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# Motivations and Consequences of Jewish Participation in Social Movements in Argentina

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Motivations and Consequences of Jewish Participation  
in Social Movements in Argentina

By

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of the requirements for  
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## ABSTRACT

ARUCH, JACLYN    Motivations and Consequences of Jewish Participation  
in Social Movements within Argentina

ADVISOR: Teresa Meade

The Jews of Buenos Aires form the second largest community of Jews outside of the US and Israel. Because the Argentine Jewish community has become increasingly secular over the past century, their activism pertains to economic, political, and social issues, rather than to religion. Importantly, conflicts of interest between Jews and the traditions of the Argentine society and government have helped the country demarcate its own values and the values of the Jewish community.

This thesis considers the Jewish community of Argentina, specifically within Buenos Aires from 1890 to the Present. It examines Jewish involvement in social movements and the community's identity as Argentines in a society dominated by Christians. Secular factors such as class, age, political affiliation, and nation of origin are essential reasons for the involvement of the Jewish community of Buenos Aires in social movements throughout the history of Argentina. In a country where both government and broader culture is Catholic, Jews have been restricted from positions in government or high levels of society. They have, therefore, taken to political and social activism to gain representation.

This thesis focuses on the role of Jews in facilitating political change in response to anti-Semitism. Major historical events that are considered include the anti-Semitism of the 1890s, the workers movement during the era of Perónism (1943-1955), and the period of state terror from 1976-1983, also known as the "Dirty War". It concludes with the modern experiences of the Jewish community in the wake of the bombing of the

Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires on July 18th 1994. These specific events were chosen because they mirror the waves of Jewish immigration.

The research is based on secondary analysis of Jewish society within Argentina and also on primary sources, including interviews with individuals involved in social movements and with members of influential organizations. Data is used to study the establishment of Jewish communities within the country during different periods of immigration from Europe and to trace Jews changes in status and demographics over the history of the country. Finally, this evidence is then used to consider the impact that anti-Semitism has had in facilitating the community's participation in social movements and to evaluate the repercussions of their activism.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction and Historiography**

During times of instability in Argentina's history, not dissimilar from other nations, frustrated citizens have sought scapegoats – Indians, blacks, immigrants, and most particularly, in this case, Jews. Their failure to fully assimilate into Argentine society due to differences in language, economic status, occupation, and alternative religion in a Catholic-run state, makes them an easy group to subjugate. The history of social movements in Argentina is extensive. During the depression of the 1890s, the reign of Juan Perón, 1946-1955, and the State Terror of the 1970s, economic and political instability were reoccurring factors that drove tensions in the nation which led to violence against and social movements by underrepresented groups. Jews, in particular, were one minority in Argentina that constantly involved themselves in activism in the nation. As a consequence of anti-Semitism, in an attempt to demonstrate their desires for economic, social, and political, change Jews participated in social movements in Argentina. Jews disassociated themselves from one another and only formed their own organizations to represent secular concerns because of discrimination against them by Argentina's Catholic community that prohibited them from joining other secular institutions to represent them.

Historians studying Jews in Latin American often focus on the way they identify themselves in their communities. Authors such as Judith Elkin, Eugene F. Sofer, and Victor A. Mirelman use the analysis of immigration patterns, demographics, and the rise of social movements, to explain the importance of Jewish communities within the diverse nations of Latin America. More recently, however, authors like Haim Avni, Marjorie Agosin, and Mark J. Osiel have concentrated on specific regions and their relationship economically, socially, and politically, to Jewish groups. They use this information to demonstrate the way different Jewish groups have been affected by policies and events within certain countries, and the way that these

groups have similarly influenced the policies and culture of the communities with which they are affiliated.

Focusing on specific events in the history of Argentina, current scholars have used primary sources and research about Jewish involvement throughout the history of social movements in the region to make broader claims regarding the place of Jews in Argentine society. By only viewing Jews through a general lens they fail to specifically identify features of Jewish life that have played a crucial role in establishing their identity within Argentina, they discuss aspects of Jewish life but make no conclusions about what these mean to their communities. They have mistakenly overlooked factors such as class, age, political affiliation, and nation of origin as essential reasons for the involvement of Jews in social movements throughout the history of Argentina. While contributing greatly to the study of Jews in Argentina and the impact that events in the history of the country have had on Jewish communities, scholars overlook the causes that contribute to the involvement and association of a disconnected group with political movements.

Judith Laikin Elkin's book, *The Jews of Latin America*, discusses Jewish immigration to Latin America from the 1500s to the 1980s. Elkin seeks to demonstrate how "Despite differences of nuance, Latin American Jews constitute an identifiable group, the study of which enlarges our understanding of Latin America and explains the universe of the Jewish Diaspora."<sup>1</sup> She presents the material chronologically showing waves of immigrants to the continent of South America: the first Jews 1830-1889, mass immigration 1889 to World War II, contemporary Jewish communities, agricultural communities, and economics of Jewish life. In each section, Elkin presents the reasons for immigration, the push and pull factors, and the established cultures of Jews in the individual locations where they settled. Using charts, pictures, and statistics, she

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Laikin Elkin, *The Jews of Latin America*. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1998), Xiii.

breaks down the information about Jewish migration into the various countries within Latin America so that it is easy to compare and contrast the patterns over time.

In writing about the different factors that influenced migration, Elkin helps to illustrate the divisions among Jews and the importance of acknowledging their diversity, despite their association with a religion that unifies them all. Moreover, by writing about many countries, rather than just one, Elkin is able to demonstrate how Jewish identity changed depending on location and experiences in each nation. For example, she writes that in the years before WWI, the “majority of immigrants gravitated to those countries that, out of a desire to encourage immigration, separated Church and State. Individual Jews, however, settled for idiosyncratic reasons in every one of the republics, including those with the most limited vision of religious freedom.”<sup>2</sup> She notes those factors that were most prevalent in defining the relationship between Jews and other groups within countries, as well as their role in defining and participating in political, economic, and social movements. While not focused specifically on Argentina, Elkin provides a useful foundation from which to compare other works. By relating this general information to more specific events and primary sources about Jews in Argentina, the information can provide evidence to support certain claims regarding what kind of Jews were living in the regions during significant events, and the contributing reasons that may have driven them to become involved.

In *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*, Elkin and Gilbert W. Merkx use a collaboration of essays by different authors who presented at the 1984 Research Conference on the Jewish Experience in Latin America, to explore Jewish identity and map its role in Latin America. The essays provide a more analytical look into past research done on the subject. As Elkin suggests in her later work, Jews are subject to national changes. Rather than being resilient

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<sup>2</sup> Elkin, 53.



to the successes and failure of economic, political, and social transformation in Latin America, Jews tend to be significantly affected by the conflicts between other groups within their countries. The editors include works by different writers in order to present the many points of view of the most significant factors that influence Jewish identity in Latin America as a whole and in individual countries. They exemplify the ways that class, economics, and religion are important in explaining why Jews have been so uniquely affected and how “factors that have led to the decline of Jewish communities will remain in place and why, the dilemma of Latin American Jewry remains inextricably tied to the dilemma of Latin American development.”<sup>3</sup> For example, Robert M. Levine focuses on adaptive strategies of Jews and determines how they vary throughout the entire continent depending on the country of settlement and origin of Jewish immigrants. He claimed, that Southern Cone Jews “were received as elements of immigrant waves, a function of the rapid urbanization and social transformation of that region. Elsewhere, Jews remained for the most part in enclave communities, isolated and with relatively unchanging social patterns.”<sup>4</sup> Leonardo Senkman, on the other hand, focuses on Argentina and writes of “three intellectual currents that deeply affected the process through which immigrants were acculturated: laicism, positivism, and cultural nationalism”<sup>5</sup> Although very different, both essays focus on the similar topic of outside influences in determining the role of Jewish communities within countries.

Unlike other works, the essays clearly state reasons economic, political, and religious reasons explain different identities that have shaped Jewish communities, such as occupational alienation, emphasis on education, and the establishment of Israel. Elkin and Merx organize

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Laikin Elkin, “Introduction,” in Judith Laikin Elkin, Gilbert W. Merx, eds., *The Jewish Presence in Latin America* (Massachusetts: Allen & Unwin, 1987) 10.

<sup>4</sup> Elkin and Merx, eds. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Elkin and Merx, eds. 256.

articles from a general view to more specific ones, shifting from broader historical issues that played a role in Jewish life, to evaluating particular aspects of Jewish identity with individual nations. Rather than focusing on how migration and immigration have produced certain aspects of Jewish culture in different Latin American countries, the works uniquely demonstrate how features of Latin American culture have forced Jews to become an invisible community, a community that is ignored by more influential sectors, and that is hidden under more socially acceptable features of their country. Importantly, in noting those factors that affect Jews, the authors consider those factors that are most influential to non-Jewish sectors of Latin American societies.

Primary sources about Jewish experiences in Argentina give evidence supporting the claims of historians. Writers contribute to secondary sources by providing evidence to support the conclusions made by historians about the Jewish identity and what has shaped their experiences as Jews in Latin America. Books including, Patricia Marchak's *God's Assassins*, Marjorie Agosin's *Taking Root*, and the edited volume, *Memory, Oblivion, and Jewish Culture in Latin America*, are firsthand accounts of what life was like for Jewish immigrants and their families.

Marjorie Agosin's writings illustrate what it meant for Jews to live in a society that was not fully receptive to their culture and whose image in popular culture varied from those real experiences of Jews in Argentina. Agosin, however, displays the separate way that Jews connected to their country of origin versus the way that they assimilated to the Latin American country that was not receptive to their lifestyle and religion because of its affiliation with the Catholic Church and the composition of its citizens which is made up of mostly other immigrant groups. She also demonstrates the importance of sharing stories and the role of memory in

establishing a continuous and respected identity. She states, “This anthology focuses on how these women with varied experiences and professions have been able to construct a *self* that has many selves; how, through the experience of displacement, these women have been able to construct a self.”<sup>66</sup> In reading these essays, it is apparent that in order to form an identity within Argentina and other Latin American countries, many Jews had to give up the lifestyle, religious connection, and identity they had brought with them from Europe. Similarly, Patricia Marchak’s book contains firsthand accounts that illustrate the conflict Jews faced within Argentina, however, it focuses primarily on the ways that this was displayed during the Dirty War and therefore the work is mainly composed of stories from the Disappeared or family members of Disappeared individuals.

The period known as the Dirty War (1976-1983) was an era of state sponsored terror led by the military run government in ruling in Argentina. In an attempt to gain control over the leftist groups, like the Montoneros and the People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP), the government staged attacks against liberal sectors of society. They kidnapped, tortured, and in some cases murdered students, professors, lawyers, intellectuals, mainly people who were associated with liberal ideologies, who they assumed had connections to subversive groups. This group of taken individuals is known as the “Disappeared” in Argentina because there was rarely any record kept of their arrest, detention, or of their current status.

Although it is a controversial term this thesis uses the Dirty War to categorize this era in Argentine history. The term “Dirty War” originated from the military junta itself. In defense of their actions they claimed that the country was in a state of war against terrorists and thus their actions were justified. The Argentine community, however, disregards this excuse and criticizes

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<sup>66</sup> Marjorie Agosin, *Taking Root: Narratives of Jewish Women in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) Xvi.

the term as a way for the government to justify the unlawful actions it took. Further study on the subject has demonstrated that the leftist groups, in fact, had little power or support in the country or internationally and the acts of the government were not in defense in a time of a Civil War and were baseless. Still, many of the military leaders who issued the orders against civilians remain free from conviction and the status of many of the Disappeared remains unknown.

Unlike other works which describe the experiences of Jewish immigrants, Marchak's book recounts the experiences of individuals born in Argentina and who identify with it over the country of origin which their ancestors immigrated from. Marchak states, "we included among our interviewees a number of persons who identified themselves as Jews, and we asked them whether they thought Jews had been especially singled out during the repression. The Answer was 'probably not,' with the additional response that if Jews were caught and identified as Jews, they were probably subjected to particularly harsh treatment."<sup>7</sup> She goes on to explain, "we had no difficulty contacting Jews as well as Catholics, Indeed, several went out of their way to ensure that we met survivors who had been young and involved in leftist organizations during the 1970s...So Jews were well represented in the final sample."<sup>8</sup> Her book brings to light the ways that Jews were targeted by the government and even by other citizens because their religion, even though they regarded themselves as citizens fighting to benefit their country rather than on behalf of their religious community.

Haim Avni's *Argentina & the Jews: History of Jewish Immigration* varies from other works on the subject because it identifies the issue of Jews as a divided group. Like Agosin he focuses on the way Jews had to change to live in a society that was hostile to their values and culture. He focuses on the notion that most Jews viewed Argentina as just a temporary

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Marchak, 14.

settlement as they waited for the opportunity for countries, with more established Jewish communities and with more religious tolerance, to open their doors to Jewish immigrants. He analyzes periods of immigration, the traits that Jews who travelled to Argentina during specific eras and the oppression they experienced there, in order to highlight their disassociation from outside communities. He stresses that although Jews may have settled in Argentina for extended amounts of time they never intended to stay. Anti-Semitism and conflicts that surrounded them were only some of the reasons that Jews chose Argentina as a stopping ground rather than a permanent settlement en route to countries that were more established and accepting of Jews, such as the United States. Although organizations in Europe set up settlements in Argentina and supported immigration to the region, Avni writes, “During the first decade of the nineteenth century, very few Jews crossed the ocean; until 1880, intercontinental Jewish migrants numbered about 200,000, and they headed almost exclusively for the United States. Later, when the pogroms in Russia unleashed the first large wave of Jewish emigrants, it was still the United States that attracted them.”<sup>9</sup> In addition to the United States, Jews also looked to settle outside of Argentina to countries like Brazil, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Victor A. Mirelman in his book, *Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1930* and Eugene F. Sofer in *Pale to Pampas*, write more specifically about Argentina and the Jewish experience in a society surrounded by anti-Semitism, including the discrimination Jews faced during major political and social transitions in the history of the country. The two author’s conclusions do diverge because they analyze two different types of communities. While Mirelman focuses on Jews of many different nationalities, Sofer identifies those Jews from Russia, who primarily attempted to work

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<sup>9</sup>Haim Avni, *Argentina & the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 197.

agriculturally in Argentina, and then moved to Buenos Aires, where they became involved in the trade union movement.

Importantly, Mirelman goes into great detail to explain the lives of Jews and the important changes that occurred in Jewish society from generation to generation. He states, “In this essay we shall describe the changing façade of the Jewish community in Buenos Aires during its crystallization period, up to 1930.”<sup>10</sup> He helpfully shows the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, analyzing the institutions the Jews created in Argentina, and studying the differences of Argentine-born Jews compared to their ancestors who emigrated from Europe. Drawing on primary sources mainly from veteran Jewish organizations in the country to support his claims, Mirelman illustrates the acculturation of Jewish groups in Argentina and the way both their families and the nation have reacted to their presence there.

Uniquely, in *Pale to Pampas*, Eugene F. Sofer supports Mirelman’s conclusions though analyzing a much smaller group of Jews who emigrated from Russia. Like Mirelman, Sofer uses information from Jewish organizations, specifically the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, Yiddisher Wisnshaftlecher Institut Archives Argentina, and the Archivo General de la Nación, to support his claims about groups, similar to other immigrants, who traveled from the Pale community in Russia to the Argentine pampas and then to Buenos Aires. Sofer first explains what the Pale settlement was in Russia, the role it played for Jews, and its role in their immigration. He states, “Most Russian Jews lived in a region called the Pale of Settlement, consisting of 362,000 square miles and including portions of Poland, Lithuania, White Russia, southwestern Russia, and southern Russia.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, although Jews were a minority group

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<sup>10</sup> Victor A. Mirelman, *A Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1930: In Search of an Identity* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Eugene F. Sofer, *From Pale to Pampa: A Social History of Jews in Buenos Aires* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 16.

within the Pale, most Russian Jews resided within it. “In the 1897 census, the tsar’s government counted 5,215,805 people who claimed to be Jewish, 94 percent of whom lived in the Pale.”<sup>12</sup>

Hence, when Jews began to emigrate from Russia, it was mainly from this area.

In *From Pale to Pampa*, Sofer’s purpose “is to establish links between the occupational and residential mobility of eastern European Jews and the larger patterns of Argentine social and economic history and also to tie these measures of mobility to Argentine politics.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, what he argues was in reaction to the media attention and he believes there was widespread violence against Jews during the Dirty War. By focusing on a small group of individuals, Sofer uniquely gives insight into the experiences of many different types of Jews living in Argentina, including Zionist, Ashkenazi, and Sephardic Jews.

Iain Guest’s *Behind the Disappearances*, diverges from the other literature on Argentine Jews and immigration and specifically emphasizes the roles of Jews and the Dirty War or “El Proceso”. Guest uses a general discussion of the reaction of other nations to El Proceso to illustrate the ways that experiences in Argentina factored into international politics. In doing so, Guest notes the significant role that Jews played in connecting Argentina to other countries because of the family members of the Disappeared that resided outside of Argentina. Additionally, he uses the case of Jacobo Timmerman, a Jewish editor who was imprisoned during the dictatorship, as an example to illustrate the role of the government in provoking anti-Semitism during the Dirty War and comparing his torture and disappearance to the Holocaust.

In *Mass Atrocity, Ordinary Evil, and Hannah Arendt: Criminal Consciousness in Argentina’s Dirty War*, Mark Osiel “examines the Dirty War in light of Arendt’s ideas about the kind of people who implement bureaucratized mass atrocity and about the social conditions

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<sup>12</sup> Sofer, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Sofer, ix.

eliciting such conduct from them.” In discussing the case of Adolf Eichmann and other war criminals in the context of Hannah Arendt’s prosecution, Osiel illustrates the ways that different groups were targeted and incorporated into the Dirty War. By doing so, he provides a different point of view of how Jews as a community, though considered different by each other, were scrutinized and attacked as a collective group.

Articles on Jews in Argentina tend to specifically concentrate on their relationship to specific social, economic, or political institutions. Lawrence Bell in his essay, “Bitter Conquest: Zionists Against Progressive Jews and the Making of Post War Jewish Politics in Argentina,” discusses how the Jewish population effected and was affected by the populist movement in Argentina. He examines three rival organizations of Jews, the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas, the Organización Israelita Argentina, and the Institutio Judio Argentino de Cultura e Información, and uses their interaction to demonstrate how Jews were relatively divided and detached from politics before the era of Perón.

Juan Perón’s campaign for office was aimed at rallying the support of immigrants and during his fight for office he focused more on gaining the support of non-Jewish immigrants. During his term in office 1946-1953, his main ally between him and the workers union was strongly opposed to Jewish involvement in labor movements. “Hussein Triki in 1964 announced that the Confederacion General del Trabajo (CGT) had subscribed to an anti-Jewish act promoted by the Arab League, forcing the CGT to deny it through the press.”<sup>14</sup> Although Jews were not connected to the labor unions of the CGT, they did have their own labor organizations to protect their rights. Thus, Perón, although not in support of Jewish immigration into the country, did attempt to form a bridge between the Jewish community and his own administration.

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<sup>14</sup> Victor A. Mirelman “Attitudes Toward Jews in Argentina” *Jewish Social Studies* 37:3 (1975), 214 ([www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)).



In particular, Perón sought to attract Jewish support for his ‘New Argentina’ in order to change his international reputation as a Nazi-fascist sympathizer and as part of his larger effort to create an image of universal support in the country.

Bell compares the conflict between the three organizations in an effort to study divisions within the Jewish community and the way different Jews identified. He claims, “Jew’s response to Perónism was dominated by a fundamental interplay between an ‘external arena of Argentine national politics and an ‘internal’ arena of Jewish communal politics.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, Jews were forced to go outside of community politics and intervene in state politics.

In the essay, “Argentina Jews and their Institutions,” Seymour B. Liebman analyzes the culture of Jews of various nationalities based on their institutions. He claims, “If the strength of a Jewish community is indicated by the number of its institutions, the Jewish community of Buenos Aires should be one of the most vital. A prominent porteño Jew is reported to have said, ‘We live under an illusion that we have great Jewish vitality because of the fact that there is an overabundance of public meetings, board of directors’ meetings, and rallies, all more or less spectacular.’”<sup>16</sup> By examining Jews based on nationality, he demonstrates how the divisiveness of Jewish populations has alienated third generation Jews and weakened the general community. He makes the rather dramatic claim that, “unless there are radical changes in Jewish life—more respect for religion, a move for the masses to admit the existence of shortcomings in the communal life and structure, a move toward integration into Argentine life, and elevation of cultural standards, and a call for non-Argentine experts for aid, then there would be a demise of

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<sup>15</sup>Lawrence Bell, “Bitter Conquest: Zionists Against Progressive Jews and the Making of Post War Jewish Politics in Argentina” *Jewish History* 17:3 (2003), 7 ([www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)).

<sup>16</sup> Seymour B. Liebman, “Argentine Jews and their Institutions” *Jewish Social Studies* 43:3 (1981), 2 ([www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)).

Judaism within forty years in Argentina.”<sup>17</sup> Liebman emphasizes this point as well as the failure of Jews to rise to higher levels of society because of their disassociation with the Catholic dynamics of the nation, and thus, their negligible influence in the positions of power in Argentine society, especially in politics and workers unions. Although Liebman claims the religious emphasis of the Judaism may be eliminated in Argentine society, other works show the secularization of the Jewish community will have little effect on the contribution of Jewish society in Argentina. The organizations and social values of Argentine Jews still are prominent features of Jewish life while the religious life of Jews in the country was never characteristic of the population.

My research will examine the evolution of Jews and their involvement in social movements throughout the history of Argentina. I focus on four specific eras of immigration and four major social movements that paralleled waves of Jews. I use secondary and primary sources to analyze Jewish immigration and political movements to Argentina in the colonial period, in 1830-1889, in 1889 to World War I, and in contemporary communities beginning through the years leading up to WWII. I will demonstrate how Jews involved themselves in activism in politics, economics, and society based on their affiliations with their class, occupation, and other groups, rather than their religion. I will highlight the fact that in order to assimilate and identify within the culture of a mainly Catholic, anti-Semitic society, Jews rarely unified on the basis of their religion and instead formed communities due to their relationship with other factors.

In the first chapter, I will discuss the composition of Jews in Latin America. I will highlight the demographics of urban and agricultural communities in order to illustrate the dynamics within different kind of connections between Jews in different areas. This I hope will provide a broader picture when comparing these statistics to demographics of Jews in Argentina

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<sup>17</sup> Liebman,315.

and determine specific occupations, ages, and other significant features. The information should give light on what types of activities the Jews in Argentina are associated with, how they interact with other individuals inside their secular groups.

Next, I will discuss immigration patterns throughout Argentina. This information will consist of statistics explaining why Jews immigrated to Latin America and certain communities in Argentina, where Jews came from, and what they hoped to find when they migrated to these places. In making certain claims, I hope to provide a foundation to explain certain attributes of Jews and how these relate to their identity and the affiliation with the community.

Lastly, I will discuss Jewish activism in Latin America. I will demonstrate in what ways Jews participate in political and social movements in both urban and country settings and for what reasons they involve themselves in conflicts. More importantly, I will show how Jews mainly are incorporated into activism for secular reasons. I will use the history of Argentina to compare modern experiences and focus on the impact their acts have had on the country. In my conclusion I will show why this information is important to the history of Argentina. Ultimately, I will show how the discussion of Argentina relates to the United States and international politics.

## **Chapter II**

### **Jewish Immigration to Latin America**

The motives for Jewish immigration to Latin America mirrored the secular values that appear in their communities in Argentina and in the organizations they form in the midst of social movements. There are four main time periods in which masses of Jews migrated to Latin America: the colonial period, 1830-1889, 1889 to World War I, and contemporary communities beginning through the years leading up to WWII. Evidence shows that though very few Jews settled in Latin America during the first century of the continent's independence, these numbers set the foundations for the waves of immigrants during the nineteenth and twentieth-century migrations that formed contemporary Latin America.<sup>18</sup> The era in which Jews immigrated, regions that they settled in, and their nations of origin can be used in understanding the disunity of the Jewish communities that formed in urban areas. The secular ideologies of the country that they settled in, the existing disconnection from their religion, and the methods of assimilation that Jews used were determined by and revealed in the environment they lived in.

In each country of Latin America, the Jewish experience has varied. It has been uniquely affected by those communities around them. Moreover, the Jewish communities within each country diverge based on their country of origin, their reasons for immigrating, their occupation and the connection they develop toward the place where they have settled. Despite the way that they were viewed by outside communities, the Jewish society that settled in Latin America was divided and secular. Even early on, they attempted to blend into the region by mimicking the traditions of the countries where they resided. In the past hundred years, large numbers of Jews left Europe and moved Latin America.

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<sup>18</sup> Elkin, 22.

Of sixty-five million people who emigrated from Europe in a century and half, about four million were Jews. This represents about 6 percent of the entire emigration from Europe. The intensity of Jewish emigration was, therefore, three to four times as great as that of the general emigration from Europe. If we consider only those sections of Europe from which Jews emigrated, i.e., middle, Eastern, and Southern Europe, the intensity of Jewish emigration is not three to four times, but six to seven times as greater as that of the general emigration.<sup>19</sup>

So many Jews came from Europe due to war, economic and political persecution, and the inability achieve the standard of living that they hoped to obtain, that the types of Jews who settled in Latin America came from wide-ranging social and economic statuses. One thing that they all shared, however, was a disconnection from the religious practice of their ancestors.

The earliest Jewish settlers in Latin America arrived during the Inquisition. Jews left Europe due to the discrimination against them. Although the governments and churches of Europe targeted them because of their religion, Jews who left Europe during this era were forced out because of the inability to participate in other sectors of society, not due to their desire to practice Judaism. Jews sought a place where they could live amongst other individuals of their country without being cast out based on their differences. In an effort to escape the pressures of the government and the Church, a caste of people known as conversos—people who were no longer Jews, but who were not accepted as Catholics either, fled to the New World.

In Latin America, the Inquisition moved to the Americas and Jews could not escape the mentality of it. Cultural values of non-Jews and governments still stressed the importance of *limpieza del Sangre*, or “pure blood” that was the foundation of the Inquisition. While they did not identify as Jews completely others still viewed them as such. Like other individuals who did not fit the criteria of *limpieza del sangre*, the first Jewish settlers were kept from government and

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<sup>19</sup> Elkin, 28.

military positions, obtaining higher levels of education, certain professional careers, and rights of burial and marriage.<sup>20</sup>

When the countries of Latin America declared their independence from their colonial rulers, it opened new opportunities for larger numbers of Jews to migrate to the region. Within out changes in the political infrastructure of the Latin American colonies, Jews could not have settled in the region. Thus the changes that occurred during the transition from dependence to autonomy, legitimated the presence of Jews, yet never led to rejection of the belief system that had formerly mandated their exclusion.<sup>21</sup> Although the governing bodies and the citizens in the colonies were not entirely tolerant of Jews and the traditions of the mother country still existed, eventually a society more disconnected from the harsh values of Europe emerged. Similar to the histories of other colonies, the distance from the churches in Europe and the indirect control of the ruling government allowed Jews to live more comfortably and anonymously than they could have in Europe under the pressures of the Inquisition.

### **Chile:**

Between the years of 1830-1889, Jews settled in a variety of countries including, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, these countries resume a large population of Jews. Although numerically the initial number of Jewish immigrants during the 1830s was small, its importance was not inconsequential. These Jews were the immigrants who tested the conditions for life on the continent and who realized that there was a possibility for the settlement of Jews in larger numbers.

In Chile, from the years of independence to around 1889, the need for a large work force, especially in the mines, and the theory that prosperity was a function of the free flow of capital

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<sup>20</sup> Elkin, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Elkin, 25.

and labor across international boundaries promoted immigration. Like many other Latin America countries, Chileans attempted to attract European immigrants. The belief that the European was genetically superior to the Mestizo, people of mixed race, and the desire to infiltrate their communities with whiter groups led the country to open its doors to Jews, and those who arrived came from all over Europe. “Sephardim came to Chile in family groups from Smyrna, Istanbul, Monastir and Salonika, removed from their ancient homes by a combination of economic and discriminatory measures. Most settled in Valparaiso, where they were joined by individuals from Jerusalem, Damascus, Beirut, and islands of the Aegean.”<sup>22</sup> Despite where they come from, however, many Jews had similar experiences to one another within their new communities in Chile.

Chile was not very inviting for Jewish immigrants and Jews rarely identified with, lost, or hid their religion. Church and State were not legally separated until 1925, thus, cultural isolation led many individual Jews to convert to Catholicism either to conform voluntarily to prevailing social norms or more specifically to marry. Thus, although it was unlikely that the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews would connect, in the face of isolation, since they were not accepted into the communities outside of their own religion, Jews of separate backgrounds created their own integrated institutions. Elkin writes, “The small numbers of Sephardim led quickly to intermarriage with Ashkenazim and the formation of unified houses of worship.”<sup>23</sup> In later years, however, unlike countries that ultimately would develop larger Jewish communities there was no attempt to organize mass Jewish immigration and the communities remained small and confined to only a few major Chilean cities.

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<sup>22</sup> Elkin, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Elkin, 35.

## **Mexico:**

Jews who settled in Mexico were initially introduced to a life of secrecy and political chaos. There was no initial wave of immigration from any one country, or an organized effort to attract immigrants, as there had been in other countries. The religious identities of people other than Catholic were infrequently documented.

In 1843, the names of ten persons who may have been Jewish can be discerned in Mexican naturalization records. Of these individuals, five came from Germany, three from France, one from Poland, and one from Turkey. They gave their occupation as comerciante and probably itinerant peddlers. What religious life they led had to be clandestine because the holding of non-Catholic religious services was illegal.<sup>24</sup>

Having left countries where their religion was less than favorable, and having experienced persecution throughout Europe for centuries, Jews in Mexico were not willing to openly practice or share their religious views. In Mexico during the 1850s, fear governed Jewish behavior and evidence of Jewish communal activity was not recorded. Thus, no Jewish organizations were created nor were Jewish communities set up for fear of being persecuted by their neighbors, what religious practices they did observe were done underground.

From 1870 onward, the number of Jewish residents increased in Mexico during Jose De la Cruz Porfirio Diaz's governing policy of "Liberty, Order, and Progress." In Mexico, the division within the entire Jewish community was obviously shown. Here, Jews rarely identified with each other and categorized themselves based on their country of origin. Most prominent among these were Alsatians, almost all who considered themselves French. "For them religion was an accident of birth, a defect educated men should overcome, though a certain religious sentiment was not inappropriate for women and the lower classes."<sup>25</sup> These Jews, eager to assimilate to life outside of Jewish communities, disassociated themselves from the Sephardic

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<sup>24</sup> Elkin, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Elkin, 38.



and Arab Jews called Turcos. “Between this low-status community with its attachment to religious norms and the high-status French and Alsatian community of the capital, characterized by its disconnection from Jewish life, there was no contact at all.”<sup>26</sup> Eventually, the political instability made Mexico an unattractive country for Jewish immigrants to continue to settle in.

### **Brazil:**

After it gained independence, Brazil was the earliest country to open its doors to Jewish immigrants. While the Imperial Constitution of 1824 recognized Roman Catholicism as the official religion, it guaranteed the right to exercise other religions in private.

Jews began to emigrate from Morocco to Amazonia shortly after independence was declared. They entered local politics and held municipal offices. With the arrival of additional Sephardim from Africa, Syria, and Arabia, other congregations were formed in Bahia, Manaus, Ceara, and Rio de Janeiro, yielding a contemporary fourth generation of Brazilian Jews.<sup>27</sup>

Later, during the latter part of Dom Pedro’s reign (1825-1891), due to the Franco-Prussian War, the most significant number came from Alsace and Lorraine.

Greater numbers of Jews went to Brazil due to the political changes that occurred in the later 1800s. The drafting of the republican constitution brought about the separation of Church and State and guarantee of religious freedom. This declaration of religious freedom was important not because it allowed Jews to freely practice Judaism, but instead because allowed them to freely move into different spheres of society without facing discrimination or legal restrictions. Jews were less likely to settle in a country where they were not identified as citizens. “Thus, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Jewish immigration to Brazil increased in numbers while becoming more disparate in origin. Immigrants continued to come from North Africa and Western Europe, but to these were added Jews from countries of the eastern

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<sup>26</sup>Elkin, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Elkin, 41.

Mediterranean as well as from Russia and adjacent countries of Eastern Europe. These immigrants organized themselves into *landsmannschaften* on the basis of country of origin.”<sup>28</sup> These original communities would eventually be imitated in other Latin American countries and would form the modern societies that remain in Brazil today.

### **Argentina:**

Modern Jewish communities in Argentina encompass the largest number of Jews outside of the United States. Like Brazil, over the course of Argentine history mass immigration of Jews into the country has occurred. According to modern statistics, there are currently over 250,000 Jews residing in the country, roughly based on those individuals who do and do not openly identify as Jewish.<sup>29</sup> Argentina built a reputation of openness toward immigrants which allowed this modern statistic to transpire. During the period of colonization by Spain and Portugal, Jews moved from Europe into the region of Latin America that would later become Argentina. Early on in Argentine history, government leaders such as Sarmiento and the government policies of the Rosas Period (1829-1832 and 1835-1852) encouraged Europeans to settle within the nation. Sarmiento stated, “English, Portuguese, and other foreigners who are not at war with us, can move to this country and will enjoy all rights of citizenship; and those who dedicate themselves to crafts and the cultivation of the countryside will be protected by the government.”<sup>30</sup> Their reasons for desiring immigrants were similar to other Latin America countries, agricultural labor, and purity of race. Likewise, for immigrants, especially Jews, more than any other country of Latin America, Argentina seemed to offer an optimal combination of religious toleration, strong government support for immigration, industrial employment, and land for farming. Thus, as a

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<sup>28</sup>Elkin, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Sofer, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Sofer, 30.

result, Argentina attracted enormous numbers of immigrants. The composition of communities, outside of the elite, included people born in countries outside of the continent.

There were, however, two flaws in the expectations of non-Jewish Argentine citizens in allowing immigrants to flood into their country. While Argentines did desire immigrants, they believed that it would replace the old inherited social structure with a model inspired by more modernized societies. They sought Western European immigrants to enter their country just as those who had previously immigrated to more modernized nations. They were, however, unsuccessful. Foreigners come from Eastern Europe, where the impact of the industrial revolution was just beginning to be felt. Northerners, already involved in industry, tended to choose the United States, both because of its higher industrialization and because there were elements of cultural affiliation dating back to the colonial period. Argentina had its doors closed during former periods of immigration by the more desirable groups in Western Europe and instead, during this time, it attracted immigrants from other parts of Europe. Similarly, immigrants, especially Jews, believed that migrating to Argentina would provide them with the opportunity to own their own land and participate in levels of society where they had formally been banned.

Despite their great numbers within the area, Jews were still a minority compared to the entire population in the Pale of Settlement and were subject to many restrictions by the Russian government which persuaded them to leave Europe. Tsar Alexander III's May Laws "forbade Jews from settling in villages on the outskirts of cities and towns, from acquiring real property in rural areas, and from conducting business on Sundays and on Christian holidays. Urban Jews had no choice but to remain in cities and rural Jews were forced into urban areas."<sup>31</sup> Thus, although Jews were used to being subject to discrimination, increasing laws against them kept

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<sup>31</sup> Sofer, 17.

them from fulfilling basic needs like land ownership, education, and occupation. Hence, it was these factors, rather than religious intolerance, that pushed them out of Europe and into Latin America.

Most of this Jewish migration from the Pale of Settlement to Argentina, rather than to another country, can be attributed to the actions of Baron Hirsh, who organized and established communities of Jews in Argentina. Hirsch was a philanthropist who focused his contributions on providing relief for impoverished Jews and those Jews living in persecution. He established the Jewish Colonization Association, an organization whose goal was to, “accomplish the moral and physical regeneration of the Jews through agricultural labor.”<sup>32</sup> Hirsh worked with the governments of Russia and of Argentina to transport Jews from Russia to a colony on the pampas of Argentina where they could farm wheat. In 1889, he initiated the first organized immigration of Jews, numbering more than 800 individuals and established an agricultural colony in Santa Fe Province. Later, as shown on Table 1.22, the map of “Jewish Colonization Association Colonies in Argentina and Brazil,” the JCA and Hirsch guided Jews to these scattered colonies dispersing them throughout the pampas.

The national census of 1895 enumerated 6,085 Israelitas, a figure considered by one scholar to be a ‘serious underestimate.’ The majority of these Israelitas, 5,890 were foreign-born. Only 753 of them were living in Buenos Aires; the rest were trying their luck as farmers under the patronage of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in the provinces of Entre Rios, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires. By 1909, when JCA conducted a census, 19,361 Jews were living in the agricultural colonies, 16,589 in the capital, and about 13,000 more in the cities of Rosario, Santa Fe, Carlos Casares, La Plata, Cordoba, Mendoza, and Tucuman, bringing the total of Jews in Argentina to just under 50,000.<sup>33</sup>

Although many Jews did not plan on remaining in the farmland provided by the JCA, and were frustrated by the fact that they were not able to own the land they farmed. The organization

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<sup>32</sup> Elkin, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Sofer, 54.

provided them with a jumping off point in order to establish their children in the country. It was these future generations that would later move into the cities and populate the urban sphere of Argentina.

World War I brought an influx of Jews from Europe into Argentina because of the political and social chaos in Europe, not because of the appeal of Argentina's immigration policy. The benefit that the entry of immigrants had, however, did not last and Argentine politics continued their effort to mimic the policies of larger countries throughout the West. "Rising xenophobia and the compelling example of the United States, however, caused Argentina also to curtail immigration, 1923 was the last year in which a sizable number of Jews were legally admitted."<sup>34</sup> Thus, throughout WWII and into the modern decade immigration policies plagued the efforts of Jewish immigrants to be admitted into Argentina and it was the groups that had settled there previously who established the dynamics of Jewish communities and the relationship between modern Jews and non-Jews in Argentina.

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<sup>34</sup> Elkin, 74.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Jewish Institutions in Argentina**

Changes in areas of Jewish settlement and migration changed the composition of Jewish occupations within the city. The shift came as a result of internal migration and the greater tendency of subsequent immigration waves to settle directly in the Buenos Aires region.

Argentina's agricultural policy promoted organizational ownership of land, not individual ownership and the result was to increase the concentration of land ownership and made it more difficult than before for a poor family to buy land of their own. The desires for independence and ownership deterred Jews from remaining on farms. "The rigid and concentrated agrarian structure made it all but impossible for individual settlers to become small scale independent farmers... and the low levels of productivity in agriculture in Latin America did not make it an attractive sector for the Jewish immigrants."<sup>35</sup> Thus, Jews were more enticed to leave the pampas in order to become owners of their own lands, this shift effected labor patterns. As a result, the industrial structure of the city began to change, particularly among the growing Jewish population of Greater Buenos Aires. Agriculture diminished among settlers and their children left for urban centers and artisanry became a widespread profession.<sup>36</sup>

Within these areas Jewish groups were able to rise in status, participate in local politics, and join a broad range of professions. Moreover, the consistent immigration has changed the demographics and locations where Jewish families have resided permanently from the pampas, to the more Western barrios (neighborhoods) of the city of Buenos Aires. Clear nationalistic and cultural values also played a role in the stability and experience of Jews who emigrated from different countries, during different periods of time, and for various reasons. Hence, as

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<sup>35</sup> Syrquin, 117.

<sup>36</sup> Syrquin, 120.

generations pass, and waves of different Jewish groups travelled into Argentina, more assimilated Jews moved into cities, while newcomers took their places in the less established areas.

### **Ethnic trends in the Barrios:**

By the mid-1930s those Jews who had initially come over with Baron Hirsh were well established and they moved into more urban neighborhoods in Buenos Aires. Most Jews remained near the central city, in Barrio Once or elsewhere, until 1914. They began to shift more Westward after WWI. In provinces outside greater Buenos Aires, the proportion of Jews working on settlements was lower than 5 percent. Hence, a large percent of those who joined the Chevrah in 1920 lived in Villa Crespo. In their place, new Jewish immigrants moved into the agricultural communities that Baron Hirsh and the initial Jews had established. This cycle repeated throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Instead of emigrating directly into more established Jewish communities in urban areas, new immigrants settled in the pampas and the next generation, the children born in Argentina, then travelled to the cities and raise their families there. As demonstrated in Table 2.30, the population growth of the colonies was no longer clearly representative of previous trends by 1940. “In 1936, some 22 percent of the Jewish community resided in Once, while slightly more than a quarter lived in Villa Crespo. That same year, for the first time, a recognizable cluster of Jews appeared in District 18 on the city’s North side, which includes the relatively exclusive barrio of Palermo.”<sup>37</sup> As time went on, the Jewish community spread throughout Buenos Aires, making the divisions within the Jewish community more apparent based on the strict boundaries and the distinct elements of each new neighborhood. Jewish communities had distinct boundaries based on the nationality of the Jews who resided there. Judith Elkin writes, “Unlike the

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<sup>37</sup> Sofer, 83.

European Jews who favored the large cities, Sephardim were more likely to settle in the interior; in 1905, the director of a JCA school counted 3,000 Sephardim in Argentina, only 750 of whom lived in Buenos Aires. In this same period, Aleppine Jews were settling the Once district of Buenos Aires, while Jews from Damascus clustered in Boca and Barracas, predominantly Genoese areas of the city”<sup>38</sup> Thus, depending of the region of Europe that they had left, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews separated themselves from one another, and often even created boundaries within these two broad groups separating themselves by country. Many of the modern features of Argentine society and urban demographics were based on the restrictions and cultural expectations of various groups within the country.

Mass Jewish immigration directly into cities changed the composition of known Jewish barrios and also extended their borders to other parts of Buenos Aires. These numbers of new Jewish immigrants as compared to the numbers of children of original Jewish immigrants, however, were representative of the trend of movement from suburbs into cities. “In 1960, more than one-third of all Argentine Jews (37.3) were foreign-born. In the older ages, the percentage was much higher 97 per cent in the 65 years and over age group) while the young generation aged 14 years and less, it was only 2.4 per cent.”<sup>39</sup> Today, however, almost 80 percent of the Argentina’s Jews reside in Buenos Aires<sup>40</sup>

Modern locations of Jews of different nations are based on historical trends of immigration. “Liberal economics provided the substructure for pro-immigration views. Many members of the ruling elite believed that prosperity depended on the free movement worldwide of manpower, goods, and capital.”<sup>41</sup> Depending on where Jews originated, what era they left

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<sup>38</sup> Elkin, 34.

<sup>39</sup> Syrquin, 123-124.

<sup>40</sup> Sofer, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Elkin, 31.



Europe, and the domestic situation in Argentina, different kinds of Jews ultimately ended up in different areas in the country.

Overtime, Jewish barrios developed to have distinguishable features. In discussing the movement of Jewish settlements and urbanization of Jewish communities Sofer notes specific stages that influenced these changes. He states,

There are our identifiable stages in the residential history of Jews in Buenos Aires between 1890 and 1947. Each is a distinct stage of the community's evolution, and each also represents a stage in the history of Jewish ghettoization. The first is entry and the search for institutional and spatial stability; the second, ghettoization and unity; the third, second-stage ghettoization and westward movement; and the fourth, dispersion and the fragmentation of the community."<sup>42</sup>

Sofer goes on to explain that although Jews did move to more urban areas in Argentina, until the 1930s they rarely moved out of older sections of the city.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of the slow movement of Jews to various sections of the city were significantly segregated. "In 1947, it was still possible to draw lines around the Jewish community of Buenos Aires with relative ease. The Jewish community remained almost six times as segregated as other immigrant communities."<sup>44</sup> Importantly, these new Jewish communities were also representative of the lives and nations of Jewish communities in Europe.

Villa Crespo, performed two functions for porteno Jews in the twentieth century. For Russian Jews, it represented a move from Once, the ghetto they had striven to create after being pushed from the central business district For Polish Jews, Villa Crespo played a role similar to the one that the Plaza Lavalle played for Russian Jews. The area drew newcomers to it because of its cultural affinity, affordable rents, and jobs. For Polish Jews, Villa Crespo was the first-stage ghetto.<sup>45</sup>

The Jewish community was disjointed. To the outside community the Jews seemed like one unified groups based on a common religion, however, most Jews rarely practiced their religion

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<sup>42</sup> Sofer, 66.

<sup>43</sup> Sofer, 79.

<sup>44</sup> Sofer, 84.

<sup>45</sup> Sofer, 79-80.

and therefore were connected by other commonalities, elements that they would share with non-Jews had they been accepted by them. “In 1917, many that had been born Jews had severed themselves from Jewish life. If the estimate of ethnic Jews not identifying with their religious community is anywhere near the mark, it indicates an assimilation rate of 25 percent within two generation or arrival on the continent.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, early on Jews did not associate with the religious aspects of their community, yet still formed organizations and acted through these institutions to facilitate change.

Jewish attempts to leave their old communities to join the non-Jewish population or a more prominent Jewish neighborhood were hindered by a series of limitations. “In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of factors restricted geographic mobility between the neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. Income, residential segregation and the distance between home and job, all combined to limit movement.”<sup>47</sup> In 1960, the largest communities outside Greater Buenos Aires were found in Santa Fe (15000) Cordoba (9000) and Entre Rios (8700).<sup>48</sup> Moreover, historical events in Europe and within Argentina influenced the migration of Jews within urban areas. Thus, the communities that are in place today are the product of interwar patterns.

Currently, even assimilated Jews remain in close knit communities due to their isolation from non-Jewish communities not due to their desire to remain connected to religious traditions. Thus, major demographics of Jews within Argentina is based off of the manipulation from the

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<sup>46</sup>Elkin, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Sofer, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Syrquin, 116.

outside environment and Jewish attempts to maintain cohesiveness within their own and outside societies.<sup>49</sup>

### **Occupations in Jewish Communities:**

Jews settled in neighborhoods with individuals from similar countries of origin and worked in trades similar to those individuals of similar ethnicities. “In 1909, Samuel Halphon, an emissary of the Jewish Colonization Association, reported that ‘our co-religion sits in Argentina include a large number of trades and they may be classified by branches, according to their countries of origin. The Russians are generally engaged in the furniture trade, the Turks –in habadashery, the Moroccans –in cloth and readymade clothing, the French, German, Dutch, etc., in jewelry.’”<sup>50</sup>

Most Jews sought the benefits of the city and migrated into Buenos Aires to join in on the growing industry in the 1900s. By 1936, only 14 percent of the traceable sample members worked in the center city, one third worked in Once, 13 percent worked in Villa Crespo, 14 percent worked on the periphery, and 18 percent worked in various neighborhoods throughout the city. Data for the 1930 sample reveal that 68 percent of the sample members lived and worked in the same district. By 1936, the percentage was even higher, being between 65 and 81 percent.<sup>51</sup> The sample data is based on the traceable members of the Chevrah in Barrio Once during the years beginning in the year 1895. Each year, a new sample was taken to be compared to the proceeding and future records in order to provide valuable information about trends of migration throughout the city and the use of each barrio for workplaces and domestic residency. Sofer draws his information from six random samples, one from 1885, 1905-1910, 1914-1915,

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<sup>49</sup> Moshe Syrquin, “The Economic Structure of Jews in Argentina and Other Latin American Countries” *Jewish Social Studies* 47:2 (1985), 115 ([www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)).

<sup>50</sup> Sofer, 94.

<sup>51</sup> Sofer, 80.

1920, 1925, and a final sample from 1930. He chooses these years because they represent successive waves of eastern European Jewish immigration to the Argentina. Sofer draws his conclusions on the movement of Jews and the functions of each barrio location based on the comparisons of information.

Jewish settlement in particular barrios was based in a large part on the occupation of an individual and on the ease in which they could travel to their workplace or attract business. Judith Elkin writes, “The constraints of employment were again a factor as the Jewish community began to form ghettos, particularly in Barrio Once.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, in order to remain economical, homes were used as both a residence and an office. Elkin writes, “One compromise with high rents, especially widespread among Buenos Aires’ Jews, was to use the residence as a workplace. Thus, in 1909, the mixed use of property in areas of high Jewish concentration was anywhere from 9 to 23 percent higher than in Buenos Aires as a whole.”<sup>53</sup>

Judith Elkin suggests that there is a trend to early Jewish labor within the city of Buenos Aires. Her research shows that occupational patterns of Jews in Buenos Aires were generally characterized by seasonal unemployment, declining rates of upward mobility, occupational inconsistency, and underemployment. This observation, however, did not continue to modern times. As the economic and political situation varied in Argentina, they became more industrial based, and Jews developed a more influential presence in the city, their status changed. Syrquin writes,

“As in most semi-industrialized countries, industrial activity in the large Latin American countries is highly concentrated. In Argentina in 1963, the East-Center region accounted for 83 percent of all industrial workers, with 63 per cent of them in Buenos Aires alone. The 1960 population census listed almost 80 per cent of Argentine Jews in the Greater Buenos Aires area and 91 per cent in the East-Center region.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Sofer, 78.

<sup>53</sup> Sofer, 78.

<sup>54</sup> Syrquin, 116.

Table 3.32 supports Syrquin's claim, it demonstrates the high numbers of Jewish workers in Buenos Aires and the expansion of their professions over time.

Yet, throughout history, Jewish occupations were based on the necessities of the Jewish communities and the talents of those individuals who made up the barrios. "Eighty-five percent of Buenos Aires Jews in this period were engaged in retail merchandising, as they had been in their native cities. Although the professions were crowded with foreigners in mid-nineteenth century, Argentina's Jews seem to have figured among them in numbers less than their proportion to the general population."<sup>55</sup>

Early on, particular professions were almost completely run by Jewish groups. Trades such as cloth making and peddling were almost totally controlled by Jews, as well as street vending, in the early 1920s. Judith Elkin writes, "Although some 85 percent of Jews did indeed come from Russia, another 15 percent were classified by JCA as Turks or Moroccans, reflecting independent migration of peddlers into the interior. There was only a sprinkling of French, German, English, Italian, Austrian, and Romanian Jews."<sup>56</sup>

However, "by 1940, Jews owned thirty spinning and weaving mills and employed some 4,000 workers, many of whom were also Jewish."<sup>57</sup> In the Jewelry sphere, "Two firms ranked third and fourth in size and employed about twenty-five people each. The majority of the five or six hundred jewelry workers in Buenos Aires were immigrants who worked eight hours a day and received additional pay for overtime."<sup>58</sup> Jewish labor was demanding but efficient and prosperous.

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<sup>55</sup> Elkin, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Elkin, 55.

<sup>57</sup> Sofer, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Sofer, 109.

Modern Jewish roles in their communities and in the job sector of Buenos Aires have varying but still identifiable characteristics similar to their past. “Over time the magnitude and the character of Jewish activities in commerce seem to have changed. Fewer Jews appear to be still engaged in trade –industry and the professions having grown at its expense –and they are no longer exclusively in retail trade or finished consumer goods.”<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Jews rarely are found in religious occupations. Syrquin states, “There is no doubt that the continuing secularization of Jewish life did bring about a drastic reduction in the percentage of Jews in the religious branch, and as a by-product a dilution of the distinctiveness of the Jews as a separate ethnic minority.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Changes in Barrios based on Occupation:**

Often, the occupations of Jews played a major role in determining their upward mobility and movement to other barrios. Changes in the economic, political, and social events of country determined the mobility of groups. “The economic rise of the Jews and other immigrant minorities in Latin America took place at a time when the economy needed trading and industrial enterprise but was confronted with a small and weak middle class unable, by itself, to fill the void while the prosperous landowners shunned such occupations. The Jewish immigrants took advantage of the opportunity and became part of the emerging middle groups.”<sup>61</sup>

Changes in education, availability to enroll in universities, and the emphasis on obtaining a degree also may have changed the way that Jews chose occupations. “The level of education among Jews improves substantially with age up to the relatively young group of 20-24 years old. This is to be expected as a large proportion of the population below 20 years is still in school. The subsequent decline in educational levels for the 25 plus group becomes stronger with age

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<sup>59</sup> Syrquin, 118.

<sup>60</sup> Syrquin, 131.

<sup>61</sup> Syrquin, 132.

indicating an improvement in the level of education over time.”<sup>62</sup> As a result, Jews no longer had to rely on basic industrial work or depending on merchandize to make a living, but instead, they could maintain and improve their status by infiltrating more influential and prestigious spheres of society.

### **Occupation and Social Need for Jewish Organizations:**

Many times, occupational restrictions led many Jews to form organizations to protect their interests. “Membership in the League for the Defense of Argentine Jewish Commerce, for example, was limited to those ‘who sell merchandise on their own, in weekly or monthly installments, without having an established store.’”<sup>63</sup> As industrialization progressed and the need for vendors decreased, many of these organizations reflected the attempts of large Jewish population of vendors to maintain their businesses. “In 1916 several street vendors found the Jewish League for Commercial Defense and Mutual Aid to ‘prove its members with first quality goods at fair prices.’”<sup>64</sup> By creating these Jews revealed their concerns, assured people of their moral business, and represented their occupational interests.

As Jews required certain institutions within their own communities due to isolation from outside groups, new occupations were also acquired as “Jewish” professions. For example, “in the financial sector of most Latin American countries a Jewish bank can be found. Its original purpose usually was to overcome the financial restrictions placed in the path of Jewish entrepreneurs.”<sup>65</sup>

Within the barrios of Buenos Aires, Jews created their own governing systems. In the case of Eastern Jews, they used the organizational strategies they had already been familiar with.

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<sup>62</sup> Syrquin, 124.

<sup>63</sup> Sofer, 111.

<sup>64</sup> Sofer, 111.

<sup>65</sup> Syrquin, 129.

“When Jewish sought to create an institution to serve their community, they turned to the model they knew best, the Kehillah. In eastern Europe, the Kehillah had been a local self-governing body given a substantial degree of autonomy by the state.”<sup>66</sup> This necessity of independence was due to their disassociation from their national government in Europe. “Locked into the Russian Pale of Settlement, without access to national schools or national economies, Jews were not participants in the national life of Russia, Poland, or Romania, in the sense in which Jews had participated in the national life of France, Germany, or England.”<sup>67</sup> As a result, Jews maintained their isolation and introverted communities in Argentina.

“The Jews capacity to come out into non-Jewish society depended on the willingness of society to permit them to do so. Consequently, Eastern Jews identified as Jews, rather than as citizens of the societies within which they existed. They were still citizens of the shtetl, that small Jewish world, traditional, introverted, and closed which balanced uneasily upon the threshold of a hostile large world they could not enter.”<sup>68</sup>

Similar associations such as the Chevrah Keduscha Shkenazi (CKA) also contributed to the cohesiveness of the Jewish community within the city. By creating their own systems, the Jewish population more clearly demarcated their existence and their separation from gentile society.

The experience was varied for Jews who had emigrated from Western and Southern European countries. Western Jewish immigrants were more disconnected from their religious, Jewish culture, and even an identifiable language. “The easterners’ attachment to the Yiddish language had no counterpart among the German, French, and Alsatian Jews, who had already translated their private lives into non-Jewish languages.”<sup>69</sup> Similarly, many of the institutions they developed were based on their efforts to blend into gentile society. “One purpose seemed to

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<sup>66</sup> Sofer, 6.

<sup>67</sup> Elkin, 69.

<sup>68</sup> Elkin, 69.

<sup>69</sup> Elkin, 69.



animate Jewish life: to escape from Judaism, to become like the gentiles.’ The desire to escape from Judaism may have been a factor in rendering Western European Jews available for immigration to Latin America, a continent that had no history of Jewish settlement, and therefore no ready-made structures for the legal isolation of Jews.”<sup>70</sup> Sephardic Jews were both less associated with their religion and with creating identifiable cohesive institutions in order create a force of representation against the neglect of the Argentine government.

Currently, organizations are established to maintain social activities rather than uphold the religious ideas and traditions of Judaism. “The Ashkenazic Kehillah of Buenos Aires was organized in 1894 with 85 members it is now known as the AMIA its organized Jewish life is generally secularist, even in its Israeli activities. Rabbis play no role in the communal life...”<sup>71</sup> On a similar note, the Sephardic community has more orthodoxy, yet still, the “second most important Sephardic house of worship, Comunidad Israelita Sefardi, does not focused on instilling Jewish educations to the younger generations. Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer, stated at the Hadassah National Convention, “‘In Jewish traditional terms, Latin American Jews South of the Rio Grande are desperately in need of intellectual and spiritual leadership. There are no great Jewish scholars in Latin America...There are no great institutions of higher learning. All this in spite of the fact that the Jews life in freedom and relative prosperity.’”<sup>72</sup> The Jewish organizations promote community of Jews, yet Argentine society and culture inhibits modern Jews to rise intellectually in society, and their own organizations fail to provide the resources necessary to do this. Hence, in order to make progress, for their own benefit, Jews must rely on social movements to contribute to amending the policies installed by the upper levels of society.

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<sup>70</sup> Elkin, 48.

<sup>71</sup> Liebman, 313.

<sup>72</sup> Liebman, 313.

## **Conclusion:**

Having established grounds for development early on in the nation's history of immigration, the status of Jews in Argentina has gradually improved over the history of the country. Although remaining isolated from other citizens within Argentine society, Jews have been able to rise within their own communities. Liebman writes, "if the strength of a Jewish community is indicated by the number of its institutions, the Jewish community of Buenos Aires should be one of the most vital known. It has more organizations and institutions, proportionately, than any other city in the world."<sup>73</sup> In part the establishment of such a concrete society is due to the Jewish intentions in Argentina, Jews from the second wave of immigration came to the country with the belief that they would remain there. Due to their separation from the Catholic traditions of Argentina's powerful institutions, Jews sought to create leadership positions within their barrios, and formed their own lower, and middle class, and upper class outside of that found in the general Argentine community.

Initially, the status of Jews was that of most immigrants, poor, lower class, and the upper classes of Jewish society were only able to ascend to more influential condition. Jewish values, including their desire to maintain education, to practice their religion freely, and to participate in local affairs, drove them to form urban communities. Thus, in Buenos Aires, Jews created their own communities which were defined by a group's wealth. Moreover, within neighborhoods, class lines were stringent and usually remain unchanged. "Barrios assumed the characteristics of a given social class, retained them, and in doing so bred the notion that people did not move extensively within the city's limits."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Liebman, 312.

<sup>74</sup> Sofer, 66.

Jewish involvement in institutions based on their occupations and their determination to rise in the social hierarchy within Argentina had a profound impact on how they were viewed by the government and the role they would later play in activist movements throughout the history of Argentina. As a minority group and one that was severely discriminated against, Jews took the initiative to secure their own rights and to prove themselves as true Argentines. As is customary in Argentina, when the interests of the many different institutions that Jews belong to were challenged, Jews embraced their nationalist values and protested to address the matter, often times looking to modernize the sometimes antiquated ideologies of Argentina's government. At these times of political unrest, Jews were persecuted the most. Hence, it was often these roles in society that pushed Jews to involve themselves in movements to restructure their community and their nation.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Jewish Involvement in Social Movements**

Similar to their communities, Jewish activism in Argentina is set apart from the rest of Latin America. Jews respond to political movements by forming their own Jewish organizations, rather than join the institutions of the general community, because discrimination against them restricts them from doing so. Because they are often isolated by the outside community, Jews mobilize within these politically and economically motivated associations, to achieve higher standards of living, gain representation in a highly Catholic nation, and obtain the benefits of citizenship that are granted to other citizens. Jews involve themselves in movements that are usually begun by individuals outside of their community because Jews identify as Argentines above all other factors they eagerly contribute to their plight. Their identification with activism has always been driven by secular aspects such as education, political affiliation, and occupation and were only characterized as Jewish because of their exclusion from secular groups and thus the necessity to form their own institution. Thus, their importance in impacting the outcomes and the goals of many major social movements throughout the history of Argentina has been unprecedented.

#### **Political Ideology and Anti-Semitism of the 1890s-Peron:**

Jewish involvement in Argentina's labor and political movements made them a key part of Argentine history. Like most Latin America countries, Argentina is one whose main source of change occurs as a result of the mobilization of its citizens. Like other immigrant groups, Jews took easily to the trend of activism in the nation to advocate for changes. According to Syrquin, Jews were involved early on in the major urban movements of the 1800s. An important element that facilitated this, which developed in this era, was that of the first generation of Argentine-

born Jews. This group reacted differently than their parents. They were disassociated from the Judaism brought by their parents from the Old World and the roots they had developed in their country of birth reflected their degree of assimilation, nationalism, and Argentinization of the new communities of Jews in Argentina. As generations of Jews were born in the Catholic environment in Argentina, they lost their connections to the religion. Still, Jewish families merged their traditions and ideas from the old country of their parents, with those of their new home. Just as the first Jews who arrived in Argentina identified more with their country of origin than with their religion, future generations of Argentine Jews identified as Argentines rather than as Jews. "As early as 1846, it was reported that the 'Jews that have arrived were already estranged from their religion before their coming.' Many immigrants always referred nostalgically to *der alte hame* (the old home). Despite the new and very different environment, the *shtetl* traits, Yiddish culture and value system were preserved, but with an absence of a religious milieu or ambience."<sup>75</sup> Jews used their institutions to demonstrate their assimilation and prove that they were concerned citizens.

Early Jewish institutions were formed to represent political, social, and economic values. Jews from Russia were associated with non-religious, socialist ideology.

After the mid-nineteenth century, many Jews had adopted socialism and even communist ideology and beliefs. Many were Bundists and some anarchists. Most of the immigrants to Argentina were *maskilm* (enlightened), and were more secularly minded than religiously oriented."<sup>76</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century major labor movements were displayed in early forms of political advocacy. Jewish immigrants to Argentina were active in the national political arena. For instance, among the founders of the Argentina Socialist party in 1896 were numerous immigrants and sons of immigrants. Jews, however, were barred from secular political groups.

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<sup>75</sup> Liebman, 317.

<sup>76</sup> Liebman, 316.

Though their concerns were similar to those of other Argentines, they were not universally shared. Augusto Gozalbo, a writer for *La Nueva Republica*, explored the common ‘Hebrew origin’ of socialism, internationalism, and anti-Catholicism. He stated that the simple fact that Marx was Jewish indicated their nature of socialism. The reasons for all Jewish political associations were not due to relationships among Jews on the basis of a common religion, but because of the anti-Semitic nature of those political leaders and other citizens within Argentina.

In the 1900s, Jewish activism was driven by the violence against them and efforts to obtain safety against the threat of vigilantes who took advantage of Jewish stereotypes to attack neighborhoods. Authors, politics, and media all used outlets to rally hatred against Jewish institutions. For example, Jewish association with the socialist party created tensions throughout the country with the government, business owners, especially in Buenos Aires, and political neglect allowed anti-communists to attack all Jews, regardless of their actual political affiliation. “Many porteños suspected the Jews of Bolshevik as well as anarchistic tendencies, again because of their largely Russian origins.... Civilians and police vented these feelings by attacking working-class neighborhoods, destroying labor offices, libraries, newspaper presses, and cultural centers and beating shooting, and arresting thousands, including many innocent bystanders.”<sup>77</sup> Individuals could act on their anti-Semitic feelings regardless of whether or not they actually believed that Jews posed a communist threat.

Thus, Jews were discriminated against collectively and their communities were uniformly identified based on these organizations. Although a minority, the devotion and perseverance against discrimination inspired movements of Jews. Liebman writes, “Few writers note the influence of the Yiddish anarchists. Their numbers were sufficient to have the daily anarchist paper, *La Protesta*, add a supplement in Yiddish in 1908. Professor Jerry Knudson

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<sup>77</sup> Deutsch, 74.

wrote that after 1908, ‘several origins of the anarchist press were founded in Argentina and, in 1916, the organization known as ‘The Jewish Anarchists of Buenos Aires’ founded the *Yiddische Rationalistische Gesellschaft*, the Yiddish Rationalist Society.’”<sup>78</sup> The experiences shared by many Jews of the 1900s, and those hardships in the lives of other social pariahs, created a connection between Argentine citizens outside of the normal Catholic, conservative community. Hence, although non-Jews did not join these Jewish organizations, they supported and often formed their own corresponding ones.

During the early 1900s, policies that were implemented both supported and discouraged Jewish activists. During Umbirio Yirgoyens term, though the threat against Jews was omnipresent, “Yirgoyen publicly disassociated himself from the anti-Semitic aspects of the repression and promised to ask the minister of the interior for an investigation. Anti-Jewish sentiments were incompatible with Argentine tradition, he claimed, and racism was the philosophy of only certain sectors, not of the entire country or of its government.”<sup>79</sup> Still, violent attacks directed at Jews created chaos, yet they were positive because they provided the initiative for public change in non-religious sections of the community. Jewish involvement in social movements, however, also often spurred anti-Semitic feelings towards them, especially in politics.

Although some politicians did try to gain their favor, they also used tactics to disassociate themselves from Jews to gain the vote of the constituents who disfavored Jews. During his time in office in the early 1900s, Julio Roca had a particularly anti-Semitic policy. Roca claimed, “Jewish learning fostered a sense of separatism in first-generation Argentines, who chose to be Jews rather than Argentines ‘in complete communion with the people and the soil’ of their

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<sup>78</sup> Liebman, 317.

<sup>79</sup> Deutsch, 78-79.

birthplace. This separatism could inspire anti-Jewish feeling and stoke the spirit of religious and political intolerance which until then, according to Roja's, had characterized native Argentines."<sup>80</sup> Roja desired that Jews give up their religion in an effort to fully assimilate into Argentine society, what he failed to acknowledge was that Jews first identified as Argentine and minimally, if at all, regarded themselves as Jewish.

Jews were used as scapegoats for citizens in reaction to poor economic conditions, political dissatisfaction, and other issues that they blamed on the Jewish community. Deutsch writes, violence against Jews particularly in El Barrio Once, "demonstrated the widespread identification of Russian Jewry with leftist politics. One visitor to Buenos Aires during the centennial found three or four newsboys beating a little Jewish boy. When he made them account for their actions, their excuse was that their victim was Russian. He concluded that everything that 'savoured of the anarchist was in those days a bad repute in Buenos Aires, and the Russian Jews were not in good odor.'"<sup>81</sup>

The most direct elaborate demonstration of violence against Jews due to their association with Communism is a week in Argentine history named Tragic Week. Tragic Week, which began January 7, 1919, was a reaction to an anarchist led strike broke out against the Vasena firm in the month of December, 1918. Armed police, while trying to put down the strike, ended up killing and wounding strikers and company men. Most people hurt were bystanders but a general strike began from workers of numerous institutions. During the funeral held for those killed, violence from labor groups escalated and in retaliation, men from middle and upper middle class targeted Jewish communities blaming them for beginning the violence because of their ties to anarchism and socialist policies.

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<sup>80</sup> Deutsch, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Deutsch, 37.



In reaction, Jews mobilized forming organizations and asserted their connection to the ideologies which they actually associated with, noting their full assimilation and relationship to Argentina. Anti-Semites used Tragic Week as an opportunity to wage an all out war against Jews. Although Tragic Week ended, in its aftermath, many Argentines continued to fear a revolutionary outbreak. Demonstrations against Jews took place in Santa Fe and other parts of the interior. In the Buenos Aires area, citizens continued to patrol the streets, and the threats against Jews persisted. Thus, in the end, Jews took it into their own hands to defend their rights as citizens.

Looking at the violence against Jewish individuals and neighborhoods it is obvious that Jews acted in response to violence or in a way that related to the trend of Argentine society, rather than due to their religion tie or their association with another country of origin. Although several prominent Jews had become influential leaders within the country's various political parties, the community as a whole and its institutions had traditionally advocated a policy of neutrality with regard to national political questions so that they could remain unnoticed and integrate further into society. Hence, Jews only stood out to defend themselves when necessary.

### **Jews and Peron:**

In the 1950s, changes in industrialization, the migration of Jews from the pampas to the city, and the direct settlement of Jews into urban areas, made Jews forerunners and constant participants in urban labor movements. Their participation led to increased violence similar to that of the previous decades. Gentile's perception of Jews still harbored significant resentment towards this group and other immigrants, who were actively involved in trying to blend in, in addition to combine their own culture with Argentine traditions. Although Argentina was composed of immigrants and supported them, immigrants were only tolerable as long as they

could be assimilated, if there was any hint at resistance, Argentines would use their feeling of superiority to force assimilation on them.

Before the rise of Perónism (1946-1953), Jews were already uniquely involved in politics. Perhaps from their origins, between 1936 and 1951, Jews accounted for 14 percent of the leadership of the Socialist party. Yet, the rise of Perónism, attracted new political affiliations with the labor movement which revolved around changing their status in Argentina and reaping the benefits that they felt entitled to as citizens, rather than as immigrants. The lifestyles and circumstances of Jews in Argentina thus drew them to the frontlines of politics and social activism.

While acting with a political agenda in mind, Perón's policies were not openly aggressive towards the Jews living in Argentina as long as they did not challenge him. Perón was more focused on the economic policies of his country than harboring resentment toward a particular group of individuals publically.

Although based on anti-Jewish sentiment, Argentina's immigration policy was not accompanied by any government action against the established Jewish community. On the contrary, Perón's official relations with Argentina's Jews were correct and, in the case of the Perónist Jewish organization, OIA, even warm. When he addressed Jewish audiences, he praised the spirit of Jewish national solidarity, and he certainly respected the Jews' international connections, which he traded to enlist for the furtherance of his own aims.”<sup>82</sup>

The leader's attempts at maintaining a hold on branches of the labor force led him to prioritize those groups which he would challenge. The power and influence of the Jews in the labor force kept the president from openly threatening them. Perón desired to reform the economics of the country by promoting industrialization and independence from foreign powers. Even in the case of Zionism and the nation of Israel, Perón sought to uphold neutral relations with both Jewish

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<sup>82</sup> Avni,194.

and Arab communities. He maintained cordial relations with the Jewish community and managed to be both pro-Israel and friendly to Arab nations. Thus, in the era of Perón, Jewish labor movements and association were motivated by the ideologies of the time. Jews reacted similarly to other groups creating their own labor and pro-Perónist organizations because of the discrimination of other institutions, but they still attempted to assimilate and positively work within the context of Argentine politics and culture. “The Jewish response to Perónism was dominated by fundamental interplay between an ‘external’ arena of Argentine national politics and an ‘internal’ arena of Jewish communal politics.”<sup>83</sup>

Although Perón had the support of many types of Jews, divisions were still expressed within the larger movement. Class struggle and connections to various economic classes and occupations separated Jews and divided them within the general labor movement. Jewish workers were dispersed over a range of proletarian ideologies. Some joined the labor wing of the Zionist movement, others turned to the Bund, the Jewish connection to evolutionary socialism and the favored workers’ organization of their European homelands linked them all with the general labor movement. As a result, numerous Jewish groups with many different affiliations were formed; these associations included the Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DIAI), the Organizacion Israelita Argentina (OIA), and the Instituto Judio Argentine de Cultura e Informacion, each group having its own bias and beliefs. Similar to the way Perón used the CGT, the country’s largest confederation of labor unions, as his intermediary with organized labor, he initially hoped to use the organization as a direct intermediary with the Jewish community.

In his essay Mirelman notes the significant features of the three major Perónist supporting organizations. The DAIA was originally founded to combat the rising tide of anti-

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<sup>83</sup> Bell, 99.

Semitism both at home and abroad during the 1930s, this federation was composed of 33 institutions and represented the community as well. Its activities crossed over social, political, and cultural spectrum.” In a speech issued by Perón administration, the speaker claimed, “The representative body of Argentine Jewry, DAIA maintains both cordial and working relations with the Perónist administration. Aware that the people and party in power have no basic loyalty either to Arabs or to the Jews, but are primarily concerned with Argentine problems, the Jews are not militant but rather try to strengthen their position through lobbying and they demand justice in cases of discrimination and defamation.”<sup>84</sup> On a smaller scale, the OIA sought to intercede with the state on matters of Jewish concern and promote Perónism within the community more generally. The OIA was an openly Perónist political body that’s goal was to gain support for Perón among Argentina’s Jewish community and represent them within the State. Within these political institutions there was conflicting beliefs.

Motivated by the integrationist politics of the American Jewish Committee in the United States, the founders of the IJA rejected both the DAIA and the OIA and instead encouraged the Jewish community to align itself more fully with the traditional political parties of the anti-Perónist opposition.”<sup>85</sup> The IJA kept their distance from Perónist officials beyond the interaction they needed to have to support the Jewish community in Argentina. They worked with but were not supporters of Perón. Furthermore, Jews outside of the working class further separated themselves from the workers movement. The unwillingness of the conservative Jewish leadership to accept the discrimination against Jews further split the community along class lines. For instance, rather than defending all Jews against anti-Semitic outrages, the FSA acted in such a way as to isolate the militant minority of the community. By identifying with their roles in

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<sup>84</sup> Mirelman, 218.

<sup>85</sup> Bell, 98.

Argentine society, Jews identified less with the individuals of their own religion and more with others being confronted by similar labor issues, or those uninvolved with the workers movement but frustrated by being associated with it due to their religion.

It was not until Jews involved themselves in the movements of the 1950s that they gained the recognition from the government and other institutions as worthy members of Argentine society. Jewish activism drove the social changes required for equality within the country. Though the country did not experience the full effect of Jewish activism until the urban movements of the 1950s, Argentina's association of Jews with social movements was a fact acknowledged throughout the country's history and even in modern times which led Jews to be severely persecuted and a scapegoat in times of crisis.

The Jewish response to the socialist movement in the 1950s was affected by the institutions connection to either national, communal, or international policies. Consequently, violence against Jews occurred as Jews became increasingly involved in workers movements, and were identified as "agents of social turbulence."<sup>86</sup> This remained the case in the 1970s when Jews were even more estranged from their religion but remained highly involved in their roles as activists and were identified as such by the government.

### **The Dirty War, Anti-Semitism, and the Jews of Argentina:**

As the country of Argentina becomes more secular, Jews have managed to both maintain their own organizations and also join some of the more liberal institutions of the community. Though doing this demonstrates their assimilation, often, as was the case during the era of state terror, Jewish participation in leftist groups demonstrates their acceptance in one part of society but also allowed them to be more directly targeted by their opposition.

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<sup>86</sup> Elkin, 56.

During the years of the Dirty War (1976-1983), the use of violence played an essential role in the order of the military government in power. The political editor of the Buenos Aires Herald in the 1970s and editor in-chief in the 1990s claimed that the violence was woven into Argentine culture and political tradition and the youth of Argentina during the 1970s and 1980s were predisposed to use bloodshed due to this fact. The government used tactics to both oppress individuals who they thought were subversives and also to carry out anti-Semitic acts. Although some Jews joined the ranks of leftist groups, others did refrain from them, Jews as a general group were all identified as a united front acting against the Argentine political structure. The connection of violence with leftist movements and politically active movements left Jews as apparent enemies of social order.

There was a high proportion of Jews who were disappeared as compared to citizens of Argentina associated with other groups. Some argue that the proportion of Jews who disappeared exceeded their proportion of the population, and unhesitatingly attribute this to anti-Semitism. This, however, also could be because of the significant number of Jews who participated in groups often associated with leftist acts. Taking up arms and rioting was not a unique behavior of citizens of Argentina, particularly its youth, however, what was unique was their reason for fighting. Jews took to the streets to emphasize their nationalism. By taking arms against their government they set out to prove to the State that they were influential components of the country and that they could assist in modernizing and improving the equality of the country.

Just as in other times of social unrest in Argentina, Jews were prone to join the social movement of the 1970s because of the anti-Semitism that they confronted from their neighbors. Marchak writes, "A 1961 report by Argentine sociologist Gino Germani revealed that 22.1

percent of the Argentine population harbored anti-Semitic attitudes...Upper class anti-Semitism was more dangerous because it was 'ideological' rather than traditional."<sup>87</sup> Anti-Semitic attitudes extended throughout the nation, especially at times of discern. Just as they had during the 1950s in the era of Perón, workers organizations who had excluded Jews from their societies and in some cases outwardly denounced them with policies against them. Many groups during the Dirty War, especially youths were subject to this anti-Semitic ideology. For example, The Juventud Peronista (Perónist Youth or Young Perónists), an outgrowth of earlier organizations such as Tacuara, was a Catholic organization for school children that was virulently anti-Semitic and anti communist. Jews were often irrationally targeted as being radical and contradictory to the government because of already preexisting anti-Semitism, yet those Jews who action were involved in mobilizing and urban movements, were persuaded to join to defend themselves.

In his book, on the terror of the Dirty War Marchak interviews individuals who both participated in and were victims of state terror. Importantly, he distinguishes the role that anti-Semitism played in the oppressive movement. He writes,

"In view of the history, we asked leaders of the Jewish community whether Jews had been targeted during the repression. Although we heard that there were many anti-Semites in the armed forces and that certain army officers had been especially vicious in their treatment of Jewish prisoners, the leaders we consulted told us that they did not think Jews had been targeted...with the additional response that if Jews were caught and identified as Jews, they were probably subjected to particularly harsh treatment."<sup>88</sup>

Marchak also notes that there were identifiable acts of violence against Jews very early on in the repression. Regardless of its origins, there were obvious instances of anti-Semitism committed by the government.

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<sup>87</sup> Marchak, 136.

<sup>88</sup> Marchak, 14.

Although Jews were involved in the guerilla movement as consequences of their political beliefs, their class, or their occupation, their religion was not the driving factor behind their activism. Moreover, only some Jews were actually involved in the movement, yet the government targeted then entire community, again identifying them as unified group, rather than an assimilated society with divided views. By using Judaism as evidence of being a participant in anti-government acts, the military disappeared many innocent individuals. In his interviews, Marchak speaks to numerous individuals who display this was the case. One man whose father was a Jewish professor claimed, “Though my father was afraid of what could happen to him, he never thought he could die. He thought that he might be in jail for a week or a month, but nothing worse. A friend of my father’s whom he had met in university and who worked in the Israeli Embassy, told him of a way to escape from Argentina. He told my father that if he wanted, we could be in Israel within forty-eight hours.”<sup>89</sup> Having lived in Argentina their entire lives the generation of Jewish youth in the 1970s considered themselves more Argentine than Jewish and did not foresee their religion providing an opportunity for persecution by the military government.

In some opinions, the military government, by targeting Jews, believed that they were acting like defenders of the Catholic faith, acting similarly to what the Inquisition had been and doing God’s work. In a similar manner, Disappeared who were associated with the Catholic Church were treated especially bad because of the notion that they had betrayed their faith. “The priests who were imprisoned were treated worse than others because we were considered to be traitors, betrayers of our faith. They fled that we were supposed to be on their side, and we were acting as if we were on the other side, so there was a particular anger against us. Twelve of us

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<sup>89</sup> Marchak, 23.



were in the prison in La Plata. We were treated with a lot of hostility, somewhat similar to the Jewish prisoners.”<sup>90</sup>

In a country that is mainly Catholic, Jews who already posed a threat by being educated and involved in leftists groups, were targeted additionally for their challenge to the authority of a non-secular state.

The military saw themselves as saviours of the nation. They had been called on many times, and to their way of thinking, they had always come to the aid of their country. As noted, they had never participated in military battles, so the only function they had had over their entire institutional lifetime was to quell internal subversion. Their assumption of sacred duties was supported by an authoritarian Catholic Church. Since the guerrillas played at being Marxists, the stage was set for the military forces to rid society of enemies of Christianity as well as of capitalism.”<sup>91</sup>

Ideologies of Catholicism countered the progress being sought after by mobilized groups.

Perhaps the most famous act of Anti-Semitism during the Dirty War was the arrest and torture of Jacobo Timerman. As the publisher of the Argentine newspaper *La Opinion*, was detained during the Dirty War under suspicion by the government that he was involved in the leftist movement. After his release, Timerman left Argentina and publically denounced the military government as anti-Semitic and accused them of torture. In his book, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, Timerman describes his experiences. Timerman argues that these extremists were more anti-Semitic than anti-communist that they were in fact reconstructed Nazis. The government, in response to Timmerman’s outspoken remarks, claimed that the anti-Semitism he faced was all false. In fact, they claimed that though there had been scattered acts of anti-Semitism there was no systematic or government inspired plot. Just as the government had done in other instances, the accusations made by Timerman were denied, but his power and

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<sup>90</sup> Marchak, 254.

<sup>91</sup> Marchak, 322.

perseverance to tell the world about what was occurring in Argentina contributed to international awareness.

Repression of Jews was so obvious that international attention was drawn to Argentina's government shining light on the events there and the terrorizing of all individuals that they were involved in. Although they attempted to keep it hidden Jewish connections to the international community led other nations inquire into the acts of the Argentine government. Influential Jews from the working class or of higher level, liberal, professions were actively involved in the subjugation and it was noted by their relations outside of Argentina. Tex Harris, U.S. Foreign Service who interviewed families with connections to Disappeared individual was interviewing thirty, then forty families a week. "If any of the kidnappings had the remotest connection with the United States, or had provoked a query from Congress, he would bring it up at one of his regular meetings with officials from the Foreign Ministry working group on human rights...There were many such cases –Jews, in particular, were being singled out –and the speed of the inquiries clearly astonished the Argentineans."<sup>92</sup> In the cables from the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires, Claus Ruser, a diplomat, was recording regular acts of abuse, such as defacement against synagogues, which he stated could not have happened without the acquiescence of the authorities. Government actions against Jews were supported by excessive anti-Semitism throughout the nation.

The workers movement was a sphere of political action that Jews were highly involved in and so they were increasingly targeted as subversives. As an educated middle working class group, Jews were affected by the transformations taking place. Unions, and organizations involved with the labor movement were a large portion of the disappeared. In response to the attacks against them, Marchak asked one of his interviewees, "Did you think that the guerrilla

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<sup>92</sup> Ian Guest, *Behind the Disappeared* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 168.

movements were allied with the unions?” Their response revealed the power of the union and the large spectrum of the society in that their members belonged to. He claimed, “No...the unions were embedded in the government in such a way that they provided 33 percent of the candidates for the legislature. The majority, however, were living apparently normal lives. They were doctors, lawyers, veterinarians, and common people. And they were at the service of the organization when it required them.”<sup>93</sup> Most importantly, Marchak notes the impact of that the movement of the 70s and the 80s had in Argentina, despite the terrible repercussions that the activists confronted by the government and military. He states, “The union leaders at the time had so much influence in the government, 1975, that they got labor laws which are still in place today and which the unions consider so favorable for them at all they now want is simply to keep them.”<sup>94</sup> The junta, although it was able to suppress their opposition, with torture, arrest, and anti-Semitism, was not able to delay the important policies that the movement set out to achieve.

The Jewish connection to the guerilla movement branched out to all sects of society. Many citizens were intrigued by the opportunity for change and jumped on the coattails of the guerilla movement. Even if they were not directly affiliated with one political side, they took leadership roles in the organizations they were a part of to openly support the political movement. One interviewee claimed, “For people my age, kidnappings by the Montoneros, like the kidnapping and murder of the director of the major newspaper, had no impact. They were concerned with the social structure. For people who were eighteen to about twenty-three years old coming from middle-class professional families, clearly the majority were in favor of the Montoneros. And you can find in the list of the desparecidos most of these kids who got into the

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<sup>93</sup> Marchak, 34.

<sup>94</sup> Marchak, 34.

Perónist organizations.”<sup>95</sup> Despite their place in society, most youth, especially Jews, were eager to involve themselves in the revolution occurring in the country.

The attempt made by the State to modernize Argentina was almost impossible because of the rooted traditions of the nation. The ruling government reigned with the ideology similar to the Spanish colonizers which was the belief that Argentina was “to have this enormous area available for Christianization. This allowed the Spanish to justify colonization as fulfillment of the Divine Law of God to Christianize the whole world. The authority of the State and the authority of God were placed together on a high pedestal, and the laws of the state, together with the love of God, were given as gifts to subjects below.”<sup>96</sup> Hence, the violence that occurred in Argentina had to do with a particular culture based on the assumption that force was necessary to resolve social conflict and that force was to be delivered by the government. When minority groups took power of more influential and powerful sects of the society, the dominating groups had to oppress them in order to retain control. Likewise, the government, in an effort to further segregate the Jews from the general society, had to directly target them, making not only a crime that they believed that they were outsiders and but also that they were Jews.

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<sup>95</sup> Marchak, 32.

<sup>96</sup> Marchak, 176.

## Chapter V

### Modern Attitudes toward the Jewish Community

In a political sense, although they often ride on the coattails of other groups movements for progress, choosing which features they want to identify as their own, Jews are still isolated from the outside community's institutions due to the way that they are discriminated against as non-Christians. “‘Anti-Semitism,’ warned Aja Espil, ‘continues to be the decisive factor that could influence the lifting of sanctions against our country’.”<sup>97</sup> Rather than unifying them under a common cause, the Argentine community still does not regard Jews as completely assimilated to their culture. Though the nation has taken a more secular direction, the country is still run by and highly influenced by the Catholic Church and although Jews have been able infiltrate certain sectors of Argentine life, they still have a need for their own organizations in order to represent their needs.

After violence of the Dirty War there was a significant change in the attitudes of non-Jews toward the Jewish community in the country though the isolation of Jews remained. Due to the dilution of religion, groups both anti and pro religion target the Jewish community. Although the secularization of the Jewish community is similar occurring in Jewish neighborhoods, and fewer individuals practice the Jewish religion than before, Jews remain been alienated by domestic and international trends.

Despite the progress made within Argentina, there are still acts and feelings of Anti-Semitism. The bombing at the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), in El Once in 1994 was the most recent and most direct act of anti-Semitism that the country had experienced since the end of the military coup. On the morning of July 18<sup>th</sup> eighty six people were killed and hundreds injured when a bomb exploded in the AMIA. Though there was suspicion that a pro-

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<sup>97</sup> Guest, 287.

Iranian Hezbollah terrorist group planned and carried out the attack no one ever took responsibility for it and no one was convicted of the crime.

### **Reaction to the Bombing at the AMIA:**

There clear evidence of a connection between anti-Semitism and the most evident act of violence against Jews in the modern era of Argentine history the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in El Once. The bombing was just a continuation of the countries anti-Jewish policies. The bombing at the AMIA was a traumatizing blow to Argentine Jews. Yet, the bombing only reinvigorated Argentine nationalism and rallied support for the Jews, reasserting their connection, to their cultural past and the achievements of their communities within and for Argentina in the face of repression. After the event, “Thousands of citizens came out to demonstrate against race hatred and terror...”<sup>98</sup> The support from non-Jews and the desire to recover from the debris valuable items that were nostalgic for reasons of historical significance, not religious, illustrates the impact that the AMIA and the Jewish role played in maintaining Argentine heritage.

### **Secularization of Jewish Communities:**

Oppression and increased nationalism have caused many groups of Jews to move further from their religion just as other matters have brought them to the streets in the history of Argentina, Jews are motivated by class, occupation, and nationalism over Judaism. “Unless there are radical changes in Jewish life –more respect for religion, a move for the masses to admit the existence of shortcomings in the communal life and structure, a move toward integration into Argentine life, an elevation of cultural standards, and a call for non-Argentine experts for aid – then one must concur that ‘Jewish life in Argentina will disappear in fifty years’”<sup>99</sup> Institutions

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<sup>98</sup> Elkin, 265.

<sup>99</sup> Liebman, 315.

fulfill the requirement of religio-ethnic groups. The secularism of the community is not going unnoticed and there has been an increase of social movements made by the Jewish community to form organizations to uphold their religion and traditions of previous generations in the face of its disappearance. For example,

“In September 1973 the Federacion Sefaraditi Latino-Americano was formed in with the intention of revitalizing Judaism within the younger generations. The chairman David Roisin, said in 1968, “‘We are not dealing here with the frequent phenomenon of a confrontation between generations, but rather with a complete rupture with the very roots of the Jewish people... Liberal Judaism is cheapened diluted and substitute Judaism’ that cannot halt assimilation””<sup>100</sup>

Oppression and increased nationalism have caused many groups of Jews to move further from their religion just other matters have brought them to the streets in the history of Argentina, Jews are motivated by class, occupation, and nationalism over Judaism.

Reactions have caused the organizations to create new social movements, but ones that remain in the Jewish community in order to maintain a forced connection between them. For example, “the AMIA, in 1967, organized a department of ‘New Generations and Social Investigation,’ in order to involve the third and fourth generations. Its chairman David Roisin, said in 1968 that, ‘We are not dealing here with the frequent phenomenon of a confrontation between generations, but rather with a complete rupture with the very roots of the Jewish people.’”<sup>101</sup> Yet, it seems that as the nation as a whole gets more secular, the younger generations in not identifying with the ancestors may be able to infiltrate other sectors of society and become accepted finally into other spheres in which they identify with, such as Jews have done within their own communities in the past, by occupation, class, and finally with the complete neutrality of religion in time by nationalism as Argentines.

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<sup>100</sup> Liebman, 315.

<sup>101</sup> Liebman, 315.

Jewish youth must be considered within their own category as well. While second or third generation Jews identify with the labor force, those individuals now coming into their 20s and 30s are concerned with other features of society. Having lived in Argentina all their life, achieving high levels of education, and taking on careers in prominent levels of society, Jewish youth are neglecting their religion some of the reason for this is most definitely determined by the repression, alienation, discrimination, and history that they have faced or that their family has experienced. Most concern for the secularization and the maintenance of religion within the Jewish community is given to the younger generations who have the most influence in the future of Judaism in Argentina and have the largest stake in the policies of the country. "Eighty to 85 percent of the Jewish university students support the extreme Left and the Third World. Not only has there been a substantial decrease in the attendance of the youth in Jewish schools, but the social and educational backwardness is also deplorable."<sup>102</sup> Similar to the generations of their parents, the Jewish youth are nationalistic and concerned with progressively affecting the country. "The younger generation also rejects aspects of Argentine culture that repress patriotic urges. Thus the majority of Jewish youth are found in the extremes of the political spectrum where quick change is sought."<sup>103</sup> These goals, however, are rarely affiliated with their desires as Jewish individuals, rather than their desires as Argentine citizens. In fact, few Jewish youths even practice the religion or consider themselves Jewish at all. The defection of Jews, not by conversion but by sheer apathy and assimilation was evidenced more than fifteen years ago, In the 1967 census, over 220,000 Jews replied 'without religion' to the census takers."<sup>104</sup>

Cultural variations in and traditions from Argentina have also alienated younger generations of Jews. Younger generations of Jews have refocused the Jewish community in

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<sup>102</sup> Liebman, 314.

<sup>103</sup> Liebman, 316.

<sup>104</sup> Liebman, 314.



refocusing their activities on religion. “Younger Jews have found a number of ways to show their alienation from the community. A 1966 study undertaken by the Delgacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentina (DAIA), the community’s umbrella defense organization, found that some 90,000 youths between the ages of ten and twenty-five, only 38 percent were affiliated with a Jewish institution”<sup>105</sup> Although the Jews of Argentina never had a strong connection to their religion, there is fear by the community that if Jews are further incorporated into secular communities they will lose the connection to their own community and their own institutions will disappear.

In modern instances of political and economic strife, Jews have been viewed with disdain by the Catholic run government and the powerful Catholic oriented leadership as burdens to the community. This attitude has alienate Jews further, Liebman writes, “If the Argentine Jewish is a political outsider it is just as much a consequence of the general orientation of super-nationalist policies, as it is a positive effort to guarantee some niche for the separate national flowering of the Jewish spirit. But that the Jew is politically deviant in the context of Argentine ‘norms’ is undoubtedly true. Broadly speaking, the Jews insist upon ethnic singularity while Argentines incline toward national unity.”<sup>106</sup> In fact, evidence has demonstrated that increasing anti-Semitism has forced Jews to be isolated within their own communities, even though they would rather resort to assimilation and connecting with outside groups. Thus, this outlook toward Jews just creates a cycle of hostility, Jews are isolated because Argentines think they are disconnected and therefore Jews are kept from contributing to national unity and are instead forced to live independently from Argentine society.

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<sup>105</sup> Syrquin, 132.

<sup>106</sup> Liebman, 320.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

Similar to phenomenon occurring in numerous countries all over the world Argentina is becoming more secular. What this means for the Jewish community there is hard to predict. Although Jewish groups believe that their youth are becoming more secular over time than their previous ancestors, evidence, however, has demonstrated that in the past, Jewish communities did not unify due to their religion, and in often rarely identified with it at all. They are more secular because they feel less of a need to identify with and form their own Jewish institutions because of their admittance into parts of the Argentine society.

As portrayed there are many factors that affect geographical distribution of Jews in a country such as war, stability within a nation, immigration policies of other countries with large Jewish communities, such as the United States, and the discrimination against Jews as a whole. There is little data that shows a general trend for all Latin American countries, or even one. While data from the 1950s demonstrates a reversal in the international migration balance, noting that in Argentina, “the rate of Jewish population growth declined from a yearly average 14.5 per 1000 between 1940 and 1950 to 8 per 1000 in 1950-1955 and to a mere 2 per 1000 in 1955-1960,”<sup>107</sup> population data regarding the Jewish community has tended to exaggerate Jewish trends to begin with and there is no solid evidence that supports the idea that the Jewish community is any less secular than before, or that it is disappearing. Although trends seem to show that numbers of Latin American Jews are reducing, conclusions on data are more easily made in smaller Jewish communities than in countries where the Jewish population was larger initially.

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<sup>107</sup> Sergio DellaPergola, “Demographic Trends of Latin American Jewry,” in Judith Laikin Elkin and Gilbert Merx eds. *The Jewish Presence in Latin America* (Massachusetts: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 96.

Factors such as era, region or settlement, country of origin, and other social, economic, and political elements, must be taken into account when recognizing trends of Jewish immigration to and within Latin America. Jewish communities no longer include immigration from Europe and other regions of the World. Just as 1890 marks the beginning of Jewish immigration into Argentina, 1930 marks the end of it. Although intermarriage does play a role, increasing secularization of the community is a more significant issue for Argentina's diminishing Jewish community.

The major waves of immigration all added to the current dynamics of the Jewish community. During the period of colonialism, the first Jews put Argentina on the map, allowing it to be recognized as a possible place for settlement. Then, the immigrants of the 1890s settled the first communities and set the foundations for the standards within the community, while later waves more clearly defined the divisions within the Jewish community. Importantly, the secular nature of the Jewish communities and their identification with economic, political, and social concerns over their religion led them to create organizations that paralleled the non-Jewish communities that were active in social movements.

During major movements in the political and economic history of Argentine Jews demonstrated their concern and connection to Argentina as their homeland and their disconnection from other Jews outside of the secular commonalities. The labor movement of the 1900s and the Perónist era was a reaction by the Jewish community to mounting anti-Semitism and their occupational concerns. They formed organizations not in order to unite religiously but instead to represent their professional goals and participate in the movement that the non-Jewish sector was trying to isolate them from by leaving them out of their labor organizations. Later, during the Dirty War, the Jews were actively involved in the liberal groups and the leftist

movement that occurred. At the same time, they facilitated international attention against the activities of the military government and identified with the secular concerns of other Argentines.

In the past decade, Jews have been actively involved in establishing security for their homeland in Argentina. Their identification as Argentine citizens has led them to make improvements in the social structure of the country as a whole by extending their influence outside of their neighborhoods. They have also extended organizations into broader sectors of society such as governmental policy and international relations. Although Jews continue to be faced with anti-Semitism, this obstacle only fuels their desire and need to facilitate change and equality especially in Buenos Aires but also in the entirety of Argentina. This ideology may mean the disappearance of a more religious community however it positively means a continued powerful class of activists who will challenge the status quo. The people within the Jewish community have no intention of emigrating from Argentina. The trends and activities of the community demonstrate that the Jews will not leave despite the social anti-Semitism. Jews intend to remain an active force in Argentina unless they are expelled.

Although the most recent act of anti-Semitism, the bombing of the AMIA, was a reaction to Zionist partisanship, evidence demonstrates that Argentine Zionists are a separate entity from the more general Jewish community in the country and are often times alienated from the more assimilated Jews who simply desire to blend in. In Argentina, Jews are often associated with Zionism Jews and Zionists are clearly two separate divisions in Argentine society. Zionists are rarely considered by other Jews as a reputable sphere of their population. Alluding to previous conclusion on the secularism of Argentine Jews, their community organizations and Zionism Liebman writes,

Family homogeneity is disappearing with the increase in intermarriage and assimilation; Jewish youth socialize less and less under the umbrella of Jewish institutions; and adherence to Jewish values and identification with the group is fast diminishing. Although there is the usual self-segregation by Jews, the modern generation rebels against this practice, and this serves as an impetus for assimilation rather than identification with the group. The vast majority of Argentine Jews does not identify with or become involved in Jewish culture, no even with causes in behalf of Israel.<sup>108</sup>

The politics of the Middle East weighs heavy in Argentina, perhaps more than other Westernized countries because of its connection with both Arab countries and Israel, and its relationship with Western powers. Thus as Argentines, Jews take on these points of view, yet as Israelis Jews are conflicted as well. Liebman writes, “The PLO is viewed with sympathy by some Jewish university youth because it is a nationalistic movement seeking self determination. The Arab propagandists speak in Marxian terms that appeal to the youth. Imperialism, capitalism, exploitation of people, and anti-foreign diatribes (including the Jews) are the jargon of the pro-PLO factions.”<sup>109</sup> Too many Jewish individuals, especially youths, relating their beliefs to Zionism only increases the discrimination against them. By 1971, only 5.8 percent of the Jewish university students belonged to a Jewish organization, and only about 4 percent belonged to a Zionist organization.”<sup>110</sup> Jews are reluctant to identify as Zionists and reluctant to participate in practices that do not identify them further with the goals of assimilating in Argentina.

It is difficult to determine if the Jewish community of Argentina will continue to exist in the future. As the community around them becomes more accepting and no longer alienates them or categorizes them as outsiders, there will be little reason for Jews to maintain their own institutions for social movements. Since their organizations are created in an effort to emphasize their assimilation and participate in the social movements of the gentile community, once they are allowed to unite with other citizens and are considered Argentines, not Jews by the

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<sup>108</sup> Liebman, 321.

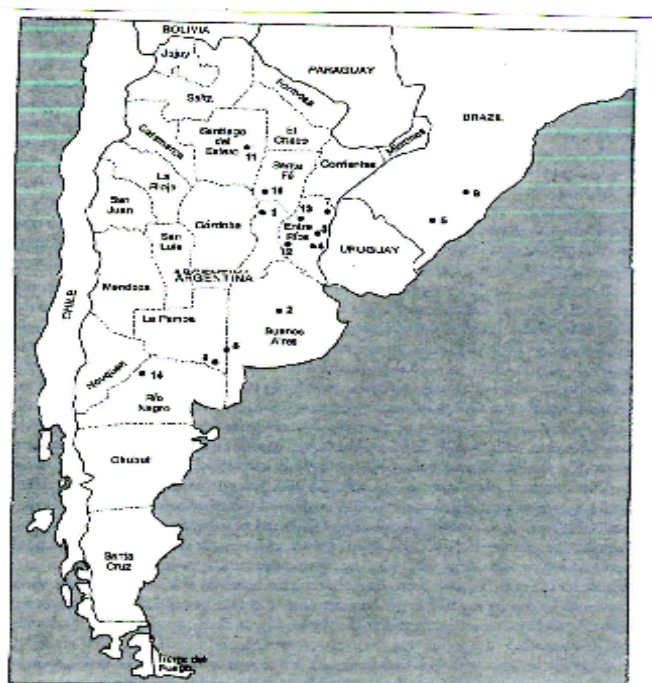
<sup>109</sup> Liebman, 324.

<sup>110</sup> Syrquin, 133.

government and other groups, they may not be motivated to connect with other Jews. On the other hand, since in times of social, economic, and political neutrality and peace Jewish organizations are used for secular activities, perhaps they will continue to utilize them as such and begin to admit non-Jews instead of neglecting to maintain them. Still, as long as Argentina remains a Catholic run country, Jews will remain banned from the powerful levels of the community where they live. If Jews do remain barred from rising to the higher levels of the military and are kept from being in government they will continue to feel the need to uphold the organizations that they participate in, even if the non-Jewish community becomes more accepting. Since the military, the Church and the trade unions are the three principal national powers and Jews are barred from the first two, and are unaffiliated with the third, Jews will need to continue to use their own institutions to represent themselves in the political, intellectual or cultural arenas of the country.

## Appendix: Table 1.22

Map of Jewish Colonization Association Colonies in Argentina and Brazil



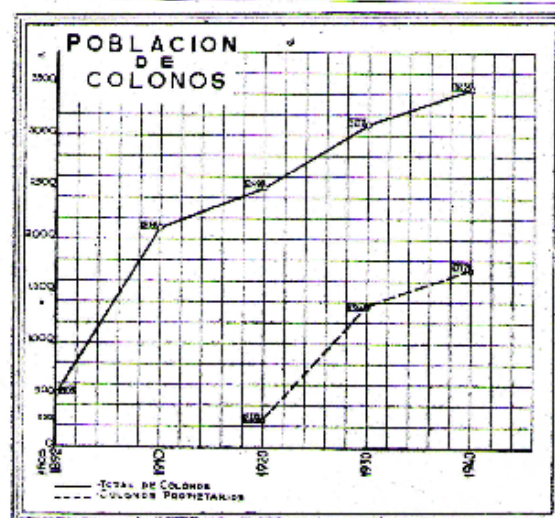
Name	Settled	Hectares	Name	Settled	Hectares
1. Mokceville	1891	118,262	8. Nardisse Leven	1909	46,466
2. Maurice	1892	43,495	9. Quatro Hermanos	1910	83,885
3. Clam	1892	102,671	10. Montefiore	1912	28,075
4. Lucioville	1894	40,530	11. Does	1913	2,880
5. Philippson	1903	5,764	12. Cohen Oungre	1925	23,074
6. Baron Hirsch	1905	110,885	13. Avigdor	1936	17,175
7. Santa Isabel	1905	47,301	14. San José (not colonized)		136

SOURCE: Adapted from Morton D. Winsberg, *Colonia Barón Hirsch*, p. 6.

Morton D. Winsberg, "Jewish Colonization Association Colonies in Argentina and Brazil," *Colonia Barón Hirsch*, [from Judith Elkin, *The Jews of Latin America* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1998), p. 110].

Table 2.32 Industrial Distribution of the Labor Force in Non-primary Occupations in Argentina and Mexico: Jews and Total Population <sup>112</sup>

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE LABOR FORCE IN NON-PRIMARY OCCUPATIONS IN ARGENTINA AND MEXICO: JEWS AND TOTAL POPULATION									
	ARGENTINA 1960				MEXICO				
	Total Population		Jews		Total Population		Jews		
	Nation	Greater Buenos Aires	Total	Provinces	Nation	Federal District		1940	1970
						1950	1970		
Share of Non-Primary workers in Total <sup>a</sup>	82.2	98.3	97.7	90.6	37.8	93.2	96.8	100	100
Of which:									
Industry	38.9	49.5	31.8	17.3	40.9	33.7	38.4	15.6	50
Manufacturing	30.5	40.1	29.9	15.5	32.6	27.6	32.2		
Construction	1.3	1.7	1.6	1.5	7.5	5.8	6.0		
Utilities	7.1	7.7	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.3	0.2		
Transport	8.6	9.3	1.7	2.3	6.9	7.6	4.6		
Trade and Finance	15.1	12.9	40.1	52.7	22.9	18.7	15.0	68.3	33
Trade			39.1	50.9					
Finance			1.0	1.8					
Services	37.3	28.2	26.3	27.7	29.3	40.0	41.0	16.1	17
Public and Professional			12.0	15.4			20.0		
Personal and Others			14.3 <sup>b</sup>	12.3			21.0		



<sup>113</sup>Table 2.30 Population in the Colonies (1892-1940)

<sup>112</sup> Moshe Syrquin, "Industrial Distribution of the Labor Force in Non-Primary Occupations in Argentina and in Mexico, Jews and Total Population." *Jewish Social Studies* 47:2 (1985), 118 ([www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)).

<sup>113</sup> "Jewish Colonization Association: Su Obra En La Republica Argentina 1891-1941," Buenos Aires, 16.



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