance of the radicals who view the Jewish state as an example of political democracy, social justice and intelligent perception of contemporary issues."

"Our stance on the Middle East situation can be synthesized in three points: we respect and defend Israel's independence and security. We believe that a solution to the complex Palestinian problem must be found. We support Lebanon's right to regain peace and its complete independence," Alfonsin told France's Jewish community's monthly.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date August 2, 1984
to Marc Tanenbaum
from Jacobo Kovadloff
subject



The enclosed confidential material just came into my hands. I think you should read it before our trip, but please don't take it with you and keep it strictly confidential as Judith asked us to.

We will have opportunity to make comments on this before arriving Argentina.

JK/iof
Encls.



LAJSA

LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH STUDIES ASSOCIATION • 2104 GEORGETOWN BLVD., ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48105 • (313) 996-2880
(313) 761-4833

July 31, 1984

Mr. Jacobo Kovadloff
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Street
New York NY 10022

AUG 2 1984

Dear Jacobo -

I have just returned from a marvelous three months in Buenos Aires. I learned a lot, met many, many people, and have now started writing up my conclusions. Some of those I met were through your suggestions, and I want to thank you for that. Amalia de Polack was one of them, and very helpful to me professionally and personally. Also, your nephew Santiago, who joined me in a round table on cultural pluralism which was sponsored by the Centro Lincoln.

Enclosed is a confidential memo that you may find interesting. It will be obvious on reading it that I would not want to have it circulated; but I send it to you for whatever interest you find in it.

I believe you will be travelling to Argentina soon yourself. I can tell you that many of your friends are looking forward eagerly to seeing you again.

Always,
Jacob



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(313) 761-4833

July 30, 1984

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF BUENOS AIRES

In the context of the substantial political and social developments that are taking place in Argentine society at large, the Jewish collectivity is also changing, though at a slower pace. The important changes can be grouped into three categories: those that are occurring within the community, those that arise from democratization of Argentine society, and those that concern the relationship between the community and the State of Israel.

I Changes within the Community

Traditional ethnic divisions appear at last to be eroding with the passage of time. Sephardic leaders express their satisfaction with the present situation, in which increasing numbers of Sephardim are acceding to positions within the AMIA and the DAIA. They attribute this to the fact that individual Sephardim are wealthy enough to make them appealing allies of the Ashkenazim. Also, formation of the Ente Coordinador Sefaradi Argentina places them in a better position to bargain with AMIA than ever before. My own guess is that dwindling membership in the kehilla has forced that body to ally with groups whose cooperation was spurned in the past.

Religion is the area in which the greatest changes are taking place. In Argentina as in Israel, a basically secular population allowed an orthodox rabbinate to gain exclusive control over the levers of religious law. The result was the increased ritualization of religion and the alienation of successive generations of Jewish youth. Several factors have now combined to bring on a religious revival of sorts. One was the military repression, which stimulated growth in the religious congregations because synagogues were among the safer places to be. Many secular parents encouraged their children to affiliate religiously during this period. A second element is the infusion of young, energetic, Spanish-speaking rabbis, graduates of the Buenos Aires Seminario Rabínico, who are now attracting children and teenagers to Reform and Conservative services. This is the first real challenge to the monopoly which orthodoxy has maintained over Argentine Jewry until now. Given the subordination of Argentine Jewry to all things Israeli, it is possible to suppose that the orthodox hegemony will not change in Argentina until it changes in Israel; however, it is at least being challenged, which was not the case a decade ago.

The third element in a changing religious picture is the departure from the country of Marshall Meyer, who was the engine of the train of religious reform. It remains to be seen whether the movement has developed enough momentum to continue forward

without him. Interestingly, there are those who argue that, absent Meyer's controversial presence, reform will now proceed at a more rapid pace.

Meanwhile, representatives of religious reform have made political gains. Brera, a new party comprised of Comunidad Bet El (Meyer's congregation), Nueva Presencia (a left of center Spanish-language weekly), and Hebraica (the foremost sports-cum-cultural center), competed in the recent AMIA election, winning 17% of the vote. Although the total was a disappointment for Brera leaders who had predicted a 25% tally, they did gain representation in the ruling circles of AMIA.

An important historical current underlies the present religious ferment within the community. Jewish secularism proved to be an inadequate response to the varied challenges posed by an unyieldingly pre-conciliar church, brutal military repression, and the disaffection of entire generations of Jews. There are thousands of Jewish families, themselves the product of a secular or even assimilated upbringing who, dismayed at the loss of their children to leftist or subversive movements, are now determined to develop a Jewish identity in the next generation of children. Some express this determination through a turn to orthodoxy (Agudot Israel, Mizrachi, the Lubavitcher and the Satmar chasidim are all flourishing). Others support religious reform (as attested by enthusiastic attendance at congregations such as Bet El, Emmanuel, Shalom, Lamrot Hakol, and the twenty or so "progressive" chavurot that are estimated to be functioning in the city). This is not to overlook or diminish secular educational achievements, such as the boom in adult education being fostered by such institutions as the Centro de Estudios Judaicos. But the new element is the turn to a specifically religious identity by various sectors of the community.

No healing agent appears to be in sight for a new division which has arisen within the collectivity. This is the alienation of those families which suffered the loss of children, siblings or parents through arrest and disappearance at the hands of the former military government. Many of these people express bitterness over what they consider to be their abandonment by the community as a whole and the DAIA in particular. For many, this hostility encompasses the State of Israel, which they inculcate in their abandonment. The consensus is that, during the ambassadorship of Ram Nirgad, the embassy was extremely concerned for the fate of the detenidos-desaparecidos; there is also agreement that many Jewish young people were spirited out of the country through the good offices of Israeli consul Moshe Perl. Following the change of government in Israel and the appointment of a new ambassador, the families claim that an iron curtain came down. Assistance was no longer forthcoming, it was difficult to get interviews with embassy officials, and compassion was in short supply. (These perceptions are offered informationally, and without my being able

personally to attest to their validity).

The relatives of the disappeared whom I interviewed were unanimous in their claim that the DAIA did nothing on their behalf. Representatives of the DAIA, on the other hand, assert that they did indeed make presentations on behalf of the detained and also to locate the disappeared, but that unfortunately their efforts had no positive result. They state that it is not their style to act publicly or to seek credit for their actions, like some people. (an allusion to Rabbi Meyer).

I am prepared to believe that both versions are true: no matter how courageous and dedicated, or how skilled at diplomacy, no one was able to shake victims loose from the jaws of Moloch. On the other hand, it is clear that personnel at the DAIA were unable or unwilling to offer compassionate support to the families of the disappeared, who faced unprecedented legal, psychological, and financial pressures. The stories of sheer rudeness are legion and too detailed to have been invented.

The booklet which DAIA published in order to support their side of the dispute actually does little to vindicate that body. The list of names published is not complete, omitting some who were in fact denounced to the DAIA. The descriptions appended to some names would provide grounds for prosecution in court. There is no record of a protest having been entered against the kidnapping of civilians, against the use of torture, or against the failure of the government to honor writs of habeus corpus. Although an extensive correspondence between the chief rabbi and the Minister of the Interior is reproduced, there is no evidence that any rabbi save Marshall Meyer and Roberto Graetz (both U.S. citizens) ever actually visited Jewish prisoners. Granted that the DAIA was as intimidated as everyone else, and as helpless as any other civilian body in the face of the armed repression, it strikes one that honest self-appraisal might have helped. The organized community opted for the security of the community as a whole, and cut loose those who had been attacked by the government. From there, it was easy to rationalize that those who were attacked were probably implicated in the subversion and deserved what they got--an opinion that continues to be expressed by persons whose families were not touched by the indiscriminate murders.

Correspondingly, some relatives of the disappeared state that they no longer wish to consider themselves as Jews, far less, Zionists. Marshall Meyer's alignment with and leadership of this group intensified the hostilities and abrasions which have surrounded his presence in Argentina for the past two decades. On the other hand, in the view of many--including non-Jewish intellectuals and human rights advocates--Meyer's public stance vindicated Judaism during Argentina's time of trial. They point to DAIA's failure to appoint a Jewish representative to the Assembly on Human Rights, a group that included representatives of all other religious groups. The political isolation of Rabbi Meyer within the Jewish community was interpreted in a very unfavorable light by non-Jews who were risking their own lives and property to defend human rights. Why had the Jewish community repudiated the one human rights leader they had?

II Democratization

This question leads directly into the issue of the relationship of the organized community to the process of democratization which is taking place in the larger society. It must be realized that, for the Jewish collectivity as for the country at large, the disappearance of the dictatorship does not imply the automatic emergence of democracy. The military relinquished power not in the face of democratic forces, but as a result of their ignominious defeat in the Falklands/Malvinas War. Democracy is a style of life that must be learned and practiced in everyday life, and Argentines--Jewish or non-Jewish--have had little practice at it in the last fifty years. In formal terms, it is possible to detect signs of democratization within the Jewish collectivity: the increased representation of Sephardim, the admission of Brera (though not, as yet, the legitimation of religious pluralism), and the increased participation of women in the AMIA and the DAIA.

On the other hand, it is not yet clear whether what we are witnessing is an opening up of the community to a free exchange of opinion, or simply the cooptation of a wider range of groups into an ongoing, closed communal leadership. For instance, Nueva Presencia, the free-wheeling, left-leaning Jewish newspaper, is widely condemned in the community, even though it offers the only source of non-official opinion (or precisely because it does). NP reflects leftist ideologies that are already cliches elsewhere on the continent, but which many Jewish leaders believe it is somehow illegitimate to ventilate in Argentina. The self-censorship which the community imposed during the repression continues into the democratic years and considerable pressure is exerted on the newspaper's editors to moderate their views.

Freedom of expression continues to be feared within the Jewish community. There remains the possibility of a return of the military and a corresponding repression which would nip off the heads of all the flowers that had bloomed meanwhile. There are of course those who argue that democracy is of little value unless people take advantage of it to express their ideas; but they seem not to have gained the ear of the organized collectivity, who continue to show a profound fear of freedom. Meanwhile, the most vicious rumors circulate in private conversation. In the absence of a free and combative press, there is no opportunity for these rumors to be ventilated and for ideas to be worked through. It should be made absolutely clear that the lack of free expression can no longer be attributed to repressive government, but to old habits which people are reluctant to shed.

What democratization of the country has permitted is the election or appointment to public office of numerous persons who are Jewish. About six Jews were elected to the Chamber of Deputies, including Cesar Jaroslowsky, subsequently elected majority leader. Senator Adolfo Gass chairs Argentina's Foreign

Relations Committee. Numerous Jews are to be found within the executive branch of government, including the secretary of state for science and technology, Dr. Manuel Sadosky; the subsecretary for information and development, Ing. Roberto Schteingart; the coordinator of the national commission on Informatica (computers), Lic. Jorge Edelman; the subsecretary of the ministry of culture, Dr. Marcus Aguinis, and many more. In one ministry, all three subsecretaries are Jews. Probably one-third of the deans appointed by the government to supervise the normalizing process at the University of Buenos Aires are Jews. Characteristically, many Jews express the fear that perhaps they are now gaining a little too much visibility.

No survey of these individuals was conducted, but as a general impression, Jews who have attained positions of public trust are not deeply engaged with Jewish life. Their profession, not their Jewish identity, is at the center of their lives. Those whom I interviewed stated that they personally had had good acceptance from their colleagues. Unlike Jews who are very involved with the community, they claim to have both Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

Many members of the Jewish community regard the advent of democracy as hazardous for Jewish survival because youth who once sought political shelter within the community will now be tempted to leave it. Those harboring this fear tend to react by fortifying either a religious or a Zionist identity in the next generation. Little consideration is given to the building of bridges between a Jewish and an Argentine identity. Among the majority orthodox, opposition to conversion remains firm. There is still a dividing line between Jewish and non-Jewish life that is far more rigid than that which prevails in the US, and many dismiss the possibility of blending the two identities.

III Relations with Israel

It has been observed before that immigrants to Latin America characteristically retain their ties to their mother countries far longer than is usual for immigrants to the US. In the case of Jews, Israel has occupied the role of mother country since 1948. The Jewish state has frequently been called on to defend Jewish individuals who have fallen out of favor with their governments. As noted above, the Israeli embassy played an important role in the early stages of the repression, and is now the target of families who feel the embassy staff subsequently abandoned them. This incident provided a very visible illustration of the fact that Israeli policy and the interests of a particular diaspora group may not always coincide.

The rest of the kehilla has now become so dependent on Israel politically, financially and morally that it is in danger of losing its identity as an independent entity. Politically, of course, the kehilla has always been organized along Israeli

party lines. The DAIA presents as its chief functions the combatting of anti-Semitism and support for Israel. It takes its cue from the embassy, lobbying the Argentine government for the support of Israel at the United Nations and elsewhere. While such activity is scarcely confined to Argentina, two elements go toward creating a situation entirely different than that which prevails in the US. For one thing, the Argentine collectivity is balanced very precariously on the threshold of Argentine nationalism, and has not yet made itself completely at home. In this context, the kehillah's identification with Zionism takes on a hostile political tone in the mouths of some observers. Secondly, the entry of Israel into western hemisphere politics as an ally of the United States clearly places Zionism in the arena of Argentine political conflict. The fact that the Argentine kehilla has placed itself on the line for Israel before it has attained a completely national identity, seems to this writer to pose a distinct hazard for the future.

Financial ties between Argentina Jews and Israel are strong. UJA contributions continue to be high, but it is an anomaly that the Jewish school system and press require subsidies from abroad in order to be able to function. Without Israeli financial and staff support, the school system as presently organized would collapse. Meanwhile, propaganda in support of aliya is strident, betraying disbelief in the future of Argentina as a place of Jewish settlement.

The pressures which have been exerted on the Jewish community of Buenos Aires in recent years have had the effect of making the community more cautious, more conservative, and tying it more closely than ever before to the policies (and politics) of Israel. In some respects, the relationship to the Jewish state is that of a colony to its metropole, with the colony yielding up annual tribute in cash and young people in exchange for defense and foreign policy leadership from the metropole. The community would do well to keep in mind that total abandonment of its will to the government of Israel will leave it at the mercy of policy makers for whom the security of Israel, not the well-being of the Jews of Argentina, is the main consideration.

Judith Laikin Elkin
Ann Arbor, MI

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date July 24, 1984
to Marc Tanenbaum
from Jacobo Kovadloff *[Signature]*
subject Meetings in Washington D. C. - 7/25/84

note

- ✓ At 11:00 a.m., meeting with Robert Morley, director of the Southern Cone Desk, State Department. Main entrance of State Dept. Room 4908.
- ✓ At 3:30 p.m., meeting with Sol Linowitz, Coudert Bros., 1 Farragut Square South, Washington D. C. 20006. Telephone (202) 783-3010.
- ✓ At 4:30 p.m., meeting with Ambassador Lucio Garcia del Solar, at the Argentinian Embassy, 1600 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington D. C. 20009. Telephone (202) 387-0705 or 10.

JK/iof

