

# **THE RESPONSE OF THE FIRST PERONIST GOVERNMENT TO ANTI-SEMITIC DISCOURSE, 1946–1954: A NECESSARY REASSESSMENT\***

**Leonardo Senkman**

## **Introduction**

The uniqueness of the relationship between the new collective identity forged by Peronism as a populist regime and Argentine civil society lies in the contradictory logic of inclusion/exclusion discourse it adopted. On the one hand, Argentine nationalism was presented as the affirmation of the national self and of nativist differences from two “others,” the internal oligarchic enemy, and the external British and US imperialistic powers. On the other hand, Peronism highlighted national integration based on the strong logic of discourse calling for the inclusion of marginal groups and immigrant communities. Jews were particularly affected by the contradictory logic of inclusion/exclusion from the Peronist regime’s very inception. While Jewish Holocaust survivors were barred from entering the country as undesirables, at the same time, Perón granted full citizenship to the country’s Jewish residents, granting them the civil right to define their Jewish communal identity as part of the populist process of national integration.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the fact that the populist movement perceived of Jews as “others,” they were however accepted by Perón as legitimate partners in his drive to

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1. On the immigration policy of the first Peronist regime and its discriminatory anti-Jewish patterns, see Leonardo Senkman, “Etnicidad e Inmigración durante el primer Peronismo,” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 3, no. 2 (1992), pp. 5–39; idem, “Perón y la entrada de técnicos alemanes y colaboracionistas con los nazis, 1947–1949: un caso de cadena migratoria,” *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 31 (Dec. 1995), pp. 673–704.

achieve national integration in his New Argentina. This logic of inclusion was consistent with the system of broad social alliances Perón offered to the middle classes and the popular sectors of Argentine society with the aim of fostering and widening the internal economic market. Consequently, the logic of inclusion, not exclusion, as well as the ideology of populist order and social concord guaranteed by the authoritarian democratic regime, discouraged anti-Semitic discourse and racial discrimination. Any study of anti-Semitic discourse in Argentina must take into account the fact that Jews were invited to become partners in the new system of social alliances between the pioneers of industry and commerce, members of the professions and unionized workers, from the initiation of Peronist rule. Evidence for this inclusionary logic is provided by Perón's granting of religious freedom, passage of antidiscriminatory legislation, and the right granted to each immigrant community to shape its ethnic-cultural identity and to preserve its national links with the mother country (*Madre Patria*). Perón and his wife Evita's friendship towards Zionism and Israel, as well as their acceptance of Argentine-Jewish communal life and the ethnic-religious patterns of their collective identity, have been the subject of study.<sup>2</sup>

Although Perón condemned popular anti-Semitism as well as prohibiting governmental anti-Semitism, nonetheless the phenomenon of institutional anti-Semitic discourse by some ultra-right wing nationalist supporters remained in evidence for several years after his accession to power. The eruption of the anti-Semitic ultra-right wing Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista (ALN) into the great mass mobilization supporting Perón's political debut on 17 October 1945, is a prime example of the leader's failure to prevent popular anti-Semitism during a mass rally stirred up by extreme nationalists. In contrast, in the late years of his regime, during the dramatic crisis with the Catholic Church (November 1954–June 1955), the populist leader was able to protect the Jews from becoming the scapegoats of a

2. See Ignacio Klich's pioneering study of the triangular relationship between the first Peronist government, Israel, and the Arab world, "A Background to Peron's Discovery of Jewish National Aspirations," in *Judaica Latinoamericana*, ed. AMILAT (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 192–223; idem, "Failure in Argentina: The Jewish Agency's Search of Congressional Backing for Zionist Aims in Palestine, 1946," in *Judaica Latinoamericana* II, ed. AMILAT (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 245–64; idem, "Equidistance and Gradualism in Argentine Foreign Policy towards Israel and the Arab World, 1949–1955," in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, ed. David Sheinin and Louis Baer-Barr (Boston, 1996), pp. 219–37. For an appraisal of the Peronist regime's pre-1955 attitude towards the Jewish community and anti-Semitism in Argentina from an Israeli perspective, see Leonardo Senkman, "El Peronismo visto desde la Legación Israeli en Buenos Aires: sus relaciones con la OIA, 1949–1954," in *Judaica Latinoamericana* II, pp. 115–36.

violent social-religious confrontation. The role of anti-Semitic discourse in both mass mobilizations under Peronist rule deserves comprehensive study and analysis ;<sup>3</sup> this, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I will restrict the present discussion to a consideration of what factors led to Perón's toleration of anti-Semitic discourse by populist movements like the ALN during the early years of his rise to power, even though this contradicted official policy.

### Anti-Semitic Discourse under the Military Regime, 1943–46

#### Reactions to the Signals of Change

The orthodox interpretation of Peronism as a national popular authoritarian movement with roots in European fascism won many followers among the Jewish middle class, both inside and outside Argentina. Historically speaking, it cannot be denied that, from the origins of the revolution in June 1943, the GOU (Grupo de Oficiales Unidos) was formed by openly pro-Axis army officers with anti-Jewish prejudices, and that Perón was their acknowledged leader.<sup>4</sup> For the first time in Argentina, civil servants and

3. Both cases are considered in my forthcoming book. See Leonardo Senkman, *Populismo latinoamericano y etnicidad: Vargas y Perón ante los judíos* (Buenos Aires, 1997). For an account of the political use made by the Peronist movement of anti-Semitic discourse and of the Sinarquia myth during the late sixties and the third Peronist regime, see Leonardo Senkman, ed., *El Antisemitismo en Argentina*, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires, 1989), pp. 121–93. I follow here the conceptual reassessment made by Emilio De Ipola, "Ruptura y Continuidad: claves parciales para un balance de las interpretaciones del Peronismo," *Desarrollo Económico* 29, no. 115 (Oct.–Dec. 1989), pp. 331–59. See also De Ipola's response to Jorge Raul Jorrat, "Respuesta al comentario 'Reflexiones sobre un balance de las interpretaciones del peronismo,'" *Desarrollo Económico* 30, no. 118 (July–Sept. 1990), pp. 285–88.
4. For a critical examination of some works on Peronism that interpret it as an Argentinian version of Fascism, see Christian Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo: La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial, 1927–1955* (Buenos Aires, 1987), pp. 311–16, 392–99; Jose Enrique Miguens and Frederick C. Turner, *Racionalidad del peronismo* (Buenos Aires, 1988), pp. 18–52. Gino Germani's classic article on anti-Semitism in Argentina draws a sharp distinction between its traditional expressions and ideological anti-Semitism and shares the theoretical framework proposed by Adorno in his book on the authoritarian personality. See Gino Germani, "Antisemitismo ideológico y antisemitismo tradicional," *Comentario* 34 (Dec. 1962), pp. 55–63. For a critique of Germani, see Joaquin Fisherman, "Etnocentrismo y antisemitismo," *Índice* 1 (Dec. 1997), pp. 17–24; idem, "El antisemitismo en el Gran Buenos Aires," *Comentario* 72 (May–June 1970), pp. 16–29. For a well-documented demythification of the actual Nazi menace in Argentina, before and immediately after Peron took office, see Ronald C. Newton, *The "Nazi Menace" in Argentina, 1931–1947* (Stanford, 1992). For a consideration of the Argentine reception of US intervention in forging the myth of Perón's compliance with the Nazis, see Ignacio Klich, "Los Nazis in Argentina: revisando algunos mitos," *Ciclos* 9 (1994), pp. 193–220.

military men known for their “judeophobia” were nominated to important official posts. The reorganization of the military cabinet in October 1943, at the moment when the Nazi extermination of European Jewry was at its height, caused deep alarm among Jewish communal leaders, who viewed the rise of Colonel Perón as linked to the ascent of this group of Army officers known for its xenophobia and its opposition to severing Argentina’s links with the Axis. General Luis Perlinger, who was posted to the Interior Ministry, launched an anti-Communist campaign which was not particular about drawing a clear distinction between “Jews” and “Marxists.” In his role as Minister of Justice and Education, Gustavo Martínez Zuviría (“Hugo Wast”), a well-known writer whose reputation helped promote two anti-Jewish best seller — *Kahal* and *Oro*, was charged with implementing the law of compulsory Catholic instruction previously demanded by the nationalist right.<sup>5</sup>

The Jewish community was unable to overlook the circumstances of the 1943 revolution that led to the dismissal of many Jewish teachers and professors, following the appointment of Interventores (Federal Commissioners). Among these special commissioners we must note Professor Tomás Casares at the University of Buenos Aires, as well as members of the staff at the Universities of the Litoral, Mendoza, and Tucuman, and the president of the National Council of Education. Specifically, the Jewish community could not ignore the first official anti-Semitic measures taken against local Jews by Entre Ríos provincial commissioner Lieutenant Carlos M. Zavalla. Provincial, municipal, and police authorities in several towns and colonies in Entre Ríos, the center of Jewish agricultural settlement, all Zavalla appointees, dismissed Jewish teachers, outlawed kosher slaughter, closed Jewish schools and cultural institutions, deprived some *kehillot* of the legal status (*Personería Jurídica*) they enjoyed and forbade Jewish meetings. This judeophobic official policy was in effect until Zavalla’s replacement by General Humberto Sosa Molina in March 1944. The new commissioner, a close friend of Colonel Perón, attempted to ameliorate the atmosphere of panic in the local community by lifting the anti-Jewish measures. Despite

5. For a detailed analysis of the impact of the military regime and the Perón administration on Jewish education, see Efraim Zadoff, *Historia de la Educación judía en Buenos Aires* (1935, 1957) (Buenos Aires, 1994), pp. 347–57. For a documented history of GOU, see Robert Potash, *Perón y el G. O. U.: Los documentos de una Logia secreta* (Buenos Aires, 1984), pp. 136ff., 202, 206–9; Leonardo Senkman, “La revolución de 1943 y los judíos,” *Todo es Historia* 193 (June 1983), pp. 38–49; Enrique Zuleta Alvarez, *El Nacionalismo Argentino* (Buenos Aires, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 509–45.

assurances by Sosa Molina to the Jewish leaders, it was not until late April 1945 that anti-Jewish hostility and Jewish fears subsided.

The Delagación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) issued formal protests against the officially sanctioned discriminatory steps taken during the terms of Commissioners Zavalla and Alberto Baldrich (the commissioner of Tucuman Province, later appointed Minister of Justice and Education in May 1944). Similarly, when the national government decreed the closure of all Yiddish newspapers in October 1943 (a decree lifted several days later following the personal intervention of US president Roosevelt), the frightened Jews were certain that the official xenophobia was directed against them exclusively, although this emergency restriction on the use of foreign languages during wartime was legislated as early as 1939.<sup>6</sup>

Following Argentina's breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Axis in January 1944, the Jews, like other middle class sectors, misunderstood the signals of change. They mistook the social initiatives of Colonel Perón — then Secretary of Labor and Welfare — for steps towards corporativism. They were unable to distinguish between Perón and the radical pro-Fascist group personified by the Minister of Internal Affairs, General Luis C. Perlinger, Perón's main adversary in the Farrell cabinet. This misapprehension was shared by all middle-class sectors. Perón's new program to reform labor relations and to give legitimacy to the involvement of popular sectors in politics was rejected by the dominant groups, who feared that this wider involvement would threaten the existing model of capitalist hegemony. These middle-class groups were quickly enlisted to strengthen the ranks of civilian resistance in the face of the perceived danger of labor reforms and mass mobilization; hence the attempt of the anti-Peronist opposition to enlist the Jewish middle class by disqualifying Colonel Perón as a fascist.

6. See DAIA Archives, Paraná, Entre Ríos, petition signed by the Jewish community of Villa Domínguez to General Sosa Molina, 13 September 1944, claiming anti-Semitic hostility and vandalism on the part of the local authorities; *La Acción* (Paraná), 5 September 1944. *Personería Jurídica* was restored by the provincial government in March 1945; see the letter of the president of DAIA-Paraná to the provincial governor, 1 August 1944; petition of an *ad hoc* committee of the Basavilbaso Jewish community to General Sosa Molina, 15 April 1945, protesting the police ban on a mourning assembly devoted to Jewish victims of Nazism. For a detailed account of anti-Semitic violence in Entre Ríos, see Leonardo Senkman, "Identidades colectivas de los colonos judíos en el campo y ciudades entrerrianas" (paper presented at the Eighth International Congress of Latin American Jewish Studies, Mexico, November 1995); *Mundo Israelita*, 23 October 1943, 6 November 1943.

In 1944, during the dizzying political changes which took place at this critical juncture, Perón looked to the old guard of Syndicalists and Socialists and to the traditional working class for support, as well as to the new industrial workers. In order to develop his power base, Perón also sought the cooperation of dissenting groups of Radicals and Conservatives,<sup>7</sup> and enjoyed the support of the nationalist *espíantavotos* (people who alienate the voters).

The Jews were aware of the dangers involved in ALN support for Perón, long before the ALN became the third political group to support his candidacy in 1946 (after the Labor Party and the “Renewal” faction of the Unión Cívica Radical [Radical Civic Union]). The ALN had favored the new revolutionary process from the beginning of the 1943 Revolution, but refused to accept subordination to Colonel Perón’s strategy of popular mobilization from above, preferring to maintain its independent political role as an ideological body outside the working-class masses and as an autonomous shock force. By playing a mobilizing role the ALN fulfilled an essential political task in the crucial phase of the political process from October 1943, when its members confronted the opposition civilian bloc which would later become the Unión Democrática (Democratic Union). On 9 June 1943 the ALN declared the Revolution “a national renewal,” and important intellectuals from its ranks assumed public office in the military government, including Jordan Bruno Genta, Ramón Doll, and Bonifacio Lastra.<sup>8</sup>

The ALN was not the only nationalist group to support Colonel Perón; other moderate nationalist supporters were to be found among populist Catholics such as the writer Manuel Gálvez<sup>9</sup> and the group of intellectuals

7. I follow the analysis of Juan Carlos Torre, “La C.G.T. y el 17 de octubre de 1945,” *Todo es Historia* 105 (Feb. 1976), pp. 38–50; idem, “Interpretando (una vez más) los orígenes del peronismo,” *Desarrollo Económico* 28, no. 112 (Jan.–March 1989), pp. 525–42.
8. *Cabildo*, 9 June 1943, p. 2. As early as December 1942 and July 1943, the ALN assumed an active role, together with the Sindicato Universitario Argentino, in the assault by the Faculty of Economics against liberal and leftist students. See *La Nación*, 8 July 1943.
9. See Manuel Gálvez, “La obra social del coronel Perón,” *El Pueblo*, 13 August 1944, p. 9; reprinted in 1946 as the foreword for the Perón’s collected speeches *El Pueblo quiere saber de que se trata* (Presidencia de la Nación Argentina). See Manuel Gálvez, *Recuerdos de la vida literaria: En el mundo de los seres reales* (Buenos Aires, 1965), p. 78. During that period, Gálvez wrote a series of articles in order to explain why, after breaking off diplomatic relations with the Axis, Argentina abandoned its traditional Anglo-American phobia, which was allegedly based on anti-imperialistic grounds, not on pro-Fascist stands. See idem, “Nosotros y los Norteamericanos,” *El Pueblo*, 20 August 1944, p. 9; “Nosotros y los Ingleses,” *ibid.*, 27 August 1944.

headed by the poet Pedro Juan Vignale, who belonged to an association called the Partido Patriótico 4 de Junio (Patriotic Party of June 4th). But the ALN undoubtedly gave the signal for the pro-Perón mobilization during the critical period from mid-1944 as well as prior to and following the events of 17 October 1945.<sup>10</sup> Its presence was felt on the streets of Buenos Aires and in the other cities of the Argentine coast and was characterized by aggressively xenophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric as well as by anti-Communist slogans used to arouse the masses. The “March for the Constitution and for Freedom,” organized by anti-Perón forces on 19 September 1945, which brought together Liberals, Conservatives, Radicals, Socialists, and Communists, and the American ambassador Spruille Braden, resulted in a symmetrical but inverted “double discourse”: the Jews were convinced by the pro-Allied and supposedly pro-Semitic camp to join the fight against a pro-Fascist leader, while the ALN believed they had now found proof for their fantasies about the “Jewish-Marxist-Yankee” conspiracy.

The eruption of the ALN and its anti-Semitic discourse into the great mass mobilization of 17 October 1945 constitutes a prime example of Perón’s failure to control a popular demonstration stirred up by outside nationalist agents. The future president would take extreme care not to allow the repetition of such an event. The anti-Semitic acts and demonstrations of that day, although limited to Buenos Aires and Córdoba, caused damage which still further deepened the dramatic misunderstanding that separated the

10. Zuleta Alvarez, *El Nacionalismo Argentino*, vol. 2, p. 524. Two eloquent examples of the correlation between the ultra-right pro-fascist offensive and the demagogic use of anti-Semitic discourse can be isolated from the period of cabinet reorganization to the right and the political crisis faced by the Junta (October–November 1943 and mid-1944). (1) Only two days before Col. Hector J. Lavocat took office as the new sub-Secretary of Information and Press on 9 November, the Presidential Secretary, Col. Enrique González, another pro-Fascist and one of the GOU strong men, was appointed minister with direct authority over Lavocat’s sub-secretariat with wide-ranging censorship powers. The 7 November issue of *Clarín* divulged new hints of official anti-Jewish drives. It called for the complete “confinement to ghettos” of Argentina’s Jewish community. Some days later, on 15 November, nationalist leaflets disseminated threats attributed to the ALN of a planned pogrom against the Buenos Aires Jewish community. DAIA representatives called on various officials, who reported that they were already aware of reports that nationalist elements were planning a “severe and bloody clean up.” On this occasion, the threat remained unfulfilled; however, the government took no measures against either *Clarín* or the pro-fascist Jew-baiting ALN, both of which renewed their anti-Semitic campaign with impunity following the appointments of Dr. Gustavo Martínez Zuviria to the Ministry of Justice and Education in October 1943, and two additional cabinet members in November 1944. (2) From June to August 1944, the pro-Fascist and pro-Junta paper *El Federal* issued attacks against Jews whom it equated with Communists and Masons.

Jewish community from the masses. Although the damage was symbolic rather than real, for that very reason it took root and survived in the Jewish community's misconstruction of the Peronist phenomenon. On that historic day, which saw the symbolic birth of the Argentinian workers' movement through popular mobilization, at a moment when this movement had finally found its inner coherence as a "national class," the slogan "Long live Perón, Death to the Jews" threw the frightened Jews into confusion. They reacted in turn by branding the entire popular movement as anti-Semitic.

Fortunately, the more lucid among the Jewish leaders realized that the racist distortion was the work of the ALN and of other pro-Nazi groups which Colonel Perón, recently released from prison and holding no official post, had been unable to control. DAIA president Dr. Moisés Goldman was aware that Farrell's government not only opposed racist incitement but had also condemned it publicly. In a speech, Interior Minister Colonel Bartolomé Descalzo rejected "the rumor which imputes to a member of the government the intention of encouraging a racial campaign ... foreign to the Argentinian spirit." Furthermore, the War Minister, General Sosa Molina, who had taken firm action to rule out any anti-Semitic excesses while he was the provincial commissioner of Entre Ríos, rejected ALN abuses and assured the DAIA president "that racial theories would find no echo in the government because they were anti-Argentinian and anti-democratic."<sup>11</sup>

An editorial in *Mundo Israelita*, the Jewish community's unofficial organ, exonerated Colonel Perón from responsibility for anti-Semitic vandalism, probably bearing in mind Perón's previous public condemnation of anti-Semitism in his 27 March 1945 address — the very day President Farrell declared war on Germany and Japan. Nor did *Mundo Israelita* exaggerate the scope of the events, which, in its words, "did not reach serious dimensions, but left a justified fear in the midst of our community." *Mundo Israelita* distinguished between those responsible at government level for the mobilization of the working masses in support of the vice president and Secretary of Labor and Welfare, and the nationalist pro-Nazi agents among his supporters, stating: "We are convinced that neither Colonel Perón nor the unions which follow him permitted such manifestations of racial brutality... Moreover, we are certain that they reject them." Those savage acts, described as "a bizarre distortion of the one-day march," were explicitly

11. See the DAIA statement condemning the attack on Jews at dawn on 18 October, *Mundo Israelita*, 27 October 1945, p. 2; see also the formal letter signed by the president and secretary of DAIA addressed to President Farrell, and Dr. Moisés Goldman's press conference, *ibid.*

attributed to “many Nazis, Germans, some fascists and Falangists, and a tiny number of Argentine-born employees looking to exploit any and every occasion for promoting rifts within the Argentine family.” The damage caused by the attacks was focused on the Paso street synagogue in Buenos Aires as well as on several neighboring stores which were stoned. According to DAIA, however, the attacks on the Jewish neighborhood of Villa Lynch forced the community to seek promises of protection from the local authorities. The worst violence centered in Córdoba, where the main synagogue was desecrated and ritual objects defiled; the local Jewish community center was also attacked.<sup>12</sup>

The choice of Córdoba by ALN demagogues for the perpetration of anti-Jewish attacks was not accidental, in view of the fact that the ill-fated September counter-revolution of General Arturo Rawson was blamed on the infamous alliance between “Jews-Masons-Yankees.” Nor is it surprising that the ALN’s anti-Communist and anti-Semitic discourse circulated during the demonstration of 17 October in the capital, when the closure of anti-Peronist faculties at the university caused violent clashes between the police and students. However, far from being restrained by the government’s condemnation, the ALN continued to foment its anti-Semitic incitement. It continued to grow in strength, becoming a political party supporting Colonel Perón’s presidential candidacy; concurrently, led by Juan Queraltó and the Jesuit priest Leonardo Castellani the ALN put forward its own candidates for deputies. The battle cry of “Long live Perón, Death to the Jews” continued to be heard by the frightened Jewish community in the months preceding the February 1946 elections, during which the Alliancists launched a violent election campaign against the Unión Democrática, at the same time emphasizing the threat of a “Jewish-Yankee” capitalist conspiracy, supposedly embodied by US Ambassador Spruille Braden.

Charges of anti-Semitism were levelled against Perón in the *Blue Book*, an outrageous piece of anti-Perón propaganda issued by the US State Department, which was released to all Latin American countries on 16 February 1946, several days prior to the Argentine general elections scheduled for the 24 February. Inspired by Spruille Braden, the *Blue Book* aimed to denigrate Colonel Perón, accusing him of being a “Nazi-Fascist”

12. See the editorial “Brotos racistas deben ser extirpados,” *ibid.*, p. 3. DAIA’s April 1945 request to Colonel Perón to remove the discriminatory entrance requirement to the military college, which demanded a baptismal certificate from all applicants, was crowned with success. See Congreso Nacional, Cámara de Diputados, *Diario de Sesiones*, 31 July 1946.

and an “anti-Semite.” As Roger Grivil has demonstrated, the opposition bloc supported the book’s publication, in hopes that the vote would be decisively turned by sensational revelations that Juan Perón had conspired to assist a Nazi victory in the Second World War by allegedly trying to purchase weapons from Germany. According to this conspiracy theory, which was supported by the Unión Democrática opposition bloc comprised of Radicals, Socialists, Progressive Democrats, and Communists, Perón’s election would mean the annexation of Argentina to the New World of the Axis so recently defeated in Europe and the Fourth Reich would be established in Latin America. Not only did the *Blue Book* demonstrate the adoption of a defamatory anti-Peronist policy by the US State Department, it showed that the opposition bloc had no reservations regarding the use of anti-Semitic discourse in its derogatory public anti-Peronist campaign.<sup>13</sup>

During this campaign, Jewish communal leaders complained about ALN immunity, whereas the Alliance leaders protested that they were the patriotic victims of certain liberal judges who, instead of punishing the “Communists and Jews” for murdering their cadres, attempted to bring the nationalists to trial.<sup>14</sup>

No ALN candidates obtained sufficient votes to enter the National Congress, and President Perón dissociated himself from the violently nationalistic *espíantavotos*. Only Ernesto Palacios and Joaquín Díaz de Vivar, two nationalists put forward by the Renewal faction of the Unión Cívica Radical, were elected as deputies on the Perón-Quijano list. Of the nationalists who had been members of the government during the 1943 Revolution, only one distinguished person attained an important office, namely Tomás Casares, who was appointed president of the National Supreme Court of Justice. Lesser juridical offices were filled by Ignacio B. Anzoátegui, Guillermo Borda, and Jorge Llambías, among others.<sup>15</sup>

We may inquire why Perón tolerated the rightist nationalists during his electoral campaign, if he correctly perceived them as alienating voters. Felix Luna convincingly suggests that Perón needed to avail himself of the nationalists’ political rhetoric and pamphleteering during a campaign in

13. See Roger Grivil, “El Foreign Office vs. el Departamento de Estado: reacciones británicas frente al Libro Azul,” *Ciclos* 5, no. 9 (1995), pp. 77–88. See also a derogatory anti-Peronist report on the *Blue Book* claiming judeophobia for Perón written by the American Jewish Committee. *American Jewish Yearbook* 48 (1946–47), pp. 246–48.
14. Cosme Beccar Varela et al., *El Nacionalismo: una incognita en constante evolución* (Buenos Aires, 1970), pp. 50–53.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72.

which his supporters among the Laborites, Syndicalists, and Quijano's extreme leaders "were liable to lean dangerously towards the Left or pure materialism."<sup>16</sup> According to this viewpoint, however, once Perón took office as the new constitutional president, he could no longer tolerate independent activity on the part of any of his former political, syndicalist, or nationalist supporters. Such behavior would undermine his plan for authoritarian democratization as defined by Juan Carlos Torre.<sup>17</sup> But, during the turbulent period of political crisis in 1945, the enlistment of the masses was perceived as necessary in order to neutralize both the civilian-military opposition and the international boycott. This accounts for Perón's acceptance of allies such as the ALN, despite their racist slogans. In the same context, this hypothesis explains why Perón inherited from the Farrell government notoriously anti-Semitic civil servants like Santiago Peralta, head of the Migrations Office (DM), who would be removed from office only in mid-July 1947.<sup>18</sup>

### Anti-Semitic Discourse under the First Perón Government

#### The Continued Diffusion of Anti-Semitic Discourse: 1946–1948

Continuing the same line of argument, Perón's desire for the normalization of his links with the USA led to the eventual dismissal of those leading civil servants who were pro-fascist members of the ultranationalist wing. This step marked a basic change in the attitude of permissiveness shown by the Peronist state toward anti-Semitic groups. Yet it does not explain why Perón failed to prevent the continuous diffusion of anti-Semitic action and rhetoric in the heart of civil society, and in some governmental agencies, up to the end of 1949.<sup>19</sup> In and of itself, the US-Argentina rapprochement does not fully explain Perón's domestic policy.

16. Felix Luna, *El 45: crónica de un año decisivo* (Buenos Aires, 1969), pp. 498–99.

17. Juan Carlos Torre bases his explanation of authoritarian democratization on Alain Touraine, *Las sociedades dependientes* (Mexico, 1976). He attempts to characterize the social role played by external political agents in the articulation of popular movements in Latin America, by nationalist leaders and elites emerging from the state bureaucracy for example, in order to establish the uniqueness of the Argentine experience. See Torre, "Interpretando (una vez más) los orígenes del peronismo," *Desarrollo Económico*. 28:112, enero-marzo 1989. pp. 541–43.

18. See my examination of Santiago Peralta's performance as director of DM before and after Perón came to power in my forthcoming book, *Populismo latinoamericano y etnicidad*. For an evaluation of Peralta's racial ideas and their influence on the Instituto Etnico Nacional he founded, see Senkman, "Etnicidad e Inmigración durante el primer Peronismo," pp. 13–16.

19. Some scholars attribute the Perón tactic of gradual dissociation from the ultra-nationalist

Verbal tirades against the United States by Perón's associates did not halt abruptly after 30 August 1946, following ratification of the Act of Chapultepec, or after the government's underwriting of the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance (TIAR). This treaty, which strengthened Perón's switch to a pro-USA policy, was harshly criticized both by nationalist groups and the anti-imperialist opposition of the left.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the resignation of General Juan Filomeno Velazco, chief of the Federal Police in the Farrell government, and Perón's fellow student at the Military Academy, was caused not so much by disagreements over repressive measures against Perón's opponents or over the immunity enjoyed by pro-Perón extreme nationalist groups, as by serious political disagreements emanating from Perón's alignment with the USA. According to Robert Potash, this military leader, to whom Perón delegated the task of ensuring police loyalty and guaranteeing orderly and free elections in February 1946, was responsible for the immunity enjoyed by violent nationalist groups from October 1945. Members of these groups continued to assault members of anti-Peronist parties, civic groups, and independent opposition unions, and to carry out anti-Semitic rampages as well.<sup>21</sup>

Opposition complaints and reproaches voiced by the Interior Ministers under Farrell and during the first year of Perón's government notwithstanding, General Velazco was not removed from office. On the contrary, he was appointed, together with another old Perón supporter linked to the extreme nationalist wing, the then Colonel Oscar Silva, to head the new and ephemeral Military Secretariat which functioned at the Casa Rosada (Presidential residence) parallel to the Political and Technical

officials appointed by President Farrell after 1945, followed by the stripping of their authority, to Perón's special interest in maintaining good relations with the US government which was alarmed by their judeophobia. Evidence for this shift comes from a surprised Spruille Braden who wrote in a secret letter to Messersmith, on 2 August 1946: "It is strange to find that General Sosa Molina and Pistarini are now outspoken in support of Inter-American collaboration, in view of their long record of Pro-Nazi sympathies." National Archives (NA), Washington, Record Groups (RG) 835.002/8-646, Braden to Messersmith. But the crucial historical question to be considered is why the influence of extreme nationalist functionaries with jurisdiction over Jewish matters lasted until late 1949, their removal from office by July 1947 notwithstanding. See Klich, "Background to Perón's Discovery of Jewish National Aspirations," pp. 196-97.

20. Felix Luna, *Perón y su tiempo: I. La Argentina era una fiesta* (Buenos Aires, 1987), pp. 214-25; Juan A. Lanus, *De Chapultepec al Beagle: Política Exterior Argentina, 1945-1980* (Buenos Aires, 1984), pp. 34-40.
21. Robert Potash, *El Ejército y la política en la Argentina, 1945-1962: De Perón a Frondizi* (Buenos Aires, 1984), pp. 116-19.

Secretariats headed by Perón's trusted supporters, Ramón Subiza and José Figuerola respectively.

The resignation of Velazco and Silva from their secretariats was preceded by sharp criticism, and by accusations of corrupt financial management levelled against the president of the Central Bank, Miguel Miranda, as well as against other ministers in the Perón cabinet during his initial year as president. Political disagreements with Perón came to a climax prior to the signing of the TIAR Treaty and the request for US help in modernizing the army and industrializing the economy. It was only following President Truman's statement on 3 June 1947, in which he voiced American satisfaction with Argentina's performance regarding the Chapultepec Agreement, and the American announcement enabling Argentina to participate with other countries of the hemisphere in discussions of defense programs, that the resignations of Generals Velazco, Oscar Silva, and Orlando Peluffo from their respective public offices were confirmed.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, Velazco's replacement by General Arturo Bertollo did not prevent a dawn attempt to bomb the Central Synagogue on Libertad Street on 26 July 1947, right at the start of Bertollo's incumbency. The perpetrators were never identified, despite official promises to locate and punish them. Interior Minister General Filipe Urdapilleta officially condemned the attack, the fourth such major incident within four months, and affirmed his commitment to preventive measures to forestall future attempts. An editorial in the opposition daily *La Prensa* expressed doubts regarding the authorities' ability to catch the culprits.<sup>23</sup>

This was not an isolated instance of violence; a month earlier a bomb had exploded during a Socialist meeting, killing four and injuring twenty. Such patterns of political response — by the government and the opposition — continued for some time, and anti-Semitic rhetoric was made to serve the political purposes of both sides, in their respective political discourse. The dichotomy — *nationalist totalitarianism vs. democracy* — coined during the electoral campaign not only failed to disappear, it continued to be operative during the first years of the Peronist government, nourished by the slogans

22. Roger Task: "S. Braden vs. G. Messersmith: World War II, The Cold War and Argentine Policy, 1945–1947," *Journal of Interamerican Studies* 25, no. 1 (February 1984), pp. 69–95; Ronald C. Newton, "Disorderly Succession: Great Britain, the US and the Nazi Menace in Argentina, 1938–1947," in *Argentina between the Great Powers, 1939–1947*, ed. Guido Di Tella and D. Cameron Watt (London, 1989), pp. 126–28; Klich, "Background of Perón's Discovery of Jewish National Aspirations," p. 197.
23. *La Prensa*, 27 July 1947.

of late 1945. Thus, from late 1945 and during 1946, the leftist opposition pointed to anti-Semitism and the immunity from prosecution enjoyed by its proponents as proof of the supposed “Nazi-Peronist” character of the government. The recurrent use of the expression “nationalist totalitarianism vs. democracy” prepared the way for a political rhetoric which incorporated the threat of anti-Semitism into its propaganda arsenal, in order to enroll voters in the fight against Peronism.<sup>24</sup> The Unión Democrática, the self-appointed legitimate successors to the anti-Nazi struggle declared by the multiparty organizations of the center-left such as Argentina Libre (Free Argentina) and the Junta Argentina de la Victoria (Argentine Board for Victory), neglected no opportunity for feeding the collective imagination with the specter of the Fourth Reich, as a Peronist Argentina was described. From its inception, on 8 December 1945, the Unión Democrática included in its electoral program a demand for legislation condemning anti-Semitism and allowing free immigration.

Furthermore, the Unión de Mujeres Socialistas (Union of Socialist Women) published a press statement in reaction to the rejection of anti-Semitism by Colonel Perón’s adherents, in which the Unión accused them of a propaganda maneuver “seeing that it has been established that the anti-Semitic populace was composed exclusively of Peronist followers.” It also claimed that “clerical nationalist elements encourage anti-Semitic schemes in order to create racial division among the citizens of Argentina.” Similar disbelief in Perón’s condemnation of anti-Semitic excesses was expressed by the official responsible for the Plata River Division in the US State Department, when consulted by the World Jewish Congress (WJC).<sup>25</sup>

A suggestive warning comparing Peronism with Nazi totalitarianism was sounded by the Committee against Racism and Anti-Semitism, whose president, Dr. Emilio Troise, and secretary, Arturo Orazabal Quintana, had an audience with the Interior Minister on 13 December 1945. They expressed the fear that “in the next few days, Nazi elements will try to foster a *Putsch* similar to the burning of the Reichstag in Hitler’s Germany.” According to this accusation, the plan was to make it appear that the Jews were distributing

24. For an analysis of anti-Peronist ideological discourse and the uses of the Nazi topic for domestic politics by the democratic parties during 1945–46, see Mario Rapoport, “Foreign and Domestic Policy in Argentina during the Second World War: The Traditional Political Parties and the Military Regime, 1943–1945,” in *Argentina between the Great Powers*, ed. Di Tella and Watt, pp. 85–101.

25. Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA), 11 December 1945; NA, Washington, RG 835.4016/12-1945, memo from Thomas Mann to James Waterman Wise, 12 December 1945.

leaflets against the Catholic Church and acting aggressively, even bombing Peronist meetings, “which would be utilized as a handy excuse for an organized revenge campaign by the nationalists, who would enter the Jewish neighborhood, destroying their shops and carrying out a pogrom.” The delegation seems to have received assurances from the minister that the police would take all necessary precautions to protect Jewish lives and property following the dispersal of the Peronist demonstration at the Plaza de la República scheduled for 14 December. However, according to the Interior Ministry report, the individuals who presented this serious accusation were unable to produce any valid supporting proofs.<sup>26</sup>

The sensationalist appeal to the iconography of Nazism was also made by the leftist anti-Perón press. During the electoral campaign, violent clashes between Perón followers and opponents had resulted in some fatalities, which the partisan press blamed on their opponents among the imagined combatants: on the one hand, so-called Nazi-fascism and, the democratic and progressive side on the other. For instance, the killing of a Labor activist by a seventeen-year-old Jew, Isaac Frydenberg, who fired in self-defence during a pro-Peronist rally in December 1945, was portrayed by other Laborites as a symbol of Jewish-Bolshevik crime. The anti-Peronist opposition, however, presented the violent confrontation as the Argentine version of revenge on the Nazis who were threatening the Jews. Thus on 29 and 30 December 1945, the daily *Crítica* expressed solidarity with Frydenberg and asked for a stay in proceedings. It argued that the case was similar to the assassination of the third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris, Ernst Vom Rath, in November 1938, by another young Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, upon learning that his parents had been deported together with another ten thousand Jews forced to return to Poland. The attack against Vom Rath triggered “Kristallnacht,” and *Crítica*, which represented the left wing of the Unión Democrática, predicted that Frydenberg’s action would elicit a similar reaction from Argentinian nationalists. The Peronist daily *La Epoca*, however, totally ignored the background of anti-Jewish threats faced by Frydenberg, and maintained that the shooting of the Labor militant had

26. *La Nación*, 14 December 1945, published the telegram sent to the Minister of Interior by the Comité contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo. See the interview in *La Nación*, *ibid.* There was widespread fear that the Jewish neighborhood that Perón adherents would stage a violent provocation at the close of a large mass demonstration held to celebrate the first anniversary of Perón’s appointment as Secretary of Welfare and Labor. See *El Mundo*, 28 November 1945. On 15 January 1946, President Farrell granted an audience to a DAIA delegation, whom he assured that the government would take action against anti-Jewish attacks. JTA, 16 January 1946.

been premeditated and that he was a “victim of Communist criminals.” Finally, the primary court accepted young Frydenberg’s version of the incident, and the case was dismissed.<sup>27</sup>

DAIA, for its part, complained to the Interior Minister not only about attacks on Jews and their property by the attack squads, but also about police hostility and even of police complicity with the delinquents. It asked General Felipe Urdapilleta for an investigation which would untangle the blame imputed to Jewish victims of nationalist aggressions, who had been imprisoned by the police. Thus, several days later, as a result of DAIA intervention, Colonel Filomeno Velazco ordered the release of twelve young Jews imprisoned a month earlier for having defended themselves when attacked by nationalist groups.

The Unión Democrática’s anti-Peronist electoral campaign mustered all the ammunition provided by anti-Semitic incidents: the unbroken wave of anti-Semitic attacks by the ALN from October 1945, anti-Jewish discrimination at the municipal hospitals, particularly at the Buenos Aires *Clínicas*, and at the La Plata, Córdoba, Rosario, and Buenos Aires academic centers, and the distribution of anti-Semitic publications.<sup>28</sup> Only days after the formal creation of the Unión Democrática, its followers at the League for Human Rights published a denunciation of the police for their slackness in identifying and punishing those responsible for anti-Semitic disturbances.<sup>29</sup> More than one thousand managers, intellectuals, and syndicalists, adherents of the Unión Democrática, signed a declaration published by the press condemning anti-Semitic activity nationwide and clearly enunciating Peronist responsibility.<sup>30</sup> *El Diario* of Paraná, in Entre Ríos, which supported

27. See Leonardo Senkman, “La Revolución de Junio 1943 y los judíos,” *Todo es Historia* 193 (June 1983), pp. 36–37; *Crítica* 29 and 30, December 1945; *La Epoca*, 29 December 1945.

28. JTA, 21 December 1945. The most important anti-Peronist proclamation equating it with Nazism was voiced by the newly formed Democratic Union (DU) at a meeting held on Saturday, 8 December 1945. DU decided to include in its election platform a demand for legislation outlawing anti-Semitism and urging free immigration to Argentina. An attempt by Peronists to disrupt the meeting was frustrated. Earlier, Peronist thugs invaded a Jewish shop and beat up its owner. Upon calling the police, the Jewish owner himself was arrested. JTA, 11 December 1945.

29. JTA, 30 November 1945.

30. See the anti-Peronist discourse in the proclamation of the main opposition party Movimiento Pro Unidad Democrática, inspired by the Unión Cívica Radical, which charged Peronism with harboring anti-Semitic prejudices. See *La Hora*, 20 December 1945. For the mass meeting organized by the Junta de la Victoria, a former pro-Allied multiparty umbrella organization, to denounce Peronism and its alleged use of racist propaganda, see JTA, 22 November 1945. In its statement to the press, the Union of

the Unión Democrática, alluded to the “province’s intolerable anti-Jewish atmosphere.” It also expressed disapproval of police indifference and lack of adequate protection and reported the decision of a local Jewish youth organization to prepare for self-defense.<sup>31</sup> For their part, the three pro-Peronist parties also organized a meeting on 20 December 1945 in order to express their own protest against anti-Semitic propaganda both in the federal capital and in the other provinces.<sup>32</sup>

The political and ideological use of anti-Semitism did not end with the electoral campaign, and continued even after Perón’s victory. The defeated followers of Unión Democrática made use of anti-Jewish incidents to accuse Peronism of adopting totalitarianism; at the same time, the pro-fascist extreme nationalistic sectors, which supported Perón, saw the Jews and their sympathizers as part of the hostile US campaign against the new populist regime. However, it is only fair to emphasize the efforts made by Perón, from the beginning of his first government, to stamp out anti-Semitic groups by imposing authoritarian controls on popular mass mobilization, as dictated by his decision to foster the participation of all sectors of society in the New Argentina, unmarred by class or racial conflict. Nevertheless, it took Perón much longer to neutralize nationalist groups and notoriously anti-Jewish public officials than the Jewish adherents to the Peronist state felt was desirable.<sup>33</sup>

Several attacks on Jewish-owned stores and the central building of Sociedad Hebraica were perpetrated by nationalist groups during the victory celebrations for Peronism on 1 April 1946. At an audience granted by the

Socialist Women charged that the recent repudiation of anti-Semitism by Colonel Perón’s supporters was “merely a maneuver since it has been established that the anti-Jewish mobs participating in attacks on Jews consisted exclusively of Peronists.” The statement continued that “clerical nationalist” elements were passively supporting anti-Semitic efforts to “implant racial division among the citizens of Argentina.” JTA, 11 December 1945.

31. JTA, 21 December 1945.

32. JTA, 22 December 1945.

33. From the establishment of the *Organización Israelita Argentina* (OIA) in early 1947, its pro-Peronist leaders stated that anti-Semitic campaigns waged by the nationalists had ceased to be a serious threat due to President Perón’s firm determination to take action against them, the ALN in particular. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to substantiate this premature prognosis prior to 1950. See Leonardo Senkman, “El peronismo visto desde la Legación Israelí en Buenos Aires,” pp. 115–36. The same confidence that anti-Semitism immediately ended with Peron’s assumption of office in June 1946 was also shared by leading sociologists. See, for example, Jose Enrique Miguens, “Actualización de la Identidad Justicialista,” in *Reaccionabilidad del Peronismo*, ed. Jose Miguens and Frederick C. Turner (Buenos Aires, 1987), p. 26.

Interior Minister at DAIA's request, Dr. León Kubowitzky, the resident delegate of the World Jewish Congress in New York, then visiting Buenos Aires, demanded an unequivocal statement by the government clarifying its attitude towards these acts of aggression, as well as future guidelines for new functionaries.<sup>34</sup> Interior Minister General Urdapilleta deplored the racial violence and assured his petitioners that, although he himself would not be a member of the next national cabinet, Perón was opposed to any expression of racist hatred, caused by "irresponsible people inspired by foreign doctrines." The same assurance was published by *El Laborista*, Perón's political mouthpiece, in the form of a statement condemning the anti-Semitic attacks and assuring the Jewish community of Perón's rejection of racist persecution.<sup>35</sup>

The fear caused by the escalation of anti-Semitic violence, and the Jewish community's feelings of insecurity and defenselessness as a result of the indulgence shown to the nationalist gangs, in spite of all official promises, were given vent at the DAIA national convention held in May 1946. Its president, Dr. Moisés Goldman, denounced the anti-Semitic incidents of late 1945 and early 1946. He conceded that in some cases, DAIA had received satisfactory explanations from the national authorities, but in others, protests and intercessions had gone unanswered. He stated that the unimpeded circulation of that sector of the press which propagated racial hatred, as well as the confirmation of the well-known anti-Semite Dr.

34. *The Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1946.

35. *La Prensa*, 5 April 1946; *El Laborista*, 5 April 1946. Perón repudiated anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish-owned businesses and communal buildings, such as Sociedad Hebraica, that took place from 17 October through November 1945. See his condemnation in *La Epoca*, 23 November 1945; *Democracia*, 14 January 1946; *El Laborista*, 12 January 1946. Perón's declaration reflected the tone he assumed in his speech on 27 March 1945, in which he denied the existence of a Jewish problem in Argentina. On 18 April 1945, Vice President Perón gave assurances to Mr. Benno Weiser "that there is no Jewish problem in our country and we have nothing against the Jews." The president of the Zionist Organization in Ecuador reported that Perón praised Argentine Jews, saying they "are all good citizens and good patriots." *JTA*, 19 April 1945. However, immediately after Perón's electoral victory in February 1946, anti-Semitic outbreaks took place during demonstrations celebrating the victory of President-elect Perón. On 4 April 1946, *El Laborista*, Perón's political organ, issued a statement denouncing the attacks and assuring the Jewish community of his opposition to racial persecution. *El Laborista* argued that these extremist, allegedly repudiated Perón supporters, acted outside of party control. At a 3 April visit to the Interior Ministry by the DAIA president and the General Secretary of the WJC, New York, to protest the anti-Semitic violence, General Felipe Urdapilleta attributed it "to irresponsible elements inspired by foreign doctrines." Jewish leaders also alleged that the campaign was being conducted by extremist elements" which Perón and the government are apparently unable to control." *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1946.

Santiago Peralta as Director of the Department of Migration, were undisputed proof of the official toleration of anti-Semitic inclinations.<sup>36</sup>

The apprehensions of DAIA's president were the result of post-October 1945 anti-Semitic activities mainly attributable to the ALN, but other local leaders and observers did not share Goldman's view. Jedidia Efron, for instance, informed the American Jewish Congress' (AJC) Latin American expert that the importance of the anti-Jewish attacks in October had been exaggerated by the press, and he recommended that no action be taken.<sup>37</sup>

It would seem that the important question for the opposition was not so much whether or not anti-Jewish persecution existed, but rather how anti-Semitic discourse was to be exploited for political purposes, both before and after Perón's victory. As Ignacio Klich has demonstrated, the anti-Peronist Unión Democrática bloc purposely played up reactions to the violence and to the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the nationalists, in accordance with the Braden-Hull anti-Perón orientation. After the February 1946 elections, the accusation that Perón had tolerated anti-Jewish persecution during the electoral campaign became an integral part of the "national-socialist" characterization of Peronism adopted by Braden in his defamatory *Blue Book*.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike the AJC president, the World Jewish Congress representative, Dr. Kubowitzky, reported to the press on his return to New York that he did not believe an anti-Semitic campaign was brewing in Argentina. He recognized that the community was concerned by the fact that several notorious anti-Semites occupied high-ranking government positions, and that it feared the consequences of a new decree to create an ethnographic bureau under the Department of Migration, which would carry out anthropological research into the degree of adaptation of various immigrant groups to life in Argentina. Dr. Kubowitzky advised the Jews of the United States to adopt a watchful rather than a panic-stricken attitude towards the situation in Argentina.<sup>39</sup>

36. JTA, 21 May 1946; *Mundo Israelita*, 23 May 1946.

37. YIVO Archives (NY), AJC Papers, AJC Latin American Office, 1945–46, memo from Máximo Yagupsky to Simon Segal, 24 October 1945. The recommendation of the JCA official, however, was dismissed. On 28 November 1945, AJC made an official request to the US government to take action in order to neutralize the recurrent attacks on Argentinian Jews. Coincidentally, the AJC petition was rather similar to the allegations voiced by the anti-Peronist coalition Exhortación Democrática — a collateral group inspired by the Unión Democrática — that charged the Peronist political movements with judeophobia. JTA, 30 November 1945.

38. Klich, "Background to Perón's Discovery of Jewish National Aspirations," pp. 216–17.

39. JTA, 7 May 1946.

The British Embassy in Buenos Aires gave a very different reading to the dramatic picture drawn by Braden. Towards the end of November 1945, British diplomats rejected accusations originating in the US which equated the situation of the Jews in Argentina with that of the Jews in pre-war Nazi Germany. Although they did not underestimate Nazism's impact on some stridently anti-Jewish nationalist groups, they preferred to emphasize the responsibility of the Chief of Police, Velazco, who, as we have seen above, refused to curb the ALN's activities. With the aim of dissociating itself from Braden's line in the event of a Perón victory, the British Embassy refrained from intervening with the Farrell government to put an end to anti-Semitism. When it did address the Foreign Office in January 1946, recommending an answer to the requests put forward by the WJC, the Embassy suggested extremely discreet intervention, completely divorced from Braden's accusations that the government was anti-Semitic. Paradoxically, the picture drawn by the British diplomatic reports between January and December 1946 was much more balanced and resembled DAIA and Soprotimis (ICA immigration department) reports rather than the US diplomatic ones. On the one hand, the British ambassador, Kelly, conceded to the Foreign Office on 8 January 1946 that the Farrell government and Colonel Perón had disowned the anti-Semitic campaign in the province of Entre Ríos, but he also passed on the complaints by AJC representatives concerning the immunity enjoyed by the instigators of anti-Jewish events in Buenos Aires as a result of police indifference. On the other hand, following Perón's rise to power, the British Embassy in Buenos Aires reported to the Foreign Office in July 1946 that the anti-Semitic attacks of the election period had disappeared; nevertheless, the ambassador, Sir Reginald Leeper, also informed the head of the Latin American desk at the Foreign Office that "Perón did not particularly like the Jews without being specifically anti-Jewish," and he mentioned the problem of anti-Jewish officials like Santiago Peralta as well.<sup>40</sup> The British ambassador was aware of the necessity of a

40. Public Record Office (PRO), Kew Foreign Office, FO 371, 51808-AS 6469, from the chancellery of the Buenos Aires Embassy to the South American desk, 16 July 1946; AS/7098, J. Victor Perowne to Sir Reginald Leeper, 2 December 1946; AS/8012, Leeper to Perowne, 20 December 1946. I am indebted to Ignacio Klich for bringing these documents to my attention. See the balanced reports by Soprotimis relating, on the one hand, to problems linked to Santiago Peralta's anti-Jewish restrictions on immigration, and its assessment of Perón's general attitude towards the Jews on the other. See Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, HM/2/1425b. On the meeting between President Perón and the local Jewish leaders, see Rabbi Schlesinger's report from the Soprotimis session, 13 November 1946.

personal appeal to Perón in order to underscore the harm caused by American press attacks on Peralta's discriminatory policies. Unlike the new American ambassador Messersmith, however, he did keep his government informed about anti-Semitism. Messersmith refrained from passing on information about anti-Semitism because of his reluctance to play political games in order to discredit Perón, as Braden had.

Ambassador Messersmith's position concerning the need for caution in attacking Perón on account of anti-Semitic incidents between October 1946 and February 1947 contrasted with Braden's, but this divergence was based on deep personal differences regarding US policy towards Perón, rather than on an alternative American version of anti-Jewish discourse in Argentina. Thus Messersmith's reluctance to inform the State Department about racial incidents was the result of his diplomatic attempts to improve relations between the USA and Perón, and by the desire to neutralize Braden, his rival in internal US politics.<sup>41</sup>

Both government and opposition continued to exploit the issue of anti-Semitism for their own ends. In 1945, Silvano Santander published a book titled *Nazismo en Argentina: La Conquista del Ejército* (Nazism in Argentina: The Conquest of the Army) from his exile in Montevideo. In it, he claimed to expose ostensible links between Nazi agents and the most prominent figures in the 4th of June 1943 Revolution. Later, in July 1946, Santander made an unsuccessful attempt to use his position as national congressman for the Unión Cívica Radical to create a new committee, the Committee for Investigation of Anti-Argentinian Activities, which attempted to prove that the Peronist government was implicated in the admission of ex-Nazi refugees and members of the wartime Luftwaffe staff into Argentina, and in their employment in government and military institutions.<sup>42</sup> In August 1946, Congressman Santander publicly accused the Argentinian army of anti-Jewish discrimination, and succeeded in having a resolution passed by the Partido Radical condemning anti-Semitism and discrimination against Jewish interns and physicians at the Buenos Aires municipal teaching hospitals. President Perón issued an outright denial of these charges.<sup>43</sup>

41. NA, RG 835.4016/5-247, internal memo from Hoyt, Division for Rio de la Plata affairs to S. Braden, Assistant Secretary, The State Department, 2 May 1947; see also Klich, "Background to Perón's Discovery of Jewish National Aspirations," pp. 209–12.
42. Congreso de la Nación Argentina, Cámara de Diputados, Diario de Sesiones, 25 July 1946, pp. 744–48, 753.
43. President Perón personally denied charges of Nazi infiltration into the army, and of discrimination against Jewish applicants to the Military College in his 31 July 1946 speech. On this occasion, Perón recalled his initiative as War Minister when he rescinded

The parliamentary opposition of the UCR (Radical Civil Union) also made occasional use of the existence of anti-Semitic discourse for its own political purposes. Thus, upon learning that the Governor of Santa Fe had been accused of pro-Nazi sympathies, Congressman Rubino demanded federal intervention in the province. The pro-government congressman Arias, wishing to protect the governor, pointed to the rehiring of several physicians previously suspended by the provincial administration, as well as of several Jewish civil servants who were readmitted into the municipality. This account drew from the radical representative Dellepiane the remark, "There are also Nazi Jews," to which Arias retorted, "It would seem that the roles are now reversed." For his part, Congressman Busaniche claimed that a printing press belonging to highly placed officials in the provincial administration had published a leaflet paying homage to the "heroes of Nuremberg."<sup>44</sup>

Perón's agenda for the gradual neutralization of anti-Semitic groups, and of their ideological spokesmen, initially made itself felt during the first elections to name new members to the National Chamber of Deputies. The pro-fascist and extremist groups which had supported Perón saw their position weaken in the March 1948 elections for deputies. The ALN, for example, lost votes as compared to the 1946 elections. However, Virgilio Filippo, a notorious anti-Semitic preacher, both in the pulpit and on the radio, was elected to the National Chamber. Although designated by Perón as *Adjunto Eclesiástico* (Ecclesiastical Chaplain) at the Casa Rosada with ambassadorial rank, Filippo waived the opportunity to serve as the military spiritual leader in order to take his seat as deputy, an office he obtained with the bare minimum of required votes.<sup>45</sup>

Among the radical congressmen, Attilio Cattáneo of the Renewal trend in Buenos Aires, known for his anti-Jewish hostility, was reelected by fewer votes than other Radical candidates, such as Silvano Santander (see above), a philo-Semite. Santander made good use of accusations with regard to anti-Semitic rhetoric in order to discredit Peronism.

the admission requirement calling for all candidates to army institutions to be Catholic and to prove their faith by means of "fe de bautismo." President Perón emphasized that DAIA received special notice of this measure on 31 May 1945. See Perón's speech in *La Prensa*, 1 August 1946, p. 4. DAIA had tendered an official request for the lifting of this exclusionary clause in a 14 April 1945 letter. For this petition and the Ministry of War response (31 May 1945), see DAIA Archives.

44. JTA, 17 April 1947.

45. *La Nación*, 18 March 1948.

**Countering Anti-Semitic Discourse: Constitutional Reform and Paternalism**

In mid-1948, President Perón summoned the leaders of DAIA and the Organización Israelita Argentina (OIA) to an audience at the Casa Rosada, in order to inform them of his desire to “prevent the proliferation of the anti-Semitic germs which can be found in Argentina,” and to express his recognition of the validity of the community leaders’ anxiety.<sup>46</sup> For the first time in Argentinian history, Perón approached the issue of anti-Semitism from a constitutional viewpoint, as part of his strategy of enlisting the participation of all sectors of society and avoiding all class or religious conflict in the framework of his program of authoritarian democracy. In this respect, constitutional reform and the insertion of the promised clause condemning racial discrimination, had the strongest impact. In several meetings with Jewish leaders throughout 1948, Perón announced his plan to introduce a special amendment declaring racism a felony. He even promised OIA that he would equate racial persecution with the “crime of high treason against the fatherland.”<sup>47</sup>

Article 28 of the new constitution approved by the National Convention in January 1949 established for the first time that “the Argentinian nation admits of no racial distinctions, advantages of blood or birth; and does not recognize personal privileges nor titles of nobility. All citizens are equal before the law, and aptitude is the sole criterion for their employment.”<sup>48</sup> Despite its importance, this constitutional reform did not preclude the continued tolerance of anti-Semitic activity, nor could it strengthen the social and legal controls needed for its prevention. Not only did the constitutional reform fail to formulate penal reforms which would define anti-Semitism as a crime, it also failed to initiate any prosecutions against anti-Semites or anti-Jewish nationalistic associations.

Nonetheless, towards the end of 1948, the president of DAIA publicly acknowledged the decline in anti-Semitic incidents during the preceding twelve months, as compared to prior years; he also underscored the marked influence of President Perón’s antidiscriminatory speeches as well as his openness on matters of Jewish interest. For their part, DAIA and OIA preferred Perón’s personal involvement when it came to punishing anti-Semitic offenses, rather than resorting to prosecution in the courts. A paternalistic style of protection was thus established, promoted by the

46. JTA, 30 June 1948.

47. Luna, *Perón y su tiempo*, chap. 7; *La Constitución de la Nación Argentina* (UNBA, 1950), chap. 2, art. 28; JTA, 12 November 1948.

various corporate links between OIA and the government, and by periodic appeals by DAIA to the president and his ministers.<sup>48</sup>

The Fernando Martaras affair illustrates the paternalistic style of voluntary intervention by the executive branch in cases of anti-Semitic offenses. The attorney general acted to stay proceedings against Martaras, a nationalist accused of setting fire to a floral tribute placed by the Santa Fe Jewish community on the San Martín monument in February 1949 to mark the Perón government's *de jure* recognition of the State of Israel. After a several-months-long stay in proceedings, the provincial executive branch asked for a review of the case, and in late August the offender was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.<sup>49</sup>

This type of intervention by the executive branch can also be traced in the instance of accusations leveled against anti-Semitic civil servants in the national administration and/or the party political machine. The head of the Department of Migration, Santiago Peralta, was finally demoted at Perón's direct initiative, in reaction to the national and international outcry over his discriminatory policy in the issuing of Argentinian landing permits. His successor Pablo Diana, who was charged with favoring Jewish applicants, was also dismissed from his post following an administrative investigation.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the new department's director, Colonel Enrique Gonzalez, failed to dismiss lower-ranking functionaries and merely warned those "who distort the principle of racial equality supported by the national constitution," threatening severe punishment in the case of any repetition of discriminatory actions "which displease President Perón."<sup>51</sup>

August 1949 saw the renewal of attacks on the Jewish community in the press. A conspiracy to murder Perón and his wife Evita was uncovered and blamed by the Chief of Police on the former cultural attaché to the United

48. See YIVO Archives, Buenos Aires (YAB), Box OIA, propaganda leaflets and prospectus on the constitutional reform, as well as an appeal to the Jewish community to vote for Perón in the 5 December 1948 general elections. The propaganda appeal was specifically aimed at former illegal immigrants and families of candidates for immigration for whom OIA had promised to intercede. See the advertisement in *Di Yiddishe Zeitung*, 2 December 1948; Luna, *Perón y su tiempo*, chap. 7; *La Constitución de la Nación Argentina* (UNBA, 1950) chap. 2, art. 28; JTA, 12 November 1948.

49. JTA, 1 September 1949.

50. Foreign Minister Bramuglia presented the HIAS complaint to Perón several days before the communiqué on Peralta's dismissal was issued. See YIVO Archives, New York, HIAS XIII, letter from Marc Turkow to Dijour, Buenos Aires, 11 June 1947; Haim Avni, *Argentina y la Historia de la Inmigración Judía, 1810–1950*, Buenos Aires, Magnes Press-AMIA, 1983, p. 504; Leonardo Senkman, "Perón y la entrada de técnicos alemanes y colaboracionistas con los nazis," pp. 673–704.

51. JTA, 30 September 1949.

States Embassy in Argentina, John Griffith, who was residing in Montevideo following his expulsion from Buenos Aires in April. This affair, together with the imprisonment of Cipriano Reyes and other labor leaders, was preceded by sensationalist exposés by the journal *Democracia* in late August 1949, revelations that also implicated local Jewish and Zionist organizations, such as DAIA and the Central Zionist Council among others, in the conspiracy, naming the Jewish Agency representative in Buenos Aires, Dr. Abraham Mibashan, and the head of the Latin American desk of the Joint Distribution Committee, Mr. Jacob Lightman, as “traitors.”

The understandable anxiety of the communal leadership when confronted with these false accusations was enhanced following a meeting with the assistant editor of *Democracia*, who refused to withdraw the allegations, arguing that the information had come not from the editorial office, but from “very high up.” He did advise the representatives of the four associations implicated by his paper to request an interview with President Perón. Reports by the Israeli legation’s first secretary suggest that the leaders of the Jewish community were afraid to appear together with twenty-eight opposition organizations and political groups (including the Young Socialists and the Young Communists). They feared that the rumors had been initiated by the secret police with government support, and did not discount the possibility that they were even acting on orders from the Presidential Information Bureau. In the final analysis, DAIA refrained from publishing any press denial, and restricted its explanations about the dangerous and equivocal situation to the internal framework of the Jewish community.<sup>52</sup> Such accusations were never repeated.

#### **The ALN’s Dissociation from Anti-Semitism**

The remarkable fact remains that, their control of the censorship and the opposition press notwithstanding, the authorities were unable to put a stop to the distribution of the various ALN press organs, which regularly attacked the Jewish community. The ALN’s initial publication, *La Tribuna*, shut

52. *Democracia*, 21 August 1949. See the front-page article “Gráfico demostrativo de la traición.” For a report on the meeting between Jewish local leaders and the acting editor of *Democracia*, see Israel State Archives (ISA), Jerusalem, 131.70.1, secret report from Arie Eshel at the Israeli Embassy to the Latin American desk, Israel Foreign Affairs, Buenos Aires, 24 August 1949. The regime attributed the responsibility for the affair to an allegedly “anti-imperialist yankee plot,” after the identities of the American Embassy officials involved were uncovered. See Luna, *Perón y su tiempo*, pp. 49–52; JTA, 1 September 1949. From 1947 on, the ALN was actively involved in attacks against the dissident Labor deputy Cipriano Reyes. For this accusation against the ALN, see the socialist weekly *La Vanguardia*, 12 July 1947.

down by governmental decree in 1947, reappeared shortly thereafter under a different name, *Alianza*. At the beginning of 1950, this publication had a circulation of 4,000 and, after starting as a bi-weekly, became a weekly. With the help of fascist rhetoric within the framework of the Peronist movement and by means of its anti-Semitic stance, it attempted to play the role of a nationalist mobilizing force, and even criticized Perón for being “the friend and ally of the Jews.”<sup>53</sup>

Well before Perón’s rise to power, the ALN had succeeded in setting up branches in the interior and in rallying thousands of sympathizers and members from a broad spectrum of right-wing nationalists with anti-imperialist populist leanings. The ALN could rely on the active support of permanent nationalist figures such as Ramón Doll, Bonifacio Lastra, Teorimo Otero Silva, and on army officers such as Colonel Natalio Mascariello and especially General Juan Bautista Molina. Its ability to enlist support exceeded that of any other right-wing nationalist group. From 1940 on, every 1 May the ALN organized gigantic demonstrations and public parades down Avenida Santa Fé to Plaza San Martín; as early as 1942, for example, its followers outnumbered the participants in the traditional Socialist commemoration of the day.<sup>54</sup>

Between October 1945 and February 1946, the ALN mobilized for attacks on anti-Perón forces. In August 1946, however, at the time of the ratification of the Act of Chapultepec and of the United Nations by the National Congress, the ALN was at the forefront of the nationalist protest demonstrations headed by Juan Queraltó and Guillermo Patricio Kelly.

53. *Alianza*, 12 March 1951. One socialist Jewish activist recalled that by chance he was imprisoned in the same cell with the ranking ALN member, Guillermo Patricio Kelly, following a clash with police during a political rally in June 1951. According to his testimony, Patricio Kelly objected to sharing a cell with a Jew and made statements objecting to Perón’s sympathetic attitude towards the Jewish community. Bar Kojba Malach, interview with author, Jerusalem, 19 May 1993.
54. Zuleta Alvarez, *El Nacionalismo Argentino*, vol 1, p. 297. The Organización Alianza de La Juventud Nacionalista, a forerunner of ALN, published the ultra-nationalist wing organ *Alianza* from May 1943, together with the Unión Nacionalista de Estudiantes Secundarios. They called for a populist, anti-oligarchic discourse aimed at the working classes. In the propaganda booklet, “Postulados de nuestra lucha” (1942) demands for fascism, corporativism, the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, and parcellation of *latifundia* rural lands were coupled with xenophobic anti-imperialist statements and virulent social anti-Semitism. See *Alianza* 11 (February 1945), 16 (1 October 1945), 18 (8 November 1945), 20 (6 December 1945), and 22 (8 January 1946). Guillermo Patricio Kelly replaced Juan Queraltó as ALN leader in April 1953. Thereafter, the ALN respected all orders given by Perón and lost its margin of autonomy as an offensive paramilitary squad. See Kelly’s personal testimony in Horacio de Dios, *Kelly cuenta todo* (Buenos Aires, 1984), pp. 7–26.

Nonetheless, the ALN-affiliated Unión Nacionalista de Estudiantes Secundarios (Nationalist Union of High-School Students) almost disappeared as a result of orders by the Perón government which outlawed the activities of all student associations except the Peronist Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios (Union of High-School Students, or UES).<sup>55</sup>

The process of “Peronization” of the ALN, which was accompanied by purges and internal schisms, as well as the gradual weakening of its political autonomy and its capacity to mobilize support as a nationalist organization, finally neutralized its racist and anti-Semitic incitement from the fall of 1953 onwards, the result of bans and other restrictive measures. However, from 1945 on and until this period, the ALN enjoyed freedom of action with regard to anti-Semitism.<sup>56</sup>

In the February 1946 elections, the ALN received the votes of nationalist supporters of the 1943 Revolution who spurned Perón’s pro-labor and statist program. ALN candidate Father Leonardo Castellani received only 25,000 votes in these elections, too few to take a congressional seat. With the progressive implementation of Peronist social and economic reforms, the ALN gradually lost its populist-nationalist supporters, proving its complete marginality and its inability to compete against Peronism by offering a nationalist corporate fascist alternative to the masses. After 1947, however, the ALN continued to engage in anti-Semitic actions with impunity, irregardless of government disapproval. Despite the police raid on ALN headquarters immediately after the bomb attack on the Great Synagogue in Libertad Street on 28 July 1947, none of its members were detained or prosecuted. The ALN issued a formal statement denying any involvement in the attack, while the federal police appealed to the public for help in capturing the culprits.<sup>57</sup> Violent clashes between militant ALN squads and

55. Zuleta Alvarez, *El Nacionalismo Argentino*, vol. 1, p. 298.

56. The ALN did not dissociate itself publicly from its former anti-Semitic and racist discourse prior to 11 March 1954. See the ALN communiqué released in the Buenos Aires daily, *La Razón*, 11 March 1954. P. G. Kelly claims that the ALN renounced anti-Semitism as early as 18 April 1953 in concert with the driving out of the Queraltó gang. There is, however, no evidence to substantiate this claim. However, in an editorial dated 19 February 1954, *Di Presse* welcomed the ideological change and doctrinal shift in the ALN’s attitude towards Jews. Cf. Kelly’s explanatory letter to *Nueva Sión*, no. 759, 19 September 1992 in which he clarified his claims. I share Buchrucker’s opinion that the ALN’s *modus vivendi* is not to be compared with either that of the fascist squad or with the SS, as Hayes and Lewis have. See Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo*, p. 394.

57. *La Luz*, no. 453 (August 1947), p. 363. Two months earlier DAIA had protested to the Interior Ministry concerning an attack on a synagogue in Tres Arroyos, Buenos Aires province, in May 1947. See *La Luz*, nos. 444–45 (4 April 1947), p. 173. See the repercussions in the anti-Peronist *La Prensa* (27 July 1947), editorial. Within the Jewish

young Jews were a common sight in the center of town, especially at the Law University and at the Hospital of Clinics, where the former distributed their publication *Alianza*. This publication's anti-Semitic diatribes were not limited to the well-known accusations of a Jewish-Marxist conspiracy and the alleged connections between Jewish capitalists and British and Yankee imperialism. It was equally active in denouncing the existence of a supposed "double loyalty" felt by Argentine Jews towards Israel. For example, the edition of *Alianza* published during the first half of April 1949 accused Moisés Toff of working for the Israeli Foreign Ministry "without giving up his Argentine citizenship"; it also warned its readers of the threat to Argentinian sovereignty posed by the presence of the Jewish Agency Bureau in Buenos Aires.<sup>58</sup>

Although other nationalistic periodicals addressed their public with similar arguments — in August 1948, for example, the traditional syndicalist movement distributed pamphlets and leaflets in Santa Fh, which caricatured Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the President of Israel, in the defamatory style of *Der Sturmer* — none of these rightist publications reached the ALN's level of circulation or success in triggering street unrest.<sup>59</sup> *Di Yiddische Zeitung* appealed to DAIA in August for more effective intercession with the national and regional authorities to put a stop to anti-Semitic graffiti on the main streets of Rosario, as well as to see to the removal of virulently anti-Jewish posters displayed in the Belgrano neighborhood of Buenos Aires, in which the local ALN branch again accused President Perón of being "a friend and ally of the Jews."<sup>60</sup>

Towards the end of 1949, the government closed down the weekly *Alianza*. It was immediately replaced by another publication, *Fortaleza*, which continued to attack the Peronist government for its pro-Jewish tendencies.

community, some dailies, *Di Presse* for example, called for the formation of Jewish self-defense groups. See alarmed reports in the US press, JTA, 5 August 1947. The communist weekly *Orientación* claimed that more than 103 violent incidents and attacks were perpetrated from June 1946 to July 1947. See *Orientación*, 9 July 1947.

58. Discrimination against Jewish interns in municipal hospitals in Buenos Aires, which worsened in 1945, continued throughout 1946 and 1947. For the list of Jewish interns not authorized to receive training at various hospitals, see *Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Boletín Municipal*, no. 7531, 29 September 1945; no. 7893, 30 December 1946. See also JTA, 10 April 1949. In fact, this anti-Semitic discrimination in the municipal hospitals long outlasted the Peronist regime. See the personal testimony of Dr. Alberto D. Kaplan, *Memoria de un médico* (Buenos Aires, 1994), pp. 73–79, 90–91, 112–13. The office building where the Jewish Agency was situated suffered damage due to an explosion during the night of 12 May 1948. See *Mundo Israelita*, 17 May 1948, p. 5.

59. JTA, 27 August 1948.

60. JTA, 23 August 1949.

*Fortaleza* too was declared illegal, and its press was temporarily closed for not respecting the ban imposed on the ALN mouthpiece.<sup>61</sup> These bans notwithstanding, the ALN periodical as well as those of other fascist and neo-Nazi organizations continued to circulate during the first half of 1950.

On 29 August 1950, DAIA presented a formal memorandum to President Perón protesting against “the systematic anti-Semitic campaign launched lately in our country by several periodicals...in an attempt to create an absurd climate of hatred against Jews.” DAIA attributed the responsibility for this campaign, “which grows and expands daily,” not only to *Alianza*, but also to the fortnightly *Firmeza* edited by Enrique Kleinert, to the German-language magazine *Der Weg*, the Latin American neo-Nazi organ, edited by Eberhard Fritsch and Gustav Friedl, and to the Italian periodical *Risorgimento* edited by the well-known fascist Di Giglio.<sup>62</sup> On 8 September, Presidential Secretary Juan B. Duarte responded to the DAIA memorandum with a condemnation of anti-Semitic publications which “certainly do not represent the national position” but “enjoy the full benefits arising from freedom of the press.” He concluded by reiterating President Perón’s outspoken condemnation of anti-Semitism.<sup>63</sup>

In other instances, Perón excused these publications by claiming that their racist discourse was, in fact, aimed at his own regime. Thus, faced with anti-Semitic incidents in which ALN members confronted Jewish medical students, Perón declared to the OIA that this incitement “was also directed against the government with the clear purpose of destroying the harmony prevailing among the citizens of the country.” The president promised OIA that racial discrimination against Jewish doctors employed in public hospitals would not be tolerated. Concurrently Perón made a goodwill gesture towards the Jewish community by authorizing the admission of twenty-five families into Argentina within the framework of the JCA’s

61. JTA, 5 February 1950.

62. DAIA Archives (DA), special memorandum on anti-Semitic incidents sent to President Perón, 29 August 1950. The petition was signed by acting president Israel Novick and secretary Benjamin Rinsky. The neo-Nazi publication *Der Weg* was founded in June 1947 in Buenos Aires. Despite the fact that the US and British occupation authorities outlawed its dissemination in Austria and West Germany two years later, it continued to appear in Argentina during and after the Perón regime. See Holger M. Meding, “Nationalsozialismus in Exil: Die Deutschsprachige Rechtspresse in Buenos Aires, 1945–1977,” in *Nationalsozialismus und Argentinien*, ed. Holger M. Meding (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), pp. 191–95.

63. See the presidential secretary’s response to the DAIA memorandum in *La Luz*, 29 September 1950. DAIA issued a formal protest to the Interior Ministry concerning recurrent ALN attacks. See DA, letter to the Interior Ministry, 13 May 1950; JTA, 19 May 1950.

colonization program. In addition, he granted entry to twenty-five Holocaust survivors, writers temporarily residing in Paris, who had previously encountered enormous difficulties in receiving Argentinian entrance permits.<sup>64</sup>

As for the ALN, during the process of adaptation to Perón's rule, it adopted Peronist party slogans in order to attack both Marxists and Jews simultaneously. According to a DAIA complaint from early February 1951, a large number of ALN-sponsored posters had appeared on the streets, claiming President Perón's support "in the fight against the Jewish-Marxist enemies." By this means, the philo-fascist organization was trying, according to DAIA, "to lend respectability to anti-Semitic tendencies by linking them with Perón's name."<sup>65</sup>

For an entire year the ALN saw its publication proscribed by the government, but in September 1953 it reappeared, attacking the "writers of the Jewish ghetto" published by *La Prensa*. Only in March 1954 did the ALN completely cease its anti-Semitic diatribes, when it was forced by the government to publicly reject "any anti-Jewish campaign as being inconsistent with the national policy of freedom for all races and religions."<sup>66</sup>

64. Among the refugee artists and intellectuals who arrived in Buenos Aires in July 1952 thanks to OIA intercession with Perón, we must note such distinguished individuals as Yiddish poets Israel Ashendorf and Moishe Knaphais and puppeteer Simja Schwartz. The Vilna poet and partisan S. Kaczerginski and his family had succeeded in reaching Argentina a year earlier. All had found temporary refuge in Paris from the war's end. See the personal testimony of one of these artists in the book devoted to singer Perla Shechter, written by her husband. See Lazaro Schallman, *Perla Shechter, la cantante que sobrevivió al Holocausto* (Buenos Aires, 1977). Mary Kaczerginski, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 10 May 1978, and Ruth Schwarz, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 9 September 1991.
65. *Di Yiddishe Zeitung*, 30 January 1951. The posters attributed the creditability of the charges to *Acción Nacionalista*.
66. *La Razón*, 11 March 1954. JTA published the ALN communiqué, with some misgivings, by 11 March 1954. The OIA president expressed his satisfaction with the ALN's public statement of the nationalist organization's dissociation from further anti-Semitic discourse and campaigns. See the complimentary letter from Ezequiel Zabolinsky to Guillermo Patricio Kelly in which the former attributed the shift in the ALN's position to Perón's doctrine of social and racial concord. DAIA Archive, press clipping, *La Razón*, 11 March 1954. After almost an entire year in which the ALN had refrained from anti-Jewish insults, the September 1953 issue of its mouthpiece contained an sarcastic article criticizing the Sunday literary supplement of the government-controlled *La Prensa*, edited by the well-known Jewish poet Cesar Tiempo. Once again the ALN warned that "too many articles signed by the writers of the ghetto" had been appearing in the daily press.

### Conclusions

President Perón proscribed all forms of racial and religious discrimination, publicly condemning state and social anti-Semitism by means of political discourse and press releases. Perón's attitude was consistent both with his populist goal of national integration and his inclusionary logic — the inclusion of all sectors of the Argentine people, irrespective of religion, cult, ideology, or ethnic belonging. Perón's official condemnation of racial and religious discrimination notwithstanding, he did not always succeed in banning anti-Semitic discourse, in particular, its dissemination by the nationalist wing among his supporters. Perón's ostensibly contradictory attitude — intolerance towards anti-Semitic acts and his alleged leaning toward anti-Semitic discourse—lies in his all-encompassing logic of inclusion that allowed all sectors, Jews and anti-Semites alike, to be part of the New Argentina. In other words, it was the dynamic of the logic of inclusion, not exclusion, that was at work when Perón differentiated between anti-Semitic acts, which he banned, and anti-Semitic discourse which he often allowed in internal politics.

The ALN's record of anti-Jewish activity, however, raises two questions: first, why did Perón tolerate the ALN's institutional anti-Semitism and incitement for so long? Also, why did the Perón-controlled censorship tolerate the ALN press and its anti-Jewish offshoots? When the Peronist press officially dissociated itself from anti-Semitism, as *El Líder* did in its 23 April 1952 issue, it felt no need to publicly admonish the ALN for its anti-Semitism. Indeed, in that very issue, *El Líder* devoted its cover-page to admonishing the *Comite contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo* for allegedly disseminating "propaganda aimed at destroying Argentine prestige abroad."<sup>67</sup> Second, why did Perón fail to control anti-Semitic discourse and actions during the ALN's uninterrupted offensive against his left-wing opposition, only to later succeed in preventing ALN racist action during the critical conflict with the nationalist and liberal Catholic opposition that reached an unprecedented level of violent political mobilization?

The answer to the first question lies in the populist dynamic of the first Perón regime. In order to neutralize and suppress political opposition from the left, Perón manipulated nationalistic groups like ALN that operated in the realm of the civil society. Even prior to Perón's assumption of office,

67. *El Líder*, 23 April 1952. See also ISA 70, 1311/1, secret report from I. Prato, first secretary of the Israel Embassy to the Latin American desk, Buenos Aires, 1953, p. 16.

ALN adherents in the Entre Ríos Province operated against both the Left and communism in order to foster the populist leader's nationalist revolution. From June 1946, Perón preferred to mobilize the ALN as a small and autonomous shock force against the Left and student opposition, irrespective of its anti-Semitic platform, rather than involve state Peronist-linked bodies for the task of repression. The situation changed dramatically on the eve of and during the course of the confrontation with the Church that deteriorated into a violent struggle of the Catholic anti-Peronist civil society against the Peronist state. This struggle, not analyzed here, deserves its own in-depth study. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, at the request of Perón himself, the ALN fulfilled an important role during the new conjuncture, similar to the one it played in fall 1945 when its members confronted the Unión Democrática civilian opposition bloc.<sup>68</sup> In 1954–55, however, the enemy of populism was no longer the Jews and the Left; for political reasons, this old enemy was replaced by a different hostile “other” — the Catholic Church.

It is not mere coincidence that the ALN's official conversion from a judeophobic organization to one with a tolerant nationalist orientation towards Jews took place on the eve of Perón's confrontation with the Catholic Church. This dramatic shift in ALN policy, its abandonment of its longstanding slogan, “Be a patriot, kill Jews,” occurred as a result of a process of “Peronization.” Unlike former 1946 ALN parliamentary candidate Leonardo Castellani, who was a Jesuit intellectual, from 1953, new ALN leaders like Guillermo Patricio Kelly recognized Jewish citizenship rights as well as their right to be part of the New Argentina. Jews were no longer portrayed as “unassimilable” strangers. Although Perón's nationalist supporters continued to perceive the Jew as “other,” by 1954 they had ceased to single them out as a scapegoat. Nonetheless, we must note that at a later juncture, during the popular mobilizations before and after Perón's return to power in 1972–1974, we again witness the renewed use of anti-Semitic discourse by the rank and file of the Peronist movement.<sup>69</sup>

68. For an analysis of the Jewish dimension during the Perón-Church conflict, and the helpful attitude of Guillermo Patricio Kelly in defending the Jewish community from an eventual nationalist Catholic backlash, see my forthcoming book, *Populismo latinoamericano y etnicidad: Vargas y Perón ante los judíos* (Buenos Aires, Fall 1997).

69. For many years Leonardo Castellani continued to believe that the State of Israel would make it easier for Argentina to rid itself of its “unassimilable” Jews. See his *Decíamos ayer...* (Buenos Aires, 1968), pp. 328–29. For the utilization of anti-Semitic discourse by the Peronist rank and file during the 1970s, see Senkman, *El Antisemitismo en Argentina*, pp. 121–93.