



Memories that Lie a Little

*Jewish Experiences during
the Argentine Dictatorship*

Emmanuel Nicolás Kahan

Memories that Lie a Little

Jewish Latin America

ISSUES AND METHODS

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Jewish Experiences during the Argentine Dictatorship

By

Emmanuel Nicolás Kahan

Translated by

David Foster



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Contents

Acknowledgements	VII
Introduction	1
1 The Jewish Community between the “Cámpora Spring” and the Assault on Power by the Military Junta	16
2 The March 24, 1976, Coup d’état and Acceptance of the Discourse on the “Anti-Subversive Struggle”	65
3 Reactions to Manifestations of Public and Clandestine Anti-Semitism during the Last Military Dictatorship	95
4 The Dimensions of “Normalcy” and the Flourishing Public Life of Jewish Institutions	121
5 Between the Collapse of the Regime and Fractures within the Jewish Community	147
6 Conflicting Discourses and Representations of the Jewish Community Regarding Its Conduct during the Last Military Dictatorship: The Case of DAIA	185
7 <i>Nueva Presencia</i> and Resistance to the Military Dictatorship	204
Conclusions: Memories that Lie a Little	234
Glossary: Institutions	243
Bibliography	245
Index	255

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Introduction

With respect to some questions posed to me about the anti-DAIA campaign, I wish to say, first, that I'm an outsider here. I am interested in no one's history but my own. My behavior, what I did, is what I can talk about. As for the internal controversies of the community, who am I to stick my nose in? I can take a plane tomorrow and I'm gone. I think that what we're all doing right now is making small contributions for the time when history will be written. I don't believe we ourselves write history. Others write history using the contributions each one of us has left behind. The historian will take the sum of what has been said ... and analyze that information, weigh it, and reach conclusions. I don't believe we can set ourselves up as judges, because we were participants, emotionally involved in this process. I believe that the community has nothing to gain from this controversy since, rather than worrying about external enemies or serious internal problems that existed here when I departed, [it] cannot bleed to death over a topic on which no one today has the right to do anything but make a personal contribution, a personal version. Let history, then, be written by the historians.

RABBI ROBERTO GRAETZ, testimony given in 1984 about his role in the Argentine Jewish community between 1975 and 1981¹



I came upon the words of Rabbi Roberto Graetz at just the right moment. I had a strange feeling after reading about the Jewish community in Argentina during the military dictatorship. I began the pages of each document knowing what the ending would be: condemnation of the local community leadership, doubts about the conduct of international Jewish organizations or the Israeli diplomatic legation, and, finally, the opinion of a few individuals who, in contrast, stood out as courageous activists, denouncing the atrocities committed by the regime.

One of the things that surprised me was that, in general, my research ended up corroborating—if not replicating—what Jacobo Timerman, one of the

¹ Graetz served as Rabbi at the Templo Emanu-El and was a member of the secretariat of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH).

most publicly acknowledged victims, bore witness to in his 1981 book, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*. Everything was there to confirm those impressions. The focus of the previous studies remained to be one of the topics that his narrative had given shape to: the anti-Semitic nature of the regime and the treatment meted out to Jews detained by military taskforces operating under its auspices.

Since that moment, it became clear to me how a series of meanings had been constructed around the Jews during the military dictatorship that it was inconvenient to put into question. After presenting some preliminary findings of my research at a congress of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, held at Tel Aviv University in 2009, some of those in attendance approached me to point out some differences of opinion. My paper, based on a minute indexing of all the issues of the Jewish weekly *Nueva Presencia*, addressed the characteristics of and changes in the editorial line of a publication that was held up to be one of the few examples of media that dared criticize the regime where it most hurt: human rights violations.

After perusing, numbering, and classifying each article that appeared in the weekly since its first appearance, on July 9, 1977, up to the presidential inauguration of Raúl Alfonsín, on December 10, 1983, I was able to gauge the emergence of an early approach to the problem of human rights violations. The first reference appeared in 1981. Nevertheless, not even then did it become a central issue in the weekly. It was only in 1984 that *Nueva Presencia* closed ranks with the agendas of human rights organizations, inviting some of their most renowned figures to become part of a relatively stable staff of writers.

Did my research detract from what *Nueva Presencia* had accomplished during the military dictatorship? Quite the contrary: it pointed out how extensive concern for asking “what was done about the disappeared” did not diminish the bold stand of a publication that was motivated to address other issues, too—such as a woman’s place in marriage, the workplace, and in bed—in the opprobrious climate of the military dictatorship. I was thus very pleased with my work when I arrived in Israel.

Nevertheless, several members of the audience demanded to know what my interest was in casting doubt on Herman Schiller, who was the chief editor of the weekly during that period.² Why did I say nothing about the daily

2 *Nueva Presencia* being one of the most significant publications for the analysis of social attitudes during Argentina’s last dictatorship, Herman Schiller’s previous journalistic trajectory within the Jewish press has been invisibilized: he had also been chief-editor of *El Observador* (an Organización Sionista Argentina publication), had written columns for *Mundo Israelita* as well as open letters about the Middle-East conflict in *Nueva Sión* before creating *Nueva Presencia*.

Convicción, owned by Admiral Emilio Massera, one of the leading members of the regime? Surprised, I attempted to explain that I had no personal interest in criticizing anyone, and that I believed my presentation had not discredited Schiller's undertaking; rather, I had shifted the focus, throwing light on a new dimension of *Nueva Presencia*.

As I write these lines, I recall the faces of those who questioned me. I am certain I did not satisfy them. They probably went away thinking that my interest was to "attack Schiller," and I was left thinking how difficult it was to suspend some of the preconceptions regarding the subject I had chosen for my research. Nevertheless, there was something Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi said that I bore in mind during my extensive reading: "I live within the ironic awareness that the very mode by which I delve into the Jewish past represents a decisive break with that past."³

How does one approach that past? That was one of the questions I sought to answer in order to advance my research. What should I focus on? Since, as was the case with *Nueva Presencia*, the documentary record showed how the centrality of human rights precluded focusing on other aspects of the experiences of key players during the period, the narrative of historiographic reconstruction needed to give an account of them—at least, those that seemed to be relevant.

But, perhaps, this would be treating as banal the most brutal sign of those repressive times: the detention/disappearance of persons? This problem began to take on gigantic proportions, since it was not only a matter of resolving how to approach that past but of how to construct a narrative that would account for the centrality of that experience without dismissing other problems over which those entities had to take a position.

During a research residency at the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Political Science Department, I was able to expand my reading about daily life in situations of repression. A study by Ana Aguado and María Dolores Ramos regarding cultural practices during the Civil War in Spain was revealing. A backdrop to their research was the voice of Antonio Machado, who maintained that "the fact that we live fully in the midst of tragedy does not mean that we have forbidden the right to laughter."⁴ It was Machado's simple words that provided me with what I was looking for.

3 Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History & Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 80–81.

4 Ana Aguado and María Dolores Ramos, "Una cultura en guerra más allá de la cotidianeidad (1936–1939)," in Ana Aguado and María Dolores Ramos eds., *La modernización de España (1917–1939): Cultura y vida cotidiana* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2002), 253.

The authors' approach motivated me to return to the archives to record the signs of "normalized" life in a context in which, to judge by the bibliography on the topic, the *state of exception* prevailed. The documents of the various institutions and organs of the Jewish community were cast in the conceptual frameworks utilized for the study of *consensus* and *opposition* in European totalitarian regimes (Fascism, Nazism, and Francoism). These structures opened up the analysis to interpretation and debate surrounding the categories of *coercion*, *consensus*, *opposition*, *resistance*, *adaptation*, and *distancing*. They served to establish the interrelationship of state policies designed to generate *consensus* in civil society, and how those to whom they were addressed received them. In particular, it meant delving into the diverse attitudes and positions adopted by individuals, institutions, and organs of the Jewish community in the face of *policies of consensus* and *coercion* pursued by the military regime.

As Lvovich points out, studies on the response to the coup in Argentina have analyzed in detail the legitimacy that leading figures—including politicians, union leaders, and businessmen—gave to the military undertaking. Yet, research still needs to be conducted into the attitudes, dispositions, and behavior of institutions, persons, and organs that did not hold influential positions in the state. The absence of such perspectives runs throughout the period and contributes, in the eyes of the majority of Argentine society, to a tranquilizing image of innocence.⁵ Within the Jewish community, only the stand of the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Argentina (DAIA) has been investigated. There remains a need for an analysis of the attitudes and positions held by other Jewish institutions and the great range of Zionist youth movements and cultural and sports associations of the community.

The approach to this documentary work was based on an attempt to understand the diversity of social attitudes manifested during the government of the armed forces. According to Burrin, who examined the behavior of civil society during the Nazi occupation in France, it is possible to reconstruct the complexity of attitudes held by various players toward power. While *acceptance* includes *resignation*, *support*, and *adhesion*, *distancing* encompasses *deviation*, *dissidence*, and *opposition*.⁶ These perspectives allow us to introduce into the debate between writers and "witnesses" over "civic responsibility" under a dictatorship, studies with a strong empirical base.

5 Daniel Lvovich, "Dictadura y consenso ¿Qué podemos saber?" *Revista Puentes*, No. 17 (April 2006): 6–8.

6 Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (New York: The New Press, 1986).

While my research centered on reconstructing the tensions and social attitudes within the Jewish community during the military dictatorship, it did not require examining every pronouncement regarding the disappeared or opinions on the implementation of repressive policies by the military regime. Rather, it was understood that the actors were not defined solely in terms of a particular circumstance, and in many cases their positions regarding the “anti-subversion struggle” dated from previous definitions of “political radicalization,” denunciations of the actions of right-wing anti-Semitic groups, or the debates that Zionist groups had engaged in with the Left during the late 1960s.

In order to comprehend the conduct and positions of Jewish community key players during the dictatorial period, I extended the chronological margins of my research: the electoral victory of the Justicialist Liberation Front (FREJULI as per the Spanish acronym) and the subsequent inauguration of Héctor Cámpora in 1973—that is, the return to power of Peronism after eighteen years of banishment—were the events that I took as the point of departure for discerning the diversity of positions and confrontations within the community, allowing identification of the multiple forces that shaped the approach of those entities toward the dictatorial regime.

Similarly, subsequent polemics, such as the political debates surrounding the “Jews during the military dictatorship,” indicate that the problem did not conclude with the transition to democracy. On the contrary: the disputes and arguments, commenced at that time. Thus, when I decided to go back in order to understand those who had intervened, I also felt an urgent need to move forward in time in order to comprehend the meanings they constructed regarding their behavior during that period.

During 2007, as will be seen in the final chapters, two public acknowledgments were issued by the state, rehabilitating those suspected previously of “collaborationism.” While the debates have not ended, state recognition allowed me to establish a temporary closure of my research.

After I had resolved the problem of how to tackle the past and how to narrate it, I was overwhelmed by the immense quantity of sources I had uncovered. How would I construct a coherent narrative with the diversity of voices that I had found and the issues they had addressed? The Jewish community turned out to be so varied and pluralistic, with as many local organizations as there were international ones, that I sensed I had an interminable task. Marcelo Dimenstein maintained that while social research recognizes the heterogeneity of “Jewishness,” it is frequently assumed that the “Jews,” despite conflicts and differences, above all constitute a *community*. According to Dimenstein, the problem is that the concept of *community*—at least when applied to “Jewishness”—is characterized by polysemy. Thus, Dimenstein

proposes adopting the approach of anthropologists and referring to it as a *native* category⁷ (which will be its assumed implication in the following pages of this book).

Nevertheless, the array of organizations was so broad that I decided to focus the study on Argentine entities rather than international ones, principally those located in the city of Buenos Aires. Yet in the majority of cases there was no access to primary sources, with the exception of the personal archive of Nehemías Resnizky, who had served as president of DAIA from 1973 to 1981 and was the principal figure accused of collaboration. This “archive,” in truth, is made up of supplements to a series of reports produced by Resnizky himself in his own defense. The other personal archive belonged to Rabbi Marshall Meyer⁸ and is located at the headquarters of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano. Although more fragmentary than Resnizky’s—and less organic, since he had no need to defend himself against any accusation⁹—it allowed me to follow some of the dynamics of the construction of an image of one of the leading Jewish individuals committed to human rights.

The other documents come from secondary sources: a diverse array of publications issued by various key players within the Jewish community. Representing various ideological stances, many of these journals bridge the gaps created by the lack of primary sources. Since most of the emanated from organizations that participated in the directive committee of the community’s main national organizations, DAIA and the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), these journals covered most of the topics discussed during their monthly meetings. The analysis and comparison of approaches taken by these institutions and organs vis-à-vis particular events enabled the construction of a relatively complex picture of the tensions and debates that arose among them.

How should I go about creating a coherent narrative from the multiplicity of opinions, which in specific circumstances and in the face of particular problems expressed themselves in unison although not with one voice? As in my

7 Marcelo Dimenstein, “Algunas reflexiones sobre el uso del término ‘comunidad’ para referirse a los judíos” (paper delivered at the “Young Jewish Intellectuals Encounter,” AMIA, August, 2006).

8 Marshall Meyer was an American Conservative rabbi who played a key role in Argentina: he created the Latin-American Rabbinic Seminary and was a member of the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP).

9 This assertion is not really true. From the early 1970s, Rabbi Marshall Meyer was repeatedly forced to confront accusations against him concerning a case of “dishonorable abuse” of a young man from the Bet-El Congregation. One of the occasions when the matter came to light was during the first years of the transition to democracy, when he was appointed to CONADEP.

previous research, I could have opted to restrict my investigation and analysis to one or two key players, perhaps the most oppositional ones, or those most representative, and/or those recognized as public voices of “Jewishness.”¹⁰ This strategy would have made my archival work much easier, and perhaps would have spared much of the disappointment I felt when I tried to make room for actors which, since they were of minor relevance and/or lower in hierarchy, would have remained anonymous in a study on the Jewish community during the military dictatorship.

As a researcher, I opted to construct a narrative that would reflect a multiplicity of voices and tensions in the face of which key players felt compelled to take a stance. Thus, I attempted to examine the build-up, the tensions, and the positions taken in the Jewish *public space* during the last military dictatorship. While one cannot ignore the hierarchical place held by some of the Jewish institutions in this public space—that of DAIA, for instance—I chose to revisit the positions and debates in which various representatives intervened, including less well-known ones which, in specific circumstances, gave meaning to statements made by weightier institutions of the community.

Thus, along with DAIA and AMIA, there are references to the Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías, or ICUF, according to its Yiddish acronym¹¹—the network of Jewish institutions close to the Argentine Communist Party; Zionist youth movements and associated groups—the Socialist Zionist Youth (JSS) and Jewish-Argentine Youth Confederation (CJJA);¹² the Argentine Zionist

10 Emmanuel Kahan, “La construcción de la identidad judía en la nacionalidad argentina: El periódico Nueva Sión en tiempos del affaire Eichmann (1969–1962)” (undergraduate diss. in History, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2003); idem, “Unos pocos peligros sensatos: La Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires frente a las instituciones judías de la ciudad de La Plata” (Master’s diss. in History and Memory, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2007).

11 ICUF was an organization close to, but not subject to, the Argentine Communist Party (PCA). Regarding Jews in the PCA and their organization, see Daniel Kerssfield, “Entre la Torá y *El Manifiesto*: Tensiones en la construcción de la identidad judeocomunista en América Latina” (paper delivered at the XIV International Research Conference of LAJSA, Tel Aviv University, Israel, July 27, 2009); Hernán Camarero, “El mundo obrero judío comunista,” in Hernán Camarero, *A la conquista de la clase obrera. Los comunistas y el mundo del trabajo en la Argentina, 1920–1935* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2007); Ariel Svarch, “¿Comunistas judíos o judíos comunistas? El activismo y la lucha de la rama judía del PC en un contexto de crisis identitaria, 1920–1950” (lecture delivered at the X Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia (Rosario, 2005); Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, “La conquista de las comunidades: El movimiento sionista y la comunidad ashkenazi de Buenos Aires” (1935–1949),” *Judaica Latinoamericana*, Estudios Históricos y sociales 11 (Jerusalem: Ed. Universitaria Magnes, 1993).

12 An organization that brought together Jewish youth groups.

Organization (OSA);¹³ the Argentine-Sephardic Coordinating Body (ECSA); the Argentine Hebraic Society (SHA); rabbis, and local representatives of international Jewish organizations—the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee—among others.

This aspect, perhaps, has had consequences for the narrative: for example, some debates are reconstructed in minute detail. Like the ethnographic perspective of my first study, the exhaustive description of the record of key players has allowed me to analyze a multiplicity of opinions regarding a single issue among members of a group. For this study in particular, reviving that discourse allowed me to discover interesting subtleties or tensions, such as those, for example, which articulated early on the dimension of terror, and provide an account of how the repressive system worked during the dictatorship, identifying those who would, a posteriori, be named as traitors and representatives of the right wing. On the other hand, those who referred only later to the question of the disappeared presented themselves as early detractors of the dictatorial regime.

While the course of the investigation allowed me to make decisions that resolved certain problems, I believe there is no answer to the most difficult one. Or, I am not the one to provide it. This study, which in its original version was my doctoral dissertation in history at the National University of La Plata, attempts to pursue a path where the areas of research of contemporary history and Jewish studies overlap. In truth, the reader her/himself is my greatest challenge.

1 The Jews and the Dictatorship

The experience of Argentine Jews who were victims of state terrorism during the so-called National Reorganization Process has been characterized by the strong anti-Semitic stance of many of the task forces charged with illegal repression. In contrast to the dictatorships in Chile and Uruguay, where the connection with anti-Semitism could not be established, in the Argentine case it was pointed out from the beginnings of the regime.¹⁴ Although the bibliography on the development of Jewish life, both institutional and personal, is scant, the few works that exist agree on the anti-Semitic disposition of the

13 An organization that brought together Zionist groups.

14 Edy Kaufman, "Introducción," in Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznadjer eds., *El legado del autoritarismo. Derechos humanos y antisemitismo en Argentina contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Hacer, 1995), 194.

regime in the form of illegal and clandestine repression pursued by the military hierarchy.

The persecution, abductions, torture, assassinations, trumped-up confrontations, kidnapping of children, the forced disappearance of persons, and the mistreatment of relatives of the victims were the methods developed by the executors of state terrorism in Argentina. A special commission, formed on the initiative of the national executive in the early days of the transition to democracy, undertook to gather data on the names of the disappeared and establish the forms that illegal state repression took during the regime of the military government.

In addition to statistics regarding the disappeared, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP, as per its acronym in Spanish) recorded forms of violence unleashed by the state. Its report underscores how Jewish individuals detained in clandestine detention centers were exposed to greater humiliation than other victims of repression and torture, and that the very fact of being Jewish could be decisive when determining the ultimate fate of the detainee.¹⁵ In 1979, a few years before the publication of *Nunca más* (*Never Again*),¹⁶ the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) produced a report following its visit to Argentina in which it underscored that while anti-Semitism was not an official state policy, they had found evidence that could be understood as designed to affect Jews.¹⁷

The open debate on the investigation of crimes committed extended to a series of studies that attempted to examine actions taken by national and international institutions of the Jewish community to oppose the atrocities and humiliation to which individual Jews detained in clandestine detention centers were subjected. An early article by Ignacio Klich on the conduct of DAIA during the National Reorganization Process was the point of departure for my socio-historical analyses. Two questions guide his approach: Why did the large majority of relatives of Jewish victims fail to report their tragedies to the institution that supposedly represented the entirety of Jews in the country? What did DAIA do in the matter of the detained and disappeared, whether locally or internationally?¹⁸

15 CONADEP, "Antisemitismo," in CONADEP, *Nunca Más* (Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 2006), 75.

16 "Nunca más" (Never More, or Never Again) was the title of a report published by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons after the investigation that established how clandestine repression operated during the military dictatorship.

17 <http://desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/document/internac/cidh79/10.htm#C.El caso de los judíos>.

18 Ignacio Klich, "Política comunitaria durante las Juntas Militares: La DAIA durante el Proceso de Reorganización Militar," in Leonardo Senkman ed., *El antisemitismo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1989), 278.

This early debate, which Klich's research inaugurated, provided the framework for subsequent inquiries, which focused on the conduct of national and international institutions that organized the community life of Jews of the Diaspora. While these lines of research cover a large range of activities pursued by these bodies, they do not examine the response of Jewish individuals, as well as Argentine institutions of the organized Jewish community, to the coup that installed the military dictatorship

In his analysis, Klich proposes a critical look at the actions taken by DAIA. The lack of interest in and mistreatment of the victims' relatives call into question the degree of commitment to the defense of human rights of those Jews who suffered under the illegal repression. He maintains that, according to the institution itself, DAIA's conduct enabled it to preserve the interests of organized Jewish Argentine community life.

The doubts surrounding DAIA's behavior are complemented by a series of studies that examine its conduct in relation to international Jewish organizations. As Klich points out, DAIA maintained a policy of silencing censure by organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL). Both institutions criticized the military dictatorship for its anti-Semitism, and sought to attain condemnation on the international level. By contrast, "DAIA attempted to create the impression that anti-Semitism was alien to the military dictatorship and that attacks on Jews which could be recognized in private were the work of 'Nazis' who had infiltrated the security forces."¹⁹

At the World Jewish Congress (WJC), an umbrella organization bringing together representatives of diasporic Jewish bodies, DAIA proposed making a pronouncement urging that declarations of international Jewish organizations comply with the position adopted by the central Jewish bodies of the particular locale in question. The motion was approved at the 1978 meeting of the WJC in Israel.²⁰

This approach was confirmed by some of the studies dealing with actions taken on behalf of Jews persecuted by the Argentine military dictatorship by international Jewish organizations and the State of Israel. Victor Mirelman, for example, describes the attitude of those entities toward the radicalization of political violence in Argentina. His article shows the early conflictive

19 Ibid., 286.

20 Ibid., 288.

relationship that DAIA established with those agencies regarding alleged human rights violations perpetrated by the Argentine state.²¹

Actions such as the boycott of local enterprises and distribution of information about the abduction and disappearance of Jewish individuals were strategies international Jewish organizations utilized to pressure the Argentine government. Although, as Mirelman points out, often these bodies had to desist in their public initiatives since it was necessary to consider the risk to the Argentine Jewish community if hardline sectors of the armed forces were to become infuriated with such campaigns.²²

The arrest of journalist Jacobo Timerman—a consequence of the Graiver case²³—generated a debate involving a multiplicity of key players. During his captivity and his subsequent house arrest, various organizations, diplomatic delegations, and intellectuals intervened in an attempt to attain Timerman's release. Finally, when the journalist was deported to Israel, after being stripped of his Argentine citizenship, he made a series of declarations and published a book about the period of his captivity, in which he denounced the Argentine government as anti-Semitic and the Argentine Jewish leadership as collaborationist.²⁴

A series of articles sought to analyze the diplomatic work undertaken by the State of Israel. Barromi examined the Timerman case and the arrest in Córdoba of members of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAI) from that perspective. In both cases, he observed the clandestine actions of Israeli diplomacy and, in the Córdoba one, a quick resolution of the problem. According to Barromi, the State of Israel was the only country to open its doors to detainees of Argentine nationality, who benefitted from the “right of return.”

These studies add a new dimension: the peculiarities of the Jewish-Argentine exile in Israel—an area yet to be researched, with the exception of Sznadjer and Roniger's work. Based on the experience of the exiles, Roniger examined the policies pursued by the State of Israel and the actions of the institution charged with all matters related to immigration to that country, the JAI, which sought to rescue victims of repression. According to his thesis, Israel conducted cordial diplomatic relations with the Argentine military authorities

21 Víctor Mirelman, “Las organizaciones internacionales judías ante la represión y el anti-semitismo en Argentina,” in Senkman and Sznadjer, *El legado del autoritarismo*.

22 Mirelman, “Las organizaciones internacionales judías”: 251.

23 Reference here is to the arrest of a group of professionals, family members, and stockholders associated with the figure of David Graiver, businessman and bank owner, who was the financial backer of the political-military Montoneros organization. See Juan Gasparini, *David Graiver: El banquero de los Montoneros* (Buenos Aires: Norma, 2007).

24 Jacobo Timerman, *Preso sin nombre, celda sin número* (Buenos Aires: de la Flor, 2000).

while providing opportunities and support for Jewish individuals who suffered persecution. This two-pronged policy represented a pragmatic model, with JAI delegates in the field responding to requests for help from those suffering persecution.²⁵

For his part, Senkman researched the actions taken by the Israeli embassy in Argentina and the JAI for rescuing Jewish victims of state terrorism. His study analyzes specific situations in which officials from each entity were involved and the various missions they engaged in. While the JAI representative, Itzjak Pundak, took an early stand against the anti-Semitic dimension of the military coup, Ambassador Ram Nigrad demonstrated a favorable attitude toward the regime.²⁶

The Timerman case modified the stance and representations of the Israeli diplomatic mission. Barromi, like Senkman, notes that the topic of disappeared Jews in Argentina was discussed at a plenary session of the Israeli Knesset as a consequence of the insistent efforts of MK Gueula Cohen of the right-wing Likud Party. She had become aware of the issue thanks to relatives of disappeared Argentines living in Israel.²⁷

Nevertheless, and as the abovementioned authors agree, DAIA attempted to prevent Jewish organizations abroad from denouncing what it did not want to state openly because this could place it in conflict with the national authorities. As Klich points out, victories on the international front weakened the efficacy of the struggle against anti-Semitism on the national level. The institution that had come into existence in 1935 as a committee fighting anti-Semitism, refrained from defending individual rights of Argentine Jews in exchange for preserving its institutional structure.²⁸

Warszawsky maintains that the organized community prioritized its specific interests with regard to its own survival, while the interests of Jews as citizens were not embraced by communal entities or by their political representatives.²⁹ The steps taken by Jewish individuals and organizations, such as the Jewish Movement for Human Rights (MJDH), to demonstrate their opposition to human rights violations by the military regime, were “the target

25 Mario Sznadger and Luis Roniger, “De Argentina a Israel: escape y exilio,” in Pablo Yankelevich ed., *Represión y destierro: Itinerarios del exilio argentino* (La Plata: Al Margen, 2004), 162.

26 Leonardo Senkman, “Israel y el rescate de las víctimas de la represión,” in Senkman and Sznadger, *El legado del autoritarismo*: 283–93.

27 Senkman, “Israel y el rescate de las víctimas de la represión”: 293.

28 Klich, “Política comunitaria durante las Juntas Militares”: 288.

29 Paul Warszawsky, “Régimen militar, iglesia católica y comunidad judía en la República Argentina,” in Senkman and Sznadger, *El legado del autoritarismo*: 229.

of very severe criticism and communal ostracism because they went against the principle of unified action, by adopting much more precise measures than those taken of central community entities like DAIA.”³⁰

But in an area still little investigated, we lack studies about the daily life of individuals and institutions during the last military dictatorship in Argentina. No research, for example, exists, concerning actions taken by the MJDH, headed by Rabbi Marshall Meyer, nor the role played by the weekly *Nueva Presencia*, published by Herman Schiller. The same is true for positions of members of the “progressive” sector of the Jewish community, those, for example, who were part of ICUF. It is the aim of this book to reconstruct a broad array of actions and interventions in public life on the part of Jewish entities and individuals during that period.

2 A Model Kit

The book consists of three parts. The first deals with the conduct and attitudes of, and tensions between, various key players of the Argentine Jewish community in the years prior to the military coup. It includes a chapter analyzing their positions regarding the return of Peronism, the “Cámpora spring,” the victory and subsequent death of Perón, and the institutional collapse and the escalation in political violence that accompanied the presidential term of María Estela Martínez de Perón.

In addition, it outlines the conduct of and tensions between those key players in relation to what we might call the “Jewish and/or communal agenda”: the conflict in the Middle East, the impact of the national economic crisis on maintenance of the institutional network, and intergenerational debates surrounding the radicalization of youth and their abandonment of the Zionist cause.

The second part is devoted to examining social attitudes and the development of institutional life of the Argentine Jewish community in the period of the dictatorship. Its first chapter investigates how the coup d'état and the “anti-subversive struggle” were received within the Jewish community. It examines various aspects, such as debates over accusations against the association of some entities with Peronism; recognition/negation of repressive policies; the process of *adaptation* to the new period by leaders and youth movements; the utilitarian sense accorded to the fight against terrorism in Argentina in order

30 Warszawsky, “Régimen militar”: 221.

to call attention to what was happening in Israel in regard to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The following chapter is an attempt to define and understand two distinct dynamics regarding anti-Semitism and the dictatorship, one *public* and the other *clandestine*. While the public dimension was linked to publications, threats, and attacks of an anti-Semitic nature, the clandestine one refers to what went on in the secret detention centers and the “special treatment” accorded to Jewish detainees. Regarding the first meaning, there is an analysis of diverse strategies adopted by entities of the organized Jewish community—especially DAIA—in order to persuade the military authorities to pursue an active policy of suppressing anti-Semitic manifestations.

As for clandestine anti-Semitism, an attempt is made to focus on strategies taken by Jewish bodies and organs to address this problem. The main themes dealt with include the reaction to and debates surrounding the Timerman case; and support on the part of local community organizations for condemnation of “the anti-Argentine campaign” in response to pressure from the state to express their gratitude for all that the military authorities had done to curb public anti-Semitism, and to solicit from the Jewish leadership a denial on the international level of state anti-Semitism.

The next chapter examines one of the aspects for which leaders of the Jewish community were impugned after the end of the military dictatorship. The testimonies of leaders who stressed how communal life had “flourished” during those years and developed “normally” were disclaimed by relatives of those affected and by detractors of central institutions of the Jewish community. The strong moral judgment, constructed on the basis of Timerman’s claim that Jewish leaders conducted themselves as a *Judenrat*, precluded the possibility of “normalcy” under the dictatorship. An attempt is made to establish the nature of that boom in institutional life by looking at several political, cultural, and social events held in public spaces that belied the cultural model instilled by the military regime.

The last chapter of this part addresses the cycle of *exhaustion* and *decomposition* of the dictatorial regime. The years 1980–81 saw the emergence of opinions demonstrating a breakdown of the *acceptance* of the legitimacy of the military government. One can discern among the key players how they go about modifying their stance toward the regime, articulating the first demands for political opening and strong criticism of the climate of “cultural suffocation.” This disintegration begins to mark the onset of *distancing* and debates in internal forums over the community’s conduct under the military regime. The chapter concludes with what I consider was the moment in which conflicting positions jelled: the march against anti-Semitism called in October 1983 by the MJDR.

The third part looks at the construction of some memories regarding the behavior of the most representative actors within the Jewish community during the military dictatorship. It analyzes a multitude of reports prepared by various organizations regarding the Jews under the military dictatorship. A re-examination of the meanings assigned to the category “detained-disappeared of Jewish origin” and “anti-Semitism,” and actions taken by organizations such as DAIA and the Israeli embassy, among others, is important to comprehending the struggles over the reconstruction of memory regarding what happened.

The Jewish Community between the “Cámpora Spring” and the Assault on Power by the Military Junta

The February 1973 issue of *Revista Raíces*, the news bulletin of the Organización Sionista Argentina (OSA), displayed on its cover an image that was significant for impending events. Beside an Aladdin's lamp superimposed on a ballot box, it showed leading political figures predicting the outcome of the upcoming election that was to take place on March 11 of that year. Inside the monthly, an article by Gregorio Selser analyzed the political context in the face of light of a vote that would include the legalized participation of the Peronist party.¹ He suggested three possible scenarios: 1) the direct or indirect banning of FREJULI; 2) the proscription of FREJULI candidates after the election; and 3) resistance or refusal to transfer power to those candidates if they were elected.²

Nevertheless, the approach undertaken by *Raíces* sought to maintain an analytical distance. The militants of the Juventud Sionista Socialista (JSS)³ would go further in their assessment of the phenomenon of dictatorship and the threat looming on the horizon. The article expressed a number of considerations regarding variables on the political scene and their relationship to Jews in Argentina:

We know that any electoral event that takes place in a bourgeois state is seen in terms of the widest array of possibilities. The last sixteen years of Argentine history corroborate the absence of the working class and the will of the people in the political direction of the country. In Argentina, the call for elections has raised hopes on many occasions regarding the possibility of a democratic, grassroots, and anti-imperialist change. Grassroots hopes were misled by the facts.... But today no one is under any illusion. The call for elections by the junta of military leaders and the GAN

1 Gregorio Selser, “Argentina, vísperas de elecciones,” *Raíces V*, No. 43 (February 1973). Selser was an Argentine journalist who was forced to seek asylum in Mexico after the March 24, 1976, military coup in Argentina. At the time he wrote this article he was already known for his publication of several books on insurgent movements in Latin America.

2 Ibid.

3 JSS was an organization that brought together Zionist left-wing youth movements, such as Hashomer Hatzair, Mordejai Anilevich, and Baderej, among others.

[Spanish acronym for Great National Agreement] is being undermined by grassroots uncertainty and skepticism. The dictatorial project cannot displace the authentic center of gravity of Argentine politics: grassroots mobilization united by the most clear-eyed sectors of the working class, peasants, and students. Electoral circumstances, repressive legislation, [and] fraudulent attempts to impose bans confirm the already generalized feeling of a populace which, through its liberation, is anxious to take its place in the construction of a free and Socialist American Continent of which Cuba and Chile are the pioneers ... At the moment of truth for all Argentines who are anxious to loosen the bonds of dependency, the Zionist movement must also have a right to be heard in the community about shedding the specific dependency that Argentine Jews suffer as an extraterritorial national minority. We believe that our active solidarity with local progressive elements is manifest in our Jewish national struggle, the only thing that brings us together in the trenches shared by all peoples who struggle against monopolistic capitalism, colonial war, imperialist exploitation, poverty, and new forces of multinational oligopolistic penetration.⁴

How can this seemingly revolutionary narrative of the youth of the organized Jewish community in Argentina be categorized? To what degree does their excitement about national liberation echo the aspirations of national organizations on the left? Perhaps all the community entities were on a similar path or were self-declared "revolutionaries"? In essence, was the 1973–75 Argentine political process transformed into the central topic of debate between the various members of the Jewish leadership?

The answers to these questions form part of the present chapter, which will examine a range of polemics, tactics, and representations characterizing Jewish participation in the political process prompted by the victory of FREJULI candidates in the presidential election of 1973.

1 Positioning and Representations of Various Sectors of the Organized Jewish Community during the Third Peronist Administration

It was thought that the period beginning with Héctor Cámpora's victory—his accession to power after eighteen years of a ban on Peronism—would prompt

4 "El sionismo socialista frente a la realidad actual," *Nueva Sión*, March 1973.

an institutional process that would channel the high level of social and political conflict that had characterized Argentina since the 1960s. Nevertheless, according to Liliana De Riz, the incidents that took place close to the Plaza de Mayo, the enormous square in front of Government House during the presidential swearing-in, and the subsequent approval of a presidential decree granting amnesty to political prisoners of the Onganía and Lanusse⁵ military dictatorships, would demonstrate that the political conflict was far from subsiding. “Perhaps,” De Riz states, “this lack of control of grassroots mobilization was a forewarning of what was to come.”⁶

Nevertheless, the end of the Lanusse dictatorship and the return to power of Peronism were greeted with great enthusiasm: “In 1973 confidence among the voters of the Peronist list of candidates was fed by a mixture of nostalgia for the past and hope for a future that would change the destiny of the country and, perhaps, their own lives.”⁷ Even sectors that had originally reviled Peronism expressed satisfaction with the FREJULI victory of March 11, 1973.⁸

Mundo Israelita,⁹ one of the most widely read Spanish-language weeklies in the Jewish community, considered that the election to the presidency of Héctor Cámpora placed Argentina at its “zero hour” or the “moment at which it would take off.”¹⁰ Given the heat of the political process and the institutional crisis that was to come, the weekly saw the “Cámporist Spring” as a curious stage “in which the people, after six years of military rule, learned to take to the streets without fear.”¹¹ Its editors underscored the demonstrations of “sympathy” that the new president made toward “the Jews and Israel,” emphasizing

5 Juan Carlos Onganía and Alejandro Agustín Lanusse were Argentine army generals who became presidents following the military coups of 1966 and 1973, respectively.

6 Liliana De Riz, *La política en suspenso, 1966/1976* (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 2000).

7 Ibid.

8 Jorge Cernadas and Horacio Tarcus, “Las izquierdas argentinas y el golpe de Estado de 1976: El caso del Partido Comunista” (paper delivered at the XI Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 2005).

9 As Beatrice Gurwitz points out, *Mundo Israelita*, a Jewish periodical in Spanish founded in 1923, was bought in 1961 by MAPAI, the most influential political party in the Jewish-Argentine political arena. The editors of the weekly included figures who, before or after their stint in *Mundo Israelita*, served as directors or other officials of the central institutions of the Jewish community: ICUF, DAIA, and OSA. Thus, many of the weekly’s positions echoed the official ones of the community leadership. See Beatrice Gurwitz, “From Apoliticism to Leftism: Re-Crafting Jewish Argentine Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s” (paper presented at the XIV International Research Conference of LAJSA, Tel Aviv University, July 27, 2009).

10 “Cámpora: Ayer y hoy,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 26, 1973.

11 “El triunfo de Perón, su deceso y la asunción de Isabel en un año signado por avances y reflujos,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 21, 1974.

that in an exchange of communiqués between Cámpora and representatives of the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Argentina (DAIA), the Peronist leader had "committed himself to fighting any manifestation of racial intolerance that might emerge during the exercise of [the government's] mandate."¹²

Nevertheless, throughout the new period of democracy DAIA called on various officials of the Peronist government to provide clarifications and measures aimed at curbing the activities of right-wing organizations, in light of the surge in threats and attacks of an anti-Semitic nature.¹³ Thus, the editorial published in *Mundo Israelita* regarding Cámpora's promise to combat any attempt at racial intolerance was seen as a gesture of rapprochement between the community leadership and the new national authorities.

The perception of the leaders of other central organizations representing Jewish-Argentine institutional life was similar. For example, OSA considered the victory of the FREJULI list of candidates a continuance of the emancipating process that had begun in May 1810.¹⁴ In correspondence with the particular nature of its position on the Jewish community's "domestic front", the Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías (ICUF, Yiddish acronym), maintained in its monthly mouthpiece *Tiempo*:

The ICUF expresses the deep satisfaction of democratic sectors of the Jewish community in the country with the re-establishment of constitutional norms of the Republic, the accession to power of a government with legitimate grassroots representation and the initiation of a stage of national life filled with possibilities for progressive transformation.... The participation of the Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías in the social processes that have gripped the country are a response to a position of principles according to which the great problems that have troubled democratic and working sectors of the community are intimately and unassailably linked to general problems ... This communion of interests gave meaning and brought great joy to the democratic sectors of the community when seeing the first positive steps of the constitutional government, which consisted of freedom for all political and social prisoners, the annulment of repressive laws, the dissolution of the DIPA [Anti-democratic Police Intelligence Division], and the affirmation of relations

12 "Cámpora: Ayer y hoy."

13 Leonardo Senkman, "El antisemitismo bajo dos experiencias democráticas: Argentina 1959–1966 y 1973–1976," in Leonardo Senkman ed., *El antisemitismo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1989).

14 "Carta al Lector," *Raíces V*, No. 45 (May 1973).

with countries which in Latin America, Europe and Asia embody emancipatory dreams, as well as anti-imperialist and pacifist aspirations like those of the Argentine people.¹⁵

This allowed them to take a public stance in light of the “breath of fresh air” that Cámpora’s victory symbolized, and to highlight some of the topics that would characterize ICUF’s positions during the period, as representatives of the “democratic” and “progressive” Jewish sectors. The leaders of socialist Zionism would take a similar approach. Such attitudes illustrated the situation De Riz saw as problematic with regard to the rallies in the Plaza de Mayo during the swearing-in ceremony, when she held that “the country found itself at a new stage.” Such stage would be characterized by “anxiety over the modification of political and social structures”, and by the involvement of “many articulate combatants” in their transformation.¹⁶

Altogether, the return of Peronism was seen by various communal entities as the beginning of a process that would put an end to political instability, in some cases, and stimulate the progress of national liberation, as the most militant forces predicted.¹⁷ Nevertheless, despite the rejoicing, community representatives began to denounce what would later become a general characteristic of the period: the impossibility of curbing political violence and anti-Semitic action perpetrated by various right-wing groups.

The ICUF statement mentioned above points out that the elation of various institutions of the Jewish community was attenuated by concerns about the appearance of anti-Semitic agitation. It thus condemned those actions as an attempt to “slow down the process of democratic recovery and social reconstruction that the people and the country are demanding.”¹⁸

In contrast to the strategies proposed by ICUF, which tended to revive the confrontation with nationalist groups on the right, there was an attempt on the part of more centrally-inclined Jewish-Argentine institutions to downplay the actions of those groups by appealing to “pluralistic” and “pro-Jewish” sentiments among leaders of the governing party. As is evident in their satisfaction with Cámpora’s statements and, as will be seen, in a future encounter with Perón just after he assumed the presidency, the community’s main bodies insisted on getting public declarations from Peronist leaders that would discredit

15 “El ICUF y el país: La Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías se pronuncia sobre la nueva realidad nacional,” *Tiempo*, No. 57 (June, 1973).

16 Jorge Fridman, “Argentina. Un proceso en marcha,” *Nueva Sión*, July 2, 1973.

17 “Nuevo Gobierno,” *Raíces V*, No. 45 (May 1973); Fridman, “Argentina. Un proceso en marcha.”

18 “El ICUF y el país.”

any anti-Jewish views coming from the core of the movement itself. As OSA activists would put it:

[T]he two most conspicuous figures of the Frente Justicialista para la Liberación, General Juan D. Perón and Héctor Cámpora, articulate a single message that is a call to harmony and the communion of wills in the pursuit of the single objective of national reconstruction. There is little reason for the two messages to appear to contradict the violent actions that, as rarely before, have taken place in the country in the same week.... General Perón's and Dr. Cámpora's points are insignificant to the degree they imply disapproval of certain groups, certain minorities which, under the aegis of the undeniable and overwhelming victory of March 11, are readying themselves to turn to their advantage what in no way could seem to be apparent in that victory, with the intent of going against its spirit and letter. No one could be unaware of the existence of small groups and sects lodged within the National Justicialista Movement, or which hover around it, ready to sow seeds of hate and intrigue against their companions. It is not our intent to attach labels or give names. It is enough that they originate in the hard core of the Right as well as in the ascending Left and that their common sign of identity is their undisguised desire to provoke or give rise to anti-Semitic sentiments by proclaiming the presumed needs of the State.¹⁹

Despite the declarations of the two Peronist leaders, the intensification of political violence in the form of attacks, invasion of public places, and threats made to various major figures on the national scene, as well as to the Jewish community, continued to deepen the crisis in the political system and imperil national stability. Numerous events would be reported on and condemned, in the Jewish press as well as by the heads of communal institutions. The strikes by armed political organizations, like the attempt by the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) to invade a military garrison in the town of Azul, for example, were criticized. Both the DAIA and the ICUF released communiqués rejecting "terrorist" actions—no matter whether from the Right or the Left—since they threatened the possibility of regularizing the regime in Argentina.²⁰

19 "Argentina: El otro balance," *Raíces V*, No. 44 (April 1973).

20 See "Francamente, insensato," *Mundo Israelita*, January 28, 1974: 4; "La provocación de Azul," *Tiempo*, No. 64 (January 1974).

An article by Grisha Weltman²¹ in the ICUF weekly examined the process of the breakdown of democratic institutions Argentina would experience during the three-year period, 1973–75. The conflicting positions and tensions that gave rise to disputes within the bosom of the governing party were considered a deviation from the programs promised by the electoral victory of March 11, 1973. Thus, Cámpora's resignation from the presidency so that a new round of elections could be held that would confirm Perón's leadership was understood as "an imposition that originated in the most right-wing reactionary forces of Justicialist poly-classism which were looked upon favorably by similar groups in other parties outside the government, obviously encouraged by the most reactionary sectors of the army."²²

Nevertheless, after perusal of the ICUF program, it becomes apparent that it was similar to the Argentine Communist Party agenda. The XIV national party congress gave a positive assessment of the Peronist government based on its "middle-class reformism," and decided to support Perón's candidacy in the September 1973 elections.²³ As a consequence, ICUF considered the elections to be an opportunity to renew the compromise affirmed by Peronism with the triumph of the Cámpora-Solano López ticket.²⁴

As De Riz points out, the September 23, 1973, election was a "plebiscite without surprises."²⁵ Juan Domingo Perón won the presidency with 62 percent of the votes. Nevertheless, his triumph was overshadowed by the fact that only a few days before a military coup had taken place in Chile that would overthrow Salvador Allende. Yet Perón's victory, despite the "fascist" threat to the region represented by the Pinochet coup, was understood to be a major triumph.²⁶

As in the case of Cámpora's victory, DAIA hailed the meeting that finally took place on November 8, 1973, at Government House, between the leaders of central Jewish community institutions and the nation's new president.²⁷ Nehemías Resnizky, president of DAIA, conveyed to General Juan Domingo Perón the community's best wishes in his mission of "pacifying and advancing the country." At the same time, Resnizky expressed "concern over the dissemination of

21 As will be revealed later, Grisha Weltman was the Yiddish name of Gregorio Gelman. See "Goyo," *Tiempo*, No. 126 (July 1979).

22 Grisha Weltman, "Un golpe de timón a la derecha," *Tiempo*, No. 58 (July 1973).

23 Cernadas and Tarcus, "Las izquierdas argentinas y el golpe de Estado de 1976: el caso del Partido Comunista."

24 Grisha Weltman, "Por la liberación: Contra la dependencia," *Tiempo*, No. 59 (August 1973).

25 De Riz, *La política en suspenso*.

26 Grisha Weltman, "Triunfar de la Ignorancia, de la pobreza, del atraso," *Tiempo*, No. 60 (September 1973).

27 "El presidente Perón recibió a una delegación de la DAIA," *Informativo DAIA* (October 1973).

pamphlets and publications—both from the extreme right and the extreme left—that twisted the meaning of synarchy by applying it inappropriately to the Jewish community," which thereby has become "the recipient of insults and unjustified attacks." Finally, the leaders requested Argentina's intervention in international bodies to achieve a "lasting peace in the Middle East."²⁸

In response, Perón considered it "absurd" to apply the concept of synarchy to the Jewish community living in Argentina because this expression had a totally different "scope." With respect to the conflict in the Near East, he reiterated his belief that the nations involved were victims of the actions of both imperialist powers and stated that Argentina would maintain a neutral position.²⁹

As when Cámpora was sworn in, the rest of the Jewish organizations called attention to anti-Semitic expressions that propagated when Juan Domingo Perón took office. On October 12, 1973, the Once neighborhood—one of the centers of Buenos Aires Jewry—was plastered with anti-Semitic fliers. As DAIA's *Informativo* stated

The fliers, which were signed by the Montoneros,³⁰ called for the extermination of the Jews. Unrest grew on subsequent days, for while it was generally agreed that the flier was apocryphal, no one appeared to challenge its veracity. Those who had prepared the flier had supposed, perhaps, that the Montoneros would not deny its origin in order to avoid being accused of "selling out to the Jews," a charge that was frequently applied by certain sectors during the political struggle among with grassroots groups with militant tendencies. Denial came, however, in an article in Montoneros' periodical *El Descamisado*, which while stressing its favorable position toward the "just aspirations of the Arabic people," claimed that the flier constituted a provocation "in the best Nazi style, adapted to a clumsy and cheap anti-Semitic campaign." We possess concrete information to the effect that in the bosom of the youth organizations of revolutionary Peronism, the matter of war in the Middle East has been intensely debated and with much less superficiality than among the traditional Left.³¹

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Montoneros was a political organization linked to the Peronist movement. Its structure expanded to encompass the student movement and the workers' unions, as well as the city's shantytowns, becoming one of the main political guerrilla organizations during the 1970s in Argentina.

31 "La guerra: Volantes, revistas, TV," *Informativo DAIA*, October, 1973.

Optimism over Cámpora's win and the revitalization that accompanied Perón's victory, nevertheless, contrasted with the view of other leading figures, including those within Peronist ranks, with respect to the political fortunes of the government. If Perón's "return" was welcomed as a possible form for the reorganization of the power of the state and the neutralization of political conflicts, they began to lose faith in the conciliatory commitment of the leader. His attempts to radicalize the center of the movement brought him many challenges.³²

Soon after Perón's win in the September elections, José Ignacio Rucci, the secretary-general of the Workers' General Confederation (CGT), was murdered. This attack signaled, first, that the road to reconciliation was strewn with unprecedented obstacles. Second, it also meant that the conflicting factions inside Peronism were not disposed to abandon the confrontation that Perón himself had provoked.³³

As is evident in the analysis up to this point, the many community entities held similar perceptions about the period between the ascendancy to power of Héctor Cámpora and that of Juan Domingo Perón. During the first period, the elections of March 11, 1973, marked an affirmation of Peronism, while those of September 23, 1973, demonstrated the desire for institutional normalization and, in the case of the most militant sectors, the possibility of acceleration of "national liberation." Yet, Jewish community leaders saw the increase of political violence and the impossibility of eradicating it, which the victory of Peronism had brought about, as one of the problems it had to take a stand on.

Thus, what happened in Chile with Salvador Allende's government would serve on more than one occasion as a reminder of the risks of failing to recognize, denounce, and/or confront organizations that could cause destabilization.

2 A Bitter Experience: The Coup d'état in Chile

The October 8, 1973, issue of *Nueva Sión* contained the following: an update on the war in the Middle East (the Yom Kippur War); an article, "Franz Fanon and His Brotherhood with Zionism"; a page dedicated to "shantytown Zionists"; and an interview with the film director Costa-Gavras. Finally, there was a detailed description by "Comrade" Ben-Dov of the path that led from the end of

32 Ricardo Sidicaro, "La crisis del Estado y el gobierno peronista 1973-1976," in Ricardo Sidicaro ed., *Los tres peronismos. Estado y poder económico 1946-55/ 1973-76/ 1989-99* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002).

33 De Riz, *La política en suspenso*.

the Unidad Popular government in Chile to the seizure of power by the armed forces.

According to Ben-Dov, the situation was "the objective consequence of the revenge by sectors of the middle class and the oligarchy against the working class and the democratically elected government."³⁴ However, the situation in Chile would not be the only disruptive political experience to sensitize Nueva Sión's editors: the coups in Uruguay and Bolivia and the liberation processes in Portugal and Peru were also dealt with. Nevertheless, the case of Chile would take on relevance since it dealt with a sensitive issue—the twilight of the road to socialism via democracy—that, in turn, would lead to a discourse regarding anti-Semitism in the Southern Cone dictatorships.

For those associated with ICUF, Pinochet's coup was perceived as a threat demonstrating how a fascist regime could come to power in the Southern Cone:

The events in Chile have deeply shaken grassroots sectors of the Jewish community in the country. Their participation in the various mass demonstrations of our persecuted and combative neighbors to protest and show solidarity in the face of the fascist coup cannot be downplayed ... it pains the Jewish masses as much as the Argentine masses—the brutal interruption of a liberating experience with which they sympathized deeply. They were able to discern immediately the most monstrous features of fascism in a coup propelled by imperialism and the oligarchic reaction against the emancipation of the Chilean people, because their own historical experience reminded them that the fall of the Spanish Republic also concluded with the extermination of six million Jews. And because they understand that events in Chile are linked to what is happening in Bolivia and Uruguay and goes against our own country where the mobilization of the people means the engagement in conclusive battles against imperialism and fascist dictatorship.³⁵

Denunciation of the Pinochet regime for its "fascist" character would occupy a prominent place in ICUF initiatives. The three-year period 1973–75 was marked by a series of campaigns designed to create solidarity with the "neighboring peoples of Chile." For example, the October 1973 issue of *Tiempo* published an advertorial that included a photograph of those responsible for the military uprising, accompanied by a caption naming the authorities of the new military

34 Ben-Dov, "Una amarga experiencia," *Nueva Sión*, October 8, 1973.

35 Editorial, *Tiempo*, No. 60 (September 1973).

leadership accused of the “assassination of President Salvador Allende, the betrayal of the Chilean people, the destruction of democracy and liberty in Chile, the installation of a reign of fascist terror in Chile and other crimes.”³⁶

Open letters from COMACH, the national coordinating body of various groups in support of Chile, began to appear in *Tiempo*.³⁷ The call by the organizers of the “April 19 Committee”³⁸ to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising even included a protest about the “fascist” climate overcoming Latin America: “We are witnesses to fascist terror in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Hungary, and above all, Chile, where innocent people have been jailed or placed in concentration camps.”³⁹

The particular nature of the “Jewish” experience under the Chilean dictatorship began to emerge as a central topic. A “Jewish testimonial” that appeared in *Avodá*⁴⁰ provided an early description of the repressive character of the regime. The testimonial referred to the “terror that continues to haunt Chile,” alluding to the ex-judicial arrest of Jews and the existence of “concentration camps in Chacabuco,” while denouncing the lack of action on the part of the Israeli embassy.⁴¹

It is in this context that it is necessary to understand what a JSS “comrade” was doing in Chile just days before Pinochet’s seizure of power. Ben-Dov stated that after his arrival he conducted a series of interviews with young people who, swayed by the socialist path that Salvador Allende’s win had put in place, “rejected Israel, even ‘forgetting’ their Jewishness.” During these “friendly chats,” the visitor attempted to explain that “just as there is a Cuban or Chilean path to socialism, there is a Jewish path that runs through Zionism as a movement of national reunification and supporting the workers’ struggle in Israel.”⁴²

Militancy in the ranks of left-wing organizations among the youth of the Jewish community in Chile became one of the axes of the debate. This militancy was in contrast to the complacent approach toward the leadership

36 *Tiempo*, No. 61 (October 1973).

37 “Todo por el pueblo chileno: A la colectividad judeo-argentina,” *Tiempo*, No. 62 (November 1973); “Con Chile en lucha: Colecta solidaria de COMACHI por cien millones de pesos,” *Tiempo*, No. 68 (June 1974).

38 A group affiliated with ICUF.

39 “Convoca el Comité 19 de abril,” *Tiempo*, No. 66 (April 1974).

40 The bulletin, edited by Mario Gorenstein, was the mouthpiece of Tnuat Haavoda Hatzionit, which directed the central community bodies ICUF and DAIA. This movement resulted from the fusion of MAPAI and the Ajdut Avoda parties. While it continued to exercise control over the weekly *Mundo Israelita*, it also put out the smaller circulation *Avodá*, in which political positions were less veiled.

41 “Chile: un testimonio judío,” *Avodá*, No. 4 (September 1974).

42 Ben-Dov, “Una amarga experiencia.”

demonstrated by the Comité Representativo de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile (CRCICh), which they had denounced. The problem would be understood as a confrontation between the "youth" and the "elders" in the community. While the young people were characterized as having "abandoned any kind of indifference in the face of the changes taking place in Latin America," the elders limited themselves to "deepening their contacts with the various constituted powers while often criticizing the youth for what they considered to be overly brash attacks":

The final chapter of this polemic (at times so acrimonious and bitter) had Chile, our Andean neighbor, as its axis, where a ferocious military dictatorship has reigned with blood and fire for almost five months. It is there where the killing of five doctors accused of "subversion" has just been confirmed ... where the display of corpses, prisoners, and mutilated bodies, in a devastating testimonial, leads the headline of the Yiddish morning paper *Lezte Naies* to estimate that thirty thousand have died since September 11. This where that the abyss between elders (leaders of the community or otherwise) and young people (Zionists or otherwise) has widened in a dramatic way. While the former cannot hide their enthusiasm over the fall of Allende (they have even officially offered the economic and moral services of the community to collaborate with the current government), the young people ... have dug into an opposing position and rushed to collaborate with various groups which, still not in a very coherent way, are resisting the military junta.⁴³

The columnist brings the case of a "young 23-year old kid, a medical student (very much a Jew and very much a Zionist), who spent eight full weeks as a prisoner in the tragic concentration camp into which the national stadium was converted."⁴⁴ Among the elders, Max Epstein, the correspondent of *De Presse* in Santiago, Chile, exemplifies the support provided by certain sectors. The journalist published an apologia of Pinochet, whom he referred to as a "protagonist of the Chilean *friling* [spring]."⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the distance between young and old cannot be generalized. The April 6, 1974, edition of *Mundo Israelita* would mention Chile's chief rabbi, Ángel Kreiman, as among those

43 "La polémica de siempre," *Mundo Israelita*, February 2, 1974.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

who signed a judiciary petition to determine the whereabouts of “131 persons about whom nothing is known.”⁴⁶

While the debate surrounding the figure of Pinochet and the Jewish leadership continued, two key moments crystallized some positions on the conflict. First, toward the end of 1974, the United Nations accepted admission of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as an international observer. Of course, Zionist organizations rejected the UN resolution, with the *Mundo Israelita* columnist pointing out ironically:

Among the few times, more out of hatred for Haman than love of Mordecai (as the well-known parable goes), those who raised their hand alongside Israel [in the UN vote to reject the PLO as a member of the organization] included representatives of Hugo Banzer and Hugo Pinochet. On the other hand, the Republican senator from California, Barry Goldwater, Jr., who not too long ago came out against racial equality, has now repudiated the anti-Israel position of the UN. Really, some of our allies are divine, just divine ...⁴⁷

This criticism regarding Israel's allies on the international stage concluded with a response by the heads of Colectividad Israelí de Chile president Gil Sinay, and secretary Robert Levy:

Esteemed Editor: It is with some delay that we have received news of the paragraph that appears in your October 28 issue, in the column “Facts and Resonances,” in which you allude to the situation that exists in Chile ... It is unfortunate ... that your publication pays heed to Marxist propaganda interested in the events occurring in Chile with regard to our community, which is pursuing its activities with complete normality. In a publication like the one you edit, which is the organ of a Zionist party, it would be more understandable for you to stress positive facts in relation to Chile, such as, for example, that this country, despite having petroleum production that meets only 25% of consumption, has not given into Arabic blackmail, and in the United Nations as well as in UNESCO it is one of the few countries to vote in favor of Israel, unless what the writer of the column we are discussing wanted was for Chile to follow the line of Cuba and Fidel Castro.⁴⁸

46 “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 6, 1974.

47 “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, November 30, 1974.

48 *Ibid.*, December 14, 1974.

As Valeria Navarro has pointed out, the position taken by the institutional leadership of the Chilean Jewish community legitimated military intervention and the overthrow of Salvador Allende.⁴⁹ For example, the leaders of CRCICH rejected denunciations of the perpetration of anti-Semitic acts by the Pinochet dictatorship. Moreover, in the face of condemnations of illegal arrests and disappearances of government workers of Jewish origin who had been a part of the Allende government, the official communiqués of the Chilean Jewish community would underscore how "according to the sources at issue, no Jew was executed and if there is any Jew being sought, it has nothing to do with his Jewish condition but his having been in some way part of the overthrown regime."⁵⁰

The conflict reached its high point when representatives of the Jewish communities in Chile and Argentina exchanged letters over a series of disputes concerning anti-Semitism during the Pinochet dictatorship. Following the VI Plenary Assembly of the World Jewish Congress that took place in Jerusalem in May 1975, one of the members of ICUF's guidance committee lashed out at the Chilean delegation for the "bad impression caused by the speech given by a delegate from the Chilean community who, moreover, spoke in English ... It sounded like it had been written by Pinochet himself."⁵¹

The response, in a letter signed by Gil Sinay, maintained that CRCICH adhered to "total neutrality" over the current and previous Chilean governments. He denied "the groundless statements concerning supposed racial persecution by the current Chilean government, thereby undermining the slanderous attacks deliberately spread from abroad."⁵²

The "neutrality" that the Chilean directorship made so much of was called into question by ICUF members from a dual perspective: first, by denouncing the collaboration of Jewish institutions with the regime and, second, by calling DAIA's attention to the limits of "neutrality" in the face of the advances of the Right in Argentina.

49 Valeria Navarro, "Comunidad judía en Chile y Argentina durante los regímenes militares: 1973–1990/1976–1983. Dirigencia y derechos humanos" (Master's thesis, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2008).

50 "Chile. Situación de judíos con cargos relevantes en el gobierno de Allende," *La Luz*, January 4, 1974.

51 "Enojoso entredicho entre las comunidades de Argentina y Chile," *La Luz*, April 11, 1975.

52 *Ibid.*

The Chilean “DAIA” showed itself to be “fully aware” of the threat of fascism. But it wasn’t. One day later,⁵³ on August 12, it held a demonstration against the USSR where it made a public statement, “in the name of the Jewish community”, feeding the anti-Soviet and anti-communist climate the thugs supporting a coup were striving to create among huge sectors of the middle class by placing them in opposition to the grassroots government. Now the grassroots Chilean Jewish sectors, individually and collectively, are victims of a tremendous crime. Let the Chilean DAIA take responsibility ... Will the Argentine DAIA draw conclusions from the bloody drama taking place in Chile? ... DAIA claims to represent the community. Are we then to suppose that, given the position of its directors, the community as such, through its organizations, should stay on the sidelines, indifferent to the monstrous conspiracy against democracy, liberty, the progressive future of the Argentine people, and all the peoples of Latin America?⁵⁴

The questions posed regarding the USSR became a key issue for Zionist organizations opposed to Jewish groups close to the Communist Party.⁵⁵ Condemnation of the USSR was denounced as part of the pro-coup climate that had devastated the Allende regime and, thus, criticism of the anti-Soviet position taken by the Chilean directorship would be used by ICUF members to censure DAIA for its ambiguities in light of what would take place on the local political level.

3 Between Political Radicalization and Jewish Youth Militancy

Toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, members of some Jewish youth groups initiated a process of radicalization.⁵⁶ Sometimes, this course led to a

53 On August 11, the CRCICh released a declaration repudiating “those who might attempt to confuse public opinion by showing that the Jewish community was in favor of or against any particular regime.”

54 “Unidad en la solidaridad,” *Tiempo*, No. 60 (September 1973).

55 Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, “Continuidad y cambio en las corrientes políticas del judaísmo del centro y este de Europa en su transición a América Latina: El caso de Argentina, siglo XX,” in M. Malinowski and W. Miodunka eds., *Comunidades de ascendencia centro-oriental europea en América Latina al advenimiento del siglo XXI: Sus roles y funciones locales e interculturales*. (Warsaw: Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, Universidad de Polonia, 2001).

56 Adrian Krupnick, “Cuando camino al Kibutz vieron pasar al Che: Radicalización política y juventud judía,” in Emmanuel Kahan, et al. eds., *Marginados y consagrados. Nuevos estudios sobre la vida judía en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2011).

rupture with the Zionist organizations that had sheltered them. For example, during an exchange of letters between militant youths as a consequence of criticism from the periodical *Noticias*⁵⁷ over Israeli actions in the Middle East conflict, tensions would become evident between those who had abandoned the Zionist cause and those who remained within its ranks.⁵⁸

The "Letter from an Anti-Zionist," signed by Marcos Blank, who claimed to have been a Zionist before becoming a member of the Revolutionary Peronist Tendencia,⁵⁹ criticized the editors of *Nueva Sión*. Blank considered the latter to be "opportunists," since "when *Noticias* or *El Mundo* had nothing to say about the Middle East, they received *Nueva Sión*'s support. But when they published an anti-Zionist article, the label of revolutionaries that had previously been so blithely granted to them was afterwards revoked."⁶⁰ Blank pointed out that,

[b]etween 1966 and 1973 *Nueva Sión* did not publish a single article on torture, repression, or grassroots initiatives like the Córdoba uprising, parts one and two, or the Tucumán uprising⁶¹ ... Everything was directed at combating anti-Semitism in an abstract manner, in order to draw Jewish youth away from a concrete struggle for the definitive liberation of our country and our people. There is something comforting in the fact that Zionism is not growing and that it will not even attain the magnitude it had in previous years. Jewish youth, today more than ever, realizes that their definitive liberation as Jews and as men involves pursuing the revolutionary path, both in Argentina and Latin America, as well as in Israel.⁶²

A reply would come in the form of a letter signed by David Ben-Ami pointing out that the ranks of Zionism included diverse tendencies and that the JSS was a left-wing faction within the ranks of the movement.⁶³ By the same token, Ben-Ami stressed that even if *Nueva Sión* did discuss topics related to "Jewish national expression from a socialist Zionist perspective," whenever there was a crucial event in the life of the country, "we have never failed to

57 *Noticias* was a publication edited by Miguel Bonasso associated with the Montoneros organization.

58 "Carta a la redacción de *Noticias*," *Nueva Sión*, June 10, 1974.

59 Revolutionary Tendency was part of a diverse grouping of the self-proclaimed Revolutionary Peronism.

60 "Carta de un antisionista," *Nueva Sión*, September 9, 1974.

61 Grassroots uprisings that took place in 1969 in the capital cities of the provinces of Córdoba and Tucumán, in which both workers and students played a key role.

62 Ibid.

63 David Ben-Ami, "Respuesta de un sionista," *Nueva Sión*, September 9, 1974.

report it and take a position.” Ben-Ami then listed such events, such as: the Córdoba uprising, the Trelew massacre,⁶⁴ assaults on freedom of the press, and the death of Juan Domingo Perón, among others.

This polemic served to establish the frame of reference and the problematics of youth militancy and political radicalism that was taking place within the Jewish-Argentine community. As Blank points out—despite Ben-Ami’s objection—the perception of a “loss” of militants and activists among the ranks of Zionism was felt to be a sign of the times. This was the impression of a British observer of the Jewish Agency (JA) during his trip to South America. S. Levenberg underscored how in the face of the revolutionary situation that was taking place in Latin America, “the Jews refuse to see the dangers of their existence,” with the major problem being the fact that the “young generation dreams of a ‘revolution’, which they believe will solve all the problems.”⁶⁵

The position taken by the editors of *La Luz*⁶⁶ regarding the political radicalization of the youth would be similar to Levenberg’s, namely, decrying the “abandonment” of the “Zionist cause” in the face of the seduction of the emancipatory prose of leftist organizations. The monthly gave prominent space to the voices of various community leaders who alluded to this controversial issue. For example, during a meeting of the Consejo Central de Educación Judía, which took place in July 1974, Manuel Graiver, a representative from La Plata, underscored the existence of

madrijim [youth leaders] and *shelijim* [emissaries] who win over children who have just graduated from Jewish school and subject them to a complete distortion of Jewish identity. To give one example: in La Plata the youth who are organized into an Israeli pioneer movement did not join in mourning the Ma’alot massacre⁶⁷ because, according to them, they “understood” the “liberationist” objectives of the “Palestinian guerrillas.”

64 Assassination of 16 Peronist and Left militants who were detained at the Almirante Zar Navy Base, located in the city of Rawson (Chubut Province). The massacre took place on August 1972, when the prisoners got caught, after their previous attempt to escape from the city’s prison.

65 “Una polémica en torno a ‘Perón y los judíos,’” *La Luz*, August 24, 1973. Words similar to those of S. Levenberg appeared in *Mundo Israelita* under the title “Prioridad número uno: frenar el proceso de desintegración,” April 13, 1974.

66 A publication representing Sephardic sectors and those associated with the Zionist party Jerut, which was conservative in its leanings.

67 Terrorist act perpetrated in a high school in the Israeli city of Ma’alot by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine on May 15, 1974.

This gives an idea of the degree to which certain organizations are out of control.⁶⁸

In accordance with the views expressed by the La Plata delegate, *La Luz* went on to denounce how not only the close association with campus militancy drew young people away from Zionism, but how some "Zionist youth movements" were close to the ideologies of the extreme left and were on the same wave length as "Third Worldism" and the New Left.⁶⁹ It even went so far as to denounce the *shelijims'* use of various techniques for "infiltrating" Sephardic organizations with ideologies of the extreme left.⁷⁰

Confronted with these accusations that implicated the JSS, the editors of *Nueva Sión* took issue with *La Luz's* position and its principal proponents, Nissim Elnecave and Joni Brenda. When Brenda condemned the infiltration of the Confederación Juvenil Judeo Argentina (CJJA) by "small groups of youths notably addicted to extremist ideologies that act under the mask of Zionism," the editors of *Nueva Sión* retorted that militants from the ranks of socialist Zionism were the majority of those who immigrated to Israel between 1973 and 1975.⁷¹

In contrast to the exchange of letters between Marcos Blank and David Ben-Ami, the bitter debate between the editors of *La Luz* and *Nueva Sión* illustrates the disparities that existed within the Zionist youth movement in an attempt to establish the legitimate scope of their militancy. Thus, the charge of "deviation" regarding national political causes was invented by those involved as a way of impugning the actions of other groups.

Against the arguments used by the youth of the Zionist left, the leadership of the organized Jewish community tended to impugn their "Third World detours" or the "national left." As Blank pointed out, the abandonment of the ranks of the Zionist youth movement was a phenomenon that worried community leaders and, thus, they took measures to staunch the loss of blood: holding events aimed at putting things straight⁷² and interviews with youth leaders to

68 "Los hijos de los hogares judíos sin judaísmo," *La Luz*, July 12, 1974.

69 Güerco Bivo, "Visita de Shelijaj paracaidista que nadie supo explicarnos para qué y por qué vino," *La Luz*, June 6, 1975.

70 Ibid.

71 "Punto final a una discusión," *Nueva Sión*, December 3, 1973; "Si esto es la luz, ¿qué será la oscuridad?" *Nueva Sión*, October 1, 1974; "La coherencia ideológica," *Nueva Sión*, December 1975.

72 For example, a talk, "Aportes críticos para un salida común del sionismo progresista," was given on August 29 in Tzavta, in which a young man from JSS took part, along with Dr. Lily Bleger, Najum Solan, Lic. Leonardo Senkman, and Josef Milmalniene. See "Superar el vacío existente," *Nueva Sión*, September 3, 1975.

gauge their positions with regard to the crisis in the community leadership,⁷³ and making calls to engage in dialogue with young people,⁷⁴ among others. These initiatives were accompanied by statements urging young militants to return to the ranks of Zionism.

The many viewpoints within the Jewish sector led to a confrontation between the editors of the ICUF monthly *Tiempo* and leaders of central Jewish community institutions. During the inauguration of Nehemías Resnisky as president of DAIA at the end of 1973, he criticized the absence of dialogue between the youth and elders of the community. It was an opportunity for the new president to promote an illusion of the “assimilation of young Jews” as opposed to their “seduction” to participate in the national struggle.

The editors of *Tiempo* were of the opinion that if there existed a “profound process of assimilation,” it could not be characterized as the only path toward “the spiritual disintegration” of the Jewish community. They held that the path toward assimilation was the product of an objective, historical, and unstoppable process that took place precisely because the community was not a “foreign body” and because it did not live “turning its back” to the interests of the “Argentine people.”⁷⁵ The enthusiasm of the young and their militancy was one of the themes characterizing the ICUF monthly during that period. It was common to find petitions, communiqués, and news bulletins from the Jewish-Argentine Progressive Youth.⁷⁶ The participation of youth sectors was welcomed as the product of “progressive” advocacy that ICUF embodied from within the Jewish community.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, their motivation was not due to persuasion by the ICUF but to the progress of political radicalization that prevailed in the country, the revival

73 The column “Aquí la juventud,” that appeared in the weekly *Mundo Israelita* consisted of a series of interviews with a range of young activists from various factions. Ángel Salvador Calderón (Bet-Am Wolfsohn and CASA, February 2, 1974), Alejandro Malowicki (filmmaker, October 5, 1974), Zvi Grinblat (Jabad Lubvabitch, October 26, 1974), Itzik Horn (member of the Organización de Maestros Hebreos, December 19, 1974), Dan Seev (JSS militant, January 4, 1975).

74 “Crisis coyuntural del sionismo,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 7, 1974.

75 “Acerca de la identidad judía,” *Tiempo*, No. 64 (January 1974).

76 “Declaración en ocasión de estar reunida la Juventud Juedo-Argentina en su máximo evento ICUFIADA '73,” *Tiempo*, No. 59 (August 1973); “Comunicado de la Juventud Progresista Judeo Argentina,” *Tiempo*, No. 64 (January 1974); “Convoca el Comité 19 de Abril: Rindamos nuestro homenaje a los héroes del Ghetto de Varsovia,” *Tiempo*, No. 66 (April 1974); “El plenario nacional de la Juventud del ICUF,” *Tiempo*, No. 68 (June 1974); “Antisemitas en Mendoza. [Informe] de la Coordinadora Juvenil del ICUF,” *Tiempo*, No. 77 (April 1975).

77 “El diálogo es posible,” *Tiempo*, No. 59 (August 1973).

of Peronism as a movement of national liberation—at least in the eyes of certain sectors of the Left—and the influence of emancipatory processes whose epicenter lay in the Cuban revolution and Salvador Allende's victory in Chile. In this regard, the obituary for the student Eduardo Bekerman is illustrative:

It is not very frequent that the dialectic relationship Peronism-Judaism-death-burial comes into play. A young lawyer of the Textile Workers Union, Saúl Hecker, died in 1965 in an automobile accident. He was well liked among the Peronist militants although not very well known to the general public. At that time, the Peronist Revolutionary Movement, led by Gustavo Rearte, had been created and the movement around Augusto Vandor⁷⁸ was already provoking criticism, [but] no one yet had even dreamed of the antipathy that racks Peronism internally and the country as a whole [today] ... Hecker's relatives arranged for his burial in accordance with Jewish ritual in the funeral parlor at the intersection of Thames and Córdoba [streets]. The coffin, of course, was swathed in a black shawl with a Magen David at its center that ICUF had sent for the funeral. When the first activists began to arrive, some of them—obviously among the most recalcitrant Rightists—were seen exiting to the street with gestures of distaste, since they had no desire to remain there a second longer “unless the Zionist flag was removed from the coffin” ... That was in 1965 when there weren't many Jews who were militant Peronists, before the Right and Left that constitute the current divide had become openly entrenched. Nine years later—on August 24, 1974, to be exact—when things were beginning to be more clearly defined and everyone knew who was who, a young Peronist of Jewish origin who was part of the Tendencia—Eduardo Bekerman—was murdered in Quilmes by “fascist bands,” according to the statement of Raúl Aragón, headmaster of the National College [high school] in Buenos Aires, where Bekerman was studying. A vigil took place at the college ... in accordance with Jewish custom, and this time all those in attendance (including leading members of Montoneros and Tendencia) stayed put, with notable (and perhaps surprising) respect, in the presence of the “Zionist flag.” Moreover, at a certain moment, they requested permission to place a Montonero

78 Augusto Timoteo Vandor was the head of the metallurgical workers' union, who competed for the leadership of the Peronist movement in the period when Peron himself was in exile and Peronism was proscribed from open political activity. He was assassinated by the Montoneros in 1969 for his “collaborationist” positions with Juan Carlos Onganía's military government.

banner over the Magen David. Bekerman was buried with that flag in La Tablada, where many of those present were seen to take an oath [to participate in] the struggle against fascism while making the familiar salute with their fingers forming a V.⁷⁹

This process within the Zionist movement is significant: not only were those who abandoned its ranks radicalized in the pursuit of the Argentine “national cause,” but the emancipatory rhetoric and characterization of Zionism as a “movement of national liberation,” accompanied to a large degree the polemics and pronouncements of the activists. In order to illustrate this point, it is sufficient to undertake a brief review of the “dialogues” held by Jewish youth groups and those of left-wing militants: *Nueva Sión* reports on a lecture given on September 8, 1973, by the priest Carlos Mujica⁸⁰ in Tzavta—the premises where Hashomer Hatzair held its activities;⁸¹ an interview with Bishop Devoto, a member of the Movement of Priests for the Third World;⁸² the text of a course held at the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano on “national reality”;⁸³ and the formation of new Zionist groups (Coordinadora de Agrupaciones Universitarias Sionistas de la Argentina [CAUSA] and the Frente de Bases de la Izquierda Sionista Realizadora).⁸⁴

Nevertheless, as will be seen below, the dialogue between Zionist and left-wing organizations led to a long series of tensions. For example, in May 1973, when there was supposed to be a celebration marking the 25th anniversary of the State of Israel, the ceremony was delayed due to the refusal of the youth to extend invitations to non-Jewish groups that were “pro-Israel demo-liberals.” The youth, on the other hand, were anxious to share Luna Park Stadium stage with those with whom they felt closer, Peronist youth.⁸⁵

79 “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, August 31, 1974.

80 A Peronist priest and member of the Movimiento de Sacerdotes por el Tercer Mundo, who served as a parish priest of the workers’ church located in the Villa de Retiro slum in the city of Buenos Aires.

81 “Carta abierta al sacerdote Mujica,” *Nueva Sión*, June 25, 1973.

82 “Entrevista al Obispo Devoto,” *Nueva Sión*, July 25, 1973.

83 “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 7, 1974.

84 “Nucleamiento estudiantil sionista,” *Mundo Israelita*, November 23, 1974; “Primer Congreso de la JSS,” *Nueva Sión*, November 3, 1973.

85 “¿Por qué la comunidad no festejo todavía los 25 años de Israel?,” *Nueva Sión*, June 2, 1973.

4 Between the Death of Perón and the Decline of Institutional Stability

Juan Domingo Perón died on July 1, 1974. As can be seen from the articles in the national and international press on "Perón's return" and the third Peronist period, the death of the leader of the National Justicialista Movement generated a variety of statements. Some were expressions of sympathy for the widow and successor to the presidency, others urged the safeguarding of democratic institutions, and there were a number indicating preparations for the struggle within the Peronist movement for carrying on Perón's legacy.⁸⁶

The central organizations of the Jewish community—DAIA, ICUF, and OSA—sent telegrams to María Estela Martínez de Perón in which they expressed their sympathy, reaffirmed their support for institutional continuity, and underscored "Perón's goodwill toward the Argentine Jewish community and his rejection of the discriminatory features of the movement."⁸⁷ ICUF published a petition in support of the new president, expressing "its solidarity with the declared proposals of affirming and developing the stage of national unity, democratization, liberation, and construction of an independent and just Argentina."⁸⁸

In similar vein, five rabbis took part in the memorial service held in the National Congress for Perón, and by decree of the Rabinato Superior de la República Argentina commemoration ceremonies were held in synagogues throughout the country.⁸⁹ The prayer read in his memory in the Libertad Street Temple, for example, was published in *Mundo Israelita*.⁹⁰ Even the Sherit Hapleita (Asociación Israelita de Sobrevivientes de la Persecución Nazi), headed by José Moskovits, sent a message to María Estela Martínez de Perón, praising her husband, "who magnanimously allowed the entry of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust [to Argentina]."⁹¹

86 Raanan Rein and Claudio Panella, *El retorno de Perón y el peronismo en la visión de la prensa nacional y extranjera* (La Plata: Edulp, 2009).

87 "Eco doloroso halló en nuestra comunidad el deceso de Perón," *Mundo Israelita*, July 6, 1974. The June 12, 1974, issue of *La Luz* includes the text of the telegrams sent by the three institutions mentioned to the president.

88 "El ICUF ante el duelo nacional," *Tiempo* (July 1974).

89 "Presencia rabínica," *Mundo Israelita*, July 6, 1974. The rabbis were Aarón Angel, Saadia Bensaquen, Salomón Benhamú, Bernardo Krosinsky, and Manuel Gordon. See: "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, July 13, 1974; "Disposición del Superior Rabinato," *La Luz*, July 12, 1974.

90 "El oficio a la memoria de Perón en el Templo de la calle Libertad," *Mundo Israelita*, July 13, 1974.

91 "Eco doloroso halló en nuestra comunidad el deceso de Perón."

The DAIA ruling body paid tribute to Perón a few weeks after his death. According to *Mundo Israelita*, Nehemías Resnizky's words were unrestrained, going beyond mere rhetoric. The popular leader, he reportedly said, "had undertaken what he called a peaceful revolution against a takeover of the economy and impoverishment of the grassroots sectors." Finally, the DAIA president recalled Perón's esteem for Israel and the Jews in his declarations to the "anti-Argentine" minorities that were attempting to stir up unrest in the country.⁹²

Although Resnizky's words breached protocol—"overflowing as they were with apparently heartfelt empathy"—other community groups placed his essentially positive perception of the Peronist regime in doubt. *La Luz* publisher Joni Brenda characterized the eulogy as "exaggerated," maintaining that it was not a sober recollection of the deceased president, as one might have expected, but "one that was so inopportune and out of place for its support of the government of the majority party that it compromised the Jewish community unnecessarily."⁹³

What began to emerge very soon was an incipient consensus regarding the need to endorse the continuity of democratic institutions; hence, the greetings and comments made to Perón's widow and successor, María Estela Martínez, as president. *Mundo Israelita*, for example published a note on her "political life" in the hope that her programs would lead "the process of liberation and national reconstruction" and bear the nation toward "its revolutionary destiny."⁹⁴

In effect, after Perón's death, the continuity of democratic institutions became a topic of discussion of all community entities. Yet, as *La Luz* pointed out, "from a Jewish point of view," they understood that an increase in political violence would bring the "Jewish question" to the forefront. José Gelbard, minister of the economy during the administrations of Cárpora and Perón, had been the whipping boy for accusations of right-wing nationalist organizations regarding the "synarchic infiltration" of power and Peronism. After the leader's death, Gelbard became the epicenter of the conflict within Peronism. *Mundo Israelita* called attention to the early accusations against him:

These wretched individuals waste no time. They are not even affected by the pain felt by the entire country. Therefore we should not be surprised at all that the fascist gang, like rats crouching in the shadows waiting to make a definitive move so as to assume total power, did not give it a

92 "Significativos conceptos vertió el presidente de la DAIA durante el homenaje a Perón," *Mundo Israelita*, July 20, 1974.

93 "Hundiéndose en el tembladeral," *La Luz*, August 1, 1975.

94 "Isabel Perón, la gran responsabilidad," *Mundo Israelita*, July 6, 1974.

second thought and no sooner had the leader died, they rushed to plaster anti-Jewish slogans on walls in Buenos Aires. Their goal in being in such a hurry has a lot to do with the internal conflict: get rid of Gelbard, who is one of the elements of the dichotomy, and whose policies (it's worth underscoring this point) we are neither defending nor attacking (since everyone has the right to elaborate his own thesis concerning the Ministry of Economy). But it is evident that it has become an obsession for quite some time for the fascists ... Jews without a doubt continue to be the sacrificial lamb most readily available for the expression of frustration and impotence.⁹⁵

In light of the increase in threats and graffiti denouncing Gelbard, which made an issue of his Jewishness in regard to the policies of his ministry, groups linked to the JSS considered that members of the Jewish community should take heed of an escalation of anti-Semitism.⁹⁶ Avodá,⁹⁷ the local Zionist party, maintained a similar position, and *Mundo Israelita* issued calls to pursue a policy of "dialogue" rather than heightening hostilities.⁹⁸

The development of conflict following the death of Perón led the various community organizations to position themselves publicly in favor of institutional continuity. One of the first initiatives, sponsored by DAIA, was the publication of a book, *Perón y el pueblo judío* (Perón and the Jewish People), which included "actual thoughts of the leader with respect to Judaism and Israel."⁹⁹ Moreover, during a meeting held on November 7, 1974, between the leaders of DAIA, ICUF and OSA and the new president, and with José López Rega, minister of social welfare, the delegation presented a copy of the book containing "declarations of the deceased president that demonstrate his profound feelings toward the Jewish community."¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the efforts made by DAIA vis-à-vis government officials drew criticism from other community institutions. While ICUF pointed out that DAIA had adopted a "hands-off" attitude toward the path being taken in national politics,¹⁰¹ *La Luz*, as in the case of Resnizky's eulogy of Perón, denounced their meddling in national affairs. One of the most illustrative debates, involving a

95 "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, July 6, 1974.

96 "Fuera judío Gelbard," *Nueva Sión*, September 9, 1974.

97 "Mantenerse unidos y alerta frente a la escalada antijudía," *Avodá*, December 1974.

98 "Perón: Un ciclo de liderazgo histórico," *Mundo Israelita*, July 6, 1974.

99 "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, September 14, 1974.

100 "Recibió la presidente de la Nación una legación de la DAIA," *Mundo Israelita*, November 9, 1974.

101 "Que las A no lleguen a la Z," *Tiempo*, No. 72 (October 1974).

confrontation between DAIA leaders and the editors of *La Luz*, took place in mid-1975. When the escalation of anti-Semitic attacks had reached breaking point, a spokesperson of right-wing factions of the Peronist movement, Norma Kennedy, threatened the “business owners of the Once district and along Libertad Street” over the economic crisis and instability facing María Estela Martínez de Perón’s government.¹⁰²

Thanks to the mediation efforts of Resnizky with the government authorities and Peronist leaders, the conflict was resolved with the publication of a communiqué, signed by Kennedy and supported by the DAIA president, wherein it was stated that it had all been the result of a “series of mistakes and misunderstandings.” Nevertheless, the appearance of a retraction by Kennedy alongside Resnizky’s signature was condemned by *La Luz*:

Mrs. Kennedy conducted herself unapologetically like an authentic anti-Semite. The presence of her signature in a communiqué approved by the president of the DAIA is an insult to Judaism on the part of the latter, which the Jewish community must denounce and repudiate in no uncertain terms. We are fully aware of how, in the climate the country is living, this type of note can cost the author his life, because we are fully aware of whom we are denouncing.¹⁰³

As a consequence of this criticism, the plenary meeting of the governing board of DAIA, which took place on July 17, 1975, referred to the motives behind the retraction that bore Kennedy’s signature. Resnizky stated that the call for a “pogrom” made by Peronist militants took place “at a very difficult moment,” coming as it did in a climate of social tension where “anti-Semites [sought] to distract the attention of the masses and instigate a process to debase the chosen victim.”¹⁰⁴

The rising crescendo of political violence and anti-Semitic threats and attacks around mid-1975 led to fractures in the initial consensus regarding the continuity of democratic institutions. The political crisis faced by María Estela Martínez’s government and the attendant institutional deterioration would be referred to by various representatives of Jewish organizations. Moreover, an article published at the beginning of the Jewish New Year in September 1974

102 See “Escalada antisemita,” *La Luz*, June 6, 1975.

103 “No añade honor y dignidad al judaísmo argentino un comunicado conjunto de la DAIA con una instigadora antisemita,” *La Luz*, June 6, 1975.

104 “Avaló la última reunión plenaria todo lo actuado hasta el momento por los directivos de la DAIA,” *Informativo DAIA*, July 28, 1975.

called attention to developments on the national stage. The writer believed that if one took into account that at the beginning of the Jewish New Year the country had been living in a euphoria that prevailed prior to the swearing in of Lieutenant-General Perón for his third term as president, and that “with the conclusion of that same year came the assassination of a former vice-governor and a former militant union man ... Atilio López (in a context of violence that has been unleashed in recent years, as much from the fascist side ... as from the other side), it would be possible to have a clear idea of the ... transformation that [has] been taking place with the development of events.”¹⁰⁵

5 The Positions of the Key Players of the Jewish Community in the Face of Pleas from Right-Wing Nationalist and Left-Wing Groups

As pointed out above, the debates engaged in by community leaders and the perspectives they revealed tended to intersect a diverse range of organizations. From the Right and the Left, the polemics involving individuals outside the Jewish community came to constitute one of the main characteristics of the discourse pursued by its members. This section attempts, first, to reconstruct the various positions and arguments of those groups that sustained an anti-Semitic narrative and, second, to bring to the study of the period a series of interlocutors—sometimes closely associated and sometimes more distant and combative—grouped around the imprecise term of “left-wing.”

The period under analysis here was filled with events linked to the geopolitical situation in the Middle East. Around the beginning of October 1973, just as the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur was being observed, Egypt and Syria launched an offensive against Israel. The impact that this development in the Arab-Israeli conflict had in Argentina was considerable. Condemnation of the State of Israel during the Yom Kippur War “was magnified by the propaganda and political actions of the Arab League, not to mention the connection of some of its major activists with Peronist officials such as López Rega.”¹⁰⁶

As the *Mundo Israelita* column “Facts and Resonances” pointed out, the Middle East conflict catalyzed debates from the Left regarding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the national Zionist program. In the context of the Yom Kippur War, the columnist was of the opinion that the leftist perspective on the conflict was over-simplified:

105 “El triunfo de Perón, su deceso y la ascunción de Isabel en un año signado por avances y reflujos,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 21, 1974.

106 Senkman, “El antisemitismo bajo dos experiencias democráticas,” 116.

The rhetorical left (and, dramatically, a good portion of the world of the oppressed) interpret the conflict not as a confrontation between two nationalist projects separated by differing economic, political, and racial reasons that power usually sharpens, but as a war limited to light and darkness, between progress and anti-progress, between good and evil, between imperialism and anti-imperialism, with no possibility ... of any middle road. In this sense, the left and those who surround it—even the most honest and combative who really do fight in the service of people's liberation—have simplified the terms of what is a vast distortion: the Arabs as a block, with no fissures or exceptions (including the feudal sheikhs and most exploitative oligarchs) make up the world of revolution, swimming toward the tide of history, while the Israelis, also as a block (because you cannot go around analyzing all the details) represent anti-revolution and anti-progress, along with the working class, the militant left, the unions and even the collective movements pressing for the end of private production and capitalist relations of production.¹⁰⁷

For those associated with Zionist Jewish organizations, the view of Israel as an imperialist satellite in the Middle East was Manichean. Or, in the best-case scenario, it was based on a profound ignorance about the struggle of Zionism for the construction of the state and the efforts at the time to establish socialism in Israel. According to Senkman, the proximity of left-wing political movements to the Palestinian cause and the deep anti-Zionism evidenced by those organizations had been forged since their condemnation of Israel in the Six Day War, the adherence to a diffuse Third-World ideology on the part of Peronism, and indiscriminate sympathy for movements of national liberation in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.¹⁰⁸

For *Mundo Israelita*, for example, Manichaeism and leftist support of the Arab cause was the product of a certain fascination with the “irrationality” of their demands as opposed to those from Israeli sources: “Israeli literature, when it takes on political problems, does not engage in demagogic stridency. Israel does not have its sights set on any ‘final solution’ for anything nor any ‘final victory’ over anyone.”¹⁰⁹

Informativo DAIA (the DAIA news report) dedicated a Special Edition to analyzing how development of the conflict was dealt with in the various national

107 “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita* (April 13, 1974).

108 Senkman, “El antisemitismo bajo dos experiencias democráticas,” 190.

109 “Columna De semana en semana,” *Mundo Israelita*, February 23, 1974.

news organs and what the repercussions were among national legislators. The left-wing arguments it covered are instructive:

[T]he positions assumed by the rhetorical Left have been beyond painful. Not only the Communist Party (which in the last two editions of *Nuestra Palabra* speaks of "Yankee-Zionist aggression") but also the independent left, have entered the realm of distortion by seeing the Arabs as occupying the domain of the good and the Israelis that of hell. *Avanzada Socialista*, the publication of the Coral Group, for instance, "urges us to support the struggle of the Arab peoples against imperialism." It also exhorts our "Jewish comrades" to "not believe in the reactionary racist demagogy of the State of Israel and imperialism." For its part, the headline of *Voz Proletaria* [a weekly led by the bizarre phantasmagoric J. Posadas] took up the entire page ("Long live the revolutionary offensive of the Arabic masses to smash the imperialist pretensions of Israel"), and the final paragraph ... (added as an afterthought after having besmirched Israel from head to toe) says something that seems to come straight out of a humorous anthology: "It is necessary to urge the masses and workers of Israel, given what the Syrians are doing, with fliers in several languages directed at the Jewish population, stating that their struggle is not inhumane and that they are not assassins." Yet our information says that the Syrian fliers (at the beginning of the war) came with a Katyusha rocket on the inside.¹¹⁰

But it was not just the Communist Party and the "independent left" and others inclined toward the Left that were represented as part of the "realm of distortion." According to the Jewish press, they were a considerably larger number. *Informativo DAIA*, for example, states that *El Descamisado*'s¹¹¹ slogan was "Israel is the weapon-bearing arm of imperialism."¹¹² The article asks two questions regarding recognition of the State of Israel: "How long will they continue to characterize thus a nation fighting so intrepidly for its independence? Are they blind or do they refuse to see?"¹¹³

Responding to *El Descamisado*, which referred to the Arab countries' fight against Israel as a "just war," members of the Mordejai Anilevich Youth in

110 "La guerra: Volantes, revistas y TV" and "Repercusión del conflicto en legisladores argentinos," *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

111 Propaganda organ of the Montoneros.

112 "Columna Informaciones y Comentarios, Penetración ideológica antisionista y antisemita," *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

113 Ibid.

Rosario drafted an open letter to the publication's subscribers, most associated with the Peronist left. The young socialist Zionists emphasized that there were parts of Israeli society committed to national liberation and to the establishment of socialism and that what local leftist sectors had not denounced was the oppression domination and hindrance of "class struggle" that existed in the Arab states.¹¹⁴

Arguments of a similar nature were put forth by the JSS in the wake of articles that Rodolfo Walsh¹¹⁵ published under the title "The Palestinian Revolution":

When our group identified ... with a revolutionary publication like *Noticias* it was because we believed that an organ existed (leaving aside the silenced *El Mundo*) that bore the banner of the grassroots struggle via objective scientific analyses and the issue of clear formulations ... Mr. Walsh paints the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in these terms, and in so doing he does not hesitate to turn to half-truths (something reprehensible in the final analysis) or false facts in order to sketch his Manichean landscape of things. Mr. Walsh states that "Israel prides itself on being the greatest example of the Diaspora ... But the ones who have so deep a sense of exile find themselves incapable of understanding how others might have the same feeling." Is it that perhaps this kind, sir, forgets that the class struggle also exists in Israel and that there are parts of socialist Zionism which, though not in power, need hardly be scorned, because they understand the Palestinian drama and are fighting for a solution?¹¹⁶

These letters demanded a more complex and comprehensive reading of the Israeli phenomenon among the militants of the local left. Zionist-affiliated youth—especially those close to the JSS—characterized it as a "movement of national Jewish liberation"¹¹⁷ and, in that sense, they saw themselves as brethren in the cause of national liberation developed by the youth of Argentina and being advanced by young Israelis. Thus, the call to grassroots figures, leaders,

114 "A los compañeros de El Descamisado," *Nueva Sión*, December 3, 1973.

115 Rodolfo Walsh was a writer and journalist identified with Peronism, in particular with the Montoneros. He disappeared in 1977 after sending an open letter that became one of the first documents denouncing the crimes being committed by the dictatorship.

116 "Carta a la redacción de Noticias," *Nueva Sión*, July 10, 1974. This debate would subsequently appear in Marcos Blank's "Carta de un antisionista" and in David Ben-Ami's reply, which I have analyzed previously.

117 See "10 reflexiones sobre sionismo, izquierda y acción," *Nueva Sión*, August 24, 1973; Peretz Merjav, "Apuntes para un movimiento de liberación," *Nueva Sión*, September 3, 1975; Tzvi Talmid, "Israel frente a la dicotomía derecha-izquierda," *Avodá*, November 5, 1974; "Sionismo es autodeterminación del pueblo judío," *Avodá*, November 1975.

and well-known intellectuals is evidence of the extent to which condemnation of the State of Israel had spread and explains the urgency of the Zionist sector to establish and redefine from both within and without the legitimacy of its mobilization.

This last point is central to an understanding of the meaning of initiatives taken by various community organizations in a quest to "clarify things"—both to those within and those outside—concerning the Middle East conflict. First, DAIA, ICUF, OSA, and CJJA formed an Institutional Coordinating Committee, which published a bulletin, "Días de Combate," in which they sought to debunk the reams of false information.¹¹⁸ OSA itself had a "clarification committee" which sought to diffuse, among both Jews and non-Jews, the genuine objectives of the "national liberation movement of the Jewish people."¹¹⁹

The debates engaged in with the Left were intended to legitimate Zionism by linking it to the struggle pursued by other national liberation movements, as well, as to intellectual sources upon which these currents drew; hence, the insistence on underscoring references to texts and authors dear to the traditions of the Left—Karl Marx, Frederick Engels,¹²⁰ Frantz Fanon,¹²¹ and Leon Trotsky,¹²² among others—by representatives of Jewish organizations.

Perhaps, that is why the positions maintained in various documents, open letters, and speeches given by Zionist representatives conclude with a call to recognize the legitimacy of the Zionist cause, its proximity to the Left, and the complexity of the Middle East conflict. During an event that took place on June 3, 1973, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel, organized by the Confederación Juvenil Judeo Argentina, Hashomer Hatzair "companion"¹²³ Guiorah Melman, wrote:

We must show the world the image of our progressive Zionism. We must make people understand the international left, which only twenty-five years ago stood in solidarity with our fight against the British invaders and colonization and [convince them] that we have not turned ourselves into imperialists. We must show them that ideology must not be turned into demonology. We have never attempted to play hide-and-seek with

118 "La movilización del Ischuv," *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

119 "Comenzaron a cumplimentarse en OSA resoluciones de su última convención," *Mundo Israelita*, June 22, 1974.

120 "Un significativo artículo de Berl," *Avodá*, September 1974.

121 "Franz Fanon y su hermandad con el sionismo," *Nueva Sión*, October 8, 1973.

122 "Trotsky ante la cuestión judía," *Nueva Sión*, July 10, 1974.

123 "Compañero" (companion) was the word preferred by Peronist sympathizers, instead of "comrade" (which was used by Communists) to refer to or address each other.

history. We have not underestimated existing national movements. To label Israel or the Palestinians is not only prejudicial, but dastardly ... We progressive Zionists stand alongside Latin American countries in their new revolutionary expression because we share it. Chile and Peru are the newest exponents Latin America has generated in response to and in defiance of its ominous conditions of existence.¹²⁴

Yet, in the context of the Middle East conflict, the Left condemned the Zionist narratives, and this position was perceived as a manifestation of anti-Semitism similar to that of nationalist organizations on the right:

What could Juan Carlos Coral¹²⁵ and Raúl Janssen¹²⁶ have in common? Before today, it would seem like nothing. The first is a socialist militant who calls himself a Marxist and who, logically, has a specific conception about events and things. The second, an old fascist provocateur, is diametrically opposed to the first, not only on the political level, but also in regard to any other topic brought forth for discussion. That is, until a few days ago. Because with the beginning of the Yom Kippur War both strangely—although not altogether so strangely—coincide on every point in their evaluation of the conflict.¹²⁷

Were Juan Carlos Coral and Raúl Janssen saying in effect the same thing? The answer is obviously not. Nevertheless, could the leaders of Jewish organizations have thought so? Even if superficially, judging by the paragraph just quoted, the answer would seem to be affirmative, an analysis of the documents produced by Jewish representatives would discredit this perspective. Thus, in contrast to accusations from the Right, the arguments put forward by the Left were intended for engagement in a dialogue, where the legitimacy of the State of Israel and Zionism might be recognized. The arguments of the Right, however, did not attempt to convince adversaries. Rather, the goal was to impugn them, demonstrate their inconsistencies, or, worse, denounce them as destabilizing factors of democracy.

Accusations coming from these Right wing organizations about “communist” or “subversive” actions were associated with concepts such as “synarchy,”

124 “Gran acto de la juventud,” *Nueva Sión*, June 29, 1973.

125 Director of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST), he had been Alfredo Palacios’s parliamentary secretary. Palacios was Latin America’s first socialist Congress representative.

126 Representative of the nationalist right.

127 “La movilización del Ischuv,” *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

"Zionism," and "Judaism." With the express intent of identifying "enemies" of the process of national liberation that would signify the "return" of Peronism, they trotted out the use of the concept of "synarchy" as a pretext to denounce as much the dependency from and the infiltration of the "socialist fatherland" into the ranks of the "Peronist fatherland," as to hold the Montoneros responsible for the assassination of Rucci or condemnation of Gelbard, the economy minister in Cámpora's and Perón's governments.¹²⁸

Avodá, for example, decried how in the militant right-wing *Patria Peronista* it was common to find statements such as, "guerrilla organizations that have been declared illegal, like FAR and the Montoneros, have set out to realize the dreams of Theodore Herzl: domination of the world by the Jews via the Marxist credo."¹²⁹

In contrast to the Left's opinion of Zionism—where the problem lay in their perception of Israel as an imperialist state in the Middle East—the Right held the Jews responsible for the political, social, cultural, and economic decadence that characterized Argentina during the twentieth century. Thus—and especially during the third Peronist government—the identification of certain public personalities as being of Jewish origin allowed right-wing organizations to disseminate the notion of a conspiracy. Figures such as Gelbard, Julio Bronner (director of the Confederación General Económica), and Jacobo Timerman (publisher of *La Opinión*) were targets of prejudice and threats by those organizations.

José Gelbard had positioned himself as one of the major players in the Confederación General Económica (CGE), an organization of business owners that brought together small and medium businessmen for the purpose of contending with the Unión Industrial Argentina (UIA) and the Sociedad Rural Argentina. His appointment as minister of economy during the third Peronist government was designed to meet Perón's considerations concerning the need for an official capable of initiating a dialogue and an accord between unions and bosses. However, after the death of Perón the sectors aligned behind the figure of his wife engaged in a struggle against Gelbard's economic policies and the Social Pact. As already pointed out in regard to the death of Perón, the Jewish press reproduced the graffiti that appeared hours after the funeral: "Get out you Jew Gelbard, you traitor," or "Gelbard Zionist." The militant press of

128 Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, 112. Similarly, for a history of the concept of "synarchy" in Argentina, see Ernesto Bohoslavsky, "Contra la Patagonia judía: La familia Eichman y los nacionalistas argentinos y chilenos frente al Plan Andinia (desde 1960 hasta nuestros días)," *Cuadernos Judaicos*, No. 25 (2008).

129 "Antisemitismo: no bajar la guardia," *Avodá*, November 1974.

right-wing organizations—*Primicia Argentina*, *El Caudillo*, *Consigna Nacional*, and *Patria Peronista*, among others—unleashed anti-Semitic diatribes against the figure of the minister of economy.¹³⁰ *Nueva Sión* thus asked whether the attacks against Gelbard were the result of his economic policy or the fact that he was Jewish.¹³¹

A crucial step in the process of humiliating him occurred during the commercial negotiations undertaken by José López Rega with the government of Libya. In January 1974, the minister of social welfare signed various accords for commercial exchange and transfer. Yet during the press conference that followed, López Rega alluded to the difficulties in the negotiations as a consequence of the interference of “Jewish officials” in the government.¹³² Although DAIA and other Jewish organizations condemned the pressure on Gelbard and the accusations with regard to his Jewish origins, the anti-Semitic campaign did not cease.

Similarly, a series of accusations against Jacobo Timerman and his daily *La Opinión* were launched, claiming they were responsible for being the journalistic voice of the “synarchy.” The attacks on Timerman grew in the wake of the newspaper’s support of Perón’s social alliances and Gelbard’s Social Pact, as well as its defense of the State of Israel and the Jewish community.¹³³ *El Caudillo*, *Patria Peronista*, and other platforms of right-wing nationalism, accused “Don Jacobo” and *La Opinión* of joining communist, capitalist, and Zionist interests.

As in the case of Gelbard, the attacks on Timerman were perceived by many Jewish organizations as an attack on the Argentine Jewish community:

Undoubtedly, Jacobo Timerman is not a saint. Hardly a saint deserving of unconditional devotion. So what? Why is he attacked so viciously to the point that various far right publications (*El Caudillo*, *Consigna Nacional*, *Enlace*, *Primicia Argentina*, *Realidad Nacional*, among others) point to him as the principal enemy of Argentine nationalism, an agent of synarchy, and other slurs in a similar vein? One doesn’t have to go far for the answer: Jacobo Timerman is not under attack because he is a “self-made man” who knew how to rapidly climb the ladder that would enable him to rub shoulders with those at the top, or ... because he has created various communication media that have introduced substantial modifications

130 Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, 137.

131 “Gelbard: ¿ataque al judío o a su política?” *Nueva Sión*, September 9, 1974.

132 Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, 128.

133 *Ibid.*, 124.

to the difficult journalism market. No. Timerman is not under attack on those grounds, rather, essentially, because he is a Jew and because he has the courage to say "I'm a Zionist," because he went all the way during the Yom Kippur War in trenches he considered were his. Because he continues to denounce the coup that overthrew the Unidad Popular in Chile, because he attacked the US escalation in Indochina, because he does not treat militant sectors as "extremist," because he denounced violations and aggression, because his cultural section is "suspicious," and because the fascists (and many who call themselves antifascists but often do a good job of hiding it) are upset that the Jewish revolution is also counted as a revolutionary process.¹³⁴

The pejorative allusions to José Gelbard and Jacobo Timerman, along with the anti-Jewish tirades of spokespersons for right-wing nationalism, were forging a climate which, along with the process of political and institutional decline, was perceived as threatening to the organizations of the Jewish community. Throughout this three-year period abundant information can be found in various news organs of these institutions regarding attacks and threats of an anti-Semitic nature that left the Jewish community on edge: TV interviews with nationalist leaders and intellectuals;¹³⁵ insulting graffiti against José Ber Gelbard;¹³⁶ an event celebrating the 38th anniversary of the Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista;¹³⁷ the discovery of a police bulletin from Río Negro raising an alert regarding the behavior of "Masons, Jews, and communists";¹³⁸ the appointment of Peron's adviser Alberto Ottalagano as the government interventor at Buenos Aires University;¹³⁹ attacks and paintings of swastikas on Jewish installations in the provinces of Mendoza, Córdoba, Buenos Aires, and the Federal Capital;¹⁴⁰ declarations by Peronist leaders concerning the

134 "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita* (March 30, 1974).

135 "Antisemitismo en el 7," *Tiempo*, No. 66 (April 1974); "Televisión y esclarecimiento," *Mundo Israelita*, April 10, 1974.

136 "Otra vez el Judeo-Comunismo," *Tiempo*, No. 69 (July 1974).

137 "Otra vez la 'Alianza,'" *Tiempo*; No. 71 (September 1974); "Acotaciones," *Mundo Israelita*, October 26, 1974.

138 "Antisemitismo a la orden del día," *Tiempo*, No. 74 (December 1974); "Río Negro: renunció el responsable de grave provocación antijudía," *Mundo Israelita*, December 21, 1974; "Y el delirio continúa," *Nueva Sión*, December 20, 1974.

139 "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, September 21, 1974.

140 "Neofascismo," *Tiempo*, No. 77 (April 1975); "Antisemitas en Mendoza. Informe de la Coordinadora Juvenil del ICUF," *Tiempo*, No. 77 (April 1975); "Sobre el atentado a Fraie Shtime," *Mundo Israelita*, December 7, 1974; "Atentado contra Voz Libre," *Nueva Sión*, December 20, 1974.

neighborhoods of Once and Villa Crespo as “usury districts”;¹⁴¹ the attack on the ICUF J. Zhitlovsky¹⁴² School network institution, as well as an assault on Mirta Judewicz, a teacher at the I.L. Peretz School in Villa Lynch¹⁴³ are some of the most significant ones.

During the plenary session of DAIA’s board of directors, held on April 5, 1975, representatives from the interior of the country presented a situation that well illustrated the “threatening climate” that the institutional leadership had perceived. Luis Jaimovich, a DAIA delegate from Córdoba, complained that Jews in the interior of the province were receiving letters from the Triple A [Argentine Anticomunist Alliance] that came in envelopes stamped with the heading “servant of international Zionism” and containing a large image of Hitler.¹⁴⁴ Samuel Kolton, president of the Mendoza chapter, asserted that an interview was published with the Nazi sympathizer Juan Queraltó, which was referenced as originally made by the official news agency Telam.¹⁴⁵

As a result, Resnizky held a series of meetings with national ministers in which he expressed his concern over the escalation in anti-Semitism. At one, he called José López Rega and Alberto Rocamora’s attention to how anti-Jewish propaganda was appearing in publications which self-identified with the Justicialista Party, meaning that they included officially-sanctioned advertising and material written by government officials.¹⁴⁶

Thus, once again we might ask: Were Coral from the Left, and Jassen from the Right, perceived in the same way by Jewish organizations? The threatening attitudes represented by the narrative and practices of right-wing nationalists were viewed as a danger of considerable magnitude. Moreover, as in Kolton’s and Nehemías’s denunciations, the state’s indulgence toward these groups—in contrast to the repressive practices used to “neutralize” left-wing organizations—became a central concern. For example, following the act of the Nationalist Alliance for Liberation, in which “Down with the Jews, down with the Jews! Hang them all!” was chanted by the crowd *Mundo Israelita*’s column “Facts and Resonances” wondered why left-wing demonstrations were banned while Nazi ones were not.

141 “Todos juntos podremos,” *Tiempo*, No. 79, June 1975.

142 “Repudio unánime al atentado terrorista,” *Tiempo*, No. 79 (June 1975).

143 “Vandálico ataque contra una Maestra del ICUF,” *Tiempo*, No. 81 (August 1975); “Secuestro y Tortura,” *Nueva Sión*, September 3, 1975.

144 “Paulatino envenenamiento antisemita del alma colectiva argentina,” *La Luz*, April 25, 1975.

145 *Ibid.*

146 “Informó el titular de la DAIA sobre entrevista con dos ministros,” *Mundo Israelita*, October 19, 1974.

6 Polemics and Positions Regarding the Community's Institutional Crisis

All of the themes dealt with up to this point present some of the positions taken by the numerous entities that dominated the Argentine Jewish community. Were these the only topics that obliged community leaders to adopt a stand? Given the complexities of the issues that arose, along with the specific impact they had on Jewish institutional activity, it is easy to recognize the large number of concerns and dilemmas they dealt with. Yet, they had also to handle many problems related to institutional logistics that, in many cases, brought about confrontations and ruptures within the community.

This aspect merits a particular analysis in an attempt to understand the "Jewish agenda" of the entities and the distance or proximity between them in each case. In the three-year period 1973–75, there were a series of internal problems that required the drafting of emergency plans and strategies in order to sustain the complex Jewish institutional dynamic.

Mundo Israelita, for example, was quick to alight on the crisis affecting the Israelita Hospital due to its financial deficit. A meeting was held on January 29, 1974, at ICUF in which a report was given of the critical situation facing the Ezrah (the hospital). Marcos Efrón and Fernando Levy, secretary and president of the Asociación de Beneficencia y Socorros Mutuos Ezrah, respectively, blamed the precarious financial situation of the hospital on the inflationary process that prevailed in Argentina. Faced with salary shortfalls, the hospital authorities resolved to set up a coordinating committee "with the purpose of analyzing and carrying out measures designed to bring about a profound structural change."¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, as the directors of the facility pointed out, it was imperative, before any reform could take place, to have the support of the community in order to gain access to "the resources necessary to cover the shortfall in question."

Following the Ezrah authorities' alert, the directors of DAIA and ICUF issued a joint call to cover the hospital's financial deficit.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, judging by the item that appeared two months later, the call fell short.¹⁴⁹ And as will be seen in Chapter 4 of this study, the crisis affecting the Israelita Hospital was not solved.

147 "Dramático llamado a la colectividad para salvar al Hospital Israelita," *Mundo Israelita*, February 2, 1974.

148 "La colectividad ante un desafío," *Mundo Israelita*, May 4, 1974. See the petition "El Hospital Israelita a la colectividad," *Mundo Israelita*, June 15, 1974.

149 "Ante los graves problemas del Hospital," *Mundo Israelita*, July 27, 1974.

However, another problem concerning the functioning of Jewish institutions also became relevant during that period: maintenance of the Jewish school network. Due to the thorny problems it faced—proposals for a solution, consultations with Israeli officials, debates regarding the unification of programs, and forms of financial support for the schools, among others—the diversity of participants and perspectives would provoke confrontations between various Jewish organizations.

At the beginning of 1974, *Mundo Israelita* published a seemingly optimistic news item: enrollment in Jewish schools had not gone down compared to 1973.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, subsequent calls to “support Jewish education”¹⁵¹ and the creation of a “Jewish education fund”¹⁵² a few months after the beginning of the school year were evidence of the crisis affecting the network.

Its cause, or rather its main manifestation—the loss of student enrollment—was considered one of the consequences of the economic crisis afflicting the country.¹⁵³ *La Luz* columnist Joni Brenda wondered whether “Jewish schools were only for the rich?”¹⁵⁴ According to him, although at the beginning of 1974 ICUF authorized a 20 percent increase in school fees, the schools themselves “have raised tuition so much that they have literally made Jewish schools prohibitive.”

Mundo Israelita proposed some options, including a reduction in school fees and renewed commitment to the appreciation of teaching labor.¹⁵⁵ But these would not be the only ones. The visit of two representatives of international Jewish organizations, Pinjas Sapir (World Zionist Organization, WZO) and Jaime Finkelsztein (Jewish Agency for Israel, JAI), led to some suggestions for restructuring the Jewish school network.¹⁵⁶ The plan consisted of three

150 “Auspicioso: pese a las dificultades económicas no mermó la inscripción en las escuelas judías,” *Mundo Israelita*, March 30, 1974; “Vaad Hajinuj: nuevo ejecutivo será elegido el 10 de abril,” *Mundo Israelita*, March 30, 1974. See also: “Escuelas judías: la misma cantidad de alumnos que el año pasado,” *La Luz*, April 5, 1974.

151 “Horim hace una exhortación a las nuevas generaciones,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 6, 1974; “El tema educacional centró la atención del Consejo Directivo de la comunidad,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 20, 1974.

152 “Harán una campaña de emergencia para respaldar la Red Escolar,” *Mundo Israelita*, June 22, 1974; Solicitada “Las Escuelas Judías no deben desaparecer,” *Mundo Israelita*, August 31, 1974; “Nuevamente la educación motivo debate en el seno de la comunidad,” *Mundo Israelita*, June 15, 1975.

153 In fact, on the same day ICUF created the Fondo de Asistencia Integral al Necesitado (FAIN). See *La Luz*, April 5, 1974.

154 “¿Es tan solo para los ricos la escuela judía?” *La Luz*, April 5, 1974.

155 “El nervio vivo de la continuidad judía,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 14, 1974.

156 “Para dar el impulso de la Tnuat Aliá fijaron pautas,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 14, 1974.

stages, of which only the first two would be published: during the two-year period 1974–75 the kindergarten network would be consolidated; and during the two-year period 1976–77 new schools would be built, especially in the interior, to accommodate students. Over a five-year period the final objective would be increasing enrollment from 50,000 to 100,000.¹⁵⁷

Nevertheless, in early 1975, the announcement of the implementation of the plan by the JAI included some alterations to what had been agreed on: the increase in the targeted number of students would be different (12,000) and thus the money set aside for the program would be much less than what had been discussed. Given these changes, the *La Luz* editor denounced the JAI's meddling and machinations:

Two questions arise from the foregoing: 1) How is it that the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem is making decisions regarding Latin America without even consulting the local communities? 2) How is it that after the trip to Argentina and Latin America of the director of the Jewish Agency's culture and education department last August there was an agreement on one thing, but now something completely different has been decided, with no input whatsoever on the part of local authorities? ... All of this suggests a lack of any accurate data in the hands of those in Jerusalem who pretend to be the guides and leaders of Jewish education here and a tendency to demonstrate a total lack of seriousness—and, hence, authority—in their approach to the problem ... It would seem that what is most important for these advocates is publicity and propaganda designed to enhance their persons—toward, one assumes, boosting their service record—via the launch of spectacular projects that may or may not have any chance of being carried out.¹⁵⁸

The confrontation between sectors of the local leadership and international agency officials is a topic that needs to be identified when examining the various points of view regarding the administration of community services. The design of a program to sustain the Jewish school network was perceived by some of those involved as inappropriate interference that resulted from ignorance regarding the operational dynamics of Argentine institutions.

157 "Jaim Finkelsztein expuso sus pautas sobre aspectos del quehacer educativo," *Mundo Israelita*, September 7, 1974; "Emprendérase un plan para el despegue educativo en el próximo ciclo lectivo," *Mundo Israelita*, October 5, 1974.

158 "Demagogia y planes quinquenales en la educación judía," *La Luz*, February 28, 1975.

Although the debate concerning the question of education was limited to tuition costs and interference on the part of the JAI authorities, another matter also provoked controversy: strikes and efforts to organization themselves on the part of teachers at the Jewish schools. As the “Facts and Resonances” columnist pointed out:

It is hardly easy for a Jew who receives a salary for working within the institutional framework of the community, and struggling for a more just salary with the same energy as any other worker in the labor sector. Exceptional, objective conditions in such institutions that regulate the employee-employer relationship have paralyzed virtually any sign of struggle, demands, or rebellion. Nevertheless, at times this paralysis exceeds tolerable limits and even those who are most timid and reluctant about making proposals feel that some situations are insufferable. A typical event has recently occurred in one of the well-known community institutions, where its personnel unanimously engaged in a two-hour strike to demand better salaries and the establishment of job categories based on the implementation of a rank system.¹⁵⁹

The outbreak of strikes and union demands took up much space in the Jewish press. *Nueva Sión*, for example, carried reports on the strike initiated by Keren Haseyod¹⁶⁰ workers and the work stoppage in solidarity with them by employees of ICUF and DAIA.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the conflicted labor environment originated in the education sector. News regarding strikes and demands for a pay rise took on their own dynamic. Just days after Cámpora’s swearing in, an editorial in *Mundo Israelita* expressed satisfaction with the fact that the building of a temple and school in the Jewish community had not been sold off at an auction due to a lawsuit by teachers over the delay in payment of their salaries.¹⁶²

The succession of conflicts led to a series of statements by leaders of central community bodies, condemning the behavior of the teachers’ organizations. During the meeting of the community’s directive council, one member,

159 “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, July 20, 1974.

160 International organization that raises funds for the State of Israel.

161 “Huelga en Keren Haseyod,” *Nueva Sión*, September 9, 1974.

162 “Acotaciones,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 26, 1973. See also “Las estructuras en crisis: alternativas de una realidad,” *Nueva Sión*, April 4, 1973.

Miguel Villa, "deplored the marked reluctance of the Organización de Maestros Hebreos to cooperate with the established Consejo Central de Educación."¹⁶³

The teachers expressed their grievances on more than one occasion. During a press conference held by the secretariat of the Histadrut Hamorim (Organización de Maestros Hebreos), Dina Gilinsky, Janá Grunberger, and Uri Rubinson denounced the tardiness with which the Consejo Central de Educación Judía dealt with their demands and the meagerness of their proposal.¹⁶⁴ As early as September 1975, when ICUF accepted the agreement obtained by the nation's public teachers, guaranteeing a monthly salary of \$ 631,000, the teachers of the Jewish school network could pursue their claims on this basis.¹⁶⁵

Yet the matter of salaries would not be the only issue to be criticized by some community leaders. OSA president Lázaro Rubinson maintained that anyone not "fully identified with the integral sense of being a Jew,"¹⁶⁶ could serve as a teacher. How should such a statement be understood? *La Luz's* opinions went even further. Given the unrest following the introduction in the Senate chamber of a project for the creation of a set of statutes covering private institutions, the editors pointed out that any teacher at a private school should "identify with the prevailing ideology."¹⁶⁷ They went on to describe one of the ways in which how being "fully identified with the integral sense of being a Jew" might be understood:

In the Jewish educational network of Vaad Najinuj this problem cuts close to the bone, since there was always the need to dismiss a number of Jewish school teachers whose ideas, discourse, and behavior were at odds with the most elementary principles of Judaism and/or were enemies of Zionism as a movement of Jewish national liberation and the State of Israel. There were cases of teachers in Jewish schools, Jewish in origin, who were active in anti-Zionist movements and had to be dismissed as a consequence.¹⁶⁸

163 "Nuevamente la educación motivo debate en el seno de la comunidad," *Mundo Israelita*, June 15, 1974.

164 "Los maestros judíos explican por qué han debido recurrir a la medida de fuerza," *Mundo Israelita*, May 18, 1974.

165 "¿Se terminó el problema," *Nueva Sión*, September 3, 1975.

166 "Inicia su nueva etapa en su acción el Consejo Central de Educación Israelita," *Mundo Israelita*, April 20, 1974.

167 "La red escolar judía y el estatuto del docente en las escuelas privadas," *La Luz*, January 4, 1974.

168 *Ibid.*

The institutional decline, then, became evident in the concerns of the leadership and staff of the Jewish press when they issued alerts about the fall in membership of community organizations.¹⁶⁹ Among the initiatives to defray losses—in addition to the curricular reform and the appeal to youth—DAIA, ICUF, and OSA implemented the pursuit of a “sectorial community census” beginning in November 1974.¹⁷⁰

Other events also demonstrated a distance or disinterest on the part of the Jewish community. According to *La Luz*, during an election on April 27, 1975, to replace ICUF officials, only 7,900 people voted out of 35,000 who were eligible.¹⁷¹

Moreover, the religious organizations of the Jewish community, Mizraji and Agudath Israel, fought each other over the legitimacy of the meaning of Jewish religiosity. For example, after the election of officers to ICUF in 1975, the institution’s plenary assembly was unable to resolve who would take up the position of secretary general of the department of religious affairs since members of these two bodies both laid claim to being the legitimate holders of that office.

While the conflicts affecting religious matters provoked confrontations, the breach between the young and the old resurfaced. During the celebration of the High Holy Days a large number of young people appeared at the Centro de Educación Judía where the Bnei Akiba youth religious organization had erected a synagogue for religious services. An interview with two members of the organization’s secretariat published in *Mundo Israelita*’s “Facts and Resonances” inquired into the motives that led to the ritual outside the legitimately recognized synagogues:

“Since it is usually in other areas where we more commonly find generational rebellion, why are you organizing synagogues outside the ones the adults have? Is not Our Lord as much an old man as a young person?” ... the young people of Bnei Akiba ... explained: “In the majority of our synagogues the practice is pseudo-religious because most people go to socialize, discuss business, or show off their fancy clothes and jewels. We, on the other hand, who are serious about prayer, dedicate our hearts to its purpose: God on High. Our education aspires to simplicity and austerity, especially spiritual austerity, while in the synagogues of the elders a distinction is made between the poor and the rich, and the powerful have the most privileged seats reserved for them. Everyone is equal in our

169 “Expúsose [sic] la preocupación por la merma del caudal de socios de la comunidad,” *Mundo Israelita*, July 20, 1974.

170 Publicidad: “1er Censo Sectorial Comunitario,” *Mundo Israelita*, November 23, 1974.

171 “Elecciones de ICUF,” *La Luz*, April 25, 1975.

houses of prayer. Besides, anyone can be called to the Torah without having to give money.” So then—we proceeded to inquire—by wanting to suppress class differences (at least in synagogue services) you practice a sort of socialism? They replied, “We advocate prophetic socialism and are closer to it because of its social values ... We are extremely worried about what is happening in Latin America and our *janijim* [students] can ask us to explain what is happening, especially at the heart of Peronism. We are not against young Jews who militate in the arena of national politics, but we regret profoundly that these young people distance themselves from the values of Judaism which have a social content they are unfamiliar with.”¹⁷²

Thus, as seen, the religious arena also constituted an area of conflict and ruptures among Jewish groups there. As the analysis in this section has shown, the Jewish Agency revealed a complex and fragmented structure in which officials weighed in with their own sectarian interests in mind. The struggles and accusations, and questioning of institutional dynamics coincided with those being played out on the national scene, the former being characterized by a profound political and economic instability manifested, for example, in the lack of interest of Jewish community members in participating in the election of officials, in strikes, and in demands for simplification of the liturgy.

7 The Conflict in the Middle East and Reaction to the UN Resolution Equating Zionism with Racism

The conflict in the Middle East was one of the issues community entities had to take a stand on. The Yom Kippur War, the perpetration of attacks by factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the debates regarding international condemnation of Zionism constituted a series of events that mobilized the leadership, as well as youth movements. Thus, while they had to defend themselves against accusations from the Left, perceptions of the conflict and attitudes regarding coexistence between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East were not uniform in the Jewish community.

Events during and after the Yom Kippur War led various youth organizations to rally and publicize their positions with respect to the conflict. Militants of the student union at ORT School, for example, distributed a flier in which they underscored how, “in this war, workers are fighting against workers” and that

¹⁷² “Columna Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, October 5, 1974.

this “maneuver was enough to bring a halt to the revolutionary process in both countries.” According to the students, the right of the Palestinians to have a state of their own was legitimate, while understanding that “their liberation cannot mean the destruction of our State of Israel.”¹⁷³

Similarly, a rally was held at the Paso Street Temple, in Buenos Aires, organized by DAIA, ICUF, OSA, and CJJA. According to *Informativo DAIA*, the event was well attended.¹⁷⁴ Moshe Roit, acting secretary of DAIA, who addressed the participants, accused the Soviet Union of being responsible for the political instability of the region, stating that “the USSR has armed the Arab governments to the teeth because they know that peace will not give them access to the Middle East.”¹⁷⁵

According to a report in national newspaper *La Prensa*, on January 20, 1973, a group of young Jews marched to the Soviet embassy in Argentina chanting slogans against the country’s meddling in the Near East: “Go back Russia/ Our fight is for peace,” “To hell with Russia/ Peace in the Middle East,” “The Jewish people/ will never be vanquished.”¹⁷⁶ Condemnation of the USSR, however, was not limited to the youth sectors. An editorial in *Informativo DAIA* in October maintained that the “attack was brazenly provoked by the USSR.”¹⁷⁷

Similarly, ICUF, was also active in one of the central debates regarding the Middle East conflict. This organization issued a communiqué expressing its position regarding the struggle:

The skillful machinations of North American imperialism, directed toward impeding the process of national liberation of the Middle Eastern countries, were specifically launched as a result of the failure to abide by the resolutions of the United Nations concerning a political solution of the conflict which stipulate the return of Arab territories occupied by Israel during the 1967 war, respect of sovereignty, and the territorial integrity of all of the states in the region, including, naturally, Israel, and a just solution of the problem of the Palestinian people.¹⁷⁸

In response to the ICUF militants’ accusation that Israel was an imperialist state in the Middle East, various spokespersons of Zionist organizations

173 “La movilización del Ischuv,” *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

174 “El acto en el templo de Paso,” *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

175 Ibid.

176 “Manifestación ante la Embajada Soviética,” *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

177 Editorial, *Informativo DAIA*, October 1973.

178 “La Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías de la Argentina ante el estallido en el Medio Oriente,” *Informativo DAIA*, October, 1973.

maintained that ICUF was a "lackey" of the Soviet Union¹⁷⁹ or an "accomplice of Stalinism."¹⁸⁰ ICUF leaders replied that these were the practices that, in the case of Chile, contributed to the "anti-Soviet and anti-communist climate that coup-prone thugs strove to create among vast sectors of the middle class in their opposition to grassroots government." They then went on to address DAIA regarding the consequences of its statements in the climate of institutional, political, and social instability that was ravaging Argentina during the third Peronist administration.¹⁸¹

In addition, the dynamics of the Middle East conflict produced a series of reactions, statements, and rallies. The May 18, 1974, issue of *Mundo Israelita* featured the sensationalist headline "Inhumane and Pointless" following the terror attack perpetrated by the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Ma'alot, Israel. Hacoaj, Hebraica, Macabi, and the Club Atlético Sefaradí Argentino (CASA) decided to suspend their activities on May 19. For its part, the CJJA organized a demonstration at which they chanted: "Down with terrorism/ We're fighting for peace"; "Come on, come on, come on/ come on my friend/ What we're fighting for here is peace for the whole world"; "The Jewish people/ will never be vanquished"; "Peace and socialism/ the paths to Zionism"; "Hear me, Palestinian/ Peace is the way."¹⁸²

The latter event began with a march through the streets of Buenos Aires via the Israeli embassy, the Syrian embassy, and the intersection of Tucumán and Ayacucho streets where the Jewish Education Center was located. During the demonstration, young Zionist groups distributed fliers to passers-by stating their positions regarding the Ma'a lot attack and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Although the event was coordinated by the CJJA, the views of the various youth groups differed:

We damn the murderous hands of the "Arab liberators" and we damn with all our soul the true assassins who, from the Red Capital, arm and incite to murder in the interests of their politics of domination. We call on the God of Israel to fortify and strengthen Zion's fist in its response to the enemy and we call on the grace of God to illuminate us and aid us in our return to Jewish National Liberation.

MOVIMIENTO JUVENIL BETAR

179 "Lacayos," *Mundo Israelita*, February 23, 1974.

180 "La Ievskezie pierde el tiempo," *Nueva Sión*, April 4, 1973.

181 "Unidad en la solidaridad," *Tiempo*, No. 60 (September 1973).

182 "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, May 25, 1974. See also "Masiva manifestación de solidaridad" and "Ante el atentado terrorista en Israel," *Nueva Sión*, May 24, 1974. According to *Nueva Sión*, some 7,000 persons attended the rally.

We cannot remain silent. Therefore we are mobilizing on a massive scale to condemn the massacre directed against peace in the Middle East, Zionist success, and the authentic movement of national and social liberation of the Jewish people, as expressed in aliya.

JUVENTUD DE MACABI

We should not confuse the Palestinian people with those who today call themselves their vanguard. The Palestinian people should have their state, but that will never be at the cost of the destruction of Israel, nor will it be viable either through the use of terror ... Only dialogue between the progressive sectors on both sides can lead to seeking a way out of the conflict. Peace alone is revolutionary in the Middle East.

JUVENTUD SIONISTA SOCIALISTA

This demonstration was typical of those organized by Jewish youth groups to the left of the political spectrum. "The march, as has usually been the case for some time now with their non-Jewish counterparts, was tightly organized and the familiar 'chains' of young people holding hands and flanking the column provided it with the militant note that we have observed on previous occasions."¹⁸³

A *Nueva Sión* editorial listed some considerations that triggered the reaction provoked by the violence in the Middle East and expressed in the local press: first, it was a call to Jewish youths to "return" to the Zionist cause;¹⁸⁴ second, it problematized the use of political violence, while not discrediting it but expressing reservations regarding the legitimacy of its use—the killing of young people, children, and civilians are not the objective of the struggle for national liberation.

Teresa Abramovich, a young JSS militant, spoke in similar vein during the twenty-sixth anniversary celebrations for the State of Israel, which took place at the Odeón Theater a few months later. She questioned the validity of considering those who committed the attack guerrillas, adding: "perhaps Camilo Torres or Che Guevara died killing children and fomenting hatred among peoples and moving the center of the fight which was against the native bourgeoisie and imperialism."¹⁸⁵

Nevertheless, the highpoint of mobilization regarding the Middle East conflict took place toward the end of 1975. On November 10 of that year, the UN approved Resolution No. 3379 in which Zionism was held to be a form of

183 "Columna Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, May 25, 1974.

184 "Israel, los guerrilleros y el problema palestino," *Nueva Sión*, May 24, 1974.

185 "Acto de la Juventud Sionista Socialista," *Nueva Sión*, July 10, 1974.

racism and discrimination. As Judit Bokser points out in her study following the Mexican delegation's vote in favor of the resolution, it served to catalyze a process for the de-legitimation of Zionism in the world context.¹⁸⁶

The discrediting of Zionism on the international stage gave rise to the rapid mobilization of Jewish organizations in Argentina. The call for a rally at the Coliseo Theater, organized by DAIA, OSA, CJJA and Ente Coordinador Sefaradí Argentino (ECSA), counted on a huge turnout and the support of former president Arturo Frondizi, the historian José Luis Romero, the writers César Tiempo and Ernesto Sabato, and judge Carlos Fayt.¹⁸⁷ Speakers included the Israeli ambassador in Argentina, Ram Nigrad, DAIA secretary Juan Gurevich and a representative from the CJJA, Luis Feld. While everyone denounced the resolution, they maintained that its approval had less to do with the dynamics of the Cold War and pressure from Arab states and more with how the possession of petroleum held Western countries in its grip.

The central community institutions also appealed to the state authorities to oppose the resolution,¹⁸⁸ while followers of socialist Zionism called attention—negatively—to the traditional policy of Argentine abstentions in international forums.¹⁸⁹ Finally, under the slogan "We are all Zionists!" Jewish organizations, with the exception of ICUF, proposed that OSA hold a massive rally in response to "international provocation"¹⁹⁰ or "anti-Semitic petroleum aggression."¹⁹¹

8 Considerations Regarding the Conduct of Jewish Organizations and Their Representations between the Cámpora Spring and the Military Coup

Analysis of the positions adopted by the various key entities during the three-year period 1973–76 has led to the identification of two themes that will be

186 Judit Bokser Liwerant, "Fuentes de legitimación de la presencia judía en México: el voto positivo de México a la ecuación sionismo=racismo y su impacto sobre la comunidad judía," *Judaica Latinoamericana, Estudios Históricos-Sociales*, No. 3 (1997): 319.

187 "Multitudinario acto de adhesión de la comunidad judía a Israel y el sionismo," *Informativo DAIA*, November 1975; "Vibrante repudio al oportunismo de la ONU," *Nueva Sión*, November 1975.

188 "Telegrama de DAIA a canciller argentino [Vignes]," *Informativo DAIA*, November 1975.

189 "La abstención también trae sus consecuencias," *Nueva Sión*, November 3, 1975.

190 "La mejor propuesta a la provocación internacional: afiliarse masivamente a la Organización Sionista Argentina," *Avodá*, November 1975.

191 "Frente a la agresión petrolera-antisemita respondemos con la afiliación masiva a la OSA," *Avodá*, January 1976.

relevant for the development of subsequent chapters: namely, the plurality of voices that made up the Jewish arena in Buenos Aires and recognition of the significance, or hybridization, of the agendas under discussion, both national and Jewish. Thus, it is possible to pinpoint the tensions and perceived relevance of an issue that led to the need for them to take a stand in the face of a large number of events. These included the swearing in of Campora and the return of Peronism to government; the military coup in Chile; the process of political radicalization and its impact in the ranks of Jewish youth movements; the debates with the Left and confrontations with the Right; Peron's death and the institutional crisis aggravated by disputes within the Peronist movement; the steep rise of political violence and accusations against alleged international synarchy; the institutional crisis that crystalized with the campaigns to shore up the Israelita Hospital and projects to reinvigorate the Jewish school network; and the demonstrations and rallies that took place in the context of the Middle East conflict.

Following the death of Peron, the disputes within the Peronist movement, which brought various political and social projects into conflict and turned the state and civil society into a battlefield, would have catastrophic results.¹⁹² Nevertheless, Peron's death, at least from the perspective of the entities analyzed, did not aggravate the political crisis: the fierce debates over the viability of democracy in light of the emergence of "destabilizing" agents gave rise to considerations about its weakness which haunted the entire Peronist government, beginning with the swearing-in of Campora.

At the same time, the succession of events was perceived in different ways by the various Jewish organizations. Even if they welcomed Campora's victory, for example, each engaged in an interpretation that was consonant with its own political and ideological positions or the place they occupied in the broad spectrum of the Jewish institutional network. DAIA, perhaps most clearly, pointed out the condemnation of anti-Semitism Hector Campora undertook, while the JSS interpreted his victory as part of the development of the movement for national liberation among which socialist Zionism also figured. ICUF, for its part, hailed the re-establishment of democracy and, especially, the inauguration of a government with legitimate grassroots representation.

The reaction to the military coup in Chile is illustrative because it demonstrates the intense impact military intervention in Salvador Allende's government had. It also highlights an issue that would re-emerge during the years of the military dictatorship in Argentina: the dynamics and tensions between

192 Marina Franco, *Un enemigo para la Nacion. Orden interno, violencia y "subversion"* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 2012).

international and local Jewish organizations over positions adopted on national developments.

Nevertheless, Ben-Dov's testimony with respect to the military coup in Chile and its repressive aspects sheds light on an issue that would be replicated in Argentina: preoccupation over the desertion from the ranks of Zionism by young people in order to become involved in the struggles for national liberation or grassroots political causes in their respective countries. Ben-Dov's task was to open channels for their return to the Zionist cause. The efforts undertaken by the Israeli emissaries revealed knowledge that was in their possession concerning the dangers inherent in implementation of the repressive plans of the Southern Cone dictators.

In the Chilean case, as in the Argentine one, the confrontation between the youth and elders, or leaders, was characteristic of the period. While the former regarded themselves as noble and selfless militants, the latter were represented in the young people's texts as submissive and/or alienated as a result of "bourgeois deviations." In turn, condemnation by members of ICUF and the Central Council of Jewish Education of the teachers' strikes demonstrated the pervasiveness of the climate of chaos and confrontation.

The present chapter examined the forms in which the youth and elders of the Jewish community perceived the process of political radicalization. While in the case of the latter, political participation and the differences expounded by the youth were read as the blending of student and/or university experience with the Jewish context, for those who participated in the youth movements the process of political radicalization made them confront two problems.

First were the arguments over recognition of Zionism as a cause similar to the national liberation movements. The debates with the Left and open letters to them were intended to legitimate Zionist militancy to organizations which, on the one hand, they considered were close because of the battle for national emancipation, but which on the other, regarded Israel as a satellite of North American imperialism in the Middle East. Second, there was a clash between young Zionist militants and former companions who had abandoned the ranks to join national organizations. As in the case of the debate between Blank and Ben-Ami, the conflict centering on Zionism allowed for a consideration on different views about militancy by the young.

Beyond Blank's claims, the debate served the goal of understanding how the forms and rituals developed by Argentine leftists were incorporated into the core of Jewish youth movements. Thus, it is possible to assert that it was not only those who deserted the youth movements that became radicalized. To judge by the militant terminology, the chants, and the programs of action analyzed, it is possible to examine how youth organizations in the Jewish arena

were part of the process of political radicalization even though they pursued their own political-ideological program.

The case of the Right is different. Although the debates within the Jewish arena took place in the context of escalating anti-Semitism—the accusations of *La Luz* against DAIA over the Kennedy affair should be recalled—the condemnation of right-wing nationalist organizations produced a solid consensus. Leaders of Jewish organizations considered that the increase in anti-Semitism was a manifestation of the breakdown in institutional and political legitimacy beleaguering the country.

Recognition within the community of the impact of events on the national field was notable. Even the small turnout for the 1976 ICUF elections illustrates members' lack of interest in participation and in decision making with respect to the future of the organization. Perhaps, in parallel with what was happening in the national arena, namely a loss of prestige of institutions and their leaders, the process of distancing from democratic forms of political and institutional participation was accentuated.

Finally, the conflict in the Middle East and the UN resolution equating Zionism and racism demonstrated the relevance that the Middle East conflict had for various community entities. Moreover, based on an examination of a bibliography that centers on the decomposition of the Peronist regime as characteristic of the final months of 1975, it is possible to appreciate how editorials and news stories regarding the future of Israel in view of the UN resolution became more relevant than national political developments and intercommunal confrontations.

The March 24, 1976, Coup d'état and Acceptance of the Discourse on the “Anti-Subversive Struggle”

In early 1981, the weekly *Nueva Presencia* reprinted an article from the Israeli magazine *Mifgash* analyzing the recently concluded decade. The Argentine publication praised the cautious character of *Mifgash*'s reflections in light of an “exaggerated tendency in the international press” regarding the Argentine reality. This “caution” resulted from recognition of the blame that was due to the ultra-left-wing guerrilla movement for its part in the creation of an unstable political climate that resulted in the takeover of power by the armed forces on March 24, 1976.

Nevertheless, the article went on to address a series of considerations which, looking both backward and ahead, would become relevant in the debates concerning the characteristics of the military dictatorship and perceptions of its policies regarding repression:

Argentina knows things it does not comment on. It knows that men and women were taken from their homes because they were suspected of being guilty of crimes that were never proven, because to this day no one knows where they are buried—if they are dead—or why they are not put on trial, if they are alive. It knows that summary executions took place. It knows that torture was a monstrous practice. It knows that the confusion produced innocent victims. It knows, in short, the cost of regaining calm and an apparent sanity.¹

A little before the fifth anniversary of the military dictatorship, one of the largest-circulation publications in the Jewish community confirmed the words of the Israeli source in order to question, not so much the news of the arbitrary arrests and torture as its cost for Argentina's recovery of social and political order. The reflections of the Israeli writer were based on recognition of the conflicted political situation that characterized the country during the 1970s:

¹ “Una década violenta,” *Nueva Presencia*, January 23, 1981: 12–13. Words similar to these appear in the journal *Mifgash* (house publication of Kibbutz Artzi/ Hashomer Hatzair/Mapam), as a translation of the article on the Timerman case by Nathan Ben Mitzri in the Israel periodical *Al Hamshmar*. See *Mifgash*, No. 4 (December 1981).

“Five years have gone by and the guerrilla movement has been eradicated. At what price, by what means? It was a war and a war wounds and muddies even those who do not fight.”²

Ending the “guerrilla problem,” as he suggested, was one of the objectives of the government’s “National Reorganization Process.” In effect, as the bibliography devoted to the study of the military dictatorship suggests, among the problems and, thus, the premises that legitimated military intervention, the “anti-subversion struggle” played a central part.³

Representation of the political situation as chaotic and denunciation of intensified anti-Semitism by some community key players were the substratum that led to the statements about the military coup of March 24, 1976. This chapter will detail how the military coup was perceived by various representatives of the organized Jewish community and will inquire into the degree to which the notion of an anti-subversion struggle generated an initial consensus among them regarding the legitimacy of the military uprising.

1 The March 24, 1976, Military Uprising

The numerous articles devoted to the “national reality” in Jewish community publications between the end of 1975 and the end of 1976 centered on the weakness of the democratic regime headed by Perón’s successor. In the “Facts and Resonances” column of *Mundo Israelita*, Herman Schiller would synthesize a perception that extended beyond ideological differences among Jewish community organizations. Violence, a hallmark of the year just concluded, “left a bitter taste in the mouth” of a society which, in the writer’s opinion, was characterized by “its democratic and pacifist tradition.”⁴

Nevertheless, Schiller pointed out a certain variable: the climate of harassment that various sectors of the Peronist right created against anything “Jewish” added to that of general violence the ingredient of widespread anti-Semitism. The publication and distribution of various anti-Semitic libels, such as Horacio Calderón’s *La Argentina Judía* (The Jewish Argentina) would

2 “Una década violenta.”

3 Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1976/1983: Del golpe de estado a la restauración democrática* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003); Hugo Quiroga, *El tiempo del “Proceso”. Conflictos y coincidencias entre políticos y militares, 1976–1983* (Rosario: Editorial Fundación Ross, 1994); Paula Canelo, *El Proceso en su laberinto: La interna militar de Videla a Bignone* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008).

4 Herman Schiller, “1976,” and “Hechos y resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, January 3, 1976: 1–2.

deepen the concern of leaders of Argentine Jewish institutions.⁵ For example, DAIA officials, led by Nehemías Resnizky, submitted a complaint, unsuccessfully, against the director of Radio Argentina, Rodolfo Martínez Sotomayor. They claimed that among the programs broadcast, "Argentina en la noche" encouraged "anti-Jewish incitement."⁶

During its plenary session prior to the coup, the DAIA reviewed various threats and incidents of anti-Jewish defamation.⁷ The strategy proposed by its governing body decided to publish the inquiry it had conducted in order to "be on guard against the dangers of anti-Semitism." The resulting "Brevarios de una infamia" would include an extensive list of attacks, threats, publications, and other forms of anti-Semitic expression.

Nevertheless, the institutional crisis dealt not only with an established perception shared by representatives of the various Jewish entities. Some possessed greater knowledge of the political plots and conspiracies that were being hatched in the bosom of the armed forces to overthrow the Peronist government. Between October and November 1975, for example, on the insistence of the Latin American representative of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), Jacobo Kovadloff, who acted as mediator, and following the request of Admiral Emilio Massera, a meeting was held between the latter and DAIA officials.⁸ Resnizky, Juan Gurevich, the DAIA secretary, and others met at Kovadloff's residence with Massera, who would subsequently represent the navy among members of the military junta.⁹

Later, and as the coup grew imminent, it would be Kovadloff who would report to the AJC authorities regarding the impending political process on the basis of statements that Massera had made during the meeting. In a document stamped "strictly confidential," he noted that "we are living under great tension and there exists a majority consensus regarding the possibility [that] a coup [will take place]."¹⁰

5 "Con inusual virulencia recrudeció la publicación de libelos antijudíos," *Mundo Israelita*, February 21, 1976. Calderón served as press secretary of the University of Buenos Aires.

6 "Protesta de la DAIA," *Mundo Israelita*, March 6, 1976.

7 "Última sesión de DAIA: Se advirtió sobre la gravedad de la recrudescida agitación antisemita," *Mundo Israelita*, March 13, 1976.

8 See letter from Jacobo Kovadloff to Morris Fine, March 18, 1976, Bundles "Argentina," AJC Archives.

9 Guillermo Lipis, *Zikarón-Memoria: Judíos y militares bajo el terror del Plan Cóndor* (Buenos Aires: Del Nuevo Extremo, 2010), 77–94.

10 Letter from Jacobo Kovadloff to Morris Fine, cited in Victor Mirelman, "Las organizaciones internacionales judías ante la represión y el antisemitismo en Argentina," in Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznajder eds., *El legado del autoritarismo: Derechos Humanos y*

According to the report, the Argentine crisis, which was marked by a sharp inflationary spiral and political violence caused by confrontation with “the guerrilla,” was truly a civil war. Kovadloff pointed out, in particular, the implications for the Jewish community: anti-Semitism constituted one of the particular features of destabilization. The report stated that the “guest” (Massera) had underscored two aspects that worried DAIA representatives. The first was that the “penetration of right-wing groups” into the inner circle of the armed forces was tangible and, under the pretext of promoting “religious and spiritual retreats,” they spewed their “anti-Semitic venom.” Second, Massera had warned that the “true danger for the country” would not come from groups on the Left, but from those on the Right.¹¹

This aspect would turn out to be central for an understanding of strategies designed to construct consensus regarding actions undertaken by the armed forces. Massera’s opinion, as expressed in the confidential document, established for the reader who was troubled by the increase in anti-Semitism that one of the problems a future military regime would have to face would be groups on the right “who rely on clichés like ‘international Zionism.’”

Nevertheless, a close reading of the document reveals that Massera’s words were not a firm assessment of the characteristics that the forthcoming military government would assume. At least for the host himself and the author of the report it was unclear what the objectives of the new regime would be. Maintaining that the major question, just days away from the military coup, was “knowing what its [political] orientation would be,” Kovadloff suggested three possible models, or alternatives: the Chilean, the Brazilian, or the Peruvian. While the first two were distinguished by their introduction of various repressive strategies—the Chilean being more direct, the Brazilian more oblique—they shared a feature that the informant considered to be singularly important: neither of the two had anti-Semitic dimensions. The “Peruvian alternative,” Kovadloff maintained, was close to “Third Worldism” and was profoundly “anti-Israel.”¹²

Other community representatives were also unsure about the model the new military regime would adopt. However, in contrast to the options presented in the confidential document, uncertainties regarding the future regime would be manifested in what was not said and in the use of irony. It is

antisemitismo en la Argentina contemporánea. (Buenos Aires: Nuevo Hacer, 1995); Lipis, *Zikarón-Memoria*.

11 Letter from Jacobo Kovadloff to Morris Fine, Mirelman, “Las organizaciones internacionales judías,” 241–242.

12 Letter from Jacobo Kovadloff to Morris Fine, AJC Archives; Lipis, *Zikarón-Memoria*, 225.

significant that no community publication issued a statement concerning the coup during the days that followed it. While some of them made no mention of it at all, others, like the ICUF monthly *Tiempo*, resorted to irony:

The drama is over. The thing has run its course and in the midst of the incompetence of its own supporters who witnessed the collapse of their own hopes, the Israeli Maccabi-Amidar football team, with its meager 15 points, is now irremediably condemned to decline. The three forwards who dominate the list of positions (Hapoel-Beer Sheva with 31 points, Betar-Jerusalem with 28, and Hapoel-Haifa with 26) cannot hide their euphoria. The championship is progressing for as long as we thought it would.¹³

Although not everyone made use of such means to account for the events that were taking place in national politics, these initial reflections regarding the new military regime were perceived similarly by Schiller: "the drama is over," "things have run their course," "the championship is progressing for as long as we thought it would." In general, the various representative voices of the broad institutional and ideological Jewish spectrum evaluated the overthrow of the Peronist government as a positive act. Referring to the announcement by the government that took power on March 24, 1976, concerning the central goals of reconstructing the machinery of state and eradicating subversion, Eduardo Paredes, spokesman for the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA), for example, upheld the legitimacy of the military coup in contrast to the image of "a country whose social and economic structures were annihilated by disorder, subversion, lack of discipline, and corruption on all levels."¹⁴

During the Jewish New Year celebrations in September 1976, the Comunidad Israelita de Buenos Aires and the Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de la República Argentina published a statement in the community's press organs, as well as in the national press, expressing support for the objectives of the military regime. The letter, signed by Mario Gorenstein (president) and Abraham Likier (secretary) said:

Major changes have occurred this year in Argentina that have resulted in a complete change in the prevailing atmosphere of the country. The Armed Forces are moved by the best of purposes to cleanse the Republic and set it on a course toward normalcy that will allow it to recover its

13 Herman Schiller, "Hechos y resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, March 27, 1976.

14 Eduardo Paredes, "¿Reforma o decadencia?," *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976).

relevant position in the international realm as a great country of wealth and dignity, with a reputed tradition of liberty. The Jewish community, as a creative and productive population of the country, identifies with these lofty ideals. In these holy days, the Jewish flock will pray in synagogues and temples for the peace and prosperity of the Republic.¹⁵

The statement praised the armed forces for being an engaged party capable of purging “the Republic and setting it on a course toward normalcy.” In celebrating the first year of the “process,” support for the regime would be unanimous: everyone recognized that the military had made great strides with respect to their primary goal, the anti-subversion struggle. *Mundo Israelita* recalled that the armed forces had “climbed the steps of Government House to dislodge, along with the person who occupied the presidential chair, a host of immorality.” The item mentioned that “the machinery of terror that had been constructed [and] the consensus regarding subversion had at its source an impressive array of problems that the armed forces had to face.”¹⁶

Nevertheless, ICUF’s first evaluations of the regime’s objectives highlighted a particular feature that differentiated them from other opinions. While the organization shared concern regarding the Peronist government’s irrevocable capitulation in the face of its “self-satisfaction with López Rega, inflation, the cost of life, terrorism, and the immorality [*sic*] that had reached unbearable limits,” it pointed out the armed forces had taken over when confronted with “an evident power vacuum.” Yet, from the outset, and based on recognition of the figure of Jorge Rafael Videla as a “democratic” military man, it stressed the need for voices of the workers and the entrepreneurial sector to be heard, the legitimizing of unions and political parties, and the upholding of freedom of the press.¹⁷

15 “Salutación de la Comunidad Israelita de Buenos Aires y del Vaad Hakheilot con motivo de Rosch Haschana 5737,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 24, 1976.

16 “Un año después,” *Mundo Israelita*, March 26, 1976.

17 “Ante la nueva situación,” *Tiempo*, No. 89 (April 1976). As Gabriela Aguila maintains in her work on the Communist Party during the military dictatorship, left-wing political parties experienced different treatment at the hands of the military. While some were banned, others were only restricted in their public actions. This was the case of the Communist Party, which continued to be legal and retained its organizational structure. Thus, the line pursued by the Communist Party coincided with that of the editorial writer in *Tiempo*. Grisha Weltman, in his characterization of the new military coup as different from the “Pinchetista” regime, distinguishes, on the local level, between “hard” and “soft” sectors—that is, “Pinochetistas” and “democratic”—of the armed forces. Gabriela Aguila, “El Partido Comunista Argentino entre la dictadura y la transición democrática,” *Revista de Historia Actual*, No. 6 (Universidad de Cadiz, 2009).

ICUF's demand was based on recognition of the repressive character of the regime, which, under the protection of the security forces, was committing acts of barbarianism against civil society:

Since March 24, there has been an increase in attacks and killings and, as much as we lament victims among the police and the military, no less reprehensible is the crime committed against various civil elements of the population ... The Armed Forces pursued the so-called guerrillas without compassion and they will have to do it even more against the gangs that shield themselves with presumed official auspices, burning and killing right and left with complete impunity ... The existence without trial of political prisoners who confronted Mrs. Perón's regime goes against the goals declared by the Government of the Military Junta.¹⁸

Denunciation of repression and the arbitrary nature with which some of the gangs acted underscored the organization's view of the dictatorial regime. Immediately following the military coup, it condemned the arbitrary detentions and disappearances. The May editorial in *Tiempo*, for example, cites a document from the bishopric calling attention to the arbitrary detention of citizens and although it speaks highly of Videla's meeting with members of the Argentine Society of Writers, it demands an investigation over the fate of Haroldo Conti and his wife.¹⁹

However, the denunciation failed to understand that the behavior of the gangs was part of a systematic plan by the armed forces. On the other hand, during commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising held in the Majestic Theater on April 25, 1976, the 19 de abril Committee issued a pamphlet criticizing how "reactionary forces, which helped overthrow the previous regime, continue to conspire in this government in the service of foreign appetites for colonization and internal interests that are against the people."²⁰ Despite the committee's support for the coup, the interests that such groups were defending "stand in opposition to the principles and objectives promoted by the Military Junta in its founding documents."

Denunciations of the kidnapping of Jacobo Lerner in Cosquín and the threats and attacks against P. Lijmayer in Rosario were considered evidence

18 "Ante la nueva situación."

19 Grisha Weltman, "Mayo, progreso, democracia," *Tiempo*, No. 90 (May 1976). Haroldo Conti was a writer and Left militant. He was one of the most prestigious literary figures in Argentina during the 60's and 70's. He was detained and disappeared by the dictatorship (together with his wife) on May 5, 1976.

20 "Declaración del Comité '19 de abril,'" *Tiempo*, No. 89 (April 1976).

that the Triple A group²¹ was still fully active: “This bloody hunt, unfolding with the same ostentation and impunity as during the time of López Rega, is at the service of reactionary sectors that are anxious to take over the process unleashed by the military coup with the goal of providing it with characteristics and content similar to [those of] the Pinochet regime [in Chile].”²²

Representing violence from the Right as a continuation of the experience of Triple A became an interpretation broadly shared by various community key figures and upheld throughout most of the period of the military regime. In early 1977, Mario Reyna, from the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA), characterized prevailing anti-Semitism as a vestige of the “hierarchical far right wing which managed to get the support of certain pockets of power during the government that fell on March 24 and which signals for Argentina a dangerous downward spiral of violence and terror.”²³

The actions of these gangs were perceived on some occasions as a consequence of the tension between sectors in conflict within the armed forces themselves. As a large part of the bibliography referring to the military dictatorship points out, the general goal that operated as an “internal cohesive” factor was the anti-subversion struggle. Nevertheless, the armed forces were riddled with internal disputes that, on occasions, had an impact on other civil society organizations.²⁴

2 Accusations, Polemics, and Resignification of the Debate Regarding the Fall of the Peronist Government

Those who demonstrated considerable support for the objectives of the regime included Nissim Elnecave, the Editor of *La Luz*. His editorial of April 9,

21 The Anti-Communist Argentine Alliance (AAA) was a parastatal organization under the command of the Social Welfare Minister of the third Peronist administration, José López Rega. The organization, belonging to the Peronist Right, was well known for the intimidation and assassination of intellectuals, teachers, students, union and political leaders from the Left. Most of its actions took place between 1970 and 1975.

22 “Antisemitismo,” *Tiempo*, No. 90 (May 1976). A subsequent issue maintained that “the scale of violence” was part of a “plot to discredit the National Reorganization Process.” According to an editorial in *El Tiempo*, this plot attributed every trace of violence to the same source: the abduction of military men, assassination of policemen, disappearance of progressive militants, proliferation of Nazi/fascist publications. See “La sombra de Eichman,” *Tiempo*, No. 91 (July 1976).

23 Mario Reyna, “Nazis: la manzana podrida de la sociedad argentina,” *Plural*, No. 5 (January 1977).

24 See in particular, Canelo, *El Proceso en su laberinto*.

1976, as seen in the first chapter, is illustrative of the view of a key opinion maker preoccupied with denouncing "communist infiltration" in the ranks of Zionist movements.²⁵ However, the overall positive reception following the overthrow of the Peronist government soon gave way to a debate among various community key figures.

One of the loudest voices was Elnecave's sharp criticism of DAIA for what he considered its ties to the previous regime. The public declarations of the community leadership that proved this claim included, Elnecave recalled, Resnisky's "unrestrained and foolish eulogy" during the DAIA plenary session after the death of Juan Domingo Perón: "it gave the sensation of support for a particularly abominable political system."²⁶

Welcoming developments in the Argentine political arena, the editor asked why a radical change of leadership could not be matched in the ranks of the local Jewish community:

If the country is really going to change, why not our unfortunate community, too? The DAIA leadership, as we have seen, is deeply committed to the government that was overthrown. For that reason a change of men—completely uninvolved in national politics—besides cleansing a symbol of odious arrangements and corruption and scorn for democracy conducted without Third World panaceas and populist-style adulations, would be in tune with the spirit that is struggling to burst forth and rehabilitate the country.²⁷

La Luz demanded that a similar change take place in the ranks of the Jewish community. This parallel allows for an observance of a degree of legitimacy and acceptance regarding the "rehabilitation" initiated by the armed forces. As in Browning's study of the forms in which the nationalist discourse was extended and internalized in Germany, we can maintain that the messages intended toward "moralizing" society and/or "uprooting" those who were "corrupt" and "subversive" had impregnated various facets of social life.²⁸

An article in *Mundo Israelita* defended DAIA and its president, Nehemías Resnizky. First, it stressed how those leading the institution under attack "risked their necks when they denounced all the forces joined in propagating

25 Nissim Elnecave, "Erradicar las lacras peronistas de la conducción judeo-argentina," *La Luz*, April 9, 1976.

26 Ibid. This debate was discussed in the previous chapter.

27 Ibid.

28 Christopher Browning, *Aquellos hombres grises: El Batallón 101 y la Solución Final en Polonia* (Barcelona: Edhasa, 2002), 21.

anti-Jewish obsessions.”²⁹ Arguing against *La Luz*’s proposal, the article emphasized that Resnizky had been re-elected president during the organization’s previous plenary session.³⁰ Moreover, it said, *La Luz* was the mouthpiece of those in the Jewish community who “genuflected” before Peronism during the general’s first governments. Quoting the prayer “Shmone Israel” (“Velamalshininim al tehi tikvá”—Be there no hope, Lord, for the betrayers), *Mundo Israelita* launched a debate surrounding the figure of the “traitors.”

In response, Elnecave accused *Mundo Israelita* of “making use of a sort of ‘mental terrorism’” when it referred to *La Luz* as an informer.³¹ Nevertheless, the former’s accusation focused on condemning the connection between Elnecave’s publication with the first period of Peronism. The editorial pointed out that “*La Luz* was not Peronist, not even during the first two governments of Juan Domingo Perón”; as an example, it praised the stance of the person who at that time was its chief editor: “David Elnecave published an open letter, in 1955, addressed to the presidents of AMIA, DAIA, and OSA demanding the expulsion of Rabbi Amram Blum³² for his involvement in the Peronist regime.”³³ The latter observation is relevant since it shows how in the context of the overthrow of the Peronist government and the institution of the military dictatorship. “betrayal” could be seen as a sign of righteousness: as when Perón was first overthrown from power in 1955, *La Luz* would now clamor for the “expulsion” of those who were found to be committed to the last Peronist government.

The editorial had other immediate consequences. A subsequent *La Luz* article held that DAIA had cancelled its advertisements in the journal.³⁴ This decision prompted the Editor to expand his criticism of DAIA’s links to the Peronist government:

We have also explained how addiction to the Peronist style in the case we have commented on should not be understood in terms of party politics, but of contamination of its methods and systems of leadership—for

29 “Velamalshinin,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 17, 1976.

30 “La DAIA, en estos años difíciles, fue un medio decisivo para luchar por la dignidad judía,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 10, 1976.

31 “Mundo Israelita también lo sabe pero le conviene callar,” *La Luz*, April 26, 1976.

32 Rabbi Amram Blum, who presided the Rabbinical Court of the Jewish Community, was the Religious Issues Counselor during Juan Domingo Peron’s first presidencies (1945–1955). After the coup that overthrew the Peronist government, DAIA promoted a number of strategies seeking to erase all ties between the Jewish community and Peronism; one of them was to expel Rabbi Blum from his position as Head of the Rabbinical Court.

33 Ibid.

34 Nissim Elnecave, “Boicoteando a La Luz la DAIA replica en una discusión que debiera movilizar a toda la opinión pública,” *La Luz*, May 7, 1976.

example, in the determination to install a vertical hierarchy, the desire to speak with a single voice, institutional accommodation, and the appointment of people by fiat ... This is another of the proven methods of the recently overthrown tyranny: the attempt to bring the press to its knees through economic pressure. During the Peronist government, the social welfare ministry and other offices of government gave entire pages of advertising to periodicals that did not criticize the government, while *La Prensa* and other publications that [did] were systematically boycotted. Thus, DAIA has no better weapon than to imitate Peronism ...³⁵

This denunciation of alleged censorship and restrictions on freedom of the press was significant in the context of the early days of the dictatorship. Because if it was true that the military junta itself had proceeded to take strong control over publications, Elnecave's criticism centered on two key entities: Peronism and organizations that were central to Jewish activity in Argentina. Thus, for some, purported censorship and restrictions on freedom of the press did not begin with the military regime nor was it the only government that implemented these measures.³⁶

The accusation of treachery directed against *La Luz* was subsequently given a new meaning. *Nueva Presencia* condemned the latter's constant ranting against young militant Zionists who, it claimed, as a consequence, had had to accelerate, at least in one case, their plan to immigrate to Israel. In response, Elnecave maintained that since *La Luz* had never "smeared anyone and if anyone considered himself affected by the ghosts of his own ideological activism, there had to be a reason for it, and if a climate of alienation had been created that compelled him to seek out a safe haven, that was [his] own responsibility."³⁷ The label "traitor" would take on new significance, aggravated by the confrontational position that Elnecave would adopt after the release of Jacobo Timerman, and which crystallized after the military dictatorship in the

35 Ibid.

36 This is not the only accusation made in the same vein. At various times, Herman Schiller criticized being the "victim" of the same policies at the hands of the community directorship. In 1977, for example, as a consequence of a short-lived publishing initiative—*El Observador*—Schiller engaged in a new dispute with *La Luz* in which he identified himself as "the community's most censured journalist." See "Sigue la polémica en torno de El Observador," *Nueva Sión*, July 1977. In 1978, between May and August, Schiller engaged in a new dispute with AMIA and *La Luz* due to the increase in subsidies to *La Luz* but not to *Nueva Presencia*. See "De la vida judía local: Un hecho para comentar," *Nueva Presencia*, May 27, 1978; "AMIA: significativa programación cultural," *Nueva Presencia* August 19, 1978.

37 "Siguen los ataques calumniosos de Nueva Presencia," *La Luz*, June 30, 1978.

claim that the editor of *La Luz* had denounced young Zionist militants to the military authorities.³⁸

Nevertheless, while establishing a hierarchy in relation to the question of anti-Semitism as one of the central arguments of the narrative of victimization of the Jews themselves, it was this publication which, along with the weekly *Tiempo*, denounced early on the existence of the disappeared. Referring in particular to the question of “detained and disappeared persons of Jewish origin” in his review on the occasion of the Jewish New Year in September 1977, Elnecave reflected on the continuity of violence eighteen months after the installation of the military government:

The disappeared, the kidnapped, the abused, those who have been forced to leave the country under threat of death reveal a predilection for seeking out Jewish victims, who are ... a preferred target. That is why ... the community has turned in on itself, gripped by anxiety and anguish, not to mention panic, for the fate and physical health of its children and associates ... In a similar context, which has unfortunately touched the entire country, the disappearance of dozens of people of our profession has shown how precarious the state of security of the press is, how fragile its freedoms and elementary rights are, the degree to which the tragedy of our colleagues, whom we mourn publicly, obliged us to cower in a certain sense, to write in a roundabout fashion, to measure and polish every word, not out of any concern for style, but to save our skins, to an extent that we have no idea of what will result from what we, not without a measure of justified fear, are saying here.³⁹

If it is true, as pointed out above, that certain key figures recognized that censorship did not come solely from the governmental sphere, they cited fear as a dissuading factor that prevented them from articulating the forms that violence against civil society took. The explicit statement that one did not know “what will result from what we are saying” hints at some of the practices and manifestations of state terrorism during the first years of the military dictatorship. While violence continued to be part of daily life, fear could voice it but not assign it responsibility: disappearances, kidnappings, censorship, according to Elnecave, had no director, no perpetrators.

38 Ricardo Feierstein's statement in Stephen Sadow and Ricardo Feierstein, *Desde afuera y desde adentro: Dos excursiones por la cultura judeoargentina*. (Buenos Aires: Acervo Cultural, 2009), 199.

39 “Año de zozobra y angustia,” *La Luz*, September 9, 1977.

3 Concerning the Knowledge and Denial of Violence

As Aguila points out in his analysis of the repressive policies of the dictatorship in Rosario, the actions conducted by military task forces in the streets lent the regime a distinctive feature: violence perpetrated by the state apparatus in public view.⁴⁰ Jewish community representatives perceived this fact in various ways. While at first it was understood to be a continuation of actions pursued by "terrorist" organizations of the right, such as Triple A, with the advance of the repressive process it came to be seen as a consequence of the anti-subversion struggle pursued by the military junta.

The military takeover on March 24, 1976, did not lead to a cessation of the violence that, as shown in the first part of this chapter, legitimated in the view of various Jewish key figures, the overthrow of the Peronist government. Resorting to irony—in the same way he accounted for the justness and inevitability of the military uprising—Schiller compared the reality in Argentina to a thriller movie in order to point out the daily nature of violence in Argentina months after the military coup had taken place:

The upstanding citizen, having organized his life with a healthy work and social routine, goes to the cinema to see violent movies in order to compensate subconsciously for the gray fog and inertia that envelops him on a daily basis. Now the silent multitude can find this every day in *Clarín*, *La Nación*, *La Prensa*, *Crónica*, and so on. He no longer needs to seek refuge in the screen, because sadism has come to form a part of many things he can feel every day in the atmosphere ... Why should we go and see criminals in technicolor, many will ask themselves, if the dramatic reality that in recent years has been decimating Argentines of all walks of life without anyone venturing to explain why, goes ... beyond any ... creative fantasy?⁴¹

The notion of covert violence reflected a common perception among a number of community voices. Although, as will be seen in the next chapter, this was augmented by particular actions, publications, and anti-Semitic aggression, daily violence, the violence that affected not only "Jews" and which remained unattributed, as observed in Elnecave's editorial on "fear," increased.

40 Gabriela Aguila, *Dictadura, represión y sociedad en Rosario, 1976/1983: Un estudio sobre la represión y los comportamientos y las actitudes sociales en dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008), 205–19.

41 Herman Schiller, "Hechos y Resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, July 17, 1976.

Did these community voices not know who the perpetrators were? Could they not give their names? Or did they accept that it was all part of the anti-subversive struggle? Even if there is no straightforward answer to these questions, a diverse range of nuances was articulated by the key players, while manifesting at least some knowledge about the repressive practices implemented by the security forces.

Some, particularly those who because of their important positions maintained contacts with members of other organizations representing civil society and governmental spheres, were able to obtain early access to information that provided accounts of the concentration camp-like atmosphere that prevailed in the country. According to Senkman, on the basis of the revelation of documents from the files of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Zionist Center based in Jerusalem, Ram Nigrad, Israeli ambassador in Argentina, Itzjak Pundak, representative of the JAI, and others, knew of the existence of torture centers at the navy's school of mechanics (ESMA).⁴²

Nigrad, via information obtained from meetings with Admiral Massera, the navy's commander-in-chief, and senior members of the Catholic Church, gave details in a "secret report of the Latin American Division of the Israeli Chancellery," about the operation of a clandestine center in ESMA and of other units that carried out abductions independently, without any orders from the joint armed forces command.⁴³ Pundak, for his part, in a report forwarded to the executive president of the JAI in Jerusalem, characterized the government of the military junta as "a regime of counter-terror carried out to liquidate the guerrilla movement."⁴⁴

Nevertheless, information about the repressive dimension of the regime was not limited to Israeli functionaries. The development of the "Córdoba case," for example, would illustrate extended knowledge of the character that the anti-subversion struggle acquired. On July 22, 1976, five JAI envoys were detained in the city of Córdoba, along with three Zionist activists. Issac and Clara Estrugo, Josef and Catalina Pik, Amón Rudin, Daniel Orenstein, Lily Glaser, and Lily Schulman were captured by forces under the command of the chief of the Third Army Corps, Lucinano Benjamín Menéndez.

42 Leonardo Senkman, "Israel y el rescate de las víctimas de la represión," in Senkman and Sznajder, *El legado del autoritarismo*, 284.

43 "Informe secreto de Nigrad a División América Latina de la Cancillería israelí" (November 23, 1976), Archive of the Israeli Ministry of External Relations; in Senkman, "Israel y el rescate de las víctimas de la represión."

44 "Informe reservado de I. Pundak al Presidente del Ejecutivo de la Agencia Judía" (January 31, 1977), Central Zionist Archive; in Senkman, "Israel y el rescate de las víctimas de la represión."

According to Joel Barromi,⁴⁵ the details of the case were disturbing: the JAI envoys were members of the socialist Zionist Hashomer Hatzair movement, and they were in Córdoba to participate in a seminar organized by the Coordination Committee, a left-wing Zionist organization. Línea Socialista Sionista later known as Amós, which had defected from the committee, established connections with one of the political-military organizations that played a major role on the political scene during a large part of the 1970s: The People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). Josef Pik had initiated contact with Amós leaders following the military takeover, with the goal of bringing the group back into the mainstream of Zionism, as defined by the committee.⁴⁶

The detention of these emissaries mobilized Israeli public opinion to such an extent that Israel's foreign affairs ministry prioritized the matter on its agenda. A meeting took place on July 27, chaired by Foreign Minister Igal Alon, in which orders were given to the deputy director general of the ministry in charge of Latin American matters, Ieshaiahu Anug, to demand that the JAI envoys be considered authorized representatives of an official Israeli entity.

Anug communicated a plan of action to Nigrad. First, they would take advantage of the impending trip to Argentina of Israeli Knesset member and future Prime Minister Menahem Begin and JAI president Josef Almogy, to urge freeing the prisoners.⁴⁷ Second, according to Barromi, the embassy should engage in a dialogue with the Argentine authorities in order to clarify the goals of the Zionist movement and to stress the differences between the activities of Zionist groups, whose goal was emigration to Israel, and revolutionary action to transform Argentina.⁴⁸

Nigrad then initiated a process that led to a meeting with various military functionaries, from the deputy secretary of foreign affairs, Captain Allara to Foreign Minister César Guzzetti. The latter informed Nigrad that the matter had been conveyed to President Jorge Rafael Videla, who had given instructions to bring it to a close, posthaste. Videla was of the opinion that a protracted conflict with Israel was inopportune.

45 Barromi held various positions in the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: between 1975 and 1977 he was director of the Division of International Organizations; from 1977 to 1981 he served as ambassador to International Organizations in Geneva, and in 1981–1983 he served as the deputy general director for Latin America.

46 Joel Barromi, "Israel frente a la dictadura militar argentina: El episodio de Córdoba y el caso Timerman," in Senkman and Sznajder, *El legado del autoritarismo*, 327–30.

47 Begin's visit was planned for August 2, and Almogy's for the 15th.

48 Joel Barromi, "Israel frente a la dictadura militar argentina."

On August 3, all those involved were released. The Córdoba case established a precedent for Israeli intervention on behalf of Argentine Jews.⁴⁹ After that, Barrami maintains, the military authorities “refrained from any action against Zionist facilities and against the Jewish Agency and its functionaries and envoys.”

In addition, the Córdoba case was raised by various key figures of the local Jewish community. At the plenary sessions of DAIA held in August 1976, Resnizky referred to the issue, mentioning, without going into motives, the satisfaction that prevailed within the community over the release of the detained “Israeli and Jewish citizens, thanks to proving the lack of merit in continuing to hold them.” This account illustrates the impossibility of delving into the politics of arbitrary arrests and/or circumlocutions to refer to them.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the matter had aroused concern and generated, parallel to the actions undertaken by the Israeli embassy, the mobilization of DAIA, AMIA, and OSA. On July 29, 1976, the latter sent a telegram to Interior Minister General Eduardo Albano Harguindeguy, expressing unease over the arrest of eight “Jewish citizens,” who “are engaged in the diffusion and preservation of the values of Jewish and Zionist culture.”⁵¹ At the same time, allusion was made to a meeting held with the minister, prior to sending the missive, in which local Jewish leaders had requested his intervention “convinced that it would result in the release of those arrested.”

Nevertheless, the silence regarding the actions undertaken in order to obtain the freedom of the Israeli emissaries, such as the concealment of possible factors that had led to their arrest, stands in contrast to the interpretations that were offered in Israel, where the press had given significant coverage to the episode. The Israeli daily *Maariv*, for example, interviewed the historian Haim Avni, “a specialist on Argentine Jewry,” who pointed out the characteristics of the repressive process in Argentina:

The case of the arrest of the Israeli emissaries should be interpreted in the context of the battle unleashed by the Argentine government against the Left and its clandestine organizations ... The slogan of the government when it took over was “Order and Social Peace” and its immediate mission is a fight to the death against the left-wing guerrillas....

49 While five of the eight who were arrested were emissaries of an Israeli public agency, only Josef Pik was exclusively an Israeli citizen. The rest were Argentine nationals. See *ibid.*

50 “El problema del antisemitismo no atañe solamente a los judíos, sino que es problema del país entero,” *La Luz*, August 13, 1976.

51 Telegram sent to Ministro del Interior, General de Brigada Albano Harguindeguy, July 29, 1976.

It is significant that the emissaries were detained in Córdoba, a city that for years has been the center of the struggle against left-wing guerrillas. It is possible that the arrest of the emissaries is due to the suspicions of the Argentine authorities that they have some sort of connection to subversive activities. But although it is completely certain to us that such suspicions have no real basis, it is necessary to understand the intensity of the battle [being waged] in Argentina and the absolute determination of the government to physically destroy all the terrorist organizations no matter what their forms and manifestations might be.⁵²

The possibility of clearly expressing the character that the anti-subversion struggle would assume could be the result of the geographic distance that served as a safeguard for the interviewee. Nevertheless, in addition to what was known, beginning with the exchange of information in the diplomatic realm, Israelis' awareness of what was going on in Argentina might perhaps be due to the fact that Israel was one of the destinations of Argentine exiles.⁵³

Nevertheless, the *Maariv* interview was translated and published in *La Luz*, which allowed circulation locally of the aforementioned data about the dictatorship, such as: "*the absolute determination of the government to destroy physically all the terrorist organizations.*" But the interview in *La Luz* was no exception, nor was it an anomaly that failed to take into account the "fear" that the same publication would subsequently denounce. *Mundo Israelita* called attention to the attempts of the Israeli authorities to achieve the release of the representatives arrested in Córdoba. The item was accompanied by surreptitious recognition of the causes that motivated the arrests of individuals in dictatorial Argentina. According to declarations by the World Zionist Organization's director of the Youth Department, Mordejai Bar-On, "the arrests had been carried out in error, since none of those arrested was involved in political activity that could be interpreted as hostile toward Argentina ...

52 The interview, conducted by Dov Goldstein, was translated by *La Luz*: "¿Es el antisemitismo en Argentina de raíz católica, de la derecha nazi, de la extrema izquierda o de todos estos factores juntos?" September 24, 1976.

53 On Argentine exiles in Israel, see Mario Sznadger and Luis Roniger, "De Argentina a Israel: Escape y exilio," in Pablo Yankelevich ed., *Represión y destierro: Itinerarios del exilio argentino* (La Plata: Al Margen, 2004); Mario Sznadger and Luis Roniger, "Un extraño sitio de exilio para la izquierda argentina: Israel," in Pablo Yankelevich, and Silvana Jensen eds., *Exilios. Destinos y experiencias bajo la dictadura militar* (Buenos Aires: Del zorzal, 2007); Raanan Rein, "Soccer as a Doubled-Edged Weapon: Argentine Exiles in Israel Protest against the 1978 World Cup," in Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity and Diaspora* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010).

The five [Israeli emissaries] do not belong to any organization that could be described as left-wing.”⁵⁴

Acknowledgment that the causes of the arrests led back to the political activities of those individuals was admitted fully and without reservation by leading spokespersons of the Jewish community. Occasionally, repressive policies appeared to be a response to the political actions of groups “that fought the regime by violent means.” Pinjas Erlich, an educator and community activist who had been a director and inspector of institutions in the Jewish school network in Argentina and who emigrated to Israel in 1978, told *Maariv*:

People don’t disappear in Argentina without there being a valid motive. This includes the women who march around Plaza de Mayo, as well as the women who demonstrate in front of the Casa Rosada, demanding freedom for their children and husbands, knowing full well how the Jewish community understands the fight against terrorism in the country because, in the past, during the Peronist period, the community suffered not infrequent anti-Semitic attacks.⁵⁵

Although community representatives silenced the repressive policies of the military dictatorship, they tended to be understood as part of the promise to attain political and social stabilization that the military regime had promoted as one of its objectives. As Barromi pointed out with regard to the Córdoba episode, while the repressive character of the regime did not directly affect Zionist institutions, the effects of persecution and the abduction of individuals neither ceased nor went unacknowledged. A few but significant cases affected Jewish community institutions and their leaders: in July 1977, the son of DAIA president, Marcos Resnizky, was kidnapped; that same year, Jaiem Pompas, a former president of the DAIA branch in Córdoba was arrested; also in Córdoba, Alejandra Jaimovich, daughter of the president of DAIA in that city was abducted (she remains one of the disappeared); and Lázaro Rubinson, president of OSA, was detained and interrogated regarding the activities of Zionist organizations in Argentina.

54 “Hay confianza en la pronta liberación de los funcionarios sionistas detenidos en Córdoba,” *Mundo Israelita*, July 31, 1976; “Recuperaron la libertad los ocho funcionarios sionistas arrestados en Córdoba,” *Mundo Israelita*, August 7, 1976.

55 “Quien no está complicado con el terrorismo no tiene nada que temer en Argentina,” *La Luz*, December 1, 1978.

4 The Uses of the Anti-Subversion Struggle

As noted, knowledge of repressive practices of the military dictatorship was not lacking among key players of the Jewish community. But in some cases, the discourse on the elimination of terrorism was utilized as an argument in order to demand that military officials carry out political actions supporting the interests of Jewish organizations. While part of this chapter will be devoted to understanding the complex and dynamic narrative that key figures constructed to render relevant—with different degrees of effectiveness—the condemnation of public anti-Semitic acts, and an analysis of how censure of “terrorist” practices perpetrated by various groups against interests defended by community institutions deserves special consideration.

As Aguila maintains, some key players sympathetic to the “decisive” action taken by the repressive forces to re-establish order went along with the objectives of the regime to the extent of demanding even more determined action.⁵⁶ Thus, when the authorities took measures against left-wing organizations, considered to be the agents of “subversive” action, voices from the Jewish community were not reluctant to request, on more than one occasion, similar treatment against right-wing and anti-Semitic organizations. Sometimes they even demanded reconsideration of appointments to public positions of individuals of known anti-Jewish tendencies.

The editor of *Mundo Israelita* protested indignantly when Walter Beveraggi Allende, a proponent in Argentina of the Jewish conspiracy theory to conquer Patagonia, received a university teaching position “to pursue the formation of young university students in our country.”⁵⁷ The accusation was not centered on the lie he defended vociferously, but rather on how a supporter of the “Plan Andina”⁵⁸ had signed in 1975 a petition attacking Zionism in the Peronist publication *Mayoría*.⁵⁹ If Allende was associated with the previous regime, *Mundo Israelita* asked, why he was being confirmed in the teaching

56 Aguila, *Dictadura, represión y sociedad en Rosario*, 240.

57 “Breviario”, *Mundo Israelita*, June 12, 1976. For an understanding of the relevance of the figure of Walter Beveraggi Allende and “El Plan Andinia,” See: Ernesto Bohoslavsky, “Contra la Patagonia judía: La familia Eichmann y los nacionalistas argentinos y chilenos frente al Plan Andinia (de 1960 a nuestros días),” *Cuadernos Judaicos*, No. 25 (2008): 223–48.

58 Plan Andinia was a fabrication spread by right-wing nationalists about an alleged plan by the Jews for appropriating the region of Patagonia.

59 About *Mayoría*, see Guillermo Clarke, “Mayoría: una herramienta periodística para el retorno de Perón al poder,” in Raanan Rein and Claudio Panella eds., *El retorno de Perón y el peronismo en la visión de la prensa nacional y extranjera* (La Plata: Edulp, 2009).

position. Criticism of Allende did not focus on his anti-Jewish stance but, in light of the goals of combating chaos and re-establishing order, on his ties to Peronism.

The military coup was considered by community key figures as a chance to halt anti-Semitic attacks that were considered during the previous period to have been one of the factors in the destabilization of the political and social order. Nevertheless, at least following first denunciations of aggressive acts carried out by “right-wing organizations,” it would seem that community key players were not clear whether they had been perpetrated by task forces under the command of the armed forces themselves. As pointed out previously, many continued to attribute to Triple A acts carried out against a variety of individuals.

Some positioned themselves in the new setting by maintaining a tension between acceptance of the anti-subversive fight and making demands for greater efficacy in the pursuit of right-wing “gangs.” Although condemning dismissals of factory workers, as well as professors and doctors, the elimination of artistic programs on television and radio, and the arrest of prestigious actors, journalists, and even priests, Grisha Weltman, for example, condoned repressive policies directed against those considered to be agents of chaos and demanded more effective action against groups still surviving:

With the death of Santucho⁶⁰ and other leaders of the illegal Trotskyist organization, the armed forces and the security forces have dealt a mortal blow to unproductive and counterproductive extremist terrorism, but that does not impede subsistence of the other kind, extreme right-wing terrorism that assaults people and homes, that steals, sacks, and kills right and left, that engages in the crime of anti-Semitism inspired by profuse and unrestrained Nazi-fascist propaganda of the sort recently denounced by DAIA.⁶¹

Likewise, ICUF published an early list with the names of Jews who had been kidnapped and disappeared and who at that point were considered victims of “subversion.” Nevertheless, the utilitarian denunciation of “terrorist” behavior by various community key figures would take on greater relevance due to tensions with the military dictatorship over the positions it took in the

60 Mario Robert Santucho was a Marxist militant. He was one of the founders of the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT) and the leader of its guerrilla division, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP). He died on July 19, 1976 during a clash with an Army task-force.

61 Grisha Weltman, “Posibilidades de vida,” *Tiempo*, No. 92 (July 1976).

international realm. On various occasions they compared the legitimacy of the anti-subversion struggle waged in Argentina by the armed forces to that of the position taken by the State of Israel against the PLO.

Mundo Israelita, for example, interviewed Argentine Foreign Minister Rear Admiral César Guzzetti regarding the possibility of a combined Argentine-Israeli action in the face of the "common enemy" of both countries, "international terrorism."⁶² Yet, although the proposition put forward by the Jewish weekly had the effect of equating both terrorisms, it became more trenchant when various international forums voted in favor of sanctions against the State of Israel and/or recognized the PLO as the diplomatic delegation of the Palestinians.

Toward the end of 1976, Argentina backed a UN resolution that recognized the PLO as a legitimate party representing the Palestinians at the Geneva negotiations for peace in the Middle East. As a result, DAIA sent a memo to the foreign ministry impugning the action of the Argentine legation.⁶³ Nissim Elnecave underscored the community's feelings following the reception, in April 1978, at Ezeiza International Airport, of Monsignor Hilarion Capucci,⁶⁴ who was considered by the editor of *La Luz* to be a PLO collaborator: "What would they say here if a close collaborator of Firmenich⁶⁵ or Santucho were to be given a similar welcome in Israel or any other Western country?"⁶⁶

Mundo Israelita defended a communiqué drawn up by the Argentine Patriotic Association in response to the results of investigations carried out in 1979 by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC), whose goal was "evaluating with greater precision the 'ideological' background against which the onslaught of violence against Argentina in these tragic times was taking place"; the report included a summary of the main groups that made

62 "El Canciller de nuestro país, Contralmirante César Guzzetti, contesta a un reportaje de Mundo Israelita," *Mundo Israelita*, November 6, 1976. The foreign minister's reply referred to the difficulty of dealing with the issue in terms of concrete actions, but he suggested that it was time to open a dialogue between the affected countries toward understanding this "scourge."

63 "Enérgico memorial de la DAIA a la Cancillería por el voto contra Israel en la ONU," *Mundo Israelita*, December 31, 1976.

64 Hilarion Capucci was archbishop of the Orden Basiliense de Alepo. In 1974 he was arrested and tried in Israel, accused of using his diplomatic status to engage in arms smuggling for the PLO.

65 Mario Eduardo Firmenich was one of the founders and leaders of the Montoneros.

66 "Esta en Buenos Aires un colaborador del capo terrorista Yasir Arafat," *La Luz*, April 21, 1978.

up the “sinister” international network of terrorism. The PLO stood out among these as a terrorist organization that operated in the Middle East.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the campaign to establish an equivalency between the PLO and Argentine “terrorist organizations” gained greater impetus in 1981. During the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, Argentina agreed to serve on a “committee of engaging issues,” along with Tanzania, Nigeria, and the PLO. The shock with which the news was received by various sectors of the Jewish community produced several reactions. *Mundo Israelita*, for example, reprinted an editorial from the Buenos Aires’ daily *Convicción*,⁶⁸ accompanied by a commentary, in which the monthly underscored “what was clear and conclusive about the concepts [the editorial] put forth”:

It is not absolutely impossible for us to explain how our country can fraternize with the terrorist organization that trained leaders of ERP and the Montoneros ... The ground we walk on here is still damp with blood and tears. We are alone, absolutely alone, in unleashing a war against terrorism. What is even worse, we are met with the incomprehension of those who should be our allies, but who have turned into our accusers under the guise of some “human rights” of perverse meaning. Someday, this war will be studied in the history textbooks of our schools as a victory of Life over Death, and Argentines, both civilian and military, who participated [in this struggle] will be commemorated as heroes. Who is going to explain to Argentines of the future that all this courage, all this resolve, all this pain was watered down by the foolish impositions of a worthless game of diplomacy?⁶⁹

Similarly, the words of the commandant of the Army Third Corps, General Cristino Nicolaides, were defended in the same fashion when he stated at a press conference that “terrorist criminals assigned the task of destabilizing the government” were given special training in Lebanon.⁷⁰ The equation of Argentine political and military organizations with the PLO produced, at least

67 “De semana en semana,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 19, 1980.

68 According to researcher Marcelo Borrelli, the magazine *Convicción* was the front of the political project supported by Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera. See Marcelo Borrelli, *El diario de Massera. Historia y política editorial de Convicción: el diario del Proceso* (Buenos Aires: Koyatun, 2008).

69 “Con profundo estupor,” *Mundo Israelita*, February 14, 1981.

70 “Una jerarquizada advertencia,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 2, 1981; “El gobierno de las Fuerzas Armadas denuncia que terroristas argentinos fueron entrenados en campamentos de la OLP en el Líbano,” *La Luz*, May 8, 1981.

in 1981, an effect considered to be positive for Jewish community leaders in Argentina. During a trip to Buenos Aires by the president of the international Jewish organization B'nai B'rith, Jack Spitzer obtained from then Argentine President, General Roberto Viola, a commitment that the country would not recognize the PLO.⁷¹

Still, tensions resurfaced following the Malvinas (Falklands) War and the subsequent swearing-in of Reynaldo Bignone as president when the country strengthened ties with non-aligned nations. During a conference held in New Delhi, Bignone met with Yasser Arafat, provoking a rapid reaction by DAIA. First, DAIA's Centro de Estudios Sociales (CES-DAIA) produced a dossier that was distributed with the largest-circulation newspapers, *Clarín*, *La Nación*, *La Prensa*, *Convicción*, and *Crónica*, with the title "PLO, Victim or Executioner?" in which the "terrorist" character of the PLO and its operations were described. The photo that accompanied the dossier was an attempt to link the anti-subversion struggle in Argentina with the dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The photograph showed Firmenich and Galimberti⁷² shaking hands with Arafat, demonstrating to the Argentine reader the idea that DAIA was trying to promote: the PLO was for the Middle East what the Montoneros were for Argentina.⁷³

DAIA criticized the country's abandonment of its "equidistant" position with respect to the conflict and its adoption of a clear pro-Arab stance. The meeting between Bignone and Arafat was inconceivable for Jewish community officials, since they considered the PLO to be an international terrorist organization that fought against democratic countries "like ours," and had maintained contacts with subversive organizations that operated in the country:

One cannot understand how our country can receive representatives of the PLO when no one is ignorant of how in the camps of this terrible gang of international terrorism groups, which shook the Argentine family with their actions and threatened our national integrity, were trained and received "ideological" support. It is impossible to explain such a strange benevolence with the principal defenders of international terrorism, even more so when the government itself instituted, as an important goal,

71 "Viola afirmó que no reconocerá a la OLP," *Mundo Israelita*, October 31, 1981.

72 Rodolfo Galimberti was another leader of the Montoneros.

73 "Terrorismo: muerte y destrucción," *La Luz*, October 13, 1982.

re-establishment of the full efficacy of republican institutions, with the return to democracy through free elections.⁷⁴

These statements equating the activity of the PLO with that of “groups that shook the Argentine family” illustrate the ways in which the notion of the anti-subversion struggle was endowed with new meanings: in a way it was a denunciation of Argentine foreign policy which was considered anti-Israel. Nevertheless, as will be seen in Chapter 5, the references between 1981 and 1983 to “international terrorism” as a dominant actor in the Argentine political process placed community key players in a tense relationship with the narrative that sought to separate victims of state terrorism from the practices of political and military groups, unions, and social organizations, among others.

5 Between Adaptation and Restrictions on Youth Activities

“Where are our children on Saturday?” So read the title of the first issue of *Encuentro*, the magazine of La Plata’s AMIA branch.⁷⁵ The publication detailed recreational and educational activities aimed at “inculcating youth with a true awareness of their Jewishness.” The question, like the activities dedicated to the youth sector, would take on relevance during the period, since, as observed in the previous chapter, youth organizations were strongly politicized during the period previous to the takeover of the armed forces.

Messages from leaders who impugned the politicization of teenagers, even before the military took over, became stronger during the first phases of the dictatorship. Thus a small Jewish institution in the city of La Plata that tried to interest teenagers, as well as mainstream groups that “depoliticized” activity within their institutions, were praised as reassuring.

In an interview conducted with rabbis Roberto Graetz, José Oppenheimer, and Marshall Meyer, the latter maintained that “young people should return to religion” because then they would be depoliticized subjects. Meyer, in particular, stressed the path “young Jews” should stick to: “These young people know that the rules of Judaism relate to reverence for life; it’s a pity that so many others who are mired in *violence*, forget *reverence*.”⁷⁶

74 “El coqueteo con la OLP es incompatible con la convivencia nacional,” *Informativo DAIA*, No. 108 (April 1983).

75 “¿Dónde están nuestros chicos los sábados?,” *Encuentro*, No. 1 (August 1981).

76 Alicia Dujovne Ortíz, “La juventud y el templo,” *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976).

The depiction of the young as close to "violence," "revolution," and "Third Worldism" constituted one of the grounds for criticism of them during the previous period of political radicalization. Thus, it is noteworthy to observe the list of modifications concerning youth activities and, second, the reception these changes had among the adults. The spaces that allowed for the public staging of "youthful enthusiasm" attained tangible form in two particular acts: commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto⁷⁷ Uprising and celebration of the creation of the State of Israel.

On April 26, 1976, remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising would take place in the SHA theater. During the ceremony, a group of youths sitting in the stands interrupted the speech of DAIA president, Nehemías Resnizky, by shouting slogans against the community leadership.⁷⁸ According to accounts of the event, Resnizky halted his speech and tendered his resignation to the plenary session of DAIA.

The incident, which became part of folklore connected to commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, was resolved when representatives of the "accused" sectors sent two telegrams of support for Resnizky. The missives, signed by Luis Feld and Marcelo Szlifman, held that the organizations to which they belonged—JSS and CJJA—were not responsible for the insults, and stated "our complete support for the job you are doing, which we value and share and which we defend in the face of any attack from any reactionary group."⁷⁹

An item in *La Luz* focused attention on another matter that appealed to "contemporary" young people. It referred to a slogan, reading "Homage to the heroes of the revolution" at an event. Those present felt that it would be more appropriate to say "rebellion" rather than "revolution."⁸⁰ This suggestion illustrates the precautions that representatives took to identify problems that could stem from continuing to use the term "revolution" during times of dictatorship. Yet, youth reaction against the DAIA president, as well as the slogan displayed on stage would serve Elnecave to renew his criticism of the youth movements: "Youth is seduced by Third World and left-wing ideologies, who

77 Commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place in two venues. One was organized by ICUF in the Majestic Cinema, and the other, under the aegis of the AMIA, DAIA, OSA, and CJJA, was held in the Sociedad Hebriaca Argentina Theater. The latter is referred to since it was the one at which members of the Confederación Juvenil Judeo Argentina attained a large participation of youth movements.

78 "Incidente y superación," *Mundo Israelita*, May 1, 1976; "Una barra perturbadora empañó el acto de recordación de los mártires judíos," *La Luz*, May 7, 1976.

79 "Carta de la Confederación Juvenil Judeo-Argentina," April 28, 1976; also "Carta de la Juventud Sionista Socialista," April 27, 1976, both in CES-DAIA and Resnizky Archive.

80 "Una barra perturbadora empañó el acto de recordación de los mártires judíos," *La Luz*, May 7, 1976.

turn their backs on Zionism ... the leadership behaved ingenuously in the face of para-Marxist advances by a handful of young people conveniently disguised as Zionists.”⁸¹

During a session of AMIA’s directorate, following the ceremony marking Israel’s Independence Day, similar criticism was voiced about the position of youth factions represented in the CJJA. Isaías Jasiu, a member of the Zionist party Jerut, complained to those present about the speech of the youth representative during the event: [His words] go against the essence and dignity of Jewish life.”⁸² Luis Feld, who had spoken on behalf of the CJJA, raised a subject that had been one of the leading banners of the Zionist left during the years prior to the coup: “to be a Zionist today is to find lines of communication with the Palestinian people.”⁸³

The positions of youth groups did not change after the first months of the military dictatorship. However, those that had denounced the adherence of young Jews to the Left toughened their stance and urged representatives of central organizations to curb youthful action. In July 1976, *La Luz* presented an “x-ray” of the distribution of young Jews, establishing three categories: those that belonged to Zionist organizations (5 percent), those that belonged to social sports organizations (35 percent), and those that had no institutional affiliation (60 percent).⁸⁴

According to the article, although the last group might be closest to “assimilation”—“they make an effort to adapt themselves to the current fashions, especially at university”—the strong ideologization of Zionist youth movements also put them at risk. The community leadership should therefore provide this sector with a dominant place in the institutional network: they should be the ones to speak at events and to obtain employment in AMIA’s youth department.⁸⁵

In contrast to the politicization of young activists, Elnecave welcomed two young women from Talpiot College who had won a Bible contest. “Unlike those young people who hide behind the skirts of DAIA, AMIA, and OSA engaging in things that have nothing to do with the natural goals of those institutions,” they set an example.⁸⁶

81 “El Establishment judío frente a la juventud,” *La Luz*, May 7, 1976.

82 “Temas de candente interés abordó el Consejo Directivo de la AMIA,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 22, 1976.

83 “Tom Haatzmaut: se realizó el acto central de la judeidad argentina,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 22, 1976.

84 “Radiografía estructural de la juventud judía en Argentina,” *La Luz*, July 30, 1976.

85 Ibid.

86 “Mensaje a la Juventud Judía,” *La Luz*, September 10, 1976.

Nevertheless, the polemic regarding youthful enthusiasm would not extend beyond the first months of the military dictatorship. Even the events of April and May 1976 that gave rise to these debates were the only ones in which there was a record of intervention by youth groups that would generate any kind of friction during the entire period of the dictatorship; at least until April 1983, when members of Juventud Judía Independiente in La Plata organized a remembrance ceremony for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the presence of Hebe de Bonafini (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo), Federico Storani from the Civic Radical Union (UCR), and Oscar Alende from the Intransigent Party (PI).⁸⁷

The accounts of subsequent activities and statements of youth movements testified to less "political" and more "Jewish"/"Zionist" tones: proclamation of the State of Israel as the epicenter of Jewish life, debates over Zionist commitment, and the superficiality of participation in social sports institutions.⁸⁸ For example, *Nueva Sión*, the mouthpiece of the Zionist left, published fiery declarations of the JSS linking Zionism to the "national liberation movement," and justifying commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1977 as part of the "Jewish historical record" without any parallel in the present or celebration of the liberation struggle.⁸⁹

The article in *La Luz*, which was characterized by a belligerent attitude toward the youth organizations, would maintain that during the 1977 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising event, "in contrast to other years, the young people seated would follow the program with circumspection and respect."⁹⁰ Speaking on behalf of the youth movements, Hernán Lebrl maintained that there were two problems faced by young people in 1977: the demand for spiritual values and the need to provide answers to a workable rather than theoretical Zionism.⁹¹ In 1980, Daniel Polite, spokesperson for the CJJA, would use tones far removed from the rhetoric that equated Zionism with the movements for national liberation: the struggle of young Jews and those associated with Jalutz should move in the opposite direction to that found at the core of the majority.⁹² *Nueva Presencia*, on the other hand, would point out, with characteristic nostalgia,

87 This event will be analyzed below.

88 Darío Kayt, "Clubes frente a Tnuot," *Mifgash*, No. 4 (December 1981).

89 "El mensaje del Ghetto de Varsovia," *Nueva Sión*, May 1977.

90 "En acto central se honró la memoria de héroes y mártires," *La Luz*, April 22, 1977.

91 "El 34° aniversario de la rebelión del Ghetto de Varsovia fue recordado por la judeidad argentina," *Mundo Israelita*, April 23, 1977. A similar situation occurred in 1978: "Honda emotividad caracterizó el acto de homenaje a los héroes del Ghetto," *Mundo Israelita*, May 13, 1978.

92 "Fue recordado el aniversario del levantamiento del Ghetto," *Mundo Israelita*, April 26, 1980; "La judeidad argentina memoró la gesta rebelde del ghetto de Varsovia," *Nueva Presencia*, April 18, 1980.

“the absence of youthful and militant fervor which, until recently, typified this type of event, when the Jalutz groups shouted their slogans and imposed their agenda.”⁹³

In contrast to the official Warsaw Ghetto Uprising event, the ceremony organized by ICUF’s 19 de Abril Committee would have a different tenor. During the meeting in the Majestic Cinema, the speakers—Berta Drucaroff, Mario Grinberg, Henry Skyobysz (Polish ambassador), Mauricio Rascován, and Elbio Rossi—praised the actions of the ghetto heroes, making observations that dealt as much with current national events, especially in regard to the disappeared and the deterioration of the economy, as with international ones.⁹⁴

Finally, two prominent episodes illustrate the approach of the mainstream leadership when youth groups were considered out of order: some expelled them from their institutions. For example, in July 1978, the Dr. Herzl School, in the Flores neighborhood, expelled young people who had joined the Herzl-Shinui Youth Movement. According to *Nueva Presencia*, the expulsion was accompanied by the burning of books and pamphlets. After intense negotiations with AMIA and OSA, the young people were reinstated.⁹⁵

A few months later, in November 1978, the youth of Herzl-Shinui condemned through an advertorial the conduct of the governing board of the Dr. Herzl School for “breaking off dialogue and suspending activities” of the youth organization.⁹⁶ Their petition demanded that the central organizations—AMIA, DAIA, and OSA—intervene so that they could resume their work. According to the advertorial, it all began when members of Herzl-Shinui were expelled from the institution and copies of their magazine *Milá* (Word) were burned, along with pamphlets from the Kibbutz Arzi movement, which adhered to a Zionist-socialist ideology. The problem was once again resolved thanks to the intervention of the JAI and OSA, which “commuted” expulsion of the young people to suspension.⁹⁷

These cases, illustrating the tensions between the work carried out by the youth movements and the leadership’s actions to marginalize them, were

93 “Generales profesionales no se comportaron con la dignidad de Anilevich y sus camaradas,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 27, 1979. *Nueva Presencia* was the Spanish-language page of the Yiddish magazine *Di Presse*, which began publication on July 9, 1977. Its director was Herman Schiller. Chapter 7 deals with its controversial trajectory.

94 “Quehacer Institucional: 36 años después,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 27, 1979.

95 “Fue superado un doloroso conflicto intergeneracional,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 22, 1978.

96 “A la Comisión Directiva de la Escuela Dr. Herzl de Flores Norte,” *Mundo Israelita*, November 18, 1978.

97 “Lo que faltaba: quema de libros en nuestra comunidad,” *Nueva Presencia*, November 17, 1978; “Desconcertante incongruencia,” *Mundo Israelita*, November 18, 1978.

neither unique nor the first of their kind. *Nueva Presencia* pointed out that for some time it was possible to verify the "dislodging" of youth movements: the Dror de Scholem Aleijem in 1977 and the Bialik group in Villa Sabores in 1978: "It would seem that more than ever today, the Zionist educational effort of the Jalutz movements and centers tends to be displaced—whether peacefully or violently, according to the circumstances—and instead there is an attempt to dilute Zionist ideological activity with insipid and phony replacements for our young people's free time."⁹⁸

6 Some Considerations

The takeover of power by the armed forces on March 24, 1976, was met with broad acceptance by the various key players of the Jewish community. Their recognition emanated from recognition of the chaotic situation into which the third Peronist government had sunk the country. Nevertheless, not everyone saw the new government in the same way. While one can detect a certain caution regarding how to name it, it is significant that none of the voices would call the new regime—at least until 1982, after the Malvinas War—a "military dictatorship."

The consensus surrounding the military uprising and its appropriateness was not only restricted to recognition of the corruption in which María Estela Martínez's government had floundered but to support for the anti-subversion struggle among the community key players analyzed. The notion that the armed forces would "channel" the destiny of the country along the path of order was supported by all of them.

The campaign against politicization of the youth movements intensified criticism, which led in some cases to expulsion from educational institutions; after a brief period of time, the youth groups adapted themselves to the new political climate. As the final section above points out, the extent that their slogans and public statements become progressively more in line with the image of "circumspect and respectful" young people is quite significant.

Yet, it can also be pointed out that the degree of acceptance and consensus regarding the military regime was not a one-way or spontaneous process. The classified document that describes the meeting of some Jewish leaders with Admiral Massera provides evidence of the strategies that some sectors of power adopted in order to obtain approval by diverse civil forces of a future military government.

98 "Lo que faltaba: quema de libros en nuestra comunidad."

But if, on the one hand, it is possible to recognize early acceptance of the regime and its goal of combating “subversion,” a series of nuances must be considered. The Jewish community leadership, which had denounced anti-Semitic gangs during the period prior to the coup d'état, saw the violence perpetrated by the military task forces—at least during the first months of the dictatorial regime—as evidence that the activities of right-wing groups had not ceased.

Nevertheless, this position does not acquit key players, which, early on, recognized the repressive character of state policies. From officials and diplomats to leaders of Jewish institutions who were forewarned and/or affected by these policies, knowledge about the criminal facet of the dictatorship did not go unnoticed. As the section on what “Argentina does not mention” shows, even information concerning the abductions, the political persecutions, and the “physical extermination of guerrillas” that the regime was carrying out were covered by news outlets that circulated among members of varying ideological leanings in the Jewish community.

Although this will be examined in the next chapter, one can find incipient criticism as of mid-1976 concerning the mechanisms of disappearance and consignment to the notorious detention centers that characterized the last military dictatorship in Argentina. One of the problems necessitating caution in ex post facto judgments concerning the community key figures studied relates to recognition of their ability to articulate what was happening in Argentina. An editorial in *La Luz*, for example, which denounced early on the disappearance of persons and the situation of detained Jewish individuals, while highlighting the dimension of “fear” and the subtleties with which the press were forced to refer to “the Argentine reality,” illustrates the tensions that they faced.

Nevertheless, at the same time that it was impacting on civil society, the violence would take on a kind of utilitarian sense, due to the Jewish community's demand for acknowledgment of its particular interests by the armed forces. The equivalence made by some Jewish representatives between the PLO and the Montoneros was an attempt to legitimize the “war” that the repressive forces had unleashed against “terrorist” organizations, mostly in order to call also for the state's recognition of the PLO as an organization whose purposes and objectives were similar to those that the dictatorship characterized as “subversive.”

Reactions to Manifestations of Public and Clandestine Anti-Semitism during the Last Military Dictatorship

The anti-Semitic character of the dictatorial regime was criticized from the outset. As will be seen in this chapter, the question of anti-Semitism drew numerous international protests. A series of reports by international organizations on human rights violations illustrates the relevance that the treatment of Jews assumed regarding accusations of arbitrary acts perpetuated by the military dictatorship. The 1976 Amnesty International Report and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (1979) claimed that “special treatment of Jews” existed in the clandestine detention centers.

These reports were complemented by the testimony of Jacobo Timerman concerning the days of his imprisonment at the hands of gangs under the command of Ramón Camps,¹ consolidating an interpretive framework that condemned in particular the leadership of DAIA at the time. An extensive bibliography deals with this perspective, criticizing the DAIA leadership as collaborationist or indifferent to the demands of relatives of the arrested/disappeared, and denouncing those who did not express their commitment to the defense of human rights.² The question raised by this research—although with differing emphases—asks the following: how was it possible that the Jewish leadership did nothing in the face of the evident anti-Semitic character of the regime which was responsible for the arrest/disappearance of between 1,500 and 2000 individuals of Jewish origin.

1 Ramón Camps was chief of the Province of Buenos Aires' police during the dictatorship. He was among the first to be put on trial for human rights violations.

2 Ignacio Klich, “Política comunitaria durante las Juntas Militares argentinas: La DAIA durante el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional,” in Leonardo Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1986), 274–309; Marcel Zohar, *Manda a mi pueblo al Diablo* (Tel Aviv: Zitrin, 1990); Gabriela Lotersztain, *Los judíos bajo el terror* (Buenos Aires: Ejercitar la Memoria, 2008); Guillermo Lipis, *Zikaron-Memoria. Los judíos bajo el Plan Cóndor* (Buenos Aires: Del Nuevo Extremo, 2010); Diego Rosemberg, *Marshall Meyer, el rabino que le vio la cara al Diablo* (Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2010); Hernán Dobry, *Los judíos y la dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Vergara, 2013); Paul Katz, “Recordar, olvidar, politizar: La DAIA y la lucha por la representación del pasado reciente,” in Lorena Cardona et al. eds., *Memorias desde el sur* (La Plata: Ceraunia, 2013).

Nevertheless, a survey of various archives and publications of relevant figures and institutions enables us to question certain a priori assumptions concerning that claim. Analysis of the documents uncovered allows for identification, in broad terms, of two distinctive forms of anti-Semitism: one public and the other clandestine. The first was marked by the open dissemination of anti-Jewish libels, threats, and attacks on communal institutions, and even an official attempt to impose mandatory teaching of the Catholic religion in public schools. The second, by contrast, was manifested in a more diffuse way. Clandestine anti-Semitism refers to special treatment of the Jews in secret detention centers and the various facilities housing political prisoners who were at the legal disposal of the National Executive Power.

This chapter will discuss the strategies adopted and the tensions that arose within the Jewish community in regard to the ways in which it dealt with and/or denounced these types of anti-Semitism. While the first part is devoted to analyzing debates and responses to public anti-Semitism, the second will discuss the controversy over denunciation of what took place in the clandestine detention centers and the prisons, where detainees were “rehabilitated” by the dictatorial regime. A clarification is thus needed as it is not just a matter of inquiring into the anti-Semitic nature of the repressive police but into how it was received and how Jewish community key players dealt with it.

1 Practices and Representations Regarding Public Anti-Semitism

Laborious scrutiny of the archives of the Argentine Jewish community confirms that anti-Semitism was one of the most constant preoccupations during that period, as much as for the Jewish leadership as for top state officials. A report of the Directorate of Intelligence of the Province of Buenos Aires’ Police (DIPBA), initiated after the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in Ciudadela in October 1980, alerted the officer carrying out the investigation to “Investigate this! A grave matter that could have international repercussions.”³ This demonstration of concern regarding possible international repercussions that could arise from the incident, which affected the Jewish institutional network in Argentina, is indicative of the attention given to and/or the resulting efficacy that followed representations of the Jewish community leadership.

From the outset of the military dictatorship, the DAIA leadership warned of the emergence of an “anti-Jewish threat” and, in many cases, its demands

3 Legajo No. 17.448, Mesa “DS” [Delincuente Subversivo], Carpeta Varios, Carátula: Atentado Cementerio Israelita (Ciudadela), DIPBA Archive.

resulted in active measures to restrict the scope of public actions. Moreover, in contrast to their experiences during the third Peronist government, when petitions went nowhere with government officials,⁴ during the military dictatorship DAIA leaders were successful on several occasions in communicating with Interior Minister General Albano Harguindeguy and officials close to the president of the country.

An exchange of letters between DAIA officials and the military authorities began soon after the armed forces took power. On April 27, 1976, DAIA president Nehemías Resnizky sent a letter to Harguindeguy in which he listed matters of concern to the Jewish community that needed to be dealt with at an upcoming meeting of members of that organization with retired Colonel José Ruiz Palacios, deputy secretary of the interior.⁵ The principal issue was the proliferation of anti-Semitic publications. The letter was interesting because it proposed that the phenomenon was “something new” even though it was a topic of continuous criticism and demands for executive intervention during the Peronist government.⁶

This time representations were made on the basis of the common goal of the anti-subversive struggle pursued by the armed forces: in this context, anti-Semitism was anti-Argentine propaganda that constituted a foreign body in the nation.⁷ During the first stages of the dictatorial regime, criticism and demands for closure by various representatives of the Jewish community focused on the publishing house *Milicia*.⁸ Following the publication and distribution of anti-Semitic materials, which according to Jewish publications could be found displayed at newspaper kiosks along the principal arteries of Buenos Aires,⁹ DAIA redoubled its protests to state agencies.¹⁰

4 This was discussed in part in Ch. 1.

5 “Carta de Nehemías Resnizky a Ministro del Interior, Albano Harguindeguy,” April 27, 1976, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

6 Senkman, “El antisemitismo bajo dos experiencias democráticas,” 109–194.

7 “Carta de Nehemías Resnizky a Ministro del Interior, Albano Harguindeguy.” Emphasis added.

8 According to Martín Andersen, *Milicia* was published by staff of the state intelligence secretariat (SIDE). In 1976, it began publishing the collection “Biblioteca de Información Doctrinaria,” in which the Works of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Julius Streicher appeared. See Martín Andersen, *Dossier secreto. El mito de la “guerra sucia” en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2000).

9 “¿Cómo, ahora también?” *Mundo Israelita*, April 3, 1976; “Agitación nazi-antisemita a través de la Editorial Milicia,” *La Luz*, July 2, 1976.

10 “Un corresponsal del Stern alemán describe el avance de sectores nazis en Argentina,” *Nueva Sión*, December, 1976.

The circulation attained by these publications created a new relationship between DAIA and the interior ministry. As in previous communications, Resnizky's letter equated the proliferation of anti-Semitic publications with the actions of "subversive" organizations that the regime sought to combat. Resnizky maintained that "if numerous organizations have been dissolved or banned for being a threat to the peace and tranquility of Argentines, it is incomprehensible that publications and organizations with nefarious ends that are a danger to the country continue to indulge in their reprehensible preaching."¹¹ In accordance with measures taken by the military authorities against various political organizations and unions, DAIA petitioned the executive branch to ban them from pursuing activities as "has been the case with other [organizations] from the institution of the new national government."

In July, DAIA representatives—Resnizky as president, Gurevich as vice-president, and Lobov as treasurer—met with the interior minister and presented him with a memorandum detailing crucial points of concern to the community: namely, the proliferation of Nazi, anti-Semitic, and anti-Zionist texts.¹² They also asked the minister to reinstate the article of the Penal Code that stipulated penalties for anyone inciting "racial or religious hatred."¹³

DAIA's strategy proved successful on September 3 when the National Executive Branch promulgated Decree No. 1887 prohibiting the distribution, sale, and circulation of publications issued by *Milicia*. As a result, the plenary session of DAIA met again to welcome the government's pronouncement. The closing of *Milicia*, Resnizky noted, should not be considered a decision affecting only Jews, since its "preaching of hatred" generated misunderstandings abroad regarding the "true Argentine position."¹⁴ During a subsequent plenary session, held on September 6, Resnizky hailed the leadership's strategy, which had achieved recognition by the government, "engaged as it was in the war against subversion."¹⁵

11 "Carta de Nehemías Resnizky a Ministro del Interior, Albano Harguindeguy," June, 1976, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

12 "Harguindeguy-DAIA: Tono cordial," *Mundo Israelita*, July 17, 1976; "El presidente de la DAIA se refirió a la audiencia con el Ministro del Interior," July 30, 1976.

13 "Entrevista Harguindeguy-DAIA: No venimos como judíos temerosos, sino como argentinos preocupados," *Mundo Israelita*, June 17, 1976.

14 "Milicia agravaba no solo a los judíos, sino al país todo," *Informativo DAIA*, No. 89 (September 1976). Regarding the repercussions of the closing of *Milicia*, see "Milicia: Se conoció el Decreto que prohíbe sus actividades," *Mundo Israelita*, September 18, 1976; "DAIA: El decreto 1887 pone fin a las actividades de una editorial desembozadamente nazi," *Mundo Israelita*, September 24, 1976; "Y ahora, otro paso más adelante," *Tiempo*, September 1976; "La clausura de Milicia," *Nueva Sión*, September 1976.

15 "DAIA: Se ha generalizado la conciencia de que la continuidad antisemita daña a la República toda," *Mundo Israelita*, September 11, 1976.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the decree was quickly seen to be limited. In the same issue of *Informativo DAIA* that described members' satisfaction with the closure of *Milicia*, there was information about a new publishing venture, *Odal*, created to continue the former's work.¹⁶ In contrast to the narratives that impugned *Milicia*, which tended to equate its anti-Semitic agitation with the destabilizing action of subversion, criticism of *Odal* focused on one of the internal problems of the military junta: the possibility that the anti-Jewish discourse was promoted by factions of the armed forces in an attempt to discredit the sectors responsible for conducting the political process.¹⁷

With the appearance of *Odal*, DAIA sought to re-interest state agencies in achieving a more conclusive solution: the banning of all anti-Semitic publications. Toward the end of January 1977, Resnizky held a meeting with the Secretary of the Presidency, General Rogelio Villareal, at which he expressed his concern regarding the continuance of those publications. Resnizky pointed out that circulation of *Odal's* material within Argentina was harmful to the image of the country abroad.¹⁸

This intervention was effective, if judged by the promulgation of a new decree (No. 258) on January 31, 1977, banning and confiscating all publications issued by *Odal*. But, in contrast to what had occurred with *Milicia*, this time the state had heeded DAIA's demand to apply maximum scope in repressing anti-Semitic publicity.¹⁹ As can be seen in a DAIA report, its plenary session applauded the decree, underscoring how it came "during the most difficult moments of national life." If it was true, it stated, that Resnizky noted that there were some who criticized the measure because it censured only *Odal*, in a later speech Resnizky stated that he believed that the decree established a precedent in jurisprudence regarding the prohibition of Nazi propaganda.²⁰

Nevertheless, despite satisfaction with the promulgation of the decree, once again its effectiveness proved limited. Although there were no more polemics regarding publishing operations similar to *Milicia* and *Odal*, criticism of the propaganda of the nationalist magazine *Cabildo* found no support among the

16 "Ahorra se llama 'ODAL,'" *Informativo DAIA*, No. 8 (October 1976). See also "Hechos y resonancias," *Mundo Israelita*, October 9, 1976; "¿Y ahora nos vienen con ediciones ODAL?" *Nueva Sión*, October 1976.

17 "¿Qué interés tiene el gobierno de hacer la vista gorda ante el avance nazi-antisemita?" *La Luz*, December 3, 1976.

18 "Entrevistó la DAIA al General Rogelio Villareal," *Mundo Israelita*, February 12, 1977; "La inquietud de la comunidad judía transmitida al presidente Videla," *La Luz*, February 25, 1977.

19 Decree No. 258/77, January 31, 1977, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

20 "The President of DAIA, Dr. Nehemías Resnizky, Stressed the Importance of the Decree Banning the ODAL Libel, during the Plenary Session of March 7, 1977," CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

national authorities.²¹ In contrast to publishing ventures that publicized the “classics” of National Socialism, *Cabildo* was considered by community representatives to represent a greater danger since its reach could “extend to the weightiest sectors of the current power structure.”²²

On only one occasion was *Cabildo* penalized by the military authorities: during the tense moments of the “Graiver case.”²³ National Executive Branch Decree No. 1711 which banned circulation of the June 1977 issue of *Cabildo* for the “deliberate treatment of national current events, oriented toward creating or generalizing ideological-racial polarization that are in line with the objectives of national unity and with due reciprocal respect, which is one of the essential rights of the various sectors that constitute the Argentina populace,” was hailed by the DAIA leadership.²⁴ Yet its limitations were quickly demonstrated: in August 1977, *Cabildo* was once again on sale to the public.²⁵

The circumstances and impact of the Graiver case again brought the Jewish leadership face-to-face with the dissemination of anti-Semitic defamation related to a matter in which many of those involved had Jewish surnames. It reacted promptly by denouncing the emphasis placed by the national press on this aspect of the case. During the DAIA plenary session held on May 2, 1977, Resnizky stated that the “Jewish community will not tolerate that the affair be used by anti-Semites for their own purpose, since it is obvious that anti-Semitic groups are making an effort to gain a foothold in the national process.”²⁶

As in the case of anti-Semitic publications, the strategy of the Jewish leadership focused on obtaining public declarations from high military officials rejecting “Jewish” responsibility for the case. The first open channel was through Interior Minister Harguindeguy. In a meeting that took place in early May, DAIA secretary Juan Gurevich, communicated the concern of the community

21 For an analysis of the magazine *Cabildo* during the military dictatorship, see Jorge Saborido, “El antisemitismo en la historia argentina reciente: La revista *Cabildo* y la conspiración judía,” *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 30 (2004): 209–223.

22 “Hechos y Resonancias,” *Mundo Israelita*, December 31, 1976; “Los peligros del antisemitismo,” *Nueva Sión*, June 1977.

23 The Graiver case was the investigation that followed the death in a plane crash of David Graiver, a young Jewish banker and businessman. It attempted to demonstrate the association of the Graiver Group with the finances of the Montoneros. The case will be referred to in more detail in Chapter 5.

24 “Fue sancionada la revista *Cabildo*,” *Mundo Israelita*, June 18, 1977.

25 “Las obsesiones de siempre,” *Nueva Presencia*, August 20, 1977; “Todos contra *Cabildo*,” *Nueva Sión*, August, 1977.

26 “El presidente de la DAIA advirtió contra elementos antisemitas que pretenden insertarse en el proceso,” *La Luz*, May 6, 1977.

about the “anti-Semitic” tone of the newspapers’ treatment of the affair.²⁷ Harguindeguy responded that “the Government clearly differentiates between the persons responsible for what has happened and the social or religious group to which they belong.” Recalling previous actions by the executive branch that had answered the demands of the DAIA leadership, Harguindeguy affirmed that “the Government will continue to fight against anti-Semitism as seen in the decrees” that restricted the dissemination of anti-Semitic publications.²⁸ Thus, Decree No. 1711 prohibiting and confiscating issue number 8 of *Cabildo* illustrated the military’s sensitivity toward the Jewish community.

Shortly afterward, the interior minister sent a letter to Gurevich in which he responded in more distant tones than those reported in the Jewish press. In response to DAIA’s demand that the state declare that it impose limits on national press organs that referred to the “Jewish surnames of those involved,” Harguindeguy noted:

The publications that upset you originate in an investigation being undertaken by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army for the presumed committing of crimes that affect security. The circumstance that some of the persons linked to the investigation may have surnames that identify them as Jewish and that these appear in headlines and commentaries is not a sufficient or worthy enough motive to warrant official intervention at this time.²⁹

Except for the *Cabildo* issue ban, there are no known official pronouncements restricting the mention of “Jewish surnames of those implicated.” Nevertheless, in addition to DAIA’s representations, the international repercussions generated by the affair, magnified by the arrest of the journalist and publisher of *La Opinión*, Jacobo Timerman, obliged military officials to issue new statements making clear that the inquiry surrounding the Graiver case did not involve the persecution of Jews. A few days after Harguindeguy’s letter to Gurevich, Videla himself declared during the commemoration of the 167th anniversary of the establishment of the Argentine army that the Graiver case had no anti-Semitic aspects:

27 By the same token, Gurevich maintained that it was DAIA’s hope to have the investigation discover quickly those responsible for the “economic crime” that had civil society on the alert. See “La DAIA entregó un petitorio al Ministro del Interior,” *La Luz*, May 20, 1977.

28 “Harguindeguy recibió a una delegación de la DAIA,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 14, 1977.

29 “Carta del Ministro del Interior, Albano Harguindeguy, a Juan Gurevich,” May 27, 1977, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

We commence in this fashion a period of working together to facilitate a civic-military convergence that will constitute the offspring of the National Reorganization Process and will transcend this course. As soon as we instrumentalize the necessary channels, we will open a broad and generous dialogue, *from which only the corrupt and subversive will be excluded. The latter have both a first and last name and, thus, it is not appropriate to adopt the simplistic solution of identifying them with a specific activity, social category, religious creed, or political affiliation.*³⁰

Videla's speech was warmly received by Resnizky at DAIA's June plenary session, and he indicated that even if the problem of anti-Semitism had not been resolved, at least the declarations of the president made it possible to "observe a decrease in actions."³¹

Nevertheless, the discourse over the anti-Semitic attributes that the investigations of the Graiver group acquired included an incident that would highlight a certain view of Jews among some Catholic intellectuals. Special Issue no. 44 of the magazine *Carta Política*, edited by Mariano Grondona,³² was devoted to the theme of "the Jews."³³ Its definition of a Jew, as a "cosmopolitan," someone who lacked loyalty to "Argentineness," drew fire from a number of Jewish intellectuals. Herman Schiller, writing in *Nueva Presencia*, condemned "those who attempt to sell the idea that Jewish identity assumed without inhibitions, as well as belonging to the ranks of Zionism represent dissolvent elements."³⁴ Boleslao Lewin, in *Mundo Israelita*, considered the article to be an example of malevolence and ignorance that assumed the only way in which a Jew could exist in Argentina was at the expense of the dissolution of his particularity in the Argentine totality.³⁵ Carlos Polak, secretary of AMIA's Department of Culture and Enlightenment, condemned the use of a "criminal event [the Graiver case] as a pretext for recycling the so-called Jewish problem."³⁶ Jaime

30 "Los corruptos y subversivos tienen nombre y apellido," *Mundo Israelita*, June 4, 1977. Author's emphasis.

31 "DAIA: Hay síntomas de retroceso en el accionar del antisemitismo," *Mundo Israelita*, June 11, 1977.

32 Mariano Grondona was a journalist and political pundit linked to conservative sectors of the Catholic Church.

33 *Carta Política*, No. 44 "Los judíos" (June, 1977): 63–70. The untitled article highlighted the "separatist" and "non-assimilationist" situation of "Argentine" Jews, evaluating them negatively for their alleged "dual loyalty" to both Argentina and Israel.

34 "Sionismo y doble lealtad," *Nueva Presencia*, July 16, 1977.

35 Boleslao Lewin, "Ponzoña racista arrojada sobre la comunidad judía," *Mundo Israelita*, July 2, 1977.

36 Carlos Polak, "¿Un ensayo científico?" *Nueva Sión*, July 13, 1977.

Barylko, president of the Consejo Educativo de la Comunidad Judía, branded the article a pathetic reflection.³⁷

The polemics surrounding anti-Semitism and representation of what was “Jewish” took a substantially different turn in 1979. Resolution No. 254 of the National Ministry of Education announcing a program for “moral and civic formation” was perceived by Jewish community representatives as discriminatory.³⁸

While Education Minister Juan Rafael Llerena Amadeo denied that the new program was the “door through which a course on religion would enter” the schools, this was how it was understood and criticized on a national scale by the press. The sectarian nature of the content and bibliography proposed by the inspectors of the National Service of Private Education generated an immediate reaction from various community representatives.³⁹

On April 23, 1979, Nehemías Resnizky and Daniel Levy sent a letter to the minister stating that they were surprised by an official initiative that was faith-based.⁴⁰ In addition, DAIA issued a communiqué⁴¹ and commissioned an article incorporating critical editorials published in various newspapers throughout the country, along with a chronology of the issue, in order to demonstrate that it had taken on a strong Roman Catholic, apostolic, faith-based character. These initiatives were part of a campaign to “clarify” matters by

37 Jaime Barylko, “El tema inagotable: los judíos,” *Nueva Sión*, July 13, 1977.

38 “Palabras de Juan Gurevich,” *Informativo Convención DAIA 1979*, September 1979. Laura Rodríguez maintains that the Process of National Reorganization authorities proclaimed that education would have a central place in the concerns of the government. In the case of the National Ministry of Education, the military appointed civilians to lead their initiatives. While the majority of ministers appointed came from various groups aligned with pre-Vatican II Catholicism, it was Juan Rafael Llerena Amadeo (1978–81) who had the strongest link to top Church leaders. See Laura Rodríguez, “Los católicos y la educación durante la última dictadura: El caso del ministro Juan R. Llerena Amadeo (1978–1981)” (paper given during the Vth Jornadas de Trabajo de Historia Reciente, June 2010.).

39 In an article in *La Nación*, Laura Rodríguez reveals that the curriculum included texts that were openly religious in content, along with numerous papal documents and works by authors such as Julio Menvielle and Jordan Bruno Genta, local extreme right-wing exponents of Catholic nationalism. See Rodríguez, “Los católicos y la educación durante la última dictadura.”

40 “Carta de DAIA a Ministro de Educación de la Nación, Juan Rafael Llerena Amadeo,” April 23, 1979, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

41 “Fija la DAIA su posición en relación a los nuevos programas de ‘Formación Moral y Cívica,’” May 16, 1979, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

circulating “the repercussions that the said resolution has given rise to in diverse spheres of national life.”⁴²

The campaign had an impact among the authorities: on May 10, 1979, a DAIA delegation was received by Llerena Amadeo. According to a subsequent communiqué released by the organization, Llerena Amadeo agreed to “consider the matter.” Nevertheless, in the minutes of its plenary session, Resnizky stated that a tense atmosphere had characterized the meeting.⁴³ He claimed that the subject matter in question subtly implied a disposition to a “pre-conversion” of the Jewish students since, “given how programs and texts are conceived, there is a proposed coincidence between a scale of values presented as desirable and incomparably superior from a moral point of view, and religious commitment, the Catholic one.” The minister maintained that the subject matter “adhered to the need to stand in opposition to Marxist materialist concepts, which are damaging to our young people.” The DAIA president replied that “religious teaching was not sufficient to guarantee preventing outstanding men formed in the ranks of Catholic colleges from joining the ranks of subversion.”⁴⁴

When the meeting was over, Resnizky believed the “demands of the community had not been met,” although the DAIA leadership had left with a commitment on the part of the ministry to evaluate “tendentious texts” and consider expanding the bibliography. Despite his negative assessment of the meeting, the ministry later formed a “commission charged with detailing explicitly the Jewish position regarding the faith-based content of the course.” The commission, as proposed by DAIA itself, included Máximo Yagupsky, Mauricio Zabelinsky, Paul Warszawsky, and Rabbi Mordejai Eder.⁴⁵

A new resolution was issued at the beginning of the 1980 school year. No. 323 modified the program of moral and civic formation, “replacing the Christian emphasis with a Judeo-Christian one.”⁴⁶ Resnizky observed that while the changes were welcome, parents needed to be alert as to the way in which the

42 See Gacetilla “Formación Moral y Cívica. Implicancias de una asignatura que preocupa e inquieta,” Ediciones DAA/Archivo Centro de Documentación Marc Turkow, 1979.

43 “Palabras del presidente de la DAIA en la Asamblea Plenaria realizada el 21 de mayo de 1979,” May 21, 1979, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

44 “Palabras del presidente de la DAIA en la Asamblea Plenaria realizada el 21 de mayo de 1979.” This thesis was not unique to Nehemías Resnizky. Leiser Madanes presented a similar one in *Nueva Presencia*. See Leiser Madanes, “Urge erradicar aquello que divide y agudiza los desencuentros,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 13, 1979.

45 “Otra circunstancia inquietante: el sobreseimiento de Cabildo,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 6, 1979.

46 The DAIA initiatives were examined in *Nueva Presencia*. Its editor, Herman Schiller, held that “while there were several individuals who opposed the ministry’s resolution that had sparked the controversy, it was DAIA that led the vanguard of proposals. See Herman

subject matter would be taught.⁴⁷ Finally, as part of the new approach, the Consejo Central de Educación Judía commissioned the preparation of a book to serve as a supplement to the course on moral and civic formation: *El humanismo judío*, by Jaime Barylko, was published in 1981.⁴⁸

Finally, one last episode demonstrates the centrality given to denunciation of public pronouncements of an anti-Semitic nature. On the program "Videoshow," aired on October 28, 1980, on Channel 9, the host, Enrique Llamas de Madariaga, interviewed engineer Jaime Rozenblum about the allegedly ambiguous conduct of the Jews regarding their "loyalty" to Israel, their reluctance to assimilate in "national society," and their reservations regarding "Argentineness."⁴⁹

As a result of arguments considered "anti-Semitic" on the program, the Jewish community again mobilized and reacted strongly.⁵⁰ As on other occasions, DAIA demanded official pronouncements that would condemn the attitude of Llamas de Madariaga. The first one would come via the meeting between a DAIA delegation headed by its new president, Mario Gorenstein, and Interior Minister Albano Harguindeguy. After the meeting, the minister issued a communiqué condemning the anti-Semitic expressions as "incompatible with the purest traditions of our Nation."⁵¹

Moreover, DAIA sought to interview the Secretary of Public Information of the Presidency, General Llamas, the brother of the journalist in question, who asked the organization to suggest the most appropriate action to be taken to deal with the situation.⁵² Gorenstein replied that it was not the organization's responsibility to "indicate possible corrective measures ... since that is the exclusive prerogative of those who exercise the responsibility for government officials."⁵³ However, eventually, rabbis were brought into follow-up discussions on state-owned channels, as were Catholic priests, and steps were taken

Schiller, "Formación Moral y Cívica: la enseñanza laica quedó atrás," *Nueva Presencia*, March 14, 1980.

47 "DAIA: Observar cuidadosamente la implementación del nuevo programa de Formación Moral y Cívica," *La Luz*, March 14, 1980.

48 "Un libro que enfoca los valores del humanismo judío," *Mundo Israelita*, March 28, 1981.

49 "Texto completo del diálogo entre Llamas de Madariaga y J. Rozenblum," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 174, October 31, 1980.

50 "Solicitada de la DAIA contra provocación antisemita en Videoshow," *Informativo DAIA*, No. 98 (November 1980).

51 "Los hechos antisemitas están reñidos con el sentir argentino," *Informativo DAIA*, No. 98 (November 1980).

52 "Gestiones de la DAIA," *Informativo DAIA*, No. 98 (November 1980).

53 "Ni concesiones en la defensa comunitaria, ni desvío de los objetivos," *Informativo DAIA*, No. 98 (November 1980).

toward allowing transmission of the television series *Holocaust*, which the state had banned.⁵⁴

2 Procedures and Representations Concerning Clandestine Anti-Semitism

The preceding section focusing on actions pursued by Jewish community entities against public anti-Semitic practices demonstrates that the various steps taken by government officials reflected early recognition of the international scale of denunciations of anti-Semitism. The warning issued to an official of the Province of Buenos Aires police intelligence charged with uncovering those who were responsible for desecrating the Jewish cemetery in Ciudadela can be understood as deep concern on the part of the military authorities regarding

54 The US series *Holocaust* was broadcast for the first time in April 1978 by NBC. Carlos Polak asked in *Nueva Presencia*, why the series, which had already appeared in several countries, was banned in Argentina. See Carlos Polak, “¿Quién le teme a ‘Holocausto’ en nuestro país?” *Nueva Presencia*, August 24, 1979.

Aside from Polak’s opinion, since the efforts to broadcast it were tied to the images and history that featured in the series, how would anyone think that official censorship would be willing, in 1978, to show images of death camps and the subjection of people to terrible conditions of detention, similar to those denounced by Argentine exiles, who in the same year criticized the dictatorial regime for systematic violations of human rights?

In the July 2, 1981, plenary session of DAIA following the “Videoshow” affair, Gorenstein claimed to have attended a meeting with the head of the Secretariat of Public Information, General Ortiz, in which he communicated the concerns of the Argentine Jewish community and proposed, in order to clear the air, the inclusion of rabbis who would appear at the ending of the each day transmission (as was customary with Catholic priests), as well as the broadcasting of *Holocaust*. See *Informativo DAIA*, No. 104 (undated).

While the Jewish community leadership greeted the possibility that the series be broadcast on local television, several members across the Jewish spectrum expressed reservations regarding the introduction made by journalist Horacio Carballal, and criticized how, “during the extensive opening address” and closing one, nothing was said about who the victims of the Holocaust were: the Jews, thus “erasing the memory of the victims.” See “Otra vez el olvido,” *Mundo Israelita*, December 19, 1981; Leonardo Senkman’s reflections were similar. See “Genocidio humano o Holocausto judío,” *Nueva Presencia*, December 18, 1981; Also Nehemías Resnizky, “Holocausto: traumatizante, pero aleccionadora,” *Nueva Presencia*, December 31, 1981.

The negotiations were extensive, and only in 1981 was the *Holocaust* series broadcast (concerning the negotiations for the airing of *Holocaust*, see “Considérase resuelta la pronta exhibición de Holocausto en la TV,” *Mundo Israelita*, October 3, 1981; “También en la TV argentina,” *Mundo Israelita*, December 5, 1981.

the international repercussions of condemnations of the alleged “anti-Jewish” character of the dictatorship.

Despite claims of an anti-Argentina campaign at a time when the country featured prominently on the international stage due to its hosting of the World Soccer Championship and the International Cancer Congress, in 1978 it would seem that it was the accusations of anti-Semitic messages and practices that concerned the military. Nevertheless, as this section will detail, denunciations of anti-Semitism, at least at the beginning of the dictatorship, were not clearly associated with the arrest and disappearance of Jewish individuals, nor did they allude to them as much as they did to the circulation of anti-Semitic publications.

Even for some community key figures that denounced the abductions, disappearances, and killings during the first months of the military regime, such events continued to be perceived as a continuation of the actions perpetrated by organizations such as the Argentine Anticomunist Alliance.⁵⁵ Clandestine anti-Semitism had a varied reception within the Jewish community. One example was the magazine *Tiempo*, which in May 1976 demanded an investigation into what had happened to the writer Haroldo Conti⁵⁶ and his wife, although it maintained that the abduction in Cosquín of Jacobo Lerner and the threats and attacks in Rosario against an individual surnamed Lijmayer were traditional anti-Semitic manifestations.⁵⁷

At the same time, *La Luz* denounced the abduction and subsequent assassination of Dr. Salvador Akerman in Don Torcuato in June 1976. While, on the one hand, it pointed out that “he was not known to have been involved in political activities,” it defined Akerman’s killing as “one more episode producing upheaval due to its anti-Semitic connotations in the heart of the Jewish community.”⁵⁸ Knowledge of the repressive dynamics that operated in the war against subversion was recognized early on, as noted in the previous chapter, although it was not referred to directly by community representatives. The Córdoba case, which arose in July 1976, for example, had made clear the mechanisms of arrest, as well as the procedure for inquiry about the whereabouts of those affected by repressive policies.

55 This matter was dealt with in Chapter 2.

56 Haroldo Conti was a well-known writer who belonged to the Revolutionary Workers’ Party (PRT, abbreviation in Spanish). He was abducted and “disappeared” by the military dictatorship in 1976.

57 “Antisemitismo,” *Tiempo*, No. 90 (May 1976).

58 “Consternación ante el asesinato del Dr. Akerman y un episodio presuntamente antisemita,” *La Luz*, June 18, 1976.

Nevertheless, recognition of the extent of the struggle against subversion and denunciation of what was happening in the country did not produce any immediate coordination with international organizations. Moreover, as Armony points out, DAIA was one of more than 300 civil organizations that signed a petition condemning the anti-Argentina campaign during the World Soccer Cup celebrations.⁵⁹ The debates and tensions over the use of the anti-Semitism issue to condemn the military regime on an international level began only around the third quarter of 1976.

On September 28 of that year, Burt Levinson, Latin American representative of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith, presented his testimony on human rights in Argentina before a commission of the US House of Representatives.⁶⁰ The subtext of his address was intended to refer the enormous quantity of Nazi publications that were in circulation.⁶¹ Yet, he also referred to how several of the dead from terrorist attacks and those who had disappeared were of Jewish descent. Levinson's statement instigated a debate over what to denounce, where, how, and who enjoyed "legitimacy" to do so, and the degree to which anti-Semitism was a component of the policies that the dictatorship engaged in as part of its anti-subversion struggle.

The first voice raised against the ADL representative would not be that of a leader of the Jewish community but of a journalist who would subsequently be recognized as a victim of repression: Jacobo Timerman. The man who ran *La Opinión* sent a letter on October 1, 1976, to US Senator Donald Fraser, president of the subcommittee on human rights in Argentina. He maintained:

My newspaper, *La Opinión*, has dealt continuously with this problem [human rights], approaching it objectively, impartially, with a concern for the human rights of every inhabitant of the country. It is in this spirit that I feel obliged to point out to you the danger that comes from listening to partisan testimony, which is what I believe is occurring with your subcommittee. *La Opinión* has condemned all violence, and on several occasions it has underscored how condemning only one of the extremes,

59 Ariel Armony, "Mejor no hablar de ciertas cosas: Responsabilidad social y terrorismo de estado en Argentina," *Revista Textos para pensar la realidad* 3, No. 6 (2004): 16.

60 For a detailed analysis of the actions taken by US Jewish organizations and the conflicts that arose with the Argentine Jewish leadership, see Victor Mirelman, "Las organizaciones internacionales judías ante la represión y el antisemitismo en Argentina," in Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznadjer eds., *El legado del autoritarismo: Derechos humanos y antisemitismo en la Argentina contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Nuevo Hacer, 1995).

61 "Testimonio de Burton Levinson sobre antisemitismo en Argentina," September 28, 1976, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

whether terrorism from the left or from the right, means being an accomplice of the other extreme. This leads me, esteemed Sen. Fraser, to request that I be invited to testify before the sub-committee, out of a conviction that my testimony will serve to provide an understanding of the human rights of all Argentines, without exception, and prevent an unnecessary deterioration in relations between our two countries.⁶²

Timerman's call, as will be seen, would turn out to be contradictory: he would eventually label as "collaborationists" both those who shared his point of view and those who refused to consider his arrest as part of an anti-Semitic campaign on the part of the military.⁶³ Nevertheless, Levinson's testimony provoked a series of exchanges and demands by members of the local chapter of B'nai B'rith and their North American referents. Alfredo Neuburger, from the Argentine chapter of B'nai B'rith, addressed William Korey, director of the international council of the organization, and pointed out the negative impact Levinson's declarations had had in the Argentine press. According to the local leader, criticism of the ADL was part of an "international campaign against Argentina" and the problem was that it was articulated by a Jewish organization and referring to Jewish matters in Argentina could lead to the association of local Jewish organizations with "subversive organizations."⁶⁴

Helmut Heinemann, a member of the local B'nai B'rith, even noted in a letter to Korey that if the intention had been to destroy the Argentine office of the ADL, Levinson's declarations could not have been more to the point.⁶⁵ In fact, Levinson's testimony and the actions of the US congressional committee had an early impact in Argentina: Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, along with 55 representatives, sent a letter to Videla in early October 1976, petitioning him to make "every effort to put an end to anti-Semitic terrorism in your country."⁶⁶

An examination of the tensions provoked by Levinson's declarations demonstrates that consideration regarding petitions equating the dictatorial regime with an official anti-Semitic policy spread among various key players. In October 1976, following a meeting between members of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Argentine Foreign Minister Rear Admiral César

62 Jacobo Timerman, "Una carta al subcomité," *La Opinión*, October 1, 1976.

63 This topic will be developed in Chapter 5.

64 "Carta de Alfredo Neuburger a William Korey," October 6, 1976, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

65 "Carta de Helmut Heinemann a William Korey," October 12, 1976, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive. A letter, dated October 11, 1976, along similar lines was sent by Wolfgang Levy and Elías Zvicklich to Korey. CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

66 "Carta al Presidente Videla de diputados estadounidenses," *La Luz*, October 8, 1976.

Guzzetti, the US representatives departed, satisfied with the declarations of the Argentine government repudiating anti-Semitism. Jacobo Kovadloff declared that “Argentine Jewry is optimistic since it recognizes that Argentine society is not anti-Semitic, but rather that small right-wing groups are taking advantage of the political situation to spread hateful literature.”⁶⁷

Similarly, Marshall Meyer stated during the annual convention of the World Congress of Synagogues, which took place in Jerusalem in 1976, that he regretted “there is absolutely no truth to what many Jews wish to believe—that is, there are pogroms in the streets of Buenos Aires. It is, undoubtedly, true that I have never seen anti-Semitism better financed or organized, whether by the Arab League or by traditional local fascist circles. But at no time have such anti-Semitic manifestations enjoyed the consent of the Argentine authorities.”⁶⁸

For his part, Nissim Elnecave criticized the use of the anti-Semitism argument to accuse the dictatorial regime in the international arena. Following the tensions generated by Levinson’s testimony, *La Luz* devoted the editorials of two consecutive issues to an analysis of “Anti-Semitism in Argentina.” Elnecave maintained that international criticism of the dictatorship “feeds the extreme left.”⁶⁹ In light of the dissemination of such articles and the negative impact they had on the local Jewish community, Elnecave undertook to describe what was happening in Argentina, including to Jewish victims:

All of us Argentines are living the anguish of the tragedy of this country because the most basic human rights are being violated by the bloodiest means, especially by terrorists who have no respect even for the most inoffensive of civilians, the aged, women, and even babies still in diapers. As a consequence, they keep the government from adopting certain forms of mercy and, rather, are compelling it to impose order by the only means the terrorists can understand: force ... But this flower of Argentine youth that is falling, for no cause or motivation having to do with their origins or their nation, is not killed because it is Jewish, but because—together with their non-Jewish companions—they have raised their hand against the country, against the nation ... Thus, using the death of Jewish terrorists to muddy Argentina, imposing the belief that it has to do with an anti-Semitic attitude, means sullyng the memory of the fallen. The

67 “Diálogo con Guzzetti: satisfacción en la judeidad norteamericana,” *Mundo Israelita*, October 16, 1976; “Sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina hizo declaraciones Kovadloff a la JTA,” *La Luz*, October 22, 1976.

68 “De semana en semana,” *Mundo Israelita*, February 19, 1977.

69 “El antisemitismo en Argentina. 1) ¿Quiénes son sus artífices?,” *La Luz*, October 22, 1976.

best we can do as an act of pious devotion is to leave them alone, praying for their withered souls and begging for a spark of consolation to grace the immense pain of their forebears.⁷⁰

Such expressions, including from individuals who would go on to boost the ranks of those who denounced the regime for its policies of systematic violation of human rights, reinforce the thesis regarding the knowledge that Jewish key figures possessed concerning the motives behind and the treatment received by those arrested by the security forces. As this chapter suggests, the documentary record leads to the supposition that at least during the first phases of the dictatorial regime there was a confluence between the impossibility of expressing explicitly what was happening on the repressive level—even though it was known to all—and acceptance with respect to repressive policies directed at “bringing order” to the political and social spheres.

Neuburger’s and Elnecave’s arguments reflect the opinion of the community leadership regarding the “dangers” to the local Jewish community from the utilization of anti-Semitism in international forums. In an early interview conducted by *Mundo Israelita* with Interior Minister Harguindeguy, the latter suggested that members of the Jewish community demonstrate “the reality existing in the country regarding their participation as a collectivity, the liberty they enjoy. If they project the true image they will undermine international reports that seek from abroad to show a non-existent racial persecution.”⁷¹

As suggested previously, the idea that the Jews constituted a dimension relevant to international sensitivity prompted zealous attention by military functionaries in order to dissociate the objectives of the Process of National Reorganization from Jewish persecution. On September 9, 1977, for example, Videla held a meeting, in New York, with representatives of the AJC (Richard Maas and David Geller) and the ADL (Arnold Foster and Rabbi Morton Rosenthal), during which they spoke of anti-Semitism, human rights, and the situation of Argentina in the world.⁷² According to the report, Videla agreed that there had been violations of human rights in the “war” that the armed forces had pursued and that this was owing to “excesses” on the part of the security forces, for which he took responsibility. The delegation, according to the report, maintained that the excesses were not “isolated cases”; they also

70 “El antisemitismo en Argentina. 2) Su relación con la imagen del país,” *La Luz*, November 5, 1976.

71 “Cuatro respuestas del Ministro Gral: Albano Harguindeguy a un cuestionario de Mundo Israelita,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 24, 1976.

72 “Informe de encuentro entre el AJC y el presidente Jorge Rafael Videla,” September 16, 1977, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

admitted to the existence of Nazi groups acting with impunity and violating human rights, and noted that testimonies existed regarding the “mistreatment that Jews receive” in prison.⁷³ Videla, in order to persuade his interlocutors that the regime was not anti-Semitic, assured them that his government had had an open-door policy with respect to the leadership of the community. This statement, as seen in the previous section, was in fact true.

At the end of the meeting, Videla held a press conference at which he pointed out that Argentina was not a Nazi state. The editors of the ICUF publication felt that the Argentine president should have met head-on the “disquieting interpretation held internationally about facts relating to our Jewish community and the status of human rights” as a result of the dissemination of an image spread by elements maliciously interested in showing that the government embarked on a policy of anti-Jewish discrimination and persecution. *Tiempo* stressed that the denunciations of anti-Semitism—as well as properly documented attacks on Jewish institutions—were intended to “destabilize the democratizing process defended by General Videla.”⁷⁴

The tensions arising from the international impact of criticism of the dictatorial regime’s anti-Semitic character took on greater relevance after the arrest of Jacobo Timerman in April 1977.⁷⁵ Once the situation of the publisher of *La Opinión* was known, an international campaign was unleashed against the regime, led by diplomatic action on the part of the United States and Israel to gain his release. Ieshaiahu Anug, deputy director general of Israel’s foreign ministry in charge of Latin American matters, led a campaign of solidarity with Timerman that counted on the participation of an array of celebrities.⁷⁶

73 In a AJC report prior to the interview with Videla, Jacobo Timerman describes the threats he received which led him to leave the country and close the AJC offices in Buenos Aires. Kovadloff points out, in the concluding comments of the report, that he believes that the threats Timerman received were linked to revenge by certain right-wing sectors for closure of the magazine *Cabildo* after his and the DAIA’s criticism of its markedly anti-Semitic approach during the development of the Graiver case. See “Informe de Jacobo Kovadloff sobre cierre de oficinas de AJC en Argentina,” June 20, 1977, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

74 “Argentina no es nazi,” *Tiempo*, No. 104 (August 1977).

75 The arrest of Jacobo Timerman, carried out by security forces on April 15, 1977, was the result of a crisis that took shape over several months. The problem lay in the sources of funding for the paper *La Opinión*. David Graiver was one of the principal stockholders, and the military authorities claimed that it was he who administered the funds for the Montoneros political-military organization. See Graciela Mochkofsky, *Timerman: El periodista que quiso ser parte del poder (1923–1999)* (Buenos Aires: Debolsillo, 2004).

76 According to the testimony of Joel Barromi, a specialist in Latin American affairs at the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yeshaiahu Anug held a meeting with the German publisher Alex Springer to ask him to chair the international committee for Timerman’s release. Springer called a meeting of well-known figures, such as Marc Chagall, Aleksandr

By the same token, the steps taken by US President Jimmy Carter to obtain the release of the publisher of *La Opinión* lent international legitimacy to condemnation of the “Timerman case.”⁷⁷

While the impact and subsequent interpretations of the Timerman case within the Jewish community will be analyzed in Chapter 5, it is relevant here to underscore some repercussions of the journalist’s arrest. One of the most outstanding was the scant record of statements made by representatives of the Jewish community after his detention became known. Except for Resnizky and, later, Marshall Meyer⁷⁸ and the weekly *Nueva Presencia*, no other Jewish leader of a local institution or other Jewish publication, referred to the matter.

The reasons may be found in the motives for his detention: the consequences of the Graiver case. The first mention made by the DAIA president to Timerman’s situation was a communiqué referring to the anti-Semitic campaign mounted from the outset of the Graiver affair. In his statement, Resnizky clearly defended the role of the arrested journalist and the recognition the community owed him for the support of Israel and Zionism that he had expressed through *La Opinión*:

No, we do not know what the charges are against him and we defer, as Argentine citizens, to the decision of the tribunals of the country. But we cannot associate his name with other Jewish sounding names that appear in the newspapers because, in contrast to them, Timerman is a man who has belonged since his youth to the organized Zionist movement and he has conducted from the pages of *La Opinión* a sustained and valiant fight against Nazism and anti-Semitism.⁷⁹

Solzhenitsyn, Saul Bellow, Salvador Dalí, Milton Friedman, Margaret Thatcher, Franz Josef Strauss, Milovan Djilas, and Indro Montanelli, among others. While, as Barromi recalls, the majority did not sign on to the committee, publication of the list in the German press and its subsequent distribution among the international press, including in Argentina, lent the existence of the committee the character of an “unquestionable truth.” See Joel Barromi, “Argentina: Veinte años después. Una revisión de las políticas de Israel hacia los judíos argentinos durante la Junta Militar.” in Judit Bokser Liwerant and Alicia Gojman de Backal eds., *Encuentro y alteridad. Vida y cultura judía en América Latina* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 679–683.

77 See Mochkofsky, *Timerman: El periodista que quiso ser parte del poder*.

78 This is the first letter sent by the rabbi to a group of US Congressmen—Abraham Ribicoff, Jacob Javits, Dante Fascell, Lago Marino, Gus Yaton, Ben Gilman, and Silvio Conde—requesting that they petition Videla for Timerman’s release.

79 “Comunicado de DAIA con palabras de Nehemías Resnizky denunciando campaña anti-semita en el caso Graiver,” May 2, 1977.

During Timerman's detention, from April 15, 1977, to September 25, 1979, DAIA's statements continued to question its arbitrary nature and to demand his release, or at least to be informed of the reasons he was still under arrest. Moreover, following the outbreak of the controversy arising from the publication of Jacobo Timerman's testimonial after his release, in which he claimed that the local Jewish leadership and Nehemías Resnizky, in particular, had collaborated with the dictatorial regime and remained silent in the face of the anti-Semitic crimes it committed, Herman Schiller, the publisher of *Nueva Presencia*, maintained that it was Resnizky who in various local and international forums had demanded the release of the publisher of *La Opinión*.⁸⁰

In contrast to other community publications, only *Nueva Presencia* alluded to the Timerman case. The first reference was its reportage of Nehemías Resnizky's statement during a meeting of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in early November 1977.⁸¹ There, the DAIA president demanded that Jacobo Timerman be released because he was not part of those who were accused of collaborating with subversive elements.⁸² Subsequently, Schiller went even further. At the end of 1977 he reprinted on the cover page an editorial that James Neilson had published in *The Buenos Aires Herald* in which he equated the figure of Jacobo Timerman with the French army captain Alfred Dreyfus.⁸³

The year 1978 witnessed a rise in tensions as a result of criticism in international forums regarding human rights in the Argentine Republic. Its upcoming hosting of the World Soccer Cup and the International Cancer Congress placed the country at the center of the international stage. As a consequence, various international organizations led campaigns to boycott Argentina as a way of denouncing systematic violations of human rights on the part of the military government.⁸⁴

The place occupied by anti-Semitism was important and in this case, it showed how DAIA was actively committed to denouncing the anti-Argentine campaign and/or providing military officials with favorable arguments for rebutting any criticism of the regime. For example, following the publication

80 "Nehemías Resnizky dice su verdad," *Nueva Presencia*, November 27, 1981.

81 The WJC brings together the principal representatives of diasporic Jewish organizations.

82 "DAIA: después de Washington," *Nueva Presencia*, November 19, 1977.

83 James Neilson, "El fantasma de Dreyfus," *Nueva Presencia*, December 10, 1977.

84 On exiles in France and boycott campaigns, see Marina Franco, *El exilio: Argentinos en Francia durante la dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2008). On exiles in Israel, see Raanan Rein, "Soccer as a Doubled-Edged Weapon: Argentine Exiles in Israel Protest against the 1978 World Cup," in Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity and Diaspora* (Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2010). On exiles in Catalonia, see Silvana Jensen, "Identidad, derrotero y debate del exilio peronista en Cataluña (1976–1983)," *Hispania Nova*, No. 5 (2005).

in France of an article by Marek Halter, which was subsequently published in Israel, the DAIA leadership met head-on the attacks of the Polish-Jewish militant, who resided in Paris and was known for his escape from the Warsaw Ghetto.⁸⁵ In his article, Halter maintained that “the situation is critical for Argentine Jews”; he referred to the existence of disappeared, detentions, and torture centers and how, although everyone knew about these crimes, no one said anything about what was happening to the Jews.⁸⁶

The impact of Halter’s denunciation provoked a reaction by military and civil officials of the regime, who asked the Jewish leadership to refute the claims made in the article. Interior Minister Harguindeguy sent a letter to Nehemías Resnizky demanding a gesture of reciprocity:

It looks like the Israeli press gets its information only from a tiny minority of citizens who stand outside the law, while at the same time the truly representative publications of the community do little to make the truth known ... Just as your institution presents its worries or petitions in the face of any sign of anti-Semitic activity in the Argentine Republic, I would suggest that as Argentines of Jewish descent, in the interests of coherency, you should make your voices be heard when a false and distorted action or piece of information has its origin or is published in the State of Israel.⁸⁷

At the DAIA session immediately following receipt of Harguindeguy’s letter, Resnizky pointed out flaws in the information concerning the nature of what Jewish communities in Latin America were experiencing. He noted that the circulation of newspaper articles originated in elements interested in distorting the Jewish reality in Latin America in order to satisfy “unmentionable and spurious” ends. Therefore, DAIA’s mission was to state that these opinions were groundless and put community life in a delicate situation.⁸⁸

85 An issue of the magazine *Gente*, devoted to promoters of the “anti-Argentine campaign,” interviewed Marek Halter, who was introduced as a “professional international protester.” The interview was conducted by Samuel Gelblung. “Cara a cara con los jefes de la campaña antiargentina,” *Gente*, May 26, 1978.

86 Marek Halter, “La tragédie de Juifs en Argentine et en URSS,” *Le Monde*, March 4, 1978.

87 “Carta de Ministro del Interior, Albano Harguindeguy, a Nehemías Resnizky,” June 5, 1978, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive. See also “¿En la Argentina no hay antisemitismo?” *La Luz*, April 7, 1978; “Traducción de entrevista de Marzel Zohar a Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, vicealmirante Oscar Montes,” CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive; “Idiot Ajaronot entrevistó al canciller argentino,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 15, 1978.

88 “Apreciaciones sobre temas actuales en una reunión de DAIA,” *Mundo Israelita*, June 10, 1978.

As a consequence of this episode, according to Klich, during a meeting of the governing body of the WJC, DAIA proposed issuing a communiqué urging the curbing of statements made by international Jewish entities and ensuring that they accorded with the position adopted by the leading Jewish organizations of the country. The motion was approved at a meeting of the WJC in Israel in June 1978.⁸⁹

It was in this context that DAIA signed a petition to condemn the anti-Argentine campaign, along with 300 other civic organizations. The petition—which was published in English, Italian, Portuguese, German, and French—was an initiative of the Argentine Chamber of Advertisers, which sought to stem overseas campaigns to boycott the World Soccer Cup and the International Cancer Congress.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, denunciation of the anti-Argentine campaign and the victory of the Argentine national soccer team were not perceived in the same way by local Jewish entities. While *Mundo Israelita*, for example, echoed the official slogan, “We’ve already won the World Cup,” since the event placed the country in the eye of the world, undermining intentions of bad faith and showing a powerful country at peace,⁹¹ *Nueva Presencia* and *Tiempo*, on the other hand, highlighted problems that still persisted in Argentina: censorship, the unemployed, the homeless, and the disappeared.⁹²

After the conclusion of the World Soccer Cup, the question of the disappeared and the effect of repressive policies on Jewish citizens began to take on a higher profile. *Tiempo* published the first lists compiled by the Argentine League for Human Rights (LADH),⁹³ letters from relatives of the disappeared,⁹⁴ and petitions from the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH).⁹⁵ *La Luz* devoted its front page and a major article to an interview by the Israeli

89 Ignacio Klich, “Política comunitaria durante las Juntas Militares: La DAIA durante el Proceso de Reorganización Militar,” in Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, 286–288.

90 “La verdadera Argentina también es noticia,” *Mundo Israelita*, June 24, 1978.

91 “El símbolo del Mundial,” *Mundo Israelita*, July 1, 1978.

92 “Nueva etapa: Restaurar la democracia,” *Tiempo*, July 1978; “Un domingo para pensar,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 1, 1978; “Nuestro país, epicentro mundial,” *Tiempo*, No. 116 (August 1978).

93 “Acción de la LADH,” *Tiempo*, No. 97 (December 1976).

94 “Carta de Dr. Max Krawczyk enviada a Videla: Un comando naziantisemita en San Fernando,” *Tiempo*, No. 91 (June 1976).

95 “El aspecto antijudío: víctimas de la subversión,” *Tiempo*, No. 104 (August 1977); “Mensaje a favor de la mujer, el niño y la familia,” *Tiempo*, No. 119 (November 1978).

journalist Marcel Zohar with the Interior Minister Harguindeguy concerning the “fate of 300 disappeared Jews.”⁹⁶

A series of events in 1979 would bring center stage the question of human rights, particularly the cases of arrested and disappeared of Jewish origin, and the response by the Jewish leadership to demands from those who had been affected by clandestine anti-Semitism. Before the release and deportation of Jacobo Timerman, which will be discussed in Chapter 5, the first public demonstration of the Madres de Plaza Mayo took place, including a plea for DAIA’s intervention in the inquiry into the fate of the arrested and disappeared.

On January 29, 1979, René Epelbaum and other mothers of arrested and disappeared children sent a letter to the governing board of DAIA in which they described the degrading treatment received by “Jews who are in or have been in such conditions.” The letter maintained that “the situation of the country is reminiscent of Hitler’s Germany.” Nevertheless, the women’s demands also underscored another matter: they blamed DAIA for censoring criticism of international Jewish organizations regarding violations of human rights in Argentina.⁹⁷

The letter was taken up on March 12, 1979, at the DAIA plenary session. Nehemías Resnizky asserted that while the pain of the “mothers” was understandable, it needed to be pointed out, that a “good part of the signatures did not come from Jewish mothers, although they indicated that there was an underlying anti-Semitic character in the disappearance of their children.” Resnizky went on to affirm that it was inappropriate for DAIA to inquire into the actions and/or declarations expressed by another entity of the Jewish community.⁹⁸

Finally, Resnizky stated that behind the legitimate anguish of the mothers, there were factors interested in undermining the image of DAIA in the community and the country. He maintained that from the outset of the anti-subversion struggle, DAIA had opened its doors, “without undertaking to judge the guilt or the innocence of persons arrested or disappeared,” in order to deal with the legitimate demands of their families. Nevertheless, as will be shown in Chapter 6, Resnizky’s statement would also be subject to doubt by the relatives of the Jewish arrested/disappeared, who maintained that the organization

96 Marcel Zohar, “Entrevista al Ministro del Interior, Albano Harguindeguy, ‘Nada le puedo decir sobre los 300 judíos desaparecidos,’” *La Luz*, January 17, 1979.

97 Joni Brenda, “Al margen de una carta de protesta dirigida a la DAIA,” *La Luz*, February 26, 1979.

98 “DAIA: la carta de las madres,” *La Luz*, March 16, 1979.

had closed its doors to them and asked questions about the militancy of the victims.⁹⁹

The fact is that considerations regarding the motives that had brought about the arrest of those being sought by the mothers had not yet been depoliticized.¹⁰⁰ Thus, in contrast to Resnizky's reservations in regard to the letters from the mothers, *La Luz* columnist Joni Brenda angrily addressed the women for their lack of a "single word condemning the guerrillas, the extreme left, and every manner of political blight that had taken the country to the edge of civil war."¹⁰¹

In May 1979 the DAIA president invited Boris Pasik¹⁰² to participate in DAIA's Territorial Convention to take place in the city of Córdoba toward the end of that month. Pasik declined the invitation for personal reasons: one of the days on which the convention was due to take place corresponded with the third anniversary of the abduction and disappearance of his son. In the letter sent by Pasik to Resnizky thanking him for DAIA's thoughtfulness in inviting him, he observed that he and the DAIA president had discussed the subject on numerous occasions.¹⁰³

At the same time, Pasik suggested to Resnizky that one of the themes that should be covered during the session devoted to analyzing "The Present Situation of the Jewish Community in Argentina" was the case of the disappeared and that it should take priority because there are "hundreds of them who are Jews."¹⁰⁴ However, judging by what transpired during the convention, held from May 24 to 27, 1979, Pasik's demand went unheeded.

By contrast, Resnizky's opening speech extolled the military government, from justifying the legitimacy of the military coup as a response to the previous unstable situation, to discrediting denunciations of anti-Semitism made

99 "Replica al Informe sobre detenidos y desaparecidos judíos 1976–1983," in Senkman, *El antisemitismo en la Argentina*, 422.

100 As Crenzel maintains, it was after the 1979 visit by the Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos and its subsequent report on the situation of human rights in the country that there began to take place in Argentina a new heartfelt respect for those affected by the repressive policies of the dictatorship and replacement of the label of the detained as "combatants" with that of "victims." See Emilio Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca Más: La memoria de las desapariciones en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 2008).

101 Joni Brenda, "Al margen de una carta de protesta dirigida a la DAIA."

102 Boris Pasik was a well-known actor during those years.

103 "Carta de Boris Pasik a Resnizky," May 17, 1979, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

104 "Carta de Boris Pasik a Resnizky."

by international Jewish organizations.¹⁰⁵ The only allusion to the issue of the disappeared during his speech was to point out that, owing to sentiments of “piety and mercy” and in response to the requests of relatives who had approached the organization, DAIA had transmitted to the national authorities its concern for the Jewish arrested/disappeared, “without going into who was responsible.” Still, Resnizky’s speech referred only to the problem of those affected for whom DAIA was serving as a representative. This position was far removed from Boris Pasik’s request that the issue of the disappeared be considered a grave problem affecting Argentina’s political situation.

3 Some Considerations

As maintained at the outset of this chapter, public threats, manifestations, and actions of an anti-Semitic nature were impugned by various Jewish community organizations. DAIA in particular, as a body recognized by state agencies as the legitimate representative of the Jewish community, adopted a series of strategies, which included engaging with officials who occupied important posts in the military regime.

The demands they made indicate that public anti-Semitism was considered by community representatives to be the continuation of practices that groups of the anti-Semitic nationalist right had been pursuing prior to the institution of the military dictatorship. In the two cases brought for ministerial resolution, namely the “Civic and Moral Formation” affair and the interview by Enrique Llamas de Madariaga with engineer Jaime Rozenblum, Jewish community organizations were able to express their grievances and obtain concessions from the military authorities. The “reformulation” of the contents of the school course and the possibility of providing television time to rabbis and allowing for future showing of the *Holocaust* television series resulted from representations made by DAIA.

Thus, the demands made to military officials were dealt with relatively effectively. However, it should be emphasized that while satisfactory replies were forthcoming in all of the petitions analyzed, the measures taken never fully resolved the matter: anti-Semitic attacks and threats continued during the years of the military dictatorship. It is possible, then, to appreciate how publicly the military dictatorship was not only willing to maintain a dialogue with

105 Nehemías Resnizky, “Hemos combatido y seguiremos combatiendo sin tregua todo aquellos que lesiones los intereses, la dignidad y el decoro judío,” *Boletín Convención Territorial DAIA* 1979, May 1979, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

representatives of the organized Jewish community but demonstrated eagerness to do so. Still, the abstention from public anti-Semitism on the part of the dictatorial regime's hierarchy might have been motivated by an early consideration that worried its officials: the effect of international condemnation of the regime for its anti-Jewish character.

The demand made by Interior Minister Albano Harguindeguy regarding Marek Halter's article and the international repercussions of criticism regarding the Jews' situation in Argentina also highlight the pressures on the local Jewish leadership by military officials. The zeal with which they dealt with the demands of the latter was not gratuitous: when the regime required public confirmation in rejecting accusations in the international sphere, it could rely on the testimony of Jewish representatives that "absolute religious liberty" existed in the country.

Nevertheless, clandestine anti-Semitism was considered differently. While Jewish key players had early knowledge of repressive practices perpetrated by the military dictatorship, public pronouncements came late. Even on some occasions, as when international Jewish agencies denounced the treatment given to arrested Jews, leaders of the main entities rejected accusations regarding the anti-Semitic character of the regime. Nevertheless, as this study points out, DAIA was not alone in responding in this way; others reacted similarly as well, including those who were subsequently affected by the repressive policy (Jacobsohn) or who were praised for being detractors of the dictatorship (Marshall Meyer).

Yet some community organs presented evidence or reproduced petitions of human rights organizations. *Tiempo*, followed by *Nueva Presencia*, provided information about denunciations of arrests/disappearances at the hands of the military dictatorship. And *La Luz* reprinted the articles Marzel Zohar published in the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronot* dealing with arrested-disappeared Jews.

The Dimensions of “Normalcy” and the Flourishing Public Life of Jewish Institutions

In problematizing the reception of the decree banning issues of *Militancia*, as analyzed in the preceding chapter, the DAIA leadership stressed that one of their main objectives was maintaining “institutional specificity” of the Argentine Jewish community. In contrast to the perceived halcyon days of the third Peronist government, the proposal to maintain normalcy in institutional life was no small matter. Nevertheless, as the leaders themselves subsequently pointed out, when during the first stages of the democratic transition they were accused of having done nothing in the face of the arrest/disappearance of individuals of Jewish origin, institutional life was flourishing under the dictatorship.

The notions of “normalcy” and “flourishing” were transformed, from then on, into a central debate regarding the attitude of the community leadership during the military dictatorship. This was more in order to impugn the practices of those who headed the main institutions than to inquire into what was meant by the terms “normalcy” and “flourishing.” But why should these words describing institutional Jewish life during the period of the dictatorship surprise us? Might it perhaps be more correct to point out the record of “normalized” life in a context marked by a *state of exception*?

In a work reflecting on his own historiographic production, Carlo Ginzburg points out that “those who study the functioning of a society on the basis of its norms, or statistical fictions such as median man or average woman, inevitably go no farther than the surface.”¹ Perhaps, then, we should reconsider the approaches used to research the life of the Jewish community during the military dictatorship. As Ginzburg says, “I believe that the intense analysis of an anomalous case can turn out to be infinitely more fruitful.”

If studies on the dictatorship have centered on explaining the repressive character of the regime, it is no small matter to understand how a group—supposedly sensitive to policies of persecution—could lead a public life without feeling threatened. Perhaps it might even help to explain why, for the Jewish leadership, the disappearance of individuals of Jewish origin neither

1 Carlo Ginzburg, “Brujas y chamanes,” in Carlo Ginzburg, *El hilo y las huellas: Lo verdadero, lo falso, lo ficticio* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 424.

constituted a central issue nor even affected the dynamics of institutional life. For in contrast to the tensions that characterized Jewish life in the period covered by the first chapter, institutional life during the period of the dictatorship flourished in an unprecedented way, at least in living memory.

Moreover, documentary examination enables the proposal of a hypothesis that is even more controversial: the development of certain activities within the framework of Jewish institutions offered an aura of security and even liberty for individuals who were at risk if they had undertaken those same activities in other contexts. Argentine writer Liliana Hecker reveals in an interview with María Matilde Ollier that during the dictatorship she began to lead literary workshops in the Idisher Folks Teater (IFT) that were “to the left”: “It was impressive to see the number of people who showed up, and the workshops were quite a phenomenon, because during the dictatorship they functioned as small realms of freedom where people could read and, for example, talk about Freud, who was banned on the outside.”²

The IFT, located in the Once neighborhood, was a left-wing theater belonging to the Jewish community. As in Hecker’s case, study of the documentary material reveals diverse voices coming from the universities, journalism, the economy, and politics, which found a place to “talk,” as well as a public that, was willing to listen.

The present chapter will attempt to establish the nature of this boom, as well as the degree of normalcy of institutional life under the dictatorship, by demonstrating how some spaces served as bulwarks for political, cultural, and social practices which stood in contrast to the cultural model of the military regime. In turn, this will lead to focus on a no less important issue: a diversity of matters on the so-called institutional and/or Jewish agenda with respect to which key community figures could take a position, often not without confrontation, as evidence that they were interested not only in problems of national politics.

Finally, through a detailed examination of the record of public activities pursued by Jewish community institutions, this study will question the notion of the extensive anti-Semitism that characterized the dictatorship. While the bibliography on Argentine Jews emphasizes the anti-Semitic character of the dictatorial regime, the broad array of public activities, along with the unrestricted development of public life within the community, challenges this description. Therefore, the daily life of the Jews and/or their institutions during that period should be examined through a more hairsplitting lens.

² María Matilde Ollier, *De la Revolución Argentina a la democracia: Cambios privados, públicos y políticos de la izquierda argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2009), 109.

1 Political Activity, Participation, and Debates

Novaro and Palermo have shown that the strategies of the military dictatorship for blocking any opposition to the regime included zealously suppressing the use of *public space*. Understanding the latter as a space open to everyone for free expression and association, the regime was successful in preventing these rights for several years in unprecedented fashion.³ Nevertheless, in line with Ginzburg’s analysis, the examination of documentary sources of the Jewish community enabled the recording of diverse anomalies that call into question the assertion regarding the restriction of public space. A little more than a month after the military coup, ICUF organized the first public act authorized by the military junta: commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The event, held at the Majestic Movie Theater on April 25, 1976, took place, surprisingly, under the slogans:

Stop the spread of fascism in Latin America and Argentina / Stand up against terrorism no matter what its stripe, and the threat of a military coup / Stand up against anti-Semitism and racial hatred fed by fascism / Stand up for peace in the Middle East / Say NO to fascism. Solidarity with our brothers in South Africa who are subjected to terror! Stand up against the killings, kidnappings, and assaults of the fascist gangs.⁴

Reportedly, a large number of people showed up for the “first public activity with political content authorized in the Federal Capital by the new national authorities.”⁵ Berta Drucaroff, president of the ICUF-affiliated Comité 19 de Abril, spoke, along with Eduardo Pimentel, León Ianulewicz (advisor to the Polish embassy), and Rubén Sinay. Closing the event, the Argentine Theater Group for All (GATT, as per the Spanish acronym) performed excerpts from the play *I, Bertolt Brecht, Say*, performed at the IFT Theater.⁶

3 Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1977/1983: Del golpe de Estado a la restauración democrática* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003), 150.

4 “Convocatoria Acto de Levantamiento del Ghetto de Varsovia,” *Tiempo*, No. 88 (March 1976). The April issue of *Tiempo* confirms the event: “El gran acto antifascista está autorizado.”

5 “El Gran Acto Antifascista,” *Tiempo*, No. 90 (May 1976).

6 The play was directed by Marcelo Soto and its full title was “I, Bertolt Brecht Say (poems of exiles, songs, and biographical information).” The same theater ran other plays with texts by Bertolt Brecht during the military dictatorship: *The Tutor* (Enrique Laportilla, 1980) and *The Good Person of Szechwan* (Miguel Candella and Horacio Medrano, 1981). See Osvaldo Pelletieri, *De Bertolt Brecht a Ricardo Monti. Teatro en lengua alemana y teatro argentino, 1900–1994* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1994).

As in the case of the Comité 19 de Abril gathering, events marking the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Israel's Independence Day took place throughout the period. Even though, as pointed out in Chapter 2, a shift could be observed to militant speeches by youth representatives, they attracted a huge turnout.

In the following year, *Mundo Israelita* noted that the commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising turned out to be the most significant activity for mobilizing the Jewish community, and therefore the organizers should have realized that the room at the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA) was too small.⁷ As a result, some of the audience was forced to stand in the hallways or leave.⁸

Similarly, in 1978, 20,000 people attended the Israel Independence Day celebration, which took place in Luna Park.⁹ This huge turnout was due to a dispute that arose among community representatives over the rapprochement between Israel and Egypt at the end of 1977. On March 26, 1979, with the signing of the Camp David accords, a multitude of people showed up outside the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires to witness the signing of the agreement—transmitted via satellite on Channels 11 and 13—and to celebrate the “steps toward peace in the Middle East.” Subsequently, the article continues, Jewish community institutions held all manner of festive activities. The main ones were held at the temple of Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina's (CIRA) and at the SHA.¹⁰ An event of similar magnitude was held on August 17, 1980, by the main community organizations—DAIA, AMIA, OSA, and CJJA—at the Gran Rex Theater, at which Israeli military and political leader Yitzhak Rabin was present.¹¹

Despite the prohibition on political activities, young members of Zionist organizations who identified with the Israeli pacifist movement Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), created a local chapter in Buenos Aires.¹² Although youth militancy was publicly confined to dealing with Zionist problems, it produced tensions within the Jewish institutional network. News of a group joining the Israeli pacifist movement caused local key players linked to the conservative

7 “Homenaje en nuestro medio a los héroes del Ghetto de Varsovia,” *Mundo Israelita*, March 19, 1977.

8 “El 34° aniversario de la rebelión del Ghetto de Varsovia fue recordado por la judeidad argentina,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 23, 1977.

9 “En vibrante manifestación la comunidad festejó el 30° Aniversario de la Independencia de Israel,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 20, 1978; “El Luna Park fue totalmente colmado en un memorable ‘Saludo a Israel,’” *La Luz*, May 19, 1978.

10 “Inolvidable jornada vivió la comunidad,” *La Luz*, March 30, 1979.

11 “Itzjak Rabin habla a la Argentina,” *Mundo Israelita*, August 9, 1980.

12 “Paz Ahora, también aquí,” *Nueva Presencia*, September 1, 1978.

Israel Likud Party to voice their opposition: what Israel needed was a "secure peace."¹³

The young people who belonged to the local chapter of Peace Now marched to the editorial offices of *Nueva Presencia*, located at 330 Castelli St. in Buenos Aires, to express their "wish that the Camp David meeting between Begin and Sadat would be fruitful." The parade, which wove through the streets of the Once neighborhood, was criticized by *La Luz* editor-in-chief Nissim Elnecave, who held that "Israel's foreign policies cannot be decided by a street demonstration," and even less so when those who were marching were "unaware of being used by Third World agitators who, in the final analysis, could help the extreme anti-Israel left."¹⁴

These would not be the only debates that would feed the rallies. Between September and October of 1978, the Flores neighborhood in Buenos Aires would witness a strange episode. In response to the decision of the authorities of the *Círculo Social Hebreo Argentino* to open, against religious restrictions, one of its facilities on Saturdays, a large group of Orthodox Jews showed up at the locale to voice their opposition to the decision. Finally, after another demonstration on October 14, in which some participants broke several of the building's windows, the police intervened and, a number of religious protestors were arrested and tried; they were released several days later.¹⁵

Demonstrations by young people and confrontations between Jews in the streets of Flores demonstrated that political activity and mobilization within the Jewish community were not banned. OSA, for example, called for a "massive affiliation campaign" a few months after the armed forces had taken power. As the ads printed in the community press show, there is no mention of any security measures and/or conditions for those wishing to sign up.¹⁶

The affiliation campaign, initiated as a result of the upcoming election of OSA leaders, even led to a series of debates regarding the need to "restructure the organization." Factions tied to socialist Zionism, for example, criticized the establishment for opposing a new generation of representatives, pointing out

13 See "La paz en Israel y el agitacionismo tercermundista," *La Luz*, June 2, 1978; "¿Paz ahora?—¿Paz segura?" *La Luz*, March 30, 1979.

14 "La paz en Israel y el agitacionismo tercermundista."

15 "Enfrentamiento entre los sefaradim en Flores," *La Luz*, November 3, 1978. During the same year, according to Susana Brauner, Orthodox religious groups—such as Jabad Lubavitch—began to celebrate Jewish festivals with parades in the streets of Buenos Aires. Concerning the various factions of Orthodox religious Judaism during the dictatorship, see Susana Brauner, "En dictadura y democracia: 'argentinos', ultraortodoxos y banqueros," in Susana Brauner, *Ortodoxia religiosa y pragmatismo político: Los judíos de origen sirio* (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2009).

16 "Con intensidad se desarrolla la campaña de afiliación," *Mundo Israelita*, July 10, 1976.

that while the Zionist political parties are those that “make the decisions,” the Jewish people identify neither with them nor with their platforms, and they participate even less in their ranks.¹⁷ Similarly, factions antagonistic to socialist Zionism criticized the official party, Avodá, for electing its leaders via “secret meetings and backroom deals.”¹⁸

In contrast to what was occurring at the national, provincial, and local political levels, political disputes and electoral battles were not limited to the Jewish community, nor did the latter attempt to suppress them, except on one occasion that will be detailed below. Unlike with political parties and labor unions, the National Executive Power did not intervene in Jewish institutions, nor were institutional leadership appointments automatically renewed. In April 1976, while *La Luz* was proclaiming that it was imperative to “eradicate Peronist deadwood from the Judeo-Argentine leadership,”¹⁹ Nehemías Resnizky was re-elected president of DAIA by members of the organization’s plenary session.²⁰ In his inauguration speech, he maintained:

[T]he period during which the outgoing directorship served was perhaps the most difficult in history since the fratricide of 1820, and it was especially difficult for the Jewish community because of the renewed aggression of Arab propaganda and that of its associates, as well as the ever-present anti-Semites and the zealous anti-Zionist left. Given these parameters that were so difficult and delicate, we can say that the Jewish community has survived the storm, at least to the degree of not having modified its educational, religious, and community activities in the midst of the tempest.²¹

Resnizky’s reference to the third Peronist government as the “most difficult stage in Argentine life,” and even worse for the Jewish community, demonstrates how key figures assessed the period immediately preceding the takeover by the armed forces. But, more significant for understanding the parameters for evaluating the conduct of the Jewish community was Resnizky’s

17 “La situación de la OSA: Un camino: reestructuración,” *Nueva Sión*, September, 1976.

18 “El Establishment judío frente a la juventud,” *La Luz*, May 7, 1976.

19 Nissim Elenecave, “Erradicar las lacras peronistas de la conducción judeo-argentina,” *La Luz*, April 9, 1976. See the debate on the “betrayers” in Chapter 2 of this study.

20 “La DAIA en estos años difíciles fue un medio decisivo para luchar por la dignidad judía,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 10, 1976; “El Dr. Nehemías Resnizky redesignado presidente de la DAIA,” *La Luz*, April 9, 1976.

21 “El Dr. Nehemías Resnizky redesignado presidente de la DAIA.”

confirmation of DAIA's objectives for the period: maintenance of the “normal” functioning of Jewish institutional life.

The reference to institutional “normalcy” was made by key figures who were contemporaneous with the progress of Jewish life during the dictatorship. This point is relevant since the criticism directed against the community leadership maintained that DAIA had congratulated itself on having maintained “normal functioning” of institutional life during the democratic transition. This judgment was impugned as an *ex post facto* formula of objectives conceived by the organization for protecting itself against the criticism of relatives of those affected by the repressive policies of the military dictatorship and others who opposed the political leadership of the Jewish community.

Despite subsequent criticism of Resnizky, members of the DAIA board reelected him in 1978. As in 1976, in his inauguration speech he defended the objectives adopted by the DAIA leadership during those difficult times (1973–78): “upholding the normal functioning of Jewish life in the country, avoiding the isolation toward which hostile factions wanted to lead Argentine Jewish life, while not failing to denounce the attacks on the dignity and smooth running of Jewish life in the country.”²²

Demonstrating its success, Resnizky underscored how, given the priority of the National Reorganization Process's anti-subversion struggle, DAIA was able to concern itself with the propagators of anti-Semitism and Nazi literature. Finally, he maintained that the steps taken by the organization made it possible for rabbis to visit Jewish political prisoners. Nevertheless, he noted that the community leadership was preoccupied with a particular matter: the arbitrary arrest of Jacobo Timerman:

We still do not know what he is accused of and obviously we respect the verdict reached by the courts of our country. On numerous occasions we have expressed our concern for his fate, a circumstance that we reiterate today. We do so, not only because the court that judged him exonerated him of any charge of subversion, but also because Jacobo Timerman has maintained a continuous and courageous struggle against anti-Semitism and Nazism, identifying himself fully and openly with Israel and the Zionist movement.²³

22 “Renuevan autoridades de la DAIA: el Dr. N. Resnizky reelecto presidente,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 1, 1978.

23 Ibid.

As in 1976, the DAIA leadership was ready in 1978 to maintain the normal development of Jewish life in Argentina, while attending to new issues that arose during the period: the situation of Jewish political prisoners and the continued detention of Timerman. Nevertheless, as Resnizky's speech suggests, none of these factors affected the advancement of institutional activities. When Resnizky's term at the DAIA helm ended in 1981, his administration was feted by those who, only a few years earlier, had been his detractors. At the event marking the conclusion of his presidency, Schiller characterized the particular historical period during which Resnizky had headed the organization: over the time he was the DAIA leader there were eight presidents: Oganía, Levingston, Lanusse, Lastiri, Cámpora, Perón, Martínez de Perón, and Videla. Yet despite the fissures in Argentine political life, Schiller's editorial assessment was positive:

In sum: various governments (military thugs, ultra-leftists, Peronist, ultra-rightists) have filed past during the administration of Resnizky and the team that worked with him. Yet the community managed to emerge unscathed (and even with dignity) from every contretemps ... His administration, apart from the questionable "pragmatism" in response to objective conditions, is worth remembering (one might even say that at one time it was progressive, at least in its general outlines) and its contradictions reveal the enormous difficulty for Diaspora Judaism ... to yoke its Jewishness with the vast array of problems that trouble contemporary mankind.²⁴

The dynamics of the political game that went on within DAIA continued, despite the restrictions imposed on the national political space. More significant than the alternatives for rehabilitating the leadership of DAIA was the possibility of carrying out open elections in organizations such as AMIA and OSA. In 1977, a convocation took place to refresh membership of OSA's national convention and the election of local delegates to participate in the Congress of the World Zionist Organization. According to *La Luz*, on August 15, a meeting of DAIA took place "behind closed doors" at which mediation efforts were

²⁴ Herman Schiller, "Diez años volcánicos," *Nueva Presencia*, June 20, 1980, 1–3. It should be noted that for the first time the editorial mentions the protests of some of the mothers of the disappeared over the lack of attention given to them by DAIA. By the same token, it points out that many voices refuted that claim.

reportedly made to decide whether it was appropriate, following the upsurge in anti-Semitism provoked by the Gaiver case, to go ahead with the OSA elections.²⁵

Nevertheless, the elections took place on September 27 of that year with the participation of seven lists of candidates: Likud, Renewal, Non-aligned, Mapam, Avodá, Sephardis, Mizrachis. A public round table took place before the voting at the seat of the Centro de Educación Judía, organized by *Nueva Presencia*, the Club de Padres de Escuelas Hebreas (Horim), and the Confederación Juvenil Judeo Argentina, which included candidates of each group.²⁶ More than two hundred people attended.²⁷ Finally, the electoral contest saw 6,220 votes cast by OSA affiliates, out of 22,686 who were eligible to vote, resulting in victory for the incumbent Avodá party, which won with 1,813 votes.²⁸

A similar situation occurred in May 1978: seven lists participated in the elections for a new AMIA board of directors. In contrast with what had occurred the previous year in the OSA elections, on this occasion there were alliances and ruptures among the political parties of the community. Fraie Schtime, for example, broke with Mapam because of its refusal to sign onto the latter's Zionist program. As a consequence, the socialist Zionist grouping aligned itself with the incumbent party, Avodá. At the same time, former senators of the Radical Party, Zenón Goldstraj and José Jaritonsky, formed a group, Dash, which shared candidates with the opposition party, Jerut.²⁹

The election took place with 9,000 voters, 2,000 more than in the previous election in 1974. The winning alliance was Avodá-Mapam, which received the support of 4,019 votes, 45 percent of those cast.³⁰ According to *Nueva Presencia's* analysis, the victory of Avodá-Mapam stood in contrast to what was happening in the Jewish political arena in Israel and the Diaspora:

25 "En la DAIA se inclinan para que no haya elecciones sionistas," *La Luz*, August 26, 1977; "¿Quién decide si hay elecciones sionistas?," *La Luz*, October 7, 1977.

26 "El sionismo argentino, hoy," *Nueva Presencia*, November 19, 1977.

27 "OSA: elecciones e incógnitas," *Nueva Presencia*, November 26, 1977.

28 *Ibíd.*; "Deparó sorpresas el comicio sionista," *La Luz*, January 1, 1978 *Nuevas Presencia's* analysis underscores an important issue: the previous OSA elections took place in 1971, as voting was not permitted during the Peronist democratic government. In that election, only 2,597 persons participated. See "Ajustada victoria de Avodá," *Nueva Presencia*, December 3, 1977.

29 "Comicios a la vista," *Nueva Presencia*, April 24, 1978.

30 "Inobjetable triunfo de Avodá en la elecciones de AMIA," *La Luz*, June 2, 1978; "El frente comunitario de Avodá afirmó su posición mayoritaria en los comicios," *Mundo Israelita*, May 27, 1978.

Differing from what is happening in Israel and the rest of the world's Jewish communities, where there is a turn toward the Likud, Avodá in Argentina rolled over its opponents with 45% of the votes. Their win was not only due to the "apparatus" they mobilized. Rather, the voters were mobilized by lay-progressive [activists] who advocated against the religious parties. That is, those ideology-driven factions voted against the only one that could stop the advance of regressive tendencies.³¹

As can be seen, mobilization, participation, and political debates regarding the leadership of central community institutions experienced no interruptions during the dictatorial period. On only one occasion did some leaders of Jewish political parties resolve not to hold elections for new leaders: in 1981 an agreement was reached on a single slate for the AMIA board of directors. This initiative was not a consequence of the prohibition on politics but of the profound economic crisis suffered by community institutions due to the inflationary spiral that characterized the period.³²

Accordingly, representatives of all of the organizations and movements that had participated in the previous elections (1978) agreed not to incur "extraordinary expenses" and to present a single slate of candidates for the AMIA board of directors, preserving the status quo that was the result of the previous election.³³ Alberto Crupnicoff, who was "elected" AMIA president, asserted immediately after assuming his position that the "community finds itself experiencing a grave economic situation" and that, as one of the first measures, he had to "freeze the process of salary increases."³⁴ As will be seen below, there were subsequent protests and strikes among workers of the Jewish community.

Even ICUF which, as noted, did not participate in the struggle for the distribution of power in DAIA, AMIA, and OSA, was able to convoke, in 1976 and 1980, the 11th and 12th ICUF congresses, in which the political platform of associated groups was discussed.³⁵ In 1981, Icufiadas 81 took place in which more than 700 young persons participated and "expressed their opinion regarding topics that are of concern to youth and Argentine citizenry." For example, spokespersons

31 "Lecciones de una elección," *Nueva Presencia*, May 27, 1978.

32 Tobías Kamenzain, "El momento que vivimos justifica una lista unificada para la AMIA," *Mundo Israelita*, May 16, 1981.

33 "Solicitada: Un acuerdo para conformar una lista unificada en AMIA," *Mundo Israelita*, April 25, 1981.

34 "AMIA: la juventud al poder," *Nueva Presencia*, September 4, 1981.

35 "Llamamiento del XI Congreso del ICUF," *Tiempo*, No. 95 (October 1976); "Al congreso del ICUF, ¡salud!" *Tiempo*, No. 140 (October 1980).

for the Radical Civic Union Party’s (UCR) Youth, and a member of the Argentine Council for Peace, participated in the “socio-political” session.³⁶

These events for the planning of community activities relied on public convocations in which representatives of diverse Jewish institutions with bases in various Argentine provinces participated. In 1979 two major meetings took place: the DAIA Territorial Convention³⁷ took place in Córdoba, and the Argentine Republic’s Convention of Jewish Institutions, organized by the Permanent Plenary of Presidents (PPP), was held in the SHA Theater in Buenos Aires.

The PPP originated during the inflationary crisis of the last Peronist government. It brought together all of the institutions, which were represented by their presidents, with the goal of establishing mechanisms that could bring order and efficiency to management of the finances of the Jewish institutional network. But some of the representatives promptly saw it as an attempt to construct a “super-entity” and/or a new umbrella organization for the Jewish community, which would endanger DAIA’s supremacy,³⁸ and also make evident its inability to represent Jewish life in Argentina.³⁹

The PPP convention, centering on the theme “Challenges to the Jewish Community of Argentina in the 1980s,” was aimed at fortifying the organizational structure of the Jewish community by seeing to its modernization.⁴⁰ More than 300 delegates, from 82 organizations from the Federal Capital, the Province of Buenos Aires, and the rest of the country, participated in the meeting. As part of its proposal for modernizing the community structure, the convention called for the incorporation of professional elements in the tasks of consulting, coordination, and leadership of community organizations, and rationalization of the economic administration of the institutional network in order to optimize its functioning.⁴¹

In addition to the recommendations in the convention’s official publication, there were several behind-the-scenes disagreements among various representatives. During preparations for the event, PPP secretary Abraham Gak, and the

36 “Icufiada 81,” *Tiempo*, No. 14 (August 1981).

37 Participants in the event and the topics of discussion were analyzed in Ch. III.

38 “Las tres P, una sigla que inquieta a muchos,” *Nueva Presencia*, August 10, 1979.

39 “¿Para qué un Plenario Permanente de Presidentes?” *La Luz*, October 8, 1977; “El PPP y la estructura de la colectividad judía,” *La Luz*, July 20, 1979.

40 “Desafíos de la Comunidad Judía de la Argentina para la Década del 80” (Convención de Instituciones Judías de la Republica Argentina, Buenos Aires, August 15–17, 1979). Cuadernillo de conclusiones del Plenario Permanente de Presidentes, Archivo Centro de Documentación Marc Turkow.

41 “Desafíos de la Comunidad Judía de la Argentina.”

publisher of *Nueva Presencia*, Herman Schiller, welcomed the inclusion of a session on the “national context” among the topics for debate.⁴² Nevertheless, the document on this session, whose drafting was assigned to Daniel Muchnik, Herman Schiller, Rabbi Roberto Graetz, Marcos Aguinis, and Mario Diamant, was censored.

According to Muchnik, “the leadership looks at reality from a corner, as if they were indifferent bystanders.” However, he gave assurances that none of the seven points dealt with said anything that was “dangerous” or “compromising” with regard to what was happening on the national level, with the exception of criticism of the Moral and Civic Formation course mandated by Juan Rafael Llerena Amadeo at the Ministry of Education.⁴³

The report on the convention published by *La Luz* under the banner “confidential document,” did not highlight any problem that might be compromising for the Jewish leadership vis-à-vis the military authorities. Among its major points was criticism of the civic national leadership for not knowing how to promote a pluralistic society. As evidence, they pointed to the Moral and Civic Formation course. Likewise, it criticized the argument of detractors of Judaism regarding “dual loyalties,” maintaining that one could be both Argentine and Jewish and have Israel as a point of reference, since assimilation was one thing and integration another.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the polemic became more dramatic when, in the final plenary session of the convention, leaders from various organizations accused each other of trying to impose themselves on the leadership of the Jewish community. The central problem lay in the differing perceptions and the fear generated by the emergence of a new important entity on the community scene: the Federación Argentina de Centros Comunitarios Macabeos (FACCMA). This organization brought together sports clubs—Hebraica, Hacoaj, Macabi, Club Atlético Sefaradí Argentino (CASA)—and was received jealously by the existing organizations and Zionist political parties that had held hegemony in the community leadership.

While FACCMA maintained that “the ideological groups no longer correspond to community reality and are lacking in what we have: people and projects,” the Zionist groups accused them of stripping Zionist content from Jewish institutions in order to imitate the “North American model.”⁴⁵ The conflict,

42 “Las tres P, una sigla que inquieta a muchos.”

43 Daniel Muchnik, “Una irritación inexplicable,” *Nueva Presencia*, August 24, 1979.

44 “Un documento confidencial: Contexto Nacional (Un documento elaborado para la Convención del PPP),” *La Luz*, September 14, 1979.

45 “PPP: ¿Quién ganó la guerra?” *Nueva Presencia*, August 24, 1979.

according to a report in *Nueva Presencia*, thwarted the development of the event. Iaacov Rubel, one of its organizers, maintained that uneasiness spread among the promoters of the convention who had had the idea of a working program that would allow “all of us to think about the Jewish community” but which ultimately failed because of the final dispute surrounding the character of the PPP.⁴⁶

While these developments did not challenge the objectives of the dictatorial regime, they did call into question the perception of closure of the public space in dictatorial times. The activities held, along with the debates and mobilization of various representatives of the organized Jewish community, enable observation of a dynamic cultural and political debate that not only was not suppressed during the military dictatorship but, in contrast to the immediate preceding period, could be pursued actively. This assessment regarding “normalized” operations did not mean that there were no debates in the Jewish community concerning the military dictatorship.

2 Fissures in the Cultural Discourse on the Regime

“Sex Goes to School” was the title on the cover of the first issue of the magazine *Plural* of the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, published in August 1976.⁴⁷ The SHA’s initiative was an attempt to undermine the cultural values that the military dictatorship sought to maintain in its efforts to reorder civil society. The bibliography focuses on the revival that the magazine *Humor*⁴⁸ signified for the publishing world and the refuge for many intellectuals that the appearance of *Punto de Vista* represented, during the dictatorship period. Although a limited publishing experiment within the confines of the Jewish community, *Plural*, according to the bibliography, was a forum for a series of debates on banned aspects of the public space.⁴⁹

Published by Alberto Senderey, with Mario Diamant as advisor and Alicia Dujovne Ortiz as editor-in-chief, *Plural* boasted a long list of collaborators from the fields of journalism and literature: Miguel Grinberg, Daniel Muchnik, José Ignacio López, Martin Müller, Mario Satz, Ernesto Schoo, Tamara Kamenzain, and Fernando del Corro, among others. In addition to the “sex at school”

46 Iaacov Rubel, “Pensemos la comunidad entre todos,” *Nueva Presencia*, September 14, 1979.

47 Tamara Kamenzain, “El sexo va a la escuela. Informe especial,” *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976).

48 See Mara Burkart, “HUMO(R): El surgimiento de un espacio crítico bajo la dictadura militar, 1978–1979,” (Master’s thesis, IDAES-UNSAM, 2008).

49 Hernán Invernizzi and Judith Gociol, *Un golpe a los libros. Represión a la cultura durante la última dictadura militar* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2003).

article, the first issue carried a piece by Miguel Grinberg on young people and rock music, and its cultural experiments.⁵⁰ Moreover, rock music would have a central place in the second issue, too, with the cover story “On the Messiah and Rock.”⁵¹

The space devoted to artistic experiments and youth cultural consumption would feature prominently in the *SHA* magazine. As with the adaptation of Zionist youth to the new circumstances imposed by the dictatorial regime examined in Chapter 2, the place given to young people in *Plural* is illustrative of the spaces opened up in the bosom of the Jewish community toward providing a refuge for them in the face of an external setting that was “dangerous” and “banned.” An interview with youth from the Club Atlético Sefaradí Argentino indicates a growth in activities that was proportionate to the increasingly large attendance at them: the secretary for university-age members, for example, emphasized that the talks on sexual education given by Dr. Ginal were roundly successful, with fifty persons in attendance.⁵²

In addition to sex and rock music, there was also a return to spirituality. Alicia Dujovne Ortiz conducted an interview with three spokespersons for diverse currents of the Jewish religious spectrum: Rabbi Roberto Graetz (Reform, Emanu-El Temple), Rabbi Marshall Meyer (Conservative, Bet-El Temple), and Dr. José Oppenheimer (Orthodox, Congregación Concordia Israelita), who were in agreement in characterizing young people in depoliticized terms, pointing out that they had undergone a “rapprochement” with religion.⁵³

Although it would discuss transgressive themes, politics was not a topic for editorial reflection by the magazine. When some of the editorials alluded to political circumstances, the references were supportive, accepting the objectives of the National Reorganization Process.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, beginning with the first issue, the analyses provided by Daniel Muchnik regarding the economic program put in place by the military dictatorship, like those in *Nueva Presencia*, were continuously criticized by the team led by Minister of the Economy Martínez de Hoz.⁵⁵ Still, rejection of the dictatorship’s economic

50 Miguel Grinberg, “La nueva música argentina,” *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976).

51 Miguel Grinberg, “Del Mesías y del Rock,” *Plural*, No. 3 (October 1976).

52 “Hablan los jóvenes de C.A.S.A.,” *Plural*, No. 3 (October 1976).

53 Alicia Dujovne Ortiz, “La juventud y el templo,” *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976).

54 Eduardo Paredes, “¿Reforma o Decadencia?” *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976); José Ignacio López, “Indicios de renovación,” *Plural*, No. 3 (October 1976).

55 See Daniel Muchnik, “Las metas del desarrollo,” *Plural*, No. 1 (August 1976); “Al final se verá quién tuvo razón,” *Plural*, No. 3 (October 1976); “Las teorías esotéricas en economía,” *Plural*, No. 4 (November 1976); “Los ejecutivos, ¿que vivos que son!,” *Plural*, No. 5 (January 1977).

program was not a subject that originated with *Plural*. In the ICUF monthly's column “Tiempo Argentino,” Grisha Weltman and Eduardo Vaiser condemned early on the de-industrialization push of the dictatorship's economic model.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the thematic diversity of *Plural*, as would subsequently be the case with *Nueva Presencia*,⁵⁷ along with the possibility of taking on topics which, in the eyes of the “censors” could appear to be problematical and/or transgressive, demonstrates that within the Jewish community there were fissures regarding the impact of cultural censorship imposed by the dictatorship. Besides the articles on sex and rock music, Tamara Kamenzain provided an extensive literary survey of books censored by the military dictatorship.⁵⁸

Thus, as in the case of political activity, one might say that in the area of culture the margins were extended relative to what was happening in the rest of civil society. *Plural* and *Nueva Presencia* repeatedly criticized the cultural censorship imposed by the military dictatorship, characterizing it as absurd, arbitrary, and narrow-minded.⁵⁹ Graciela Safranchik, for example, described how young people on occasion disguised themselves as adults in order to defy the controls in movie houses so they could attend “banned productions.”⁶⁰

This stretching of margins in the cultural arena does not mean that columnists were unaware of the potential threat of the regime. Daniel Muchnik, in an item celebrating Journalists' Day, written in 1980, pointed out that the press was “drowsy, sedentary, and dispirited”:

Serious things are taking place in Argentina ... But that is all child's play compared with López Rega and the blood-soaked stories unleashed by both the ultra-right and the ultra-left. Blood ran. Fear, a tremendous

56 These two publications do not even provide a new perspective. As Borelli's work on *Clarín* points out, criticism of Martínez de Hoz's economic program coincided with its implementation. See Marcelo Borrelli, “El diario Clarín y la participación civil en los primeros años de la dictadura (1976–1978): Gobernar con los ‘mejores hombres’, pero sin la ‘partidocracia’” (paper delivered at the v^o Jornadas de Trabajo sobre Historia Reciente, 2010).

57 *Nueva Presencia* is a similar case, although with greater public impact. This publication will be analyzed in the last chapter.

58 “Vida, pasión y muerte de las revistas literarias,” *Plural*, No. 16 (June 1978).

59 This description is part of an article by Luis Gregorich, published originally in the journal *Medios y Comunicación*, which includes the following criticism: “while soft-core pornographic films in which the Olmedo-Porcel duo appeared circulated without any censorship problems, the Argentine public could not enjoy the Holocaust mini-series.” See Luis Gregorich, “Una censura que fomenta la obscenidad,” *Nueva Presencia*, November 30, 1979.

60 Graciela Safranchik, “Prohibido para menores de 18 años,” *Plural*, No. 24 (July 1980).

and lacerating fear, took hold of the creative hearts and spirits of some journalists.⁶¹

In keeping with Elnecave's early reference in *La Luz* to the fear that accompanied the work of journalists,⁶² others from the organized Jewish community were obliged to redefine their proposals for the development of diverse cultural activities. In December 1976, Marcos Aguinis sent a letter to the World Jewish Congress informing them how the First Colloquium on Latin American Cultural Pluralism had turned out. He pointed out the problems he, as the coordinator of the event, had had to solve.

First, since it was thought that the meeting might be at risk, he sought to hold the sessions in an "official venue," assuring the attendance of public functionaries; additionally, in order to give it a character more in tune with the cultural values promoted by the dictatorial regime, he advised renaming the event. The colloquium on Cultural Pluralism and National Integration took place at the San Martín Cultural Center and included the participation of the general director of education for the city of Buenos Aires, Dr. Enrique Belloc, who spoke on behalf of the municipal and national authorities.

Even with these adaptations, Aguinis continued, the organizers had had to face an even more serious problem: deciding who the speakers would be. The invitation to participants attempted to cover a broad array of figures, "avoiding anyone who might be any kind of irritant." According to Aguinis, thanks to his status as a writer and his ties to Latin American cultural activities, as well as having found an official venue for the event, the following speakers accepted the invitation: Monsignor Antonio Quarracino (president of the General Secretariat for Ecumenism), Bishop Sante Urbie Barbieri (former president of the World Council of Churches), the writer Syria Poleeti, Dr. Susana Chertudi (head of the National Anthropology Institute), Jochen Bloss (director of the Goethe Institute), and Gregorio Weinberg (former director of UNESCO's International Documentation Center).⁶³

61 Daniel Muchnik, "Sin coraje y sin riesgos no hay periodismo auténtico," *Nueva Presencia*, June 13, 1980.

62 This aspect was dealt with in Chapter 2.

63 Letter from Marcos Aguinis to the World Jewish Congress on the occasion of the First Colloquium on Latin American Cultural Pluralism, December 7, 1976. CES-DARA, Resnizky Archive. According to the note in *Mundo Israelita*, the number of persons who delivered papers was greater: Eugenio Pucciarelli (National Academy of Sciences), Norberto Rodríguez Bustamante, Jaime Barylko, Reverendo Padre Boris Gabriel Turel, Hebe Clementi, Egron Schaden, Adolfo Silva Delgado, Paul Warzawsky, Narciso Binayán, Miguel Wasylik, and Rabbi Marcos Edery, among others. See "Se inicia una experiencia

The event, which attracted a large audience, led to the holding of a similar program in December 1978. As previously, the Centro Cultural San Martín would be the official venue for the Second Colloquium on Cultural Pluralism, which boasted the participation of renowned academics such as Gregorio Klimovsky, Eugenio Pucciarelli, Ester Hermitte, José Luis de Imaz, Leonardo Senkman, Natalio Botana, Ezequiel Gally, and Roberto Cortés Conde.⁶⁴

Notably, after the cultural pluralism colloquia, activities held by various Jewish groups were not limited to the communal public space. The possibility of gaining access to “official” settings such as the San Martín Cultural Center and operational movie houses, such as the Majestic and the Metro, lead to the conclusion that events held by Jewish community organizations faced no restrictions in the public space. The celebration of the 28th anniversary of the State of Israel even included a gala evening at the Colón Theater, attended by leaders, government officials, artists, and scientists, among others.⁶⁵

As pointed out in the testimony of Liliana Heker above, within the community public space, there were certain initiatives which, in addition to being calls to action, allowed for various professionals to give courses and/or teach classes for intellectual development. In April 1976, two significant institutions would emerge: the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Hebraica (IDES-Hebraica) and the Centro de Estudios Judíos (CEJ). José Luis Romero coordinated the former, and Luis Alberto Romero was part of the teaching roster with the course, “The 1880s: Project and Development of Liberal Argentina.”⁶⁶

The CEJ was backed by the Jewish Agency, with academic guidance from Tel Aviv University. Its objective, according to one of its first coordinators, was to provide education for future community leaders.⁶⁷ After the first call for enrollments, which appeared in *Mundo Israelita* and *La Luz* during the first week of May 1976, more people registered than expected: only 85 of the 138 applicants were chosen to attend the courses.⁶⁸ The following were among the subjects and teachers involved: 1) “Contemporary Jewish Thought,” Rabbi

inusual: El Primer Coloquio Latinoamericano sobre Pluralismo Cultural,” *Mundo Israelita*, November 20, 1976.

64 “Se inicia el coloquio sobre pluralismo cultural,” *Nueva Presencia*, December 1, 1978.

65 “La conmemoración en el Colón: Saliendo de los marcos rutinarios,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 8, 1976.

66 “SHA inicia el ciclo de miércoles culturales,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 24, 1976; “Publicidad IDES Hebraica,” *Mundo Israelita*, August 2, 1980. Other courses given included “The Jewish Conception of Man” (Prof. Mordejai Levin), “Arab and Jewish Positions and Their Role in the Development of the Conflict in the Middle East” (Prof. Shimón Farja), and “Crisis and Contemporary Thought” (Prof. Abraham Haber).

67 Interview with Yaacov Rubel conducted by the author.

68 “Alto nivel del Centro de Estudios Judíos,” *La Luz*, May 21, 1976.

Roberto Graetz and Marion Albin; 2) "Social History of Argentine Judaism," Julio Brenner; 3) "Historical Roots of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," Yaacov Rubel; and 4) "Jewish Identity: Laboratory of Group Reflection," coordinated by Luis Sidicaro and Eduardo Rogoski.⁶⁹

In addition to these forums, other less structured ones existed in which distinguished scientific, intellectual, literary, and journalistic figures gave lectures. These included, among others: "Wednesdays at the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina" and "Hacoaj Thursdays." Participants included Ernesto Sábato,⁷⁰ Jorge Luis Borges,⁷¹ Gregorio Klimovsky, Bernardo Korenblit, Juan Carlos Ghiano,⁷² César Tiempo, Berta Singerman, León Dujovne, Roberto Tálice, Juan José Jusid,⁷³ Julio César Calvo, Silvio Huberman, Enrique Pugliese, Daniel Muchnik, Alberto Rudni, Ernesto Schoo,⁷⁴ Pacho O'Donnell, Luis Gusmán, Enrique Medina, Rodolfo Rabanal, Manuel Mujica Láinez,⁷⁵ Carlos Carballo, Roberto Lavagna,⁷⁶ and Carlos Fayt,⁷⁷ among many others.

Activities conducted in the community public space attracted a large audience and numerous well-known personalities. But in order to understand the complexity of the issue another matter should be mentioned: the diverse array of lectures and courses took place at night, starting at 8.30 or 9.00 p.m. So what about the curfew? And the fear of being in the streets at night? When I questioned two of my interviewees about this matter (Yaacov Rubel and Juan Gurevich),⁷⁸ their responses were firm: "We were not afraid." Nevertheless, the denial of fear contrasted with stories alluding to the repressive policy of the regime.

How does one interpret these different contemporary experiences regarding fear? According to documents, nighttime activities, or at least the Jewish community ones, did not cease. Rather, they increased in number and amount of participants compared with the preceding period. It would seem that, as in

69 "Se iniciaron los cursos del CEJ," *Mundo Israelita*, May 15, 1976.

70 "Jueves de Hacoaj," *Mundo Israelita*, April 5, 1980.

71 "Homenaje a Spinoza en Hebraica," *Mundo Israelita*, July 9, 1977. Participants in the roundtable were Bernardo Korenblit, Gregorio Wainberg, Jaime Barylko, Padre Carlos Cucheti and Luis Farré.

72 "Miércoles de SHA," *Mundo Israelita*, April 24, 1977.

73 "Jueves de Hacoaj: Homenaje a Alberto Gerchunoff," *Mundo Israelita*, September 2, 1978.

74 "Jueves de Hacoja: Nosotros, los periodistas," *Mundo Israelita*, June 12, 1980.

75 "Publicidad de actividades en el SHA y Hacoaj," *Mundo Israelita*, October 4, 1980.

76 "Jueves de Hacoaj: Encrucijada económica 1981," *Mundo Israelita*, March 23, 1981.

77 "Octubre en el SHA," *La Luz*, September 22, 1978.

78 Interviews conducted by the author. I inquired about their experience with the CEJ and the lectures there, since one of them, Rubel, had been a coordinator at the institute and the other, Gurevich, was a senior DAIA official who attended many of the events.

the case of the chapter on anti-Semitism, two simultaneous reactions co-existed: fear over participation and/or political expression, and a sense of safety about moving about in a reordered daily existence as a consequence of the very policy of repression that produced fear in the first place.

Thus, according to the research conducted by Adrián Jmelniczky, the Jewish community during the "years of lead" of the dictatorship was perceived to be a safe space: compared with an "outside" that was dangerous and threatening, the "inside" constituted a protected space. This would explain, said Jmelniczky, why projects multiplied and communal spaces increased both in inclusion and participation.⁷⁹ Not only were there programs at CEJ, IDES-Hebraica, the "SHA Wednesdays," and the "Hacoaj Thursdays," but also a proliferation of programs and meeting places for young people. And, as in the case of the IFT Theater, where plays by Bertold Brecht were performed, the SHA movie theater had a large turnout for films that were not shown in commercial cinemas.

From the beginning of the dictatorial regime spaces opened up and proliferated for university-age people from the community. Both the organized sports institutions and those belonging to the Conservative and Zionist youth movements promoted meeting spaces for young people where they could find recreational and intellectual activities, along with artistic development. CASA's Secretaría de Edad Universitaria⁸⁰ and Tzavta Uno,⁸¹ for example, were created in 1976. The Hebraica's Moadon would be promoted as "a space for young university-age people to gather" during the hours of 9 and 11 p.m., where "they read books and study the principal works of Freud," in addition to taking courses on sociology and the Middle East.

The rapid proliferation of these settings led to the creation in 1979 of the Federación Universitaria Sionista (FUSA). Its first convention, which took place on November 22, 1980, at the Centro de Educación Judía, saw a large audience filling the room and the hallway on the fourth floor.⁸² The convention brought together eight university groups, while the second one, the 1983 National Congress, attracted 27 organizations, 15 from Buenos Aires and 12 from the provinces. The federal structure generated proposals, activities, campouts, regional encounters, and the publication of materials, among others. From

79 Adrián Jmelniczky, "Aproximación a los últimos treinta años de trabajo comunitario con jóvenes judíos en edad universitaria," in Bernardo Zelcer and Gabriel Trajtenberg, *Los adultos jóvenes judíos* (Buenos Aires: Agencia Judía para Israel, 2003), 77–95.

80 "Hablan los jóvenes de C.A.S.A.," *Plural*, No. 3 (October 1976).

81 "Abrimos Tzavta Uno," *Nueva Sión*, July 1976.

82 "Efectuó una convención la Federación Universitaria Sionista Argentina," *La Luz*, December 5, 1980; "La integración de jóvenes universitarios búscase impulsar," *Mundo Israelita*, November 29, 1980.

its creation up to the beginning of the democratic transition, FUSA became a movement of national relevance, although its activity declined in 1984–85.⁸³

3 The Institutional Dimension: Internal Agenda and Problems in Sustaining the Jewish Institutional Network

When the World Soccer Cup, which took place in Argentina in 1978, ended, an editorial in *Nueva Presencia* pointed out that with the termination of festivities, the country needed to address more burning issues: “from those who were being thrown out of their homes to the disappeared.”⁸⁴ The bibliography focuses, appropriately, mainly on the disappeared—those from the organized community as well as those who were not part of it—while the demands of those who were victims of the regime’s economic policies are given scantier treatment.

Nevertheless, the “Memories and Balances” report issued by AMIA, enables an examination of the organization’s funds and the strategies it adopted in order to handle the growing demand by individuals who sought its help.⁸⁵ The organization’s social welfare department, headed by Aarón Dashevsky and coordinated by Norman Lew, was charged with dealing each year with a larger population and more diverse problems, from the inability to pay rent to loss of employment.

In July 1978, the month in which the World Cup ended, the professional staff of the department saw to 529 cases and, in August, 541. Eviction affected a high percentage of individuals, Lew noted: “People who have come to request our assistance find themselves in a truly dramatic situation. And our response can only be affirmative, even when it affects the communal budget.”⁸⁶ According to Lew, in 1980 the department’s activity continued to grow, and in the first quarter of the year, 3,132 claims were submitted.⁸⁷

The public urgency of those affected by the economic policies of the regime, to which AMIA’s social welfare department provided aid, was vividly characterized in *Nueva Presencia* during preparations for Passover in 1978:

83 According to Jmelniczky, this occurred as a result of a lack of new leadership within the federation. See: Jmelniczky, “Aproximación a los últimos treinta años de trabajo comunitario con jóvenes judíos en edad universitaria,” 83–84.

84 “Un domingo para pensar,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 52 (July 1, 1978).

85 Reports and findings of AMIA for the years 1976–79 and 1982–83 can be found in the Marc Turkow Central Documentation Archive.

86 “La difícil tarea de paliar la indigencia,” *Nueva Presencia*, September 7, 1978.

87 “AMIA: Viviendas para los indigentes,” *Nueva Presencia*, September 13, 1980.

In a store specializing in the sale of kosher products, clients overwhelmed the place as they lined up with a smile on their faces ... Barely a few meters away on the ground floor of AMIA, a very different, other “line” was waiting for access to the same products. Beaten-down and silent faces patiently waited their turn at the social welfare department for free hand-outs of products for the holiday.⁸⁸

The development of the economic program led by Alfredo Martínez de Hoz impacted on many individuals, who applied to the social welfare department and also to the soup kitchens organized by members of the Jewish community. In 1981, Manuel David Sznajder and Felipe London set up soup kitchens that would handle 120 persons a day, of whom 10 percent were Jewish.⁸⁹ The assistance was not aimed exclusively at Jews because, as the coordinators pointed out, they did not want to “do to others what had been done to the Jews.”

Thus, one of the groups affected by the military regime—as victims of its economic model—was cared for by community organizations. It can even be stated, as per the post-soccer match editorial of *Nueva Presencia*, that AMIA pursued an active policy with respect to one of the burning problems after 1978: evictions and unemployment. This observation is no minor matter since, just as DAIA sought to guarantee normal functioning of the institutional network, AMIA sought to ensure social welfare.

Just as the massive burden on the social welfare department demonstrates the consequences of the economic program implemented by the military dictatorship, the chronicle of debates and tensions within the Jewish community over sustaining the institutional network illustrates to what extent it was affected.

In April 1976, for example, a unified fund was launched to deal with the institutional budgetary crisis.⁹⁰ While AMIA’s financial problems corresponded with its support structure and predated the onset of the military dictatorship, Martínez de Hoz’s economic program and the 1981 inflationary spiral dealt the organization a serious blow. The debates on its methods of financing are recorded very early on.

Carlos Polak, a member of Fraie Schtime, criticized AMIA’s economic structure because 95 percent of its income came from burial fees in Jewish cemeteries. He proposed that AMIA base its budget on genuine resources: namely,

88 “Las dos ‘colas,’” *Nueva Presencia*, April 22, 1978.

89 “Los comedores populares y la pobreza judía,” *Nueva Presencia*, October 23, 1981.

90 “Acotaciones,” *Mundo Israelita*, April 24, 1976; “Se concreta la creación del Fondo Unificado del judaísmo argentino,” March 26, 1976.

membership fees. And these fees, taking into account social diversification and members' economic circumstances, should be proportionate to their income.⁹¹ The debate over the cost of burial in the community generated, subsequently, the presentation of other projects for sustaining and raising funds for the Jewish mutual aid society both by groups without affiliation to political parties as well as one by Avodá.⁹²

AMIA was not the only entity affected by the economic program. In early 1981, Mario Gorenstein, who had become president of DAIA in the middle of the previous year, maintained during the first plenary session of the institution that he had assumed office with the commitment that he was not going to have to concern himself with "mundane budgetary questions." But he noted that none of the institutions affiliated with DAIA had made the contributions laid down for its maintenance.⁹³ In the following session, Gorenstein returned to the matter, pointing out the gravity of the organization's financial situation and, consequently, the impossibility of pursuing its objectives.⁹⁴

The extent of the economic crisis was demonstrated by events in the Jewish school network and the Israelite Hospital.⁹⁵ At the start of the 1981 school year, a teacher, Daniel Schulman, sent a letter to *Nueva Presencia* complaining of the grave situation of teachers in the schools and denouncing the illicit handling of funds. Schulman maintained that salaries were 30 days in arrears and that the administrators blamed the national economic crisis. Nevertheless, he maintained that some schools had undertaken major building renovations in preparation for the beginning of the school year and this showed that "they had decided to invest in the façade at the expense of their personnel." Finally, he maintained that teachers feared submitting any claim or undertaking any protest because they could be fired.⁹⁶

91 Carlos Polak, "AMIA, una propuesta de cambio para sus bases económicas," *Nueva Presencia*, December 24, 1977.

92 Mauricio Waitstein, "Para revertir el proceso: El 'Seguro Social Comunitario' es una necesidad insoslayable," *Nuevo Presencia*, February 8, 1980.

93 "Reclamó la DAIA el efectivo apoyo económico comunitario," *Mundo Israelita*, March 14, 1981.

94 "La indiferencia hacia una institución lleva al resquebrajamiento comunitario," *Mundo Israelita*, April 11, 1981.

95 While it is true that Burzaco's Home for the Elderly was also affected by the crisis, its situation had less impact on the community press, as well as on the debates held at the directive boards of AMIA and DAIA.

96 Daniel Schulman, "¿Qué pasa con los maestros de escuelas judías?," *Nueva Presencia*, March 20, 1981.

During the same year, after Alberto Crupnicoff⁹⁷ assumed the AMIA presidency, the "program to update salaries" was suspended. As a result, the teachers of the Ramban Institute and the teachers seminary went on strike and marched to the main office to protest.⁹⁸ The action, according to the strike organizers, was successful: the leadership promised to pay the salaries and to respect the 1975 agreement signed by the Histadrut Hamorim (the union representing the teachers of the Jewish school network).⁹⁹

Toward the end of 1981 AMIA declared that since maintaining the educational network was such a burden, it would be the organization's main concern in the following year.¹⁰⁰ The proposed strategy was to obtain funds from Israeli state agencies to support the network. Nevertheless, some sectors criticized the plan because it did not include suggestions for making the network more self-sustaining.¹⁰¹

Another victim of the 1981 economic crisis was the Israelite Hospital. As seen in the first chapter, the hospital was experiencing a longstanding crisis which in 1981 assumed major proportions and it faced the possibility of closure. Discussion about the causes of the crisis began in 1979 when at an AMIA session there was a confrontation involving those who maintained that any attempt to remedy the hospital's financial situation was "like trying to fill a bottomless pit" and those who insisted on the need to make an effort to maintain it and its service to the community and the country.¹⁰²

The point about the hospital's service to the country was singled out by some as a reason for AMIA to stop supporting the institution. Abraham Gak, secretary of the PPP, pointed out that "it would seem that there is a certain common sense 'out on the Jewish street' that since few Jews were treated at the Israelite Hospital the Jewish community has no reason to concern itself with

97 "AMIA: La juventud al poder," *Nueva Presencia*, September 4, 1981.

98 "Incomodidad salarial en AMIA," *La Luz*, October 30, 1981. This was neither the first nor the last act of protest by the workers of the community. In 1977, teachers sued over back pay, and in 1978 AMIA workers engaged in a work slowdown to demonstrate their discontent over low salaries. See "Planteos y debates en una agitada sesión del Consejo Directivo de la AMIA," *Mundo Israelita*, October 29, 1977; "Inquietud laboral en AMIA," *La Luz*, December 15, 1978.

99 "Después de la Huelga," *Nueva Presencia*, November 6, 1981.

100 "Salvar a las escuelas," *Nueva Presencia*, Noviembre 20, 1981; "Escala de prioridades," *Mundo Israelita*, November 21, 1981.

101 "¿Por qué se piden dádivas a Israel para Educación Judía aquí?" *La Luz*, February 12, 1982.

102 "La desaparición del Hospital Israelita redundaría en perjuicio de nuestra imagen," *Nueva Presencia*, November 23, 1979.

it.”¹⁰³ However, Moisés Preide branded as “racists” those who suggested that the hospital had moved away from being “Jewish” because it did not treat mostly Jews: “We cannot accept the existence of differences grounded in ethnic origin or skin pigmentation when it is a question of providing medical assistance to anyone in need of it ... The only condition for attention is someone’s health status.”¹⁰⁴

The austerity and scaling-back measures taken by AMIA in September 1981 fueled a reaction among workers like that of the teachers.¹⁰⁵ The hospital staff went out on strike and marched to AMIA headquarters, side-by-side with the teachers from the Ramban Institute and the teachers’ seminary.¹⁰⁶ An article in *Mundo Israelita* pointed out that “we are facing an eventual surge in intra-communal social confrontation” and that it was urgent to “put the brakes on this wave of worker conflict.”¹⁰⁷

With the escalation of the dispute over the Israelite Hospital, which included the publication of petitions from the staff association and the hospital administration, the PPP proposed the creation of a mediation commission made up of the chief rabbi, Shlomo Benhamú, and representatives of AMIA, DAIA, OSA, FACCOMA, ECSA, and the local affiliate of B’nai B’rith. The commission, however, proposed that for its intervention to be effective there should be an end to “any form of force, in order to create the climate necessary to overcome the conflict with dignity.”¹⁰⁸ To judge by a subsequent appeal from the PPP condemning “physical aggression” against members of the Israelite Hospital’s management committee and the “publications that sought to cast aspersions” on them, it would seem that the mediating efforts of the commission were unsuccessful.

However, eventually, national and international events overshadowed accounts of the labor disputes within the Jewish community. The replacement of the president, General Viola, by General Leopoldo Galtieri, tensions over the dispatch of Argentine troops to the Sinai Peninsula, the exacerbation of the labor union conflict in Argentina and, from April 2 to June 10, 1982, the

103 “Hospital Israelita: Crisis y soluciones. Dialogo con Abraham Gak, secretario general del PPP,” *Nueva Presencia*, August 29, 1980.

104 Moisés Preide, “En defensa del Hospital Israelita,” *Nueva Presencia*, March 13, 1981.

105 “Ante todo mantener el diálogo,” *Mundo Israelita*, September 5, 1981.

106 “Incomodidad salarial en AMIA,” *La Luz*, October 30, 1981. This would not be the first union action on the part of hospital professionals. In July 1981, the Association of Medical Professionals engaged in a work stoppage to force the directors to modify the financial deficit with which the administration was running the institution. See “¿Qué pasa en el Hospital Israelita?,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 24, 1981.

107 “Así no se puede seguir,” *Mundo Israelita*, July 24, 1981.

108 “Acuerdo Impostergable,” *Mundo Israelita*, October 31, 1981.

Malvinas/Falklands War, marginalized the debates surrounding the communal Jewish political agenda.

4 Some Considerations

The broad spectrum of activities described above allows for a comparison and even an inquiry into how communal public life developed in a context characterized by a state of siege. The first measures imposed by the military junta included strict restrictions on the holding of public events and the right of assembly. Nevertheless, as Lida Miranda shows in her analysis of mobilization within Catholic movements,¹⁰⁹ the detailed record of activities arranged by various sectors of civil society enables the repudiation of certain notions regarding limitations on public space during the dictatorship.

The research on the development of political, cultural and social activities in dictatorial contexts must take into account the hypothesis maintained by Luis Alberto Romero regarding grassroots sectors during the first military dictatorship inaugurated in 1930 by General José Félix Uriburu. While forms of participation integral to political parties were cut back, "grassroots sectors regrouped in the nuclear sectors of society in a series of organizations that emerged in the neighborhoods in which it was possible to maintain a certain measure of egalitarian participation."¹¹⁰

Thus, it may be concluded in this chapter that in contrast to conduct in the national public space, communal sectors were left a large margin for development. This observation therefore necessitates more subtlety in approaching narratives that describe official policies of the dictatorship as persecuting Jewish life in Argentina. While the regime pursued policies of persecution, arrests, and the subsequent disappearance of individuals, one cannot ignore how daily life went on even under the shadow of repressive policies.

In order to understand how it was possible for some representatives to be able to affirm—despite the suffering that this might cause to those affected by state terrorism—that the Jewish community was "flourishing" and functioning "normally," we must take into consideration the experience of those same representatives during the period immediately prior to the military dictatorship.

109 Lida Miranda, "Movilizaciones católicas en tiempos de represión militar y dictadura: Sociedad, régimen militar e Iglesia Católica en Argentina, 1976–1982," <http://historiapolitica.com/datos/biblioteca/miranda1.pdf>.

110 Luis Alberto Romero, "Participación política y democracia, 1880–1984," in Luis Alberto Romero and Gutiérrez Leandro, *Sectores populares, cultura y política* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), 120.

For, in contrast to the tensions detailed in Chapter 1, the record shows a considerable increase in activities and attendance, making it possible to understand the use of these terms to describe the development of Jewish life under the dictatorship.

This conclusion, nevertheless, cannot overlook an aspect discussed in the previous chapter: the weight given by the military authorities to international condemnation of the dictatorial regime as anti-Semitic. Therefore, it might be proposed that the care with which these institutions were treated allowed for the development of Jewish life and enabled it to enjoy broader parameters than other sectors of civil society.

Still, an examination of the activities pursued in the cultural arena, for example, shows that it was not only individuals belonging to Jewish community institutions that enjoyed a secure space; among those attending events, whether as speakers or as teachers, were notable non-Jewish personalities who were banned from appearing in the national public space.

Nevertheless, something that flourishes can also wither. The Jewish community suffered the effects of the economic program led by Martínez de Hoz. The crisis had a serious impact, and gave rise to diverse situations, from the welfare aid provided by AMIA to labor disputes within the Jewish institutional network. Tensions that arose due to the effect of the economic crisis demonstrated that the concerns of Jewish key players were not restricted to human rights violations. The relevance they gave to institutional debates—even though they might have been considered less important than those over the disappearances—illustrates strains regarding the continuity of community life, at least as far as the Israelite Hospital and the realm of education were concerned.

Between the Collapse of the Regime and Fractures within the Jewish Community

Videla's speech in March 1980 commemorating the fourth anniversary of the National Reorganization Process was received with little enthusiasm by the Jewish community. According to *Mundo Israelita*, the citizenry believed there would be no further reference to the "accomplishments" of the military government, especially the supposed success of the anti-subversion struggle. Rather, expectations lay in the future plans of the regime. It was hoped that the president would offer "concrete proposals" in this regard.¹

In a study of the period, Quiroga maintained that the stage of *legitimation* of the regime (1976–77) was followed by *delegitimation* (1978–79), *exhaustion* (1980–82), and *decomposition* (1982–83). If the first was characterized by the forging of an initial consensus regarding the objectives of the dictatorship, based on delegitimation of the Peronist government, original support for the military government began to show signs of erosion due to its lack of effectiveness. The loss of legitimacy led in 1980 to a situation of exhaustion that, after the Malvinas/Falklands War, culminated in decomposition of the regime.²

This shattering of the consensus and acceptance of the war were evident early on, although with varying degrees of explicitness on the part of Jewish community entities. Amid clear signs of exhaustion of the military regime, internal tensions, and especially reaction to Jacobo Timerman's criticism from abroad, embroiled leading figures in a dispute regarding how Jewish institutions had acted during the dictatorship. As will be seen in this chapter, the declarations made by Jacobo Timerman after his release and the subsequent publication of his testimony, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, triggered a debate over actions or omissions of the Jewish leadership regarding anti-Semitism and, especially, the regime's tendency to persecute Jewish individuals as part of its repressive policies. The cycle of exhaustion and decomposition of the military dictatorship prompted a series of disputes and re-positioning among leading figures of the Jewish community in respect to

¹ "El derecho a saber," *Mundo Israelita*, April 5, 1980.

² Hugo Quiroga, *El tiempo del Proceso. Conflictos y coincidencias entre políticos y militares, 1976–1983* (Rosario: Fundación Ross, 1994), 9–44.

their evaluation, retrospectively—and in many cases appealing to a narrative invented by themselves—of their conduct during that period.

The present chapter will examine how the exhaustion and eventual collapse of the military regime were perceived by leading Jewish community players, and to what degree the signs of a possible end to the National Reorganization Process were assumed as being in the Jewish community's best interest or were not perceived as related to the Jewish institutions' daily affairs. Similarly, reactions to the denunciations made by Timerman and the degree to which his accusations contributed to the image of alleged collaborators with the regime, allowed for the repositioning of those who were left unscathed in his testimony as opponents of the dictatorship.

1 Perceiving Circumspection as a Problem and Re-Evaluating Militant Behavior of Jewish Youth

As pointed out in Chapter 2, one of the signs indicating the early adjustment of institutional practices to the new values imposed by the military dictatorship was the de-politicization of youth movements. In contrast to their rebellious acts during Jewish celebrations—such as at ceremonies marking the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Israel Independence Day—after 1976 young people exhibited “circumspect and respectful”³ behavior, far removed from “the juvenile and militant fervor” that had previously characterized them.⁴

This aspect began to be perceived as a problem after 1980. About halfway through the military dictatorship, Luis Alberto Mesyngier would maintain that it was necessary to channel the concerns of Jewish youth, who were exhibiting a high degree of apathy. In his view, their rejection of militancy was a product of their immediate political experience:

Argentina has lived, not as much as one might think, moments of obscurantism and irrationality which are impossible to forget and are worthy of the effort of understanding on the part of all sectors that make up the Republic ... One of the efforts to understand should today be directed at an interpretation of the generalized apathy with which young people and adolescents react toward politics, especially within the Jewish

3 “En acto central se honró la memoria de héroes y mártires,” *La Luz*, April 22, 1977.

4 “Generales profesionales no se comportaron con la dignidad de Anilevich y sus camaradas,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 27, 1979.

community, and at their active participation in vanguard movements [which], in Judaism, [belong] to the socialist Zionism ideology.⁵

Documentation of the organized Jewish community reveals an extremely discreet youth, at least during the 1976–80 period. While publications such as *La Luz* continued to express mild criticism of “Third Worldism”—beginning with the creation of the local chapter of Peace Now—the record of youth activities suggests a scenario in which Jewish youth were concerned only with continuity of identity issues and/or the situation of the State of Israel. The first account of a youth group that began to show interest in other issues may be found around 1980: the youth of the Max Nordau Centro Literario Israelita y Biblioteca⁶ began to feature in *Nueva Presencia* as key activists.

The youth of La Plata published a magazine, *Renacer*,⁷ which interviewed two figures who had begun to distance themselves from the official leadership of the Buenos Aires Jewish community: Herman Schiller and Rabbi Marshall Meyer.⁸ The openness of this relationship between the latter two figures and the younger generation, and the way in which Schiller praised the youth group gave rise to two debates. The first—the second will be analyzed in the last section of this part—originated in an interview given by the publisher of *Nueva Presencia* during his visit on January 1, 1981, to the organization’s recreation center.⁹ There, both the young people and the institutional leadership proclaimed that La Plata’s organization was characterized by a “progressive” stamp, illustrated by the high degree of acceptance of “mixed marriages.”¹⁰ Schiller’s expression of approval was subsequently censored at a session of AMIA in which the Herut representative, Isaías Jasiuk, condemned the encouragement of mixed marriages that was promoted there.¹¹

Criticism of the apathy of young people once again became a topic in *Nueva Presencia*. A few months after the interview between the young people of La Plata and Schiller, the periodical published an opinion piece by Sergio Leonardo, which began with an assertion made by “a well-placed woman who

5 Luís Alberto Mesyngier, “La militancia juvenil,” *Nueva Presencia*, May 2, 1980.

6 The Centro Literario Israelita y Biblioteca “Max Nordau” is located in the city of La Plata and was part of the ICUF until 1985, when it formally separated from the latter. During the years prior to the military coup its contacts with ICUF were limited.

7 The first issue dates from June 1979.

8 “Nueva Presencia y sus fantasmas,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 25, 1980; “Luchar por la santidad de la vida,” *Nueva Presencia*, December 19, 1980.

9 “Max Nordau de La Plata: Ser argentinos, ser judíos,” *Nueva Presencia*, January 23, 1981.

10 A “mixed marriage” refers to the union between someone from Jewish origin and someone who is not.

11 “No somos los tesoreros de la comunidad,” *Nueva Presencia*, August 21, 1981.

engages in pro-military government pseudo-journalism on TV,” and who questioned the “lack of ‘idealism’ she perceived among young people.” Leonardo continued:

[t]he lady in question did not realize—intellectual shortsightedness is likely to be one of the graces characterizing ladies of certain classes—that *she was denouncing, precisely, the failure of those who governed in order to “change the moral face of the country”* ... Because if we take for granted what she said, it implies that in four-and-a-half years the “process” eradicated an effervescence of “ideals” which previously, no matter how you looked at it, prevailed among our youth.¹²

The idea that the “process” had eradicated the ideals of a generation began to emerge as one of the main points of criticism of the regime, which would have consequences for communal behavior. Sergio Leonardo’s article would please Schiller’s monthly: it motivated a first letter-to-the-editor from the mothers of the disappeared. The mothers saluted the article on youth and stressed how *Nueva Presencia* “has been from the start a publication that has maintained that the situation of the ‘arrested-disappeared’ requires clarification.”¹³

Nueva Presencia then published its first article devoted to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo association. Ariel Asenbach compared these mothers to the biblical figure of Hannah, because, like her, they were anxiously awaiting their children.¹⁴ “What could be more human than the love between mother and child?” he asked, maintaining that their demands were “humanly just.”¹⁵ Thus, the link between the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, *Nueva Presencia*, and Herman Schiller began to be sealed on the basis of the periodical’s criticism of the country’s youth who had been rendered apathetic by the military regime.

The centrality of the youth dimension was noted in the appearance, beginning in 1981, of sections in the most significant publications of the organized Jewish community, which investigated forms of militancy and the opinions of young people regarding ways to participate in politics: “Is Halutzism still

12 Sergio Leonardo, “Pese a todo, juventud,” *Nueva Presencia*, September 5, 1980.

13 “Una carta,” *Nueva Presencia*, November 21, 1980.

14 According to the Biblical text concerning the First Prophets, in the chapter on Samuel, Jana (Hannah) was unable to have children. After making several appeals to God, she became pregnant by Samuel.

15 Ariel Asenbach, “Jana, el profeta Samuel y los desaparecidos,” *Nueva Presencia*, December 5, 1980.

valid?"¹⁶ "Tribunal of the Young,"¹⁷ and various references in *Nueva Presencia* exemplify this. While the *Luz* section focused on how to keep youth groups involved in Jewish matters, *Mundo Israelita* and *Nueva Presencia* interviewed leaders of youth movements, demonstrating the conditions under which Zionist militancy operated at the beginning of the 1980s.¹⁸

The important role youth participation would begin to acquire contrasted with the press's perception of their "effervescence" at communal events. As had occurred in the period prior to the military coup, criticism grew against the "uproar" and the "insults" that youth groups manifested during the 33rd anniversary celebrations of the State of Israel which took place in the SHA Theater in 1981.¹⁹

Nevertheless, disapproval of the youth movements did not detract from recognizing their dynamism as this sector recovered from its apathy prior to the 1980s. In 1981, the same year of the proliferation of the youth columns in the community press and condemnation of their first noisy public appearance, a *Mundo Israelita* journalist was very critical of the greetings that the dictator Videla offered to young people on the occasion of the first day of spring:

The youth are seeing the drama of their civic frustration. The pronouncement was not circumstantial, but incorporated in order to stifle the festivities. It occurred during recent youth encounters at which acidic remarks were made with reference to the situation of young people as proponents of the national project. Moreover, they had been marginalized by circumstances they were unable to understand and much less justify when they could understand them.²⁰

As of 1981, young people would resume an active role in the community by engaging with leaders and, on occasion, taking the initiative or choosing sides in the polemics surrounding the positioning of various community figures vis-à-vis the military dictatorship. Commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,

16 This was the name of the column devoted to youth published by *Mundo Israelita*, beginning in February 1981.

17 This section of *La Luz*, edited by Roxana Morduchowicz, appeared in late 1982.

18 *Mundo Israelita* published interviews with representatives from Hejalutz Lamerjav (February 28, 1981), Habonim Dror (March 7, 1981), Hanoar Hatzioni (March 14, 1981), Bnei Hakiva (March 21, 1981), Betar (April 4, 1981), Ijud Habonim (April 18, 1981), Israel Hatzeira (May 9, 1981), and Hashomer Hatzair (May 23, 1981).

19 "El escándalo en el Teatro SHA," *La Luz*, May 22, 1981; "Actitudes lamentables," *Mundo Israelita*, May 16, 1981.

20 "La juventud, esa primavera," *Mundo Israelita*, September 26, 1981.

organized by the Juventud Judía Independiente in the city of La Plata in April 1983, and the debates over mobilization called for by the Movimiento Judío por los Derechos Humanos in October of the same year—topics that will be taken up in the last section of this chapter—gave youth participation a notable boost.

2 The First Demands for a Return to Democratic Institutions and Responses to the Signs of Political Opening

While the Jewish community leadership made no pronouncements regarding the need for an “institutional normalization”, rather it demonstrated its support and acceptance of the objectives promulgated by the National Reorganization Process, a few community publications referred early on to that issue in diverse ways and with varying degrees of criticism of the military regime, *Nueva Presencia*, *Tiempo*, and *Mundo Israelita* began to reflect the mood of a part of civil society which clamored for a return to democracy.

From the outset of the regime, and even counting among those that gave advance warning of the outcome of the military coup, *Tiempo* forecast a transition to democracy through a civilian-military front. Inclining toward the position of the Partido Comunista Argentino,²¹ ICUF maintained that any political endgame must include “legalist” or “patriotic” sectors of the armed forces that were not supporting the dictatorship. Even prior to 1978 there began to emerge a discourse demanding “political opening,” since one of the objectives of the regime, the anti-subversion struggle, had been successfully accomplished.²²

Such demands were accompanied by the publication of documents produced by various organizations and leaders of political parties and factions. Early on, *Nueva Presencia* included political pronouncements from organizations such the Argentine People’s Athenaeum, headed by Ángel Robledo (María Estela Martínez de Perón’s²³ former interior minister), and a petition signed by well-known public figures who urged rapid political opening and institutional normalization, the return to a state of law, the release of political

21 Gabriela Aguila, “El Partido Comunista Argentino entre la dictadura y la transición democrática (1976–1986),” *Revista de Historia Actual*, No. 6 (2009).

22 Grisha Weltman, “Como poner al país en marcha,” *Tiempo*, No. 112 (April 1978); idem, “La democratización del país,” *Tiempo*, No. 119 (November 1978); Sebastián Vaiser, “Mayo, progreso, democracia,” *Tiempo*, No. 124 (April 1979).

23 “Una sutil autocrítica,” *Nueva Presencia*, August 19, 1978.

prisoners, a response to relatives of the disappeared, and revision of the economic program.²⁴

In contrast to *Tiempo*, where writers of the “Tiempo Argentino” column demanded immediate political opening, *Nueva Presencia* preferred to publish petitions and declarations of leaders on the national spectrum. In 1980 it featured a series of interviews with key political figures in an attempt to analyze the political situation and to elicit an agreement calling for the reinstatement of party politics. In parallel with the commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the National Reorganization Process, Schiller’s weekly initiated a round of consultations with politicians, military men, economists, clergymen, and sociologists in order to evaluate “this key moment in contemporary Argentina.” The first personalities consulted were Oscar Alende from the Intransigent Party (PI) and Héctor Polino from the Socialist Party (PS).²⁵

The initiation of a process of *distancing* from and incipient *opposition* to the dictatorial regime by some opinion makers of the organized Jewish community led to the centrality that those in the vanguard of the new politics would begin to have in its publications. *Tiempo*’s articles would illustrate how these figures began to underscore the weaknesses of the dictatorial regime. The analysis of four years of the National Reorganization Process highlighted new problems that emerged from the programs the military dictatorship had implemented: there was no response to the issue of the disappeared, the economic plan was an “irritant,” the university law had been rejected, and the “political foundations” presented by the three branches included clauses that were considered unacceptable, ambiguous, and poorly stated.²⁶

The beginning of a new year of military rule was marked by the convocation of a “dialogue”: a mechanism with which the military junta initiated a round of consultations with various political figures. The meeting, from which the “corrupt” and the “subversive” were excluded, sought to be an instrument for reviving a consensus with respect to the military government. By formulating a different relationship with political forces, the military rulers were attempting to gain the support of parties for a policy that would set the stage for the institution of a civilian-military accord.²⁷

24 “Contra el terrorismo, cualquiera sea su signo,” *Nueva Presencia*, November 24, 1978. The document, which originally appeared in the national press, was signed by Felipe Deodolindo Bittel, Vicente Solano Lima, Eloy Próspero Camus, Raúl Rabanaque Caballero, Miguel Montserrat, Simón Lázzara, Alberto Ugabeta, Víctor García Costa, Enrique Inda, José Antonio Allende, Martín Dip, and Rubens Íscar, among others.

25 “Hay que ir directamente a la práctica democrática,” *Nueva Presencia*, March 21, 1980.

26 “Después de cuatro años,” *Tiempo*, No. 133 (February/March 1980).

27 Quiroga, *El tiempo del Proceso*, 256–61.

The publishers of community publications reacted to the meeting in different ways. *Mundo Israelita* welcomed it as a healthy initiative.²⁸ *Tiempo*, however, condemned it as restrictive:

One is struck by how representatives of the political parties with the greatest weight in the country are not the ones to rise to the occasion of dialogue, with the occasional exception, but rather small groups that are not representative of men who do not reflect the majority views of their party. Does the interior ministry wish to organize a new "Concordat"? Perhaps it is thought that the memory of the country is so weak that no one remembers the patriotic fraud organized after 1930 which began with elections in the Province of Buenos Aires?²⁹

The writer of the article, Sebastián Vaiser, considered the dialogue a meeting of "friends" of the National Reorganization Process. Nevertheless, He did not reject it outright. The alternative was to construct a "national accord" with the participation of all anti-imperialist forces, as well as the armed forces, in order to set up "a civilian-military government that would guarantee the process."³⁰ As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, ICUF, the Jewish community organization closest to the program of the Communist Party maintained that the civilian-military solution was the most viable option, at least until the period that came after the Malvinas/Falklands War.

The limited call for dialogue had consequences in the national arena and a varying impact on the community's press. Those leaders who were not invited made their agenda for discussions with the regime public: economic reform and negotiations for political opening.³¹ The extensive array of themes and/or problems that emerged, along with the voices of those that commented on the regime's policies, were echoed loudly and consistently in Jewish publications. The opinions of the Civic Radical Union's (UCR) Congress of Economists, the Juan B. Justo Foundation, and the Argentine Socialist Confederation, as well

28 "El diálogo," *Mundo Israelita*, March 29, 1981.

29 Sebastián Vaiser, "Aniversario de un Proceso interrumpido," *Tiempo*, No. 139 (September 1980). "Patriotic fraud" is the name by which is known the political regime that was implemented in Argentina after the first military coup against a democratically elected government in 1930, which lasted until 1943. All elections held during that period were won by the governing alliance by practicing electoral fraud. Since the leaders of the governing party considered that free democratic elections allowed access to political power to leaders who were not prepared for such responsibility, electoral fraud was considered a "patriotic" intervention in defense of the nation's best interests.

30 Idem, "¿'Diálogo' para largo?," *Tiempo*, No. 133 (February/March 1980).

31 Quiroga, *El tiempo del Proceso*.

as comunicués issued by trade unions, began to appear in the three publications, especially *Nueva Presencia*.

Moreover, the mishandling and initiation of unpopular policies by representatives of the dictatorial regime were highlighted and condemned by the editors of those same publications. The closure of Luján University, for example, was praised ironically by a ICUF spokesperson for uniting parents, students, and intellectuals who declared their opposition to such decision.³² A similar reaction was sparked by the treatment of laws regulating the administration of universities and broadcasting: *Mundo Israelita* declared that the next measures the regime would take should be discussed within large forums where it would be possible to take into account the observation of sectors directly affected by the new policies.³³

Similarly, demands for political opening and the call for dialogue were accompanied by the elaboration of a narrative regarding the recent past of those who were advocating for it. If on the one hand, the objectives of the anti-subversion struggle had been accepted, by the fourth anniversary of the dictatorship a new atmosphere of condemnation of antagonism in political life and the recourse to violence started to crystallize. "There is no doubt," *Mundo Israelita* maintained, "that the country needs to go beyond the mistakes that have been made during these years."³⁴

Tiempo, *Mundo Israelita*, and *Nueva Presencia* were unanimous in condemning the use of political violence by both the Right and the Left. Ernesto Sábato consistently denounced "the terrorism of both extremes" whenever the subject was mentioned in Schiller's weekly.³⁵ While from very early on *Nueva Presencia* slammed "terrorist subversion" and "disappearances by the Right,"³⁶ it also, notably, highlighted the associations of those affected by state terrorism, and consequently, began a discourse that developed after the Malvinas/Falklands War, and was oriented toward demanding the whereabouts of the arrested/disappeared.

32 "La experiencia piloto," *Tiempo*, No. 133 (February/March 1980).

33 "El proceso de las leyes," *Mundo Israelita*, May 3, 1980.

34 "El diálogo," *Mundo Israelita*, March 29, 1980.

35 "Documentos y comunicaciones: Sábato: ni terrorismo de izquierda ni terrorismo de derecha," *Nueva Presencia*, September 14, 1979; "Sábato y Borges condenan el terrorismo de la izquierda y las desapariciones causadas por la derecha," *Nueva Presencia*, October 3, 1980.

36 "Comienza el año nuevo judío bajos dos invocaciones: La lucha por la paz y los derechos humanos," *Nueva Presencia*, September 21, 1979; "5741: Paz y derechos humanos," *Nueva Presencia*, September 13, 1980; "Comienza el Año Nuevo Judío bajo dos invocaciones: Luchar por la paz y los derechos humanos," *Nueva Presencia*, October 2, 1981.

By contrast, at least during the period of exhaustion, *Mundo Israelita's* criticism, aimed at the opposing sides over their use of violence, created a narrative stressing the necessity of going beyond the past and its victims:

There have been many Argentine dissenters and they have been very cruel, leaving many households to dress in mourning, with wounds that bleed in the face of irreparable losses. All this tragic baggage that has stemmed from confrontational provocation, irrational hatred, unconscious rancor, and thoughtless and impulsive behavior must be left behind, not strewn along the highway, which would mean reinforcing its presence, but buried once and for all.³⁷

While the recent past began to be the topic on which basic definitions would be assumed the vicissitudes of the national political course prompted many editorial writers of Jewish publications to take a stand. Added to the mistakes and consequences of the policies implemented by the military dictatorship was the uncertainty of not knowing who President Videla's successor would be. As Canelo pointed out, the need to name a successor only heightened the degree of tensions that existed among the armed forces.³⁸

In contrast to the early stages of the military dictatorship, during which legitimacy was maintained by the need to struggle against subversion, the situation had changed radically in 1980. The profound economic crisis, demands for political opening, the increase in labor disputes, and the rise of human rights organizations created fertile ground for the proliferation of conflict.

The decision to promote Roberto Eduardo Viola as Videla's successor was not without complications. While among the moderates, including Videla himself, Viola was perceived as someone who would continue the policies the regime had pursued up to that point—despite the profound economic crisis which demanded urgent attention—hardliners questioned whether he was fit to continue economic reform and maintain a curb on political activity.³⁹

His nomination, however, drew expressions of satisfaction from a significant group of opinion makers in the organized Jewish community. *Nueva Presencia* columnist Daniel Muchnik pointed out that Viola was a “different kind of military man.” He was the “son of immigrants” who did not belong to “closed circles or exclusive sects.” Sebastián Vasier, writing for *Tiempo*, also maintained that

37 “Las coincidencias saludables,” *Mundo Israelita*, January 3, 1981.

38 Paula Canelo, *El proceso en su laberinto: La interna militar de Videla a Bignone* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008), 164–76.

39 Ibid.

Viola did not subscribe to authoritarian concepts but adhered to ideologies traditionally considered democratic. Both publications welcomed the decision of the armed forces to support the continuation of Videla's policies.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, both journalists underscored the problems that, in the short term, the decision to appoint Viola as successor to Videla brought to the fore and the nature of those issues that he needed to address. The first and most urgent was the waiting period and the uncertainty about what Viola's government would be like. Although his nomination came at the end of 1980, he would take over only in March 1981. While *Mundo Israelita* pointed to the unrest generated by the "paralysis" resulting from the waiting period,⁴¹ *Tiempo* stressed the political points that should be part of the agenda of the next president: "Will there be authorization for the normal functioning of political parties? And what will happen to the political prisoners who have not been tried?"⁴²

Muchnik, on the other hand, asserted that the most urgent problem lay in the attention that needed to be directed to sectors affected by the regime's economic policies.⁴³ In fact, the declarations and signs of concern over the inflationary spiral and economic crisis, as seen in the previous chapter, were hallmarks of the year 1981. The replacement of Alfredo Martínez de Hoz by Lorenzo Sigaut as minister of the economy not only failed to produce changes in the regime's economic program, but also accentuated financial problems. The columns devoted in 1979 and 1980 to analysis of the political domain, demanding the creation of pathways leading to institutional normalization and political opening, turned in 1981 to criticism of the economic situation.⁴⁴

Despite the focus on economic analyses, the political demands did not disappear. The first news of meetings held among the leaders of various political parties, which took place in June and July 1981, was hailed in *Nueva Presencia*: "This constitutes an important move by the most representative forces of civility, not only in the reaffirmation of the democratic commitment of the Argentine people, but also toward staving off any adventurism on the part of reactionary forces."⁴⁵

In this climate of possibility of an incipient opening, Carlos Polak recalled the "Jewish militancy" that had taken place in the various national political

40 Daniel Muchnik, "Viola y las peripecias del poder," *Nueva Presencia*, January 10, 1980; Sebastián Vaiser, "¿Habrà cambio?" *Tiempo*, No. 140 (October 1980).

41 "El riesgo de las expectativas," *Mundo Israelita*, August 16, 1980.

42 Vaiser, "¿Habrà cambio?"

43 Muchnik, "Viola y las peripecias del poder."

44 In particular, the columns of "Tiempo Argentino," edited by Sebastián Vaiser and Lázaro Bregman, and the articles by Daniel Muchnik in *Nueva Presencia*.

45 "Tensiones y distensiones," *Nueva Presencia*, July 3, 1981.

parties: socialism, communism, Peronism, radicalism, intransigency, among others. He maintained that “in light of a return to the normal exercise of state powers, Jews cannot remain on the sidelines. The “don’t get involved” option, the ostrich attitude, implies a tacit defense of everything that was evil and rotten.”⁴⁶

The subsequent creation of the Multipartidaria (multiparty commission), which resulted from those meetings, was welcomed by *Mundo Israelita* and *Nueva Presencia*. Schiller’s weekly accorded great relevance to the creation of a body that brought together many of the political parties on the national scene.⁴⁷ *Mundo Israelita* devoted a column to its approval of the initiative.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the narrative directed toward calling for political opening and acclaiming the formation of the multiparty commission clearly shows how the military regime itself was understood, even by key figures who distanced themselves during those years. According to an editorial in *Nueva Presencia*, the Multipartidaria was poorly received by the “reactionary hawks that lie in wait for an opportunity to attack. These sectors, represented by the magazine *Cabildo*, demand the immediate installation of a dictatorship and repression of party politics [*partidocracia*]. They seek a deterioration of the current process (led at the moment by its most moderate wing).”⁴⁹

As pointed out in Chapter 2, the military government was not identified as a “dictatorship” by any of the opinion makers, at least until the Malvinas defeat. Moreover, it was thought that the overthrow of power by hardliners of the armed forces could transform the regime into a military dictatorship like that of Pinochet in Chile. But, generally, the succession of Videla, by Viola, and later by Galtieri, was seen as a triumph of the “democratic wing” of the three military branches.

Around the beginning of 1982, *Tiempo* and *Nueva Presencia* radicalized their positions concerning their evaluation of the military regime. The editorial of January 7, 1982, in Schiller’s periodical declared:

Since March 1976 the political state no longer exists “legally.” With the suspension of activity under this so bothersome rubric—politics—and with a state of siege in effect, the nation is mute and subject to authoritarian control characteristic of de facto regimes.⁵⁰

46 Carlos Polak, “El ‘no te metas’ encierra una cobardía cómplice,” *Nueva Presencia*, May 15, 1981.

47 “Multipartidaria: ilusiones y expectativas,” *Nueva Presencia*, July 17, 1981.

48 “Que no se frustre un buen comienzo,” *Mundo Israelita*, August 1, 1981.

49 “Multipartidaria: ilusiones y expectativas.”

50 “Verano caliente, tensiones y expectativas,” *Nueva Presencia*, January 7, 1982.

The de facto character of the regime was recognized when exhaustion of the legitimization process was reaching its end.

At the same time, there began to emerge a narrative that distanced itself from previous acceptance of the anti-subversion struggle. In light of the attainment of the objective that had given the regime legitimacy, questions emerged that shed new light on the motives of the dictatorship. "Why was political activity suspended?" asked the editorial, in a bid to affirm that it was part of an attempt to impose a socio-economic model that demanded sacrifices and denied liberties.⁵¹

In this, one could see reflections in *Tiempo*. The editor maintained that "political prohibition" was imposed by the National Reorganization Process with the goal of confronting "economic terrorism" and obliterating "armed terrorism." Nevertheless, "what was banned was dissent, holding a personal political opinion that did not match the official model."⁵² *Tiempo* proposed, instead, that a future political program take into account the following topics: 1) democratization and the full functioning of all institutions; 2) elimination of economic subversion; 3) the return of decision-making power to the Argentine people.

The demands for political opening and institutional normalization, along with a reinterpretation of the regime as a "de facto government" whose goal was to silence detractors and impose an economic model, characterized the stage of exhaustion of the military regime.

3 Reactions to the Release of Jacobo Timerman and Tensions within the Jewish Community in the Wake of His Testimony

The release of Jacobo Timerman was the consequence of a difficult series of events in which international Jewish bodies participated, in particular, US organizations and the Israel embassy. The publisher of *La Opinión*, who had been arrested in the context of the Graiver case, spent more than two years in various states of arrest: from his arrest/disappearance up to his final house arrest. During the period of his detention, several judicial trials—from a military tribunal up to the Supreme Court—determined that there was no proof of any ties between Jacobo Timerman and the "subversive organizations" that the regime had set out to combat.

51 Ibid.

52 Pablo Deutsch, "La veda política," *Tiempo*, No. 153 (December 1981); Pablo Deutsch, "Una nueva etapa," *Tiempo*, No. 154 (January 1982).

Nevertheless, armed forces hardliners, as described by Mochkofsky, stonewalled the process with an array of obstacles that prevented his release.⁵³ The result of efforts made on behalf of Jacobo Timerman allowed the journalist to leave the country, as an exile, for Israel. The commitment made by Jewish intermediaries in the negotiations meant that Timerman could not make statements regarding the nature of his arrest in Argentina and he would lose his Argentine citizenship upon leaving the country. The publisher of *La Opinión* grudgingly accepted these conditions, according to Mochkofsky, and the transfer took place on September 25, 1979.

Nevertheless, his liberation produced contradictory reactions within the Jewish community. The polemics surrounding Jacobo Timerman as a victim of “state repression” and as living proof of the “anti-Semitic” character of the regime, emerged a little before his departure for Israel. The focal point in his construction as a “special victim” of the dictatorial regime was articulated by the editor of *La Luz*, Nissim Elnecave, who based his first public statement on an expression of French judicial origin in an attempt to illustrate his argument: “The excessive nature of the punishment rehabilitates the guilty party.”⁵⁴

This, in sum, is what the Argentine authorities have accomplished in Timerman’s case. Without intending it in any way, they have made Timerman the number one martyr of the country in modern Argentine history. The dozens of disappeared journalists have been forgotten, although they are the true martyrs ... Those who persist in maintaining Timerman in his present situation—distancing themselves from the legal considerations of which government should be the strict guardian—place themselves under the stigma of the French saying that provides the basis for this commentary.⁵⁵

Elnecave’s editorial was a response to the Hubert Humphrey Award, given in absentia to Timerman by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith. The award constituted one of the strategies of public pressure put on military officials to obtain a rapid resolution of Timerman’s situation. The reactions to the award gave way to another debate that had begun prior to Timerman’s release and would go on for some time: questioning the DAIA for its alleged passivity in the face of the Timerman case by close associates of the *La Opinión* publisher.

53 Graciela Mochkofsky, *Timerman. El periodista que quiso ser parte del poder (1923–1999)* (Buenos Aires: Debolsillo, 2004).

54 Nissim Elnecave, “L’excès de chatiment rehabilite le culpable,” *La Luz*, August 31, 1979.

55 Ibid.

In an interview granted to *Nueva Presencia*, Héctor Timerman, Jacobo's son, appeared to be surprised by the silence of the Jewish leadership. If the award was going to a "victim of anti-Semitism" in Argentina despite the fact that DAIA remained silent, said Héctor, it was evident that the institution's behavior had been inadequate.⁵⁶

The news regarding the end of the Timerman case was welcomed by the community press and the DAIA plenary session. Nevertheless, as pointed out in the introduction to this section, its reception took various forms. The monthly *Tiempo*, which had not devoted a single page to mention of Timerman's situation during his captivity, pointed out that "solidarity with Timerman" was a consequence of his being a victim of illegality and violation of human rights. Yet, the publication distanced itself from him because of his ambiguous ideological stand and his questionable journalistic conduct. It pointed out that contrary to what Héctor Timerman had maintained, some Jewish institutions had turned his father's case into a leading cause:

At no point did we fall into the idiocy of certain so-called typical instances of turning him into a symbol of anti-Jewish arbitrariness or into an almost exclusive banner for the demands of our community in the realm of democratic liberties and human rights ... Timerman's name is just one more on a long list of Jewish victims in whose name *Tiempo* expresses its demands.⁵⁷

In contrast, *Nueva Presencia* hailed the result of the efforts made for his release, calling Timerman a courageous journalist. The editorial on the subject used the situation to commend Timerman's ideological line in order to position the weekly as the heir to his legacy:

Everyone from both the Right and the Left could not stand Jacobo's newspaper, some of whose principal features (defense of human rights, support for progressive forces that fought for peace and justice, repudiation of left- and right-wing terrorism) were similar to those that our publication defends today against hell or high water ... Timerman's release has closed a chapter. We would like to believe that we have had something to

56 "Entrevista a Héctor Timerman: Desde chicos hemos aprendido a ser judíos íntegros," *Nueva Presencia*, September 21, 1979.

57 "Marginado," *Tiempo*, No. 129 (October 1979).

do with raising awareness over the problem within the Judeo-Argentine community.⁵⁸

The conditions that provided for Timerman's exile from the country raised a touchy problem that only a few of the community's publications expressed openly: revocation of Timerman's Argentine citizenship, turning him into an expatriate. Leiser Madanes states that the principal role played by the Israel embassy allowed for revocation of his citizenship, since he was being defended by a foreign political agent.⁵⁹ Madanes's assertion served to sharpen criticism of DAIA: when this institution did not lead efforts on Timerman's behalf, advocacy for him was associated with him being a stateless Jew.

The debate entered a new phase when Jacobo Timerman himself said during an interview after his arrival in Tel Aviv that he felt excited to be in Israel, since this was the home of the Jewish people. This assertion, confirming the unequivocal relationship between the Jews and Israel, occasioned a strong denial by opinion makers of the Jewish community, including those who had declared themselves heirs to his legacy. While *Tiempo* criticized Timerman's pronouncement as working in favor of those who had arrested him, it also took advantage of the opportunity to point out a topic that would be crucial in subsequent condemnations: the absence of declarations referring to the thousands of prisoners and disappeared persons whose situation had not changed.⁶⁰

Similarly, Daniel Muchnik slammed Jacobo Timerman's statements. According to the *Nueva Presencia* columnist, his words gave credit to those who from the ranks of "anti-Semitism" accused the Jews of "dual loyalties."⁶¹ Nevertheless, the strongest condemnation came, once again, from Elnecave. This time, his editorial expanded the polemics outside the community (his commentary criticizing Timerman was published in the morning *La Prensa*, the largest circulation newspaper in the country) and, as a consequence, it redoubled subsequent accusations against the chief editor of *La Luz*.

Like Muchnik and *Tiempo*, Elnecave judged Timerman's declarations to be offensive, not because they provided anti-Semitic groups with arguments but because they demonstrated that his release had been the result of his Jewish affiliation. He maintained that Timerman's arrest had nothing to do with

58 "Jacobo Timerman: Trabajosa libertad," *Nueva Presencia*, September 28, 1979.

59 Leiser Madanes, "El caso Timerman sigue suscitando polémicas," *Nueva Presencia*, October 12, 1979.

60 "Marginado."

61 Daniel Muchnik, "Las declaraciones de Jacobo Timerman," *Nueva Presencia*, October 5, 1979. Herman Schiller seconded condemnation of Timerman's declarations in a subsequent editorial. See "Una extraña coincidencia," *Nueva Presencia*, October 19, 1979.

this connection, nor even with his profession as a journalist. Without making any direct accusation, however, Elnecave maintained that *La Opinión* employed many prominent members of political-military organizations such as the Montoneros, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Finally, he held that Timerman had saved himself precisely because of his Jewishness: "If there was anti-Semitism in this case, it worked precisely in reverse, that is, to the benefit of the accused."⁶²

Herman Schiller, who in 1976 had used the term "informer" to describe the *Luz* publisher, maintained that the arguments Elnecave had utilized were "the very same ones that the most recalcitrant sectors of local anti-Semitism had preached." Elnecave's article, according to Schiller, held that left-wing sectors of the community saw Timerman as their panacea. He considered this view of left-wing sectors to be a new way of being a traitorous "informer."⁶³

In fact, as *La Luz* pointed out in reply to the "left-wing Jewish weekly," Elnecave's article had broad journalistic repercussions. It was read on the Mitre and Colonia radio stations and on the noon news program of Channel 9.⁶⁴ *La Luz's* response to the accusations made by *Nueva Presencia* was as follows: denial that they were "collaborators" (*Judenrat*), and the naming of journalists at *La Opinión* who allegedly belonged to "Latin American terrorist groups."⁶⁵

Elnecave accused Schiller, first, of engaging in "verbal terrorism," sowing panic via the use of "witch-hunt words" like "Judenrat," "informer," "traitor," "Nazi," and "reactionary," with the aim of "tainting as leprous anyone who fought against the evil of the Left in our community." Second, Muchnik would be singled out because his "companions" on the staff of *La Opinión*—his contemporaries when he worked for Timerman's periodical—included a nucleus of "Latin American journalists" with a past linked to diverse political-military organizations: Andrés Ernesto Alsino Bea (Uruguayan, arrested for being a member of ERP after participating in the Sallustro kidnapping), Augusto Montesinos Hurtado (Bolivian terrorist, a collaborator of General Torres and Hernán Siles Suazso), Ted Córdeova-Claure (Bolivian, former press secretary in the communist government of General Torres), Juan Gelman (spokesman in Rome for the Montoneros), Miguel Bonasso (press secretary for the Peronist terrorists), and Francisco Urondo (arrested in 1973 and linked to FAR).⁶⁶

62 "Timerman: El abuso del argumento de antisemitismo," *La Prensa*, October 14, 1979 and *La Luz* (October 21, 1979).

63 "Una extraña coincidencia"; Daniel Muchnik, "Caso Timerman: Una nota poco edificante," *Nueva Presencia*, October 19, 1979.

64 "El impacto de un artículo en *La Prensa*," *La Luz*, October 26, 1979.

65 "La defensa de las 'vacas sagradas,'" *La Luz*, October 26, 1979.

66 *Ibid.*

While this polemic did not continue, the diatribe between Elnecave and *La Luz* resurfaced in June 1981 after the publication of Jacobo Timerman's book, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*. The first edition of the book was launched in the United States in May 1981 and, as Mochkofsky points out, provoked an enormous furor. While it was not a great commercial success, "it ended up consecrating Timerman as a champion of human rights."⁶⁷ Although the first edition in Spanish came later,⁶⁸ repercussions in Argentina were felt shortly after its initial publication.

As on the previous occasion, Elnecave challenged Timerman's testimonial. Repeating the same argument used in his disagreement with Daniel Muchnik—the existence of "six Latin American terrorists" working for *La Opinión*—he raised an issue he had not articulated in his previous columns: Jacobo Timerman did not explain in his testimonial what the motive for his arrest was. According to Elnecave, it was not because he was a Jew, but because of his connection to the financier David Graiver, who managed the funds of the Montoneros organization. He reproached Timerman for this "oversight" as being part of a strategy to highlight his role as a "victim of anti-Semitic operations."⁶⁹

Faced with new accusations regarding his character as a "collaborator," Elnecave hardened his position against Timerman:

La Luz broke this taboo [over the arrest of Timerman because of supposed links between Graiver, a stockholder in *La Opinión*, and the Montoneros]. We were the first to dare to break that taboo, and for that they have branded us *malshinim*—traitors and informers—and other obscenities along the same lines, which shows us how the Timerman case is the logical sequel to the dirty antiterrorist war ... The revelation of the truth about this individual and stripping him bare to the public represents our contribution in this country's fight against that dirty war. It is an honor for us to have established in these columns a front for making things clear in this specific stage of the ... war. That is, by denouncing the

67 Regarding the polemics surrounding reception by the national and international press, see Mochkofsky, *Timerman*, 395–434.

68 The first edition was a pirated one, published by *El Cid* in November 1982. The title is *El caso Camps, punto inicial*, in response to the libelous text published by the chief of police of the Province of Buenos Aires and one of Jacobo Timerman's torturers, Ramón Camps. See: Ramón Camps, *Caso Timerman: Punto Final* (Buenos Aires: Tribuna Abierta, 1982).

69 "Prisionero con seis números, celda con dos números," *La Luz*, June 19, 1981.

charade, the lie, [and] the inventions aimed at denigrating our country and its Jewish community.⁷⁰

The tenacity with which Elnecave took on Timerman led him to support the declarations that the chief of police for the Province of Buenos Aires and Timerman's torturer, Ramón Camps, made in the weekly *Gente*, where he claimed that Jacobo Timerman was reigniting an "anti-Argentine campaign."⁷¹ On the basis of this confrontation, *La Luz* undertook to translate and publish every article published abroad denouncing Jacobo Timerman's testimonial.⁷²

This position, nevertheless, became a point of no return for *La Luz*: first, because its severe criticism of Jacobo Timerman—whose detention in effect had become a symbol of international condemnation of the military dictatorship—leaving Elnecave's campaign against Timerman in alignment with the military dictatorship at its worst moment, being closely tied to the arguments upheld by the military junta regarding the anti-subversion struggle; second, because its opposition to Timerman's criticism of the DAIA leadership led Elnecave to close ranks with the regime. This was a considerable change, since *La Luz* had been, at least until 1981, the publication that was most critical of the leadership of the Jewish community and its institutional structure.

This shift was significant because it was DAIA and its main leaders that were questioned in Jacobo Timerman's initial declarations. The reason for his condemnation turned out to be the same as Héctor Timerman's in the interview with him published in *Nueva Presencia* in August 1979: they deemed the action taken by the organization to obtain his release to be insufficient. The two-and-a-half years of Timerman's detention prompted an argument holding that no effort had been sufficient and that few players—of those he considered would react quickly—came forth with an effective strategy. From his exile in Spain, Abrasha Rotenberg—who had been a partner in various journalistic enterprises led by Timerman—had suggested to Timerman, after the exposure of the Graiver case, that he leave the country. However, Timerman's reply

70 "El principio del fin de la falsa del simulador: Auto-torturador y llorón," *La Luz*, June 24, 1981.

71 Ibid.; "Entrevista a Ramón Camps," *Revista Gente*, July 2, 1981. In September 1981, Channel 7 broadcast on five consecutive days the program "La campaña antiargentina de Jacobo Timerman," in which the principal person interviewed, Gen. Ramón Camps, produced the recordings of the "interrogations" of Jacobo Timerman who referred to himself as a Marxist and Zionist.

72 "Repudian a Timerman en Israel," *La Luz*, August 14, 1981; Tov Seguev, "Timerman: El hombre que quedó afuera," *La Luz*, October 9, 1981; Baron B. Weisser, "La beatificación de Jacobo Timerman," *La Luz*, December 11, 1981.

had been unequivocal: “Do you have any idea how long I would remain under arrest? International pressure would not allow them to hold me for more than 48 hours!”⁷³

Timerman’s detention extended well beyond this declaration and, because of this misconception, its anti-Semitic character began to be stressed—justifiably if we recognize the singular nature of the questions posed to him during his interrogation—and the incapacity of the Jewish leadership to grasp the anti-Jewish character of the regime.⁷⁴ Prior to statements coming in 1980 from Israel and the United States regarding the “collaborationist” character of the Jewish leadership in the face of the dictatorship’s assaults, Timerman began to construct a narrative designed to equate human rights violations in Argentina with the persecution of the Jews under the Nazis.

In light of the upcoming visit that Elie Wiesel was making to the country, which took place in August 1979, Timerman produced a document, written during his house arrest, which included the following:

The Jewish community is sick, and its sickness stems from how it cannot find or does not want to find a way to fight its aggressors ... Elie Wiesel’s principal job in Argentina is to speak with thousands of Jews. Since he symbolizes the Holocaust, Argentine Jews console themselves with their own misfortunes by using a very simple argument every time someone proposes that they fight: “Don’t exaggerate. No one is carrying us off to the gas ovens.” Can Elie Wiesel analyze the negative, demagogic effect of the Holocaust on a community? ... Can Elie Wiesel attempt to explain to a community that there is still a danger of persecution even though they are allowed to leave the country, the schools and synagogues are in business, the Zionist organizations are in business?⁷⁵

Elie Wiesel’s visit took place in the context of an invitation extended by the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano. During his stay, he sought permission,

73 Interview by the author with Abrasha Rotenberg, February 4, 2010. See also Abrasha Rotenberg, *La Opinión amordazada: La lucha de un periódico bajo la dictadura militar* (Barcelona: Taller de Mario Muchnik, 2000).

74 According to Timerman’s testimony in *Preso sin nombre, celda sin número* (*Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*), the interrogation led by Ramón Camps himself and Miguel Etchecolatz focused on definitions regarding “Zionism,” “Socialist Zionism,” “the Jewish Community,” and an alleged plot, according to which Jews would take over Patagonia.

75 “Elie Wiesel: Direct Translation of Suggestions made by Jacobo Timerman, Friday 20 of July 1979,” Marshall Meyer Archive.

unsuccessfully, to visit Jacobo Timerman.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, news of Wiesel's arrival generated the first documentation in which Jacobo Timerman began to consolidate a narrative directed toward maintaining the notion of a "sick community" that is unwilling to confront its "aggressors."

This perspective deepened in 1980 when Timerman—violating the conditions of the agreement under which he was granted release—began to make his first declarations abroad. His focal points were condemnation of the repressive policies of the regime and its anti-Semitism, as well as the leadership of the Jewish community, especially Nehemías Resnizky. Branding of the local leadership as a *Judenrat*, an accusation that circulated in the Israeli and North American press, was rejected by the organization's president, who called them "self-serving opinions for distorting the reality of the Argentine Jewish community by damaging its leadership."⁷⁷

Timerman's pronouncements led to intensification of the campaign the community had begun in international forums of Jewish organizations to deny the existence of official anti-Semitism in Argentina. Presentations by various community key players held that the development of Jewish institutional life continued normally, and underlined the rapid reaction of the Jewish leadership when faced with acts of anti-Semitism.⁷⁸

Criticism of the DAIA leadership and Nehemías Resnizky was condemned by various key figures of the community, who demonstrated their support for the former president of the organization. Letters sent by Rabbi Roberto Graetz,⁷⁹ a former member of the APDH, and Sión Cohen Imach,⁸⁰ former president of AMIA, as well as articles and tributes, praised Resnizky's actions.⁸¹ Herman Schiller, for example, commended Resnizky in an interview

76 "Wiesel vino, vio y venció," *Nueva Presencia*, September 7, 1979.

77 "Solo la irresponsabilidad puede llevar a distorsionar la imagen de la comunidad," *Mundo Israelita*, August 9, 1981. The same accusation would be repeated in 1981. See *Informativo DAIA*, No. 101 (n.d.).

78 "Solo la irresponsabilidad"; "Rechazamos los gestos espectaculares, pero la DAIA no permanece en silencio," *Mundo Israelita*, June 11, 1981; "El antisemitismo en Argentina en una conferencia del AJC," *La Luz*, June 5, 1981; "No cesan las distorsiones: La presencia de la comunidad en los foros judíos mundiales disipa equívocos," *Mundo Israelita*, December 12, 1981.

79 "Carta de Roberto Graetz a Nehemías Resnizky," July 6, 1981, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

80 "Carta de Sion Cohen Imach a Nehemías Resnizky," December 1, 1981, CES-DAIA, Resnizky Archive.

81 The magazine *Mifgash*, part of the Artzi-Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz movement, published a short article that appeared originally in the Jewish magazine *Al Hamishmar*, by Nathan Ben Mitzri, criticizing Timerman's declarations and defending the DAIA's initiatives. See "El caso Timerman," *Mifgash*, No. 4 (December 1981).

occasioned by Timerman's accusations against him. The chief editor of *Nueva Presencia* maintained that the Jewish leadership had two "moments of glory in its history": its reactions to the Sirota case⁸² and the Graiver case.⁸³

While Resnizky was able to assemble a broad array of supporters, the consensus regarding DAIA's conduct and, especially, that of the man who had been its president during the first phase of the military dictatorship, would crumble during the democratic transition. The rupture crystallized when Ignacio Klich, in the newly relaunched *Nueva Sión*, began to present a series of reports on the "conduct of the Jewish community during the military dictatorship."

4 The Jewish Community's Response to the Malvinas War

On April 2, 1982, the military dictatorship surprised everyone with an important news item: a joint military force had disembarked on the outskirts of Port Stanley (renamed Puerto Argentino) and retaken the Malvinas/Falklands Islands following a brief battle. While post-dictatorship, it was generally considered that the Malvinas War was a strategy adopted by the military regime in order to regain public support, more recent studies view it in more complex fashion. The "Malvinas cause" rested on its enormous popularity as a "grass-roots issue" in Argentine society.⁸⁴

News of the recovery was welcomed by the Jewish community. Nevertheless, the first editorials, with the exception of *La Luz*, did not abandon their demands for institutional normalization and political opening. Elneceave's

The article points out that the publication of the socialist faction of local Zionism, *Nueva Sión*, ceased to appear during the days of Timerman's disappearance, following the circulation of the complete text by the weekly of DAIA's declaration regarding Timerman's arrest. Research reveals that this is incorrect. Timerman was detained in April 1977, and *Nueva Sión* ceased to appear several months later, in August of that year. Several issues of *Nueva Sión* came out between the publication of Resnizky's declarations, to which Mitzri is referring, and the final issue.

82 Graciela Sirota was a medical student kidnapped in 1962 by the Tacuara nationalist group. On the impact of the Sirota case, see Emmanuel Kahan, "La identidad judía en la Argentina en los tiempos del 'affaire Eichmann' (1961–1962)", in Sabina Frederic and Germán Soprano eds., *Cultura y Política en etnografías sobre la Argentina* (Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005).

83 "Nehemías Resnizky dice su verdad," *Nueva Presencia*, November 27, 1981.

84 See Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1976/1983: Del golpe de Estado a la restauración democrática* (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 2003); Federico Lorenz, *Malvinas: Una guerra argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009); Rosana Guber, *¿Por qué Malvinas? De la causa justa a la guerra absurda* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001).

periodical exalted the actions of the armed forces, pointing out that “just as the Argentines have held on for 150 years to their ties to the Malvinas, the Jews have done so with Jerusalem.”⁸⁵ *Tiempo* and *Nueva Presencia*, for their part, were “happy,” while recognizing the framework and the context in which the “news” had taken place: the increase in social discontent and the general strike of March 20, 1982.⁸⁶

Schiller underscored how the government, in this “historical emergency,” should engage in reflection by taking into account two different cases of “popular reaction” vis-à-vis the regime:

When on March 30 it repressed the people, it became the target of all criticism. But when on April 2 it restored the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands, setting aside its painful repressive role and fulfilling with manliness the goals set by the Constitution and the people—that is to say—the preservation of sovereignty, Argentines take to the streets to express their support and affection.⁸⁷

The thesis defended by Schiller’s periodical while the conflict in the islands lasted was that “external sovereignty is not enough if internal sovereignty is forgotten.”⁸⁸ Nevertheless, those very same pages condemned leftist factions that impugned the army’s actions. Ernesto Guidici maintained that “taking the Malvinas is a just cause,” although there might be “people from the Left who express fear or reticence.”⁸⁹ Abel Wolfer, for his part, mocked the “intellectual stupidity” of Cortázar, “who, holding his French passport in his left hand,” had criticized recovery of the islands by the military regime.⁹⁰ Like Guidici and Wolfer, Schiller condemned “do-gooders” who suggested, “the people were being led by the nose”: “This is a historical event, one that is legitimate

85 “Las Malvinas 150 años después,” *La Luz*, April 9, 1982; “Las Malvinas y Jerusalem,” *La Luz*, April 23, 1982.

86 “Las Malvinas redimidas,” *Tiempo*, No. 15 (April 1982); Herman Schiller, “Una nueva situación,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 8, 1982.

87 Schiller, “Una nueva situación.”

88 Herman Schiller, “Si, todo cambio,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 16, 1982; Ricardo Monner Sanz, “Soberanía externa y soberanía interna,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 16, 1982; Herman Schiller, “Soberanía externa y soberanía interna,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 30, 1982. ICUF maintained a similar position. See Pablo Deutsch, “Soberanía,” *Tiempo*, No. 157 (May 1982).

89 Ernesto Guidici, “Malvinas: Argentina enfrenta al colonialismo,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 8, 1982.

90 Abel Wolfer, “Las Malvinas más allá del régimen,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 16, 1982.

for the recovery of sovereignty and a piece of land expropriated by British colonialism.”⁹¹

The march to Plaza de Mayo that took place on April 2, 1982, demonstrated the emotions felt at that time. According to Schiller, the plaza was filled with flags and chants from many sectors—including Peronists and Communists who until then had been targets of repression by the armed forces. The chants were evidence of support for the recovery of the Malvinas, but there were also slogans directed against the government: “Now that the British are gone, Aleman should go,” referring to the economy minister. Nevertheless, the report in *Nueva Presencia* spoke of how the “Argentine national anthem” blared out, “unifying voices to drown out the voices of protest.”⁹²

The grassroots marches to Plaza de Mayo in support of the regime’s initial years were welcomed as evidence of the “maturity” of the citizenry. As Schiller pointed out, regardless of the final outcome of the conflict, the rally indicated the path the regime would take once the war was over:

When this all has passed, the country will surely turn once again to look at itself in the mirror. Unemployment, the unjust distribution of wealth, the dismantling of industry, disappeared people, [and] political prisoners, are the elements of the Argentine contradiction that must be urgently overcome. Because the people—as these past days have demonstrated—are no longer afraid of the colonialists or the internal repressors.⁹³

The notion of a “fearless” people who were showing maturity in rallying for the Malvinas cause was one of the main themes in *Nueva Presencia*’s and *Tiempo*’s coverage.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the character of the rally took on added value for key figures of the organized Jewish community who saw that in the context of war the Jews had become esteemed members of the Argentine nation and fully constituted citizens.

However, during a radio broadcast, the host Enrique Llamas de Madariaga, wondered “why all the communities have mobilized with the exception of the Jews?”⁹⁵ Nevertheless, and despite Madariaga’s query, representatives of the Jewish community promoted a broad array of activities and issued statements demonstrating their solidarity with national feeling. A DAIA communiqué,

91 Schiller, “Si, todo cambio.”

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 “Las Malvinas redimidas,” *Tiempo*, No. 156 (April 1982); Wolfer, “Las Malvinas más allá del régimen”; Herman Schiller, “El colonialismo no pasará,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 23, 1982.

95 “Los judíos se suman a la movilización popular,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 23, 1982.

for example, welcomed, “along with all of the sons of this land,” the recovery of the Malvinas, considering it “an act of justice.”⁹⁶ ICUF, for its part, in a memorandum sent to DAIA, proposed organizing a concerted act among all the institutions of the Jewish community. It would consist of five steps that ICUF felt would demonstrate support for the military: 1) organize as soon as possible a march in a public place; 2) address to the State of Israel a petition requesting support in the United Nations for the Argentine cause; 3) request the endorsement of other Jewish communities in the world; 4) demand that the international community intercede to avoid armed conflict; 5) sponsor an act of solidarity in the event that the British government decided to respond to the Argentine occupation and attempt to recover control of the islands by military means.⁹⁷

The fervor over the Malvinas went so far as to be reflected in an ad campaign of the company that traditionally made matzah, the Yanovsky Brothers, with an enthusiastic text in support of the recovery of the islands:

WHAT A BLESSING! You can celebrate two grand events: the anniversary of the State of Israel and the recovery of the South Atlantic Islands by the Argentine Republic. Two geographically different countries where the people govern themselves, consolidating sovereignty. We raise a prayer to the All Mighty [asking] Him to guide and protect our Argentine soldiers who, joined together under our Argentine flag, without distinction of race or creed, are giving their lives to maintain the ideals we have inherited from our forefathers in the Heroic Deed of May. *Yanovsky Bros. Company, S.R.L.*⁹⁸

There were various other gestures of support for recovery of the Malvinas Islands. Members of the board of the Israelite Hospital, which continued to suffer the consequences of its financial crisis, sent a message to the chief of the Joint Command, Vice Admiral Leopoldo Suárez del Cerro, informing him that the hospital was putting all of its services at the disposal of the armed forces, including the hospital's modern equipment, to aid combatants who might need surgical or other medical attention.⁹⁹

96 “DAIA: Solidaridad de la comunidad judía con la recuperación de las Malvinas,” *La Luz*, April 23, 1982.

97 “Propuesta del ICUF a la DAIA,” *Tiempo*, No. 157 (May 1982).

98 “Publicidad Establecimientos Yanovsky Hnos. S.R.L.,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 30, 1982.

99 “El Hospital Israelita y las Malvinas,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 16, 1982. The Ministry of Public Health of the Nation subsequently expressed its gratitude for the offer from the Israelite Hospital. See “Las Malvinas y los judíos,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 23, 1982.

By the same token, the DAIA supplied, at the request of representatives of various political parties, “letters of introduction” for those attending international Jewish forums and were speaking in support of the legitimacy of the Argentine claims.¹⁰⁰ Representatives of the Organización Sionista Femenina Argentina (OSFA) and the Consejo Argentino de Mujeres Israelitas (ICAMI) attended a fund-raise event that took place in the Sheraton Hotel, organized by the Council of coordination of Private Works (CONDECOORD) and the Argentine Coordinating Committee of the Inter-American Women’s Commission (CIM/OEA).¹⁰¹

These demonstrations of support were complemented by enthusiastic public activities intended to reaffirm the justice of the step taken by the Argentine government. One of the first and best attended took place in the Templo Puertas de Oración Sephardic synagogue. The initiative, which originated in Orthodox religious sectors, was led by Rubén Beraja, president of the Ente Coordinador Seferadí Argentino, along with Rabbis Isaac Chehebar, Saadia Benzaquén, and Shlomo Benhamú.¹⁰² Similarly, there was a gathering at the Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina’s (CIRA) temple, where Rabbi Simón Moguilevsky said a prayer for peace.¹⁰³

The CIRA temple was the center of another event with an attendance of more than one thousand, at which the first speaker was DAIA president Mario Gorenstein.¹⁰⁴ Along with Rubén Beraja and retired Brigadier General Isaías García Enciso, Gorenstein spoke again at the “Great Public Act for Peace and Sovereignty on the Malvinas Islands” that took place on May 23 at the El Nacional Theater. The subsequent *La Luz* article underscored once again the massive attendance.¹⁰⁵

For its part, during the celebration of Kabalat Shabbat on Friday April 23, the Comunidad Bet-El, led by Rabbi Marshall Meyer, invited a major figure, Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel.¹⁰⁶ This was not the only forum to do so: *Nueva Presencia* published an interview in which Pérez Esquivel upheld Argentina’s right to reclaim its external sovereignty, although he did not

100 “La colectividad judía unida en el fervor argentino,” *La Luz*, May 7, 1982.

101 “Participación judía en el ‘Operativo Malvinas’ de movilización de las mujeres argentinas,” *La Luz*, May 21, 1982) and “Publicación OSFA,” December, 1982.

102 “Los judíos se suman a la movilización popular,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 23, 1982.

103 “Las Malvinas y los judíos,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 23, 1982.

104 Ibid.

105 “Las entidades sefaradíes efectuaron un masivo acto por la paz y la soberanía Argentina en Malvinas,” *La Luz*, June 4, 1982.

106 “Paz y libertad: Texto completo de la prédica pronunciada por Pérez Esquivel en la Comunidad Bet-El,” *Nueva Presencia*, May 7, 1982.

hesitate to mention the conditions prevailing within the country.¹⁰⁷ However, among those that proclaimed themselves detractors of the military regime, *Nueva Presencia* was the only Jewish publication interested in publishing opinions on the Malvinas War.¹⁰⁸

Businesses were closed for the *Círculo Social Hebreo Argentino* event in the Flores neighborhood of the city of Buenos Aires, at which there was a massive turnout.¹⁰⁹ And more than three thousand people attended a gathering organized by ICUF on May 22 in Plaza San Martín, according to Daniel Pernik's "Letter to the Reader," published in *Tiempo*. Finally, the Hebraica Argentina Society and the Náutico Hacoaj Club organized a gathering under the slogan "The Argentine Malvinas, forever and in peace," in which major cultural figures participated: Marcos Aguinis, Isidoro Blastein, Alberto Brailowsky, Rudy Chernicoff, Norman Erlich, Alberto Fischermami, Ricardo Halac, Gregorio Klimovsky, Bernardo Koremblit, Santiago Kovadloff, Sergio Leonardo, Cipe Lincovsky, Rosa Rosen, Berta Singerman, and Gregorio Weinberg, among others.¹¹⁰ This rally, held at the Obras Sanitarias Stadium, was attended by more than five thousand people.¹¹¹

In addition, some organizations came up with initiatives to contribute to the "National Patriotic Fund" sponsored by the military regime. The Sholem Aleijem School held an Israeli dance festival, attended by military personnel such as Col. Dante Bustista Busca (head of the army's Civic Action Division) and police commissioner Adolfo Roboredo, while the Max Nordau Club in La Plata organized a film program.¹¹² AMIA, for its part, issued a communiqué on the occasion of the massive attendance of members to the institution's building, asking them to send contributions directly to the National Patriotic Fund and not to AMIA headquarters.¹¹³

These gestures of support had a positive effect in the eyes of the military. Recognition by the authorities of "Jewish fervor" over the recovery of the Malvinas translated into an invitation to local DAIA representatives from the commander of the Third Army Corps, based in Córdoba, to visit "the said military establishment."¹¹⁴ By the same token, DAIA obtained permission for

107 "Pérez Esquivel y la guerra en el Atlántico Sur," *Nueva Presencia*, April 30, 1982.

108 "Derechos Humanos y soberanía: Diversos sectores contestatarios opinan sobre la recuperación de las Malvinas," *Nueva Presencia*, April 23, 1982.

109 "Malvinas: sigue la movilización judía," *Nueva Presencia*, May 14, 1982.

110 Ibid.

111 "Se mantiene la movilización judía," *Nueva Presencia*, May 21, 1982.

112 "Las Malvinas y los judíos," *Nueva Presencia*, June 11, 1982.

113 Comunicado AMIA, *Nueva Presencia*, April 30, 1982.

114 "La colectividad judía unida en el fervor argentino," *La Luz*, May 7, 1982.

a rabbi—Baruj Plavnik—to conduct a religious ceremony in the southern city Comodoro Rivadavia, attended by Jewish soldiers. This service, according to *Nueva Presencia*, enabled the opening of a synagogue that had been closed for lack of congregants.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, in the midst of these enthusiastic manifestations of support for the Malvinas cause an event in the Middle East again turned the debate to the problem of Jewish and Argentine identity. On June 6, 1982, a week before the armed forces signed Argentina's surrender, during the Peace for Galilee operation, or the First Lebanese War, the Israeli army invaded south Lebanon with the objective of expelling PLO groups from that country.

The conflict in the local arena was triggered by the declaration made by Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon stating that young Argentine Jews should be fighting for Israel, not the Malvinas. In contrast to the public events and pronouncements from the Jewish community recognizing the justice of the recovery of the South Atlantic islands, which went so far as to compare the Argentine mission to the Jews' connection to Jerusalem, Sharon's words reactivated accusations regarding the Jews' "dual loyalty" and their weak assimilation in Argentina.

Various publications condemned Sharon's declaration. *Tiempo*,¹¹⁶ *La Luz*,¹¹⁷ and *Nueva Presencia*,¹¹⁸ for example, were in agreement in condemning the Israeli defense minister's statement. In contrast, the central organizations—DAIA, OSA, and AMIA—avoided reacting publicly. Nevertheless, they sponsored a communiqué seeking to "clarify" Israel's motives for its incursion in south Lebanon, and claiming that the military operation did not seek to alter the sovereignty of that state, but to "destroy the military bases and gangs of assassins that operate from them."¹¹⁹

Enthusiasm for the Malvinas cause, nevertheless, was not unanimous. A self-proclaimed "young reader" of *Nueva Presencia* impugned support for the recovery of the islands. Adrián Feldman wrote:

What is wrong with the Argentine people? Are we so meek that a governmental elite can lead us by the nose wherever they want? I am asking these questions as a young person who is attempting to follow the political events of our time using analytical tools. I cannot understand how it

115 "Se mantiene la movilización judía," *Nueva Presencia*, May 21, 1982.

116 "¡Esa guerra no es nuestra, señores Beguin-Sharón!" *Tiempo*, No. 158 (June 1982).

117 "Una decisión torpe e inconsulta del Ministro de Defensa Israelí," *La Luz*, June 4, 1982.

118 "Profundizar nuestra identidad: Reportaje al Ingeniero Jacobo Fiterman, presidente de la Organización Sionista Argentina," *Nueva Presencia*, August 6, 1982.

119 "Declaración de OSA, DAIA y AMIA," *La Luz*, June 25, 1982.

is possible that those same people beaten down by the repressive force of March 30 has now decided to give itself body and soul to support the regime.¹²⁰

Feldman confronted *Nueva Presencia* over what he considered, as in the case of the other publications, its championing of the massive assemblies: “I would like to know if the support for the recovery of the Malvinas can erase so many years of suffering, blood, and repression,” he concluded. Nevertheless, the documentary evidence appears to show that in contrast to other Jewish community organs, Schiller’s weekly was the one pointing out most insistently that the mass demonstrations should not be considered a defense of the military dictatorship. In an article from April 2, 1982, for example, *Nueva Presencia* noted the opposition chants at each rally and published the opinions of detractors of the regime.

At the end of April, Schiller noted one of the slogans shouted by the multitudes: “Hip, hip, hip, we support the Malvinas but not the dictatorship,” in order to validate one of the main arguments of the periodical’s editorial line during the armed conflict:

The basic existential doubt of our time (how to support the just cause of the Malvinas without that support being interpreted as providing oxygen for the eventual survival of the regime) was resolved by almost all the democratic sectors via a formula for consensus: sovereignty would not be complete if at the same time they did not take the necessary steps for a return to the rule of law.¹²¹

In contrast to other Jewish community key players—with the exception of ICUF—*Nueva Presencia*’s statement was an attempt to support the demand for institutional normalization and political opening that characterized the narrative of distancing from the military dictatorship. While Schiller’s weekly stressed the country’s main problem—internal sovereignty—the other Jewish organizations called for a “pause for the Malvinas Islands,” suspending all polemics and tensions in which the community had been involved during 1981.¹²²

Nothing much changed after the end of the war. Again, only *Tiempo* and *Nueva Presencia* made critical pronouncements over what became once again

120 “Carta de Adrián Feldman en ‘Voces de Aliento, crítica y comentarios,’” *Nueva Presencia*, May 21, 1977.

121 “Soberanía externa y soberanía interna,” *Nueva Presencia*, April 30, 1982.

122 See previous chapter.

the issue of the military dictatorship, expressing hope for the inevitable democratization of public life. Nevertheless, their predictions varied: while *Tiempo's* style was characterized by a dispassionate prose that highlighted the need for changes in the economic sphere, *Nueva Presencia* became even more radicalized:

For better or for worse, the end of the war. For better, because nobody plays with the blood of valiant young Argentine men anymore. And for worse, because the events have been a slap in the face, waking [us] up from the illusion of a “unique national front” and reminding people that the struggle against fierce colonial aggression was not carried out by a grassroots and representative regime enjoying the affection and confidence of the citizenry, but by a de facto repressive government stemming from an unconstitutional act ... After the defeat, have we returned to April 1—that is, to the very nature of the regime from before the formation of national unity required by imperialist aggression—or do the possibilities for change exist? ... It is inevitable that we follow the path of democratic opening and deal with the matter of the disappeared over which “a mantle of oblivion” will not be cast.¹²³

In effect, once the Malvinas War was over, key figures of the organized Jewish community returned to their debates and tensions. But two not-so-distant consequences confronted them. The first was a result of the Argentine defeat in the war: in contrast to previous years, the end of the National Reorganization Process was an attainable goal. The second, which followed on from the latter, derived from the ways each opinion maker was willing to travel the path to democratic transition.

As can be observed in the analysis presented so far, at least one of them began to build an image positioning it among the bulwarks against the military dictatorship: *Nueva Presencia*. “We have put ourselves on the line for five years in the struggle for a democratic Argentina, including harshly criticizing the government,” Schiller maintained in his editorial on the end of the war.¹²⁴

123 “Las lágrimas, históricamente, han fermentado las mejores luchas,” *Nueva Presencia*, June 18, 1982.

124 Ibid.

5 Between the Collapse of the Regime and Fractures in the Jewish Community

While there was no let-up in disputes within the organized community during the military dictatorship, the increase in tensions, disagreements, and the emergence of a more radicalized line took place after the Malvinas conflict. From then on, the positions assumed by the various key figures toward the start of a political process in Argentina became a source of friction among them.

After the war, as Lvovich and Bisquert assert, the dictatorial regime as a whole was placed in question and the immediate past became an object of critical interpretation. Thus, a cycle began in which the human rights question would assume a relevant place; this, in turn, was accompanied by a process of “hiding” the various degrees and manifestations of support that community representatives had lent to the dictatorial regime.¹²⁵

With the exception of the leaders of central organizations and the publishers of *La Luz*, positions on human rights and the meaning of political opening became the main topics on which their articles focused. ICUF, for example, had condemned the disappearances early on, while supporting the objectives of the anti-subversion struggle and the armed forces faction led by Videla; however, it had revised the immediate past, distancing them from the assumptions they had held during the first period of the regime:

From the moment that Videla and his super-minister [economy minister, José Martínez de Hoz] left the government, public opinion was informed of the tremendous damage that the former authorities had inflicted on the country ... Nor can one continue to lull the citizenry with the “fairy tale” that we are all responsible, when the reality was and still is terribly harsh for those who were compelled to accept a government that imposed an economic plan that brought hunger and misery ... The citizen who protests against an unjust policy is not subversive. Nor is one who resists losing part of his income, salary, savings or, even worse, job. One is not subversive for not bowing his head in the face of mass theft or refuses to die of hunger, or is opposed to open or covert terror ... The latter is the honest Argentine, the democratic fighter.¹²⁶

125 Daniel Lvovich and Jorgelina Bisquert, *La cambiante memoria de la dictadura: Discursos públicos, movimientos sociales y legitimidad democrática* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento/Biblioteca Nacional, 2008), 25.

126 Pablo Deutsch, “Los impunes enemigos públicos,” *Tiempo*, No. 162 (October 1982).

ICUF's assessment challenged the goal of the military authorities which was to vaunt the "success" of their administration.¹²⁷ Re-defining the term "subversive" as applied to a protestor of the regime's policy, to mean "honest Argentine, the democratic fighter" began to form part of the narrative of some community key figures who, following the defeat in the Malvinas, distanced themselves radically from the regime, but also from the positions they themselves had held regarding the original objectives of the dictatorship.

If, once, references to human rights organizations had previously been scattered, after the Malvinas War *Nueva Presencia*, and to a certain degree, *Tiempo*, placed this issue at center stage. Yet, human rights would not become the key topic until the armed forces began a campaign for self-amnesty in early 1983. Rather, conditions for the transition to institutional normalization and political opening would once again be strongly advocated.

As noted in some of the articles, while the National Reorganization Process was weakened after the defeat in the South Atlantic war, the path to a democratic outcome was not free of obstacles. On more than one opportunity, *Nueva Presencia* pointed out the "dark and conspiratorial climate" in which people were living as a result of the positions of certain "reactionary" sectors within the armed forces that opposed democracy and were planning a "Pinochet-style" coup d'état.¹²⁸

Thus, the political question gained serious weight in the debates during the final phase of the regime. In contrast with the narratives that tended to revitalize the image of the political parties—as had happened in the stage prior to the Malvinas War—the opinion makers, who were sharpening the radical tone of their positions, directed their criticism against the behavior of those parties during the post-Malvinas period. Schiller, for example, maintained that the transition was like a "ship without a rudder":

The representatives of the political parties are deaf mutes who throughout all these years kept their mouths shut and now think that by doing pirouettes they are going to escape scot-free from the turmoil that their star-struck march might produce toward what is customarily called institutionalization.¹²⁹

127 Idem; "Réquiem para el Proceso," *Tiempo*, No. 164 (December 1982).

128 Daniel Muchnik, "Los salarios y el país siguen acorralados," *Nueva Presencia*, August 13, 1982; "Coincidencia popular: Volver a la democracia, dejando atrás el fantasma de la represión," *Nueva Presencia*, September 10, 1982); "¿Podrán los fascistas salirse con la suya?" *Nueva Presencia*, November 19, 1982.

129 Herman Schiller, "No queremos venganza, sino justicia," *Nueva Presencia*, November 12, 1982. See also Carlos Brocato, "No hay espacio para el discurso racional," *Nueva Presencia*, December 31, 1982.

The editorial in *Nueva Presencia* demanded that politicians stick to their convictions and proposals. On the other hand, it praised figures like Ernesto Sábato who had opposed the regime “from the beginning of the dictatorship.” Further, the periodical maintained that the question of the arrested/disappeared was the only one that preoccupied the power holders because they knew full well there would be no “mantle of oblivion.”

Similarly, while ICUF leaders supported the initiative of the Multiparty Commission for the Re-institution of the National Constitution,¹³⁰ they criticized the excess of personal attacks in the political debates, claiming they lacked pragmatism. They noted that if anything proved the failure of the process, it was knowledge of who the “enemies” still were: Argentine financial corporations, right-wing terrorism, Yankee imperialism, and British colonialism. *Tiempo* called for a union of all the democratic forces against them with a program that took into account the legitimate aspirations of the majority of the Argentine people.¹³¹

ICUF made several calls to Argentine Jews to participate in the process of political opening and the electoral struggle.¹³² To judge by the group of Jewish organizations invited to back various party candidates during the electoral process that began in 1983, political events were high on the agenda. In the 1983 documentary record it is possible to find entries for the Jewish Argentine Committee supporting the candidacy of Dr. Augusto Comte, the Israel Support Committee for Peronist and Communist Candidates, the Jewish Justicialista [Peronist] Youth, and a petition presenting the Radical Party candidate José Abad as “a man of the community.”

DAIA's position, however, during the processes of exhaustion and decomposition, was characterized by caution and the absence of public declarations regarding the political future of the military dictatorship. Given developments in the democratic elections that would take place in October 1983, it declared itself not to be a participant even though it praised the beginning of a new phase in democratic life.

In contrast to other opinion makers who would take a position and/or placed one of their central topics of interest on the political agenda, DAIA assumed a neutral stand, but one of “dialogue” with all of the political forces at play. During its October 11–13, 1983, Territorial convention, DAIA invited

130 “Adhesión del IcuF: ‘La marcha y el Medio Oriente,’” *Tiempo*, No. 165 (January 1983).

131 Pablo Deutsch, “Unidos o dominados,” *Tiempo*, No. 166 (February/March 1983).

132 “La colectividad y la cuestión electoral,” *Tiempo*, No. 169 (June 1983); “Declaración del ICUF ante las elecciones: La colectividad judeo-argentina avanza junto a la democracia,” *Tiempo*, Nos. 170/171 (July/August 1983).

aspiring candidates to the presidency to speak; all of them claimed to oppose anti-Semitism.

Their presence and the resolutions that emerged were underlined as an achievement and as recognition of DAIA by politicians of the leading parties. The convention organizers provided the following assessment about it:

It placed before the expectant gaze of the entire country the spokespersons of political groups representing national sentiment and challenged them to unavoidably express their commitment to the struggle against anti-Semitism, beginning with the basic and irreversible premise that anti-Semitic agitation constitutes a problem that should be more of a concern for Argentine democracy than for Jews.¹³³

The principal presentations delivered by communal spokespersons put the question of anti-Semitism at the center of the range of problems that would have to be dealt with under a future democratic regime. The focus given to this topic contrasted with the priorities of other community key figures for the agenda of the emerging political process.

During the convention a significant episode took place. Mothers of the arrested/disappeared of Jewish origin sent a letter to DAIA and marched to the venue in order to petition for the organization's intervention in obtaining a commitment from the leaders of the political parties to secure the release of their missing children.¹³⁴ As in the case of the letters sent by René Epelbaum and Boris Pasik to Nehemías Resnizky between January and August 1979, the convention made no declaration on the issue.

As to political statements regarding the electoral contest, DAIA avoided making any public remarks on the question of the detained/disappeared.¹³⁵ Even before the convention, it censured those from the Jewish community who made common cause with the defenders of human rights.

133 Booklet of the "Convención Territorial de la DAIA," October 11–13, 1983, Marc Turkow Central Archive of Documentation.

134 "Carta de Madres de Detenidos-Desaparecidos de Origen Judío," booklet of the "Convención Territorial de la DAIA," October 11–13, 1983, Marc Turkow Central Archive of Documentation.

135 When it did, as in the case of the document impugning the self-amnesty sought by the armed forces, it was rejected by ICUF: "When human rights are invoked, one must be consistent to the very end. Indignation over a document that conceals real genocide is not very convincing if the day before another genocide was being applauded somewhere else [referring to Sabra and Shatila]." See "Solicitada de DAIA por Autoamnistía, 1 de junio de 1983," *Informativo DAIA*, No. 108 (n.d.); "Marginado," *Tiempo*, No. 169 (June 1983).

The first debate in which DAIA participated occurred in April 1983 when the Juventud Judía Independiente de La Plata (JJI) invited individuals from outside the community to a commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The speakers included Federico Storani from Civic Radical Union (UCR), Oscar Alende from the Intransigent Party (PI), Alfredo Bravo (Permanent Association for Human Rights), Rabbi Bauj Plavnik (Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano), Ernesto Tenenbaum (JJI), Nehemías Resnizky (former president of DAIA), and Herman Schiller (*Nueva Presencia*). Since the event became a forum for the pursuit of various demands, the Plata youth group was criticized by DAIA and the publishers of *Mundo Israelita*, which felt that they had diminished the significance of the event by turning it into a propaganda rally.¹³⁶

These initiatives increased the distance between the leadership of the central bodies and Jewish community entities that had joined in solidarity with human rights organizations. The creation of the Jewish Movement for Human Rights (MJDH)¹³⁷ in August 1983, and the rallies it held, was the initiative of Herman Schiller and Rabbi Marshall Meyer, motivated “in the heat of mobilization against self-amnesty.” It would be another link in the polemics regarding the relationship between the Jewish community leadership and those protesting human rights violations perpetrated during the military dictatorship.¹³⁸

The first public convocation of the MJDH took place a few days after the DAIA Territorial Convention, in October 1983. The March against Anti-Semitism that took place in the Plaza de la República on October 24, 1983, was marked by a confrontation between members of MJDH and the leadership of DAIA, AMIA, and other Zionist organizations. According to one of its members, Eliahu Toker, DAIA’s refusal to participate, and even its express opposition to the rally, lay in information obtained via its contacts in the two majority parties, the Radical and the Justicialista, who felt it was “imprudent” to conduct a march a week before the presidential elections.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, at a meeting held between MJDH and DAIA representatives, the rally’s sponsors stressed that the parties’ fears were groundless and that

136 “Con claridad y firmeza,” *Mundo Israelita*, May 2, 1983; “Mundo Israelita: Uber Alles,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 305 (May 6, 1983): 24; “La Juventud Judía de La Plata responde a las diatribas de dos publicaciones,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 310 (June 10, 1983): 6.

137 The creation of the MJDH took place at an open meeting as part of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano. See “El Movimiento Judío por los Derechos Humanos aprobó su Declaración de principios,” *Nueva Presencia*, October 21, 1983.

138 Eliahu Toker, “Guía para los perplejos,” in “Material de AMIA producido hacia fines de 1983 en torno de la convocatoria al acto del MJDH, que se discutirá durante el Encuentro del 1° de diciembre ‘Alternativas del Pensamiento Comunitario,’” Marc Turkow Central Archive of Documentation.

139 *Ibid.*

DAIA was attempting to block the event. According to Toker's report, in an interview between Marshall Meyer and DAIA officials, the latter suggested that the MJDH convocation would produce fissures within the Jewish community.

The rally took place and was attended by representatives of human rights organizations and some political parties; speeches were made by Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Rabbi Marshall Meyer. Faced with the refusal of the organizers to cancel the event, DAIA initiated a campaign to discredit them, pressuring community members not to show up at the Plaza de la República. DAIA published a statement in the national press condemning the MJDH initiative, describing it as "inopportune" and insisting that DAIA was the only organization that had the power to organize public events in the name of the Jewish community.¹⁴⁰

The Consejo Central Juvenil Sionista issued a communiqué condemning the MJDH initiative and asserting that Zionist youth organizations would not attend the march because DAIA was the organization that arranged events for the Jewish community.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, as in the case of the DAIA statement, various groups disregarded the central organizations and confirmed their participation: the youth leaders of Sociedad Hebraica, the youth groups of Hashomer Hatzair and Baderej, and the Asociación Cultural Judeo-Argentina, among others.¹⁴² By contrast, *La Luz* condemned such meetings because they "incited communal rebellion and institutional chaos."¹⁴³

The discourse regarding the various responses provoked by the MJDH initiative illustrates the circumstances in which representatives adopted positions in the first stages of the democratic transition. While some expressed their support for human rights causes through rallies and public solidarity, the main entities proposed less high-sounding initiatives that were sometimes at odds with the anti-dictatorial and humanitarian consensus that was beginning to consolidate.

6 Some Considerations

This chapter focuses on the response within the Jewish community to the process of exhaustion that characterized the military dictatorship after 1980. Its most notable manifestations can be found in publications such as *Tiempo*,

140 Solicitada: "DAIA: La comunidad judía y la hora actual," *Clarín*, October 21, 1983.

141 "Material de AMIA producido hacia fines de 1983."

142 Ibid.

143 "Judaísmo y derechos humanos," *La Luz*, November 4, 1983; Dr. Zajdenberg, "Los pequeños hombrecillos," *La Luz*, November 18, 1983.

Mundo Israelita, and *Nueva Presencia*, in the form of demands made in favor of institutional normalization and political opening. The identity of the opinion makers who took positions regarding the future of the national political drama is not an insignificant matter: institutional Jewish leadership, and DAIA in particular, avoided making pronouncements on these topics throughout the period, except for rallies during the Malvinas War. Yet the display of institutional exhaustion may be contrasted with the renewed vigor that youth militancy would take on in its stead. Beginning in 1981, the concerns and forms of action pursued by Argentine Jewish youth came to assume greater relevance.

The main issue that confronted Jewish leaders during this period was focus on the actions of the community during the dictatorial regime. Jacobo Timerman's testimony placed at center stage the anti-Semitic nature of the regime and the accusation of collaborationism directed at the leadership. This debate was fundamental because it established the criteria by which the period would be understood after that point: recognition of Timerman as a special victim of the military regime and of the community leaders as collaborators.

The Malvinas War led to a pause in development of this conflict. The key figures took a position in favor of the recovery of the islands, recognizing the legitimacy of the military undertaking. Nevertheless, not all of them did so in the same fashion. While some supported the military action unreservedly, others pointed out that "external sovereignty needed to be accompanied by internal sovereignty." *Nueva Presencia* and *Tiempo*, in particular, backed the anti-colonialist assault, but did not relent in their demands for normalization of institutional life and opening of a political process. Accounts of the rallies in Schiller's weekly are indicative in this regard: dissident voices were ranged against the military discourse.

The end of the war precipitated in both these publications a discourse oriented toward urging a return to democracy. This discussion, however, was based on a previously unvoiced designation of the regime: the National Reorganization Process began to be called a military dictatorship. Thus, the demand for political opening assumed added complexity with the revision of definitions related to the immediate past.

The call—expressed more radically in *Nueva Presencia* than in *Tiempo*—placed these key players alongside others which began to receive greater public recognition, namely, human rights organizations. The invitation to well-known political figures by young people from La Plata, the subsequent creation of MJDH, and the rallies at the Obelisk in Plaza de la República to protest anti-Semitism offered greater visibility to these initiatives.

These actions contrasted with the positions of DAIA and other central organizations of the Jewish community. Rejection of the anti-Semitic character of the military dictatorship in the Timerman case, and the subsequent impugning of initiatives pursued by the JJI and the MJDH left the former and their leaders at odds with new positions and political and public sensibilities that led eventually to the fall of the regime and the beginning of a democratic transition.

Conflicting Discourses and Representations of the Jewish Community Regarding Its Conduct during the Last Military Dictatorship: The Case of DAIA

The Emilio Mignone Auditorium in Argentina's Ministry of Justice and Human Rights slowly began to fill up. On November 21, 2007, the investigation conducted by the DAIA's Center for Social Studies (CES-DAIA) team was about to be presented. Although it was not the first time that the report's content had been disclosed, this setting implied recognition by the Argentine state of the assignment carried out by the community's researchers.

The audience included community activists, members of the Argentine Association for the Relatives of Disappeared Jews and the MJDH, DAIA leaders, journalists from various publications, Rabbi Daniel Goldman,¹ and a number of state officials. The speakers—Eduardo Luis Duhalde, secretary of the National Secretariat for Human Rights; CES-DAIA investigator Marisa Braylan; and vice-president of DAIA, Ángel Schindel—gave a brief introduction, and they were followed by one of the activists of the Association for the Relatives of Disappeared Jews, Versa Jarach.

While the DAIA spokespersons devoted their presentation to explaining the methodology of the investigation and contemporary policies regarding the organization's treatment of the matter of disappeared Jews, the state official analyzed the report from another perspective. Underscoring DAIA's investigation in the framework of the "politics of memory" that took place during Néstor Kirchner's presidency (2003–07), Eduardo Luis Duhalde declared:

[It] is my belief that with maturity, the DAIA authorities are taking charge of an ongoing debate that I believe is applicable to many of the institutions of the country. *In this case, the existence of this debate demonstrates that at least someone in DAIA circles is discussing this matter, while in other institutions, unfortunately, they have not even begun such a debate on institutional conduct during the dictatorship ...* I believe that one must identify civil sectors that actively collaborated with state terrorism. For them,

¹ Daniel Goldman is a rabbi from the Bet-El community and a member of the Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos xxxx, as well as of the Comisión Provincial por la Memoria of the Province of Buenos Aires.

there is no pardon possible other than subjecting them to justice as ... participants or collaborators in crimes against humanity. This is a parting of the waters. And then there is the other case, which is that of omissions: what could have been done but wasn't. This is a difficult debate. Because those of us who experienced directly the nature of the dictatorship like those persecuted by it know that it was very difficult to confront it, [and] many times heroic acts were required. While one salutes and congratulates those who were capable of heroic action, it is not a demand we can make of all citizens, not even those in positions of responsibility ... Certainly, those who at the time needed help, those who knocked on the doors of the institutions but were turned away without the support they sought, have the right to engage in this debate and in profound criticism. But we must also weigh what it meant to live under the dictatorship and the absence of guarantees for all. Therefore, I believe that debates are never negative if we draw positive conclusions. If we can separate the wheat from the chaff: collaboration and the omission of certain facts are two ... separate fields. And then go on to see who proceeded on the basis of the absolute lack of guarantees. It will allow this analysis of the past to achieve greater activity and responsibility, signifying a symbolic comprehension of what was not done because one could not do it or because one did not know how to do it in those dark times. But yet at the same time, this impossibility to act, the risk of the moment, will elevate and illuminate those who did do something. I believe this will also revive the memory of those who did something while putting in danger their own lives in order to save the lives of others.²

The human rights secretary's speech was not the first state initiative to recognize the treatment accorded to disappeared Jews. In 2007, the secretariat, headed by Eduardo Luis Duhalde, created a Special Investigation Unit on Detained/Disappeared and Assassinated Individuals from the Jewish Community.³ Thus, the problem of detained/disappeared Jews and recognition on the part of a state agency demonstrated the position of the matter on the political agenda.

2 Address by Dr. Eduardo Luis Duhalde during the presentation of the "Special Report on Detained and Disappeared Jews" at the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, November 21, 2007. Author's transcription and emphasis.

3 "Una unidad para investigar. La desaparición de los judíos en la dictadura," *Página/12*, September 2, 2007. Nevertheless, the announcement of the creation of the unit, which occurred in the context of the 2007 election, was not accompanied by concrete action: the unit was not set up and those announced as its members were never convened.

Nevertheless, it was not the first time the problem concerning treatment of the Jews in the clandestine detention centers emerged as an issue of concern.

This chapter examines initiatives and representations about DAIA's actions regarding the defense of Jewish individuals who were victims of state terrorism. The institution produced its first document at the beginning of the democratic transition and the second in 1999. The arguments and accusations that arose from its reports, and the pursuit of the construction of a memory of DAIA's political representation of the Jewish community, were the center of a discourse on its involvement as a key player in the recent Argentine past.⁴

1 First Reports, Dissenting Voices, and the Beginning of a Conflicted Relationship

Persecution, abductions, torture, assassinations, fake confrontations, the kidnapping of children, the forced disappearance of persons, and the mistreatment of victims' families were the forms state terrorism took in Argentina. A special commission, established at the initiative of the National Executive Branch in the early days of the democratic transition, was responsible for gathering data on the names of the disappeared and determining the kinds of illegal repression implemented by the state during the period of the military junta.

In addition, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) registered the kinds of violence used by the state.⁵ Its report underscored how Jewish individuals held in clandestine detention centers were exposed to worse treatment than other victims of repression and torture and that even the fact of being Jewish could be decisive when it came to determining

4 These are not the only reports regarding the cases of detained/disappeared Jews. The report produced by the Commission of Solidarity with Relatives of the Jailed and Disappeared in Argentina, "The Violation of Human Rights of Argentine Jews during the 1976–1983 Military Regime" was presented to the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón. See Co.So.Fam, *La violación de los derechos humanos de argentinos judíos bajo el régimen militar (1976–1983)* (Buenos Aires: Milá, 2006).

In addition, a commission created by the Israeli Parliament in 2001 gathered testimonies and gained access to documentation in the hands of the Israeli foreign affairs ministry for the evaluation of actions taken by the State of Israel in regard to saving persecuted Jews during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship. See CES-DAIA "Informe de la Comisión Inter-Ministerial para tratar el tema de los desaparecidos judíos durante los años del gobierno militar (1976–1983)," Box CRD7, Testimonies.

5 See Emilio Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca Más: La memoria de las desapariciones en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2008).

the fate of a person. The aggravated cruelty of the acts of torture suffered by these individuals is explained as “equivalent to a distortion of Christianity” by members of the security forces:

The defense of God and other Christian values was a simple ideological motivation that could be understood by the agents of repression at the lowest organizational and cultural level. This necessary identification was done in order to forge among all of the personnel of repression “a combatant morality” and a means of tranquilizing their conscience without the obligation of going in depth into the real causes and goals of persecution and punishment, with such a horrendous methodology, not only of a terrorist minority, but also of a broader range of political, social, religious, economic, and cultural expressions.⁶

The particular kinds of brutality used against Jewish individuals led to a series of reports, actions, and debates compiled by Jewish community institutions, both on the national and international level. In 1984, while CONADEP engaged in gathering testimony, DAIA produced and issued the Special Report on Detained and Disappeared Jews, 1976–1983. The report attempted to “clarify” public opinion regarding actions taken by this central institution of Jewish communal life in Argentina to safeguard the situation of detained/disappeared Jews. The urgent need to compose a document in which DAIA could legitimate its conduct in the face of state terrorism resulted from accusations directed against it by relatives of the detained/disappeared, as well as from the suspicions raised by Jacobo Timerman in the United States and Israel regarding DAIA’s inaction and connivance with the regime.⁷

The document describes a situation wherein relatives contacted DAIA headquarters and describes the procedures for recording their complaints:

The questions DAIA asked relatives who came forward to complain were essentially the following:

- 1) How did the arrest or disappearance take place?
- 2) Could they indicate the apparent cause (in the majority of the cases they had no idea), without going into the ideological affiliations of the party in question?

6 CONADEP, *Nunca Más. Informe de la Comisión sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 2001), 76.

7 Graciela Mochkofsky, *Timerman. El periodista que quiso ser parte del poder (1923–1999)* (Buenos Aires: Debolsillo, 2004).

- 3) Relatives were always consulted as to whether the arrest or disappearance could be attributed to the fact that the person involved was Jewish (generally, the response to this question was negative).⁸

The report pointed out that meetings with state representatives were frequent and that DAIA requested information about the fate of Jewish detainees. While the reply on the part of the state agents was on a case-by-case basis, the only information provided was about those who had been placed at the disposal of the National Executive Branch and were therefore “legally” recognized by the regime as political prisoners as opposed to those who were “disappeared”. Two points illustrate DAIA’s concerns regarding those state representatives:

[The year] 1977 saw the beginning of more open contact, so to speak, with then Minister of the Interior, General Albano Eduardo Harguindeguy, who was informed of the uneasiness of the community as a result of several anti-Semitic acts and because of the growing spread of anti-Jewish libel. It must be pointed out that DAIA found this official to be receptive toward the claims made and seemingly disposed to find solutions to them. Thus, decrees by the Executive Power ordered first the closure and then the seizure of widely circulated anti-Semitic, Nazi publications issued by the Nazi-fascist publishing houses *Milicia* and *Odal*.⁹

Concrete proof that all these irregular operations were occurring outside the purview of the federal police became evident when some of those freed decided, as a measure of elementary security, to leave the country. Such parties were able to obtain their passport without any obstacles, since their police records contained no mention of anything that would prevent them from requesting one, despite whatever it was they had recently been involved in.¹⁰

Although the report does not recognize human rights violations committed illegally by the state’s repression apparatus, DAIA maintained that state officials had acted in “good faith” following its complaints: the closure of Nazi-fascist publishing houses and a ban on some anti-Semitic materials used in the class

8 “Informe especial sobre detenidos y desaparecidos judíos 1976–1983: Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas,” CES-DAIA Archive, Box CDR4, CES, p. 2.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

10 *Ibid.*

on “Moral and Civic Formation” were examples of action taken against anti-Semitism by the dictatorial regime.¹¹

On the one hand, DAIA believed it was dealing with a regime “receptive” to its demands while, on the other, the anti-Semitism suffered by Jewish detainees was the consequence of “irregular behavior conducted outside” the state bureaucratic-legal framework. The illegal circumstances in which state violence occurred seem to have remained beyond the possibility of action on the part of communal representatives, although they were aware of the conditions to which the detainees were subjected. An exception was the case of the abduction of the son of former DAIA president, Nehemías Resnizky: after four days of captivity in a clandestine detention center and after pressure applied by DAIA, the young man was set free.

In addition to the actions that have already been detailed, the report underscores how: 1) DAIA obtained permission for several rabbis to visit “legal” Jewish detainees (Shlomo Benhamú, Roberto Graetz, and Marshall Meyer, among others; 2) a community representative—Rabbi Roberto Graetz—actively participated in the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH); 3) frequent meetings took place with relatives to advise and contain them.

Finally, the report contains an appendix listing the names of 215 people who appeared in relatives’ complaints to the DAIA, which the organization handed over to the military authorities: 195 cases of detained/disappeared Jews about whom they had information and 20 for whom they had only names. Additionally, 91 Jewish persons who had been released were listed. Nevertheless, in contrast to the humanitarian narrative of the CONADEP report, among the references to the 195 cases of the “detained/disappeared of Jewish origin,” DAIA “politicized” individuals by providing information on their ideological affiliation and the circumstances of their militancy, noting whether he or she had been active with the Montoneros or other political organization.

The report was immediately repudiated by relatives of detained/disappeared Jews¹² and, generated an early debate on the acts and omissions of communal leaders.¹³ The accusations in the “Reply to the Report on Detained

11 Paul Warszawsky, “Régimen militar, iglesia católica comunidad judía en la República Argentina,” in Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznadger, *El legado del autoritarismo: Derechos humanos y antisemitismo en la Argentina contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Nuevo Hacer, 1995), 233.

12 The document was signed by thirty family members and included the support of members of the Commission of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Argentina who lived in Israel.

13 This was not the only confrontation between family members of detained/disappeared Jews and various community or Israeli leaders. As shown in Chapter 5, confrontations had already begun during the dictatorship.

and Disappeared Jews 1976–1983” (Réplica al Informe sobre detenidos y desaparecidos judíos 1976–1983) raised political and humanitarian issues. It claimed that there was “no mention of the means and goals [of state terrorism], nor a single condemnation of the agents of repression,” and, therefore, since it was known that the terrorism unleashed by the state apparatus caused the disappearance of people, among whom were Jewish individuals, how was it possible to affirm that “community life continued ‘as usual’ in the midst of a climate of institutionalized terror?”¹⁴

The second accusation stemmed from the experience of relatives who came to DAIA headquarters seeking help:

The solidarity we hoped for was nothing more than superficial, since several of the signatories of this reply were insulted by DAIA officials who are perfectly identifiable, of having appointments postponed, being met with in hallways, without enough time to listen to us after long waits, with no sign of concern regarding the anguish that led us there. We were met with indifference, obvious disinterest, and the expression of pejorative or dismissive opinions with respect to the “Jewishness” of the disappeared.¹⁵

The relative’s reply pointed to dark places in the DAIA report: namely, its political position with respect to state terrorism and the reception of appeals made by relatives. In the final analysis, the indignant response to the report was rooted in the latter’s attempt to make communal leaders appear to be “paragons in the defense of human rights,” when their silence had, according to relatives, contributed to the development of state terrorism.

In addition, relatives condemned the politicization of the biographies of some of the cases included in the DAIA report: namely, the implication that membership in ERP or the Montoneros could be regarded as justification for their arrest or disappearance. Even the mention of only 195 cases, when relatives maintained that the number of arrested/disappeared Jews was greater, was criticized because it suggested that the “problem” of the detainees/disappeared involved only those directly affected—those who had complained to DAIA—but not the Jewish community or society in general.

According to the last accusation, other registers existed listing a greater number of detained/disappeared of Jewish origin. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B’nai B’rith put together a list with 973 claims, a considerable

14 “Replica al Informe sobre detenidos y desaparecidos judíos 1976–1983,” in Leonardo Senkman, *El antisemitismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1989), 422.

15 *Ibid.*, 430.

majority of them disappeared Jews.¹⁶ Similarly, the Israelite Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Argentina estimated there were 1,500 detained/disappeared of Jewish origin.¹⁷

The discrepancy between the lists compiled by DAIA and those of international organizations was due to the fact that relatives of the detained/disappeared were more likely to appeal to foreign entities. First, they might consider an international accusation more effective than one made in Argentina. But, second—and this accords with what families claimed in their reply—DAIA demonstrated hesitancy in dealing with the problem or, as noted in Chapter 3, on some occasions complaints were silenced and those who claimed the regime was anti-Semitic discredited.

The debate opened by relatives became more serious with a series of studies that sought to analyze the actions taken by national and international institutions of the Jewish community as a consequence of complaints about atrocities and humiliation to which Jewish individuals detained in clandestine detention centers were subjected. An early article by Ignacio Klich¹⁸ on DAIA's conduct during the National Reorganization Process is a reference point for socio-historical analyses in this regard. Two questions guided his approach: Why did the great majority of relatives of Jewish victims avoid sharing their tragedies with representative institutions of the country's Jews? What did DAIA do about the disappeared/detained locally or abroad?¹⁹

While the answer to the first of these considerations can be found in the relatives' reply, Klich points out that DAIA maintained a policy of silencing denunciations made by organizations such as the American Jewish Committee or the ADL. In fact, "DAIA attempted to create the impression that anti-Semitism was alien to the military dictatorship and that the attacks on Jews that were acknowledged in private had been carried out by 'Nazis [who had] infiltrated the security forces!'"²⁰ This perspective has been confirmed by some studies that have dealt with the actions pursued by international community organizations

16 "Lista incompleta de desaparecidos en Argentina," ADL (January 1984), in "Prueba Documental: el trato de detenidos y desaparecidos judíos de origen judío durante la dictadura militar argentina, 1976–1983" (New York, August 23, 1985), B'nai B'rith Archive.

17 *La Nación*, December 30, 1983, cited in Edy Kaufman and Beatriz Cymberknopf, "La dimensión judía en la represión durante el gobierno militar en la Argentina," in Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, 258.

18 Ignacio Klich, "Política comunitaria durante las Juntas Militares: La DAIA durante el Proceso de Reorganización Militar," in Senkman, *El antisemitismo en Argentina*.

19 *Ibid.*, 278.

20 *Ibid.*, 286.

and the State of Israel on behalf of Jews persecuted by the Argentine military dictatorship.²¹

2 The Examination of Past Actions: A New Report and Recent Initiatives

Toward the mid-1990s there began a process of reviving the debates regarding the recent past.²² The polemics surrounding the situation of detained/disappeared Jews and the actions taken by various Jewish institutions, whether by attempting to “rescue” individuals persecuted by the dictatorial regime or by launching campaigns denouncing human rights violations, took on renewed vigor.

In contrast to the notions raised in the early days of the democratic transition, which focused on DAIA, the reports appearing toward the middle of the 1990s dwelt on “special treatment,” an allusion to the brutality toward Jewish prisoners in the clandestine detention centers.

The admission on the part of the Spanish tribunal presided over by Judge Baltasar Garzón of the claim presented in March 1996 by Prosecutor Carlos Castresana reopened the debates and enabled the revision of some ideas regarding the Jewish experience during the military regime. A request by the prosecution that those responsible for state terrorism in Argentina be tried for crimes against humanity was grounded in the proposition that “repression in Argentina had genocidal features and connotations, with specific reference to a given race, the special object of persecution undertaken against Argentine [being] citizens of Jewish origin.”²³

Fourteen years after the DAIA report and the beginning of the debates concerning its actions during the military dictatorship, and armed with knowledge of the forms of state terrorism in Argentina, DAIA’s Center for Social Studies (CES) initiated a project in which it attempted to analyze the situation of detained/disappeared Jews. Judge Baltasar Garzón issued part of this second

21 See Joel Barroni, “Israel frente a la dictadura militar argentina: El episodio de Córdoba y el caso Timerman,” in Senkman and Sznadjer, *El legado del autoritarismo*; Víctor Mirelman, “Las organizaciones internacionales judías ante la represión y el antisemitismo en Argentina,” in Senkman and Sznadjer, *El legado del autoritarismo*; Leonardo Senkman, “Israel y el rescate de las víctimas de la represión”, in Senkman and Sznadjer, *El legado del autoritarismo*.

22 Daniel Lvovich and Jorgelina Bisquert, *La cambiante memoria de la dictadura militar* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de general Sarmiento/Biblioteca Nacional, 2008).

23 See Co.So.Fam., *La violación de los derechos humanos de argentinos judíos*, 9.

report in 1999. Garzón himself tied Argentine state terrorism to “genocidal practices,”²⁴ as recognized by international law, given the level of systematization and planning with which a centralized organization of power eliminated a specific minority of the population. This intellectual basis allowed the CES-DAIA investigators to equate the military dictatorship with Nazism.

The second report sought to highlight the anti-Semitic character of the military regime and the consequences for its conduct toward Jews detained in the clandestine detention centers. One of the points indicating this particularity of the regime refers to the “special treatment” accorded to Jews. For analytic purposes, this is divided, into five types:

- 1) Anti-Semitic actions at the time of kidnapping or arrest;
- 2) Specific forms of torture and humiliation of Jews during their time in the detention centers;
- 3) Use of Nazi language, phrases, or symbols;
- 4) Special “interrogation” of Jews;
- 5) Illicit confiscation of property and extortion.²⁵

While points 1) and 2) provided additional documentation, they repeated the conclusions reached by CONADEP. But in the case of *utilization of Nazi language, phrases, and symbols*, it pointed out:

It is clear, then, that it was not a question of a particular “excess” on the part of a specific agent of repression, but of an institutionalized conception and practice within the security forces acting during those years.²⁶

In contrast with the 1984 report, the second DAIA report presented the repression and humiliation to which Jewish detainees were subjected as systematic and institutionalized anti-Semitic practices. In the case of interrogations, the investigators cited various testimonies in order to conclude that the questions formulated regarding “Zionism,” “comprehension of Yiddish,” “the Andinia

24 One of the members of the investigative team was Daniel Feierstein, who subsequently published a work in which he defined the notion of “genocidal social practices” as “that technology of power whose objective lies in the destruction of the social relations of autonomy and cooperation and identity of a society by means of the annihilation of a relevant faction of that society and the use of terror, the product of annihilation for the establishment of new social relations and identity models.” See Daniel Feierstein, *El genocidio como práctica social. Entre el nazismo y la experiencia argentina* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 83.

25 CES-DAIA, “Informe sobre la situación de los detenidos-desaparecidos judíos durante el genocidio perpetrado en Argentina,” *Revista Índice*, No. 20 (Buenos Aires: CES-DAIA, 2000), 305.

26 *Ibid.*, 309.

Plan,” and characteristics of Jewish institutions, among others, “make it clear that a systematic plan existed, aimed at carrying out intelligence tasks regarding the Jewish communities and persons of Jewish origin.”²⁷

The CES-DAIA based its conclusions on a new list containing the names of 794 “detained-disappeared of Jewish origin,” substantiating the claim of the anti-Semitic nature of the military government.²⁸ In preparing the list, the researchers utilized a category proposed by Israeli demographer Sergio Della Pergola: *the broad Jewish community*. This allowed for the incorporation of all those persons with some Jewish link in their ancestry or in the present, such that the final number grew with the inclusion, for example, of non-Jewish wives and husbands who were “Jewish” victims of repression.

The other point that should be made here when reviewing the anti-Semitic character of the military government was the overrepresentation of detained/disappeared Jews. The first DAIA list issued in 1984 contained the names of 195 Jewish victims, while the second report referred to some 1,300. Overrepresentation was established by comparing the proportion of Jews within the Argentine population during the dictatorial period (between 0.8 and 1.2 percent) with that of Jewish victims among the total of detained/disappeared, which was around 5 percent.²⁹

The general tone of the second report is based on the following premise: “It is clear, then, that while the Jew was not a central figure persecuted at that time by the agents of repression, s/he was undoubtedly a ‘special victim’ especially exposed to repressive actions.”³⁰ This interpretation underscored identification of the military dictatorship with the Nazi regime:

It turns out as frankly surprising the comparability of the methodology of genocide exercised by Nazism with the methodology of genocide in Argentina: in both cases, there was an attempt to conceal bodies, to deny the names of the victims, to de-personalize individuals during the time of their arrest, the attempt to dehumanize and degrade victims, the attempt to “break” their ultimate physical, mental, and moral resistance as a prerequisite for their destruction. But appropriation of the practices of Nazism can be found not only in the implicit characteristics of the *modus operandi*, but also in the verbal and symbolic explicitness of that appropriation. The numerous testimonies regarding the presence of swastikas

27 Ibid., 311.

28 Ibid., 313.

29 Ibid., 313.

30 Ibid., 312.

in some of the torture chambers or detention centers, the self-attribution of a “Nazi” identity on the part of many of the agents of repression, the constant reference to the Nazi death camps on the part of those who imitated their practices serve only to reaffirm how this expropriation was absolutely intentional and explicit.³¹

The equation of the experience of the detained/disappeared of Jewish origin during the last military dictatorship with that of Jews under Nazism reinforces the connection between the Jews of both groups as scapegoats during times of state persecution. Yet, the report does not distinguish between racism-based policies of extermination and politically-based persecutions and repression of subjects. However, contrary to the first report, the second one recognizes the general anti-Semitic nature of the treatment accorded the detained/disappeared of Jewish origin, and extends the list of victims.

The initiative to submit a report to the Spanish judicial authorities enabled re-opening of the political debate, especially among key players with varying degrees of institutional recognition within the Jewish community, regarding DAIA’s role during that period. This new staging led to the launching of several initiatives that would be presented during public events, attended by state officials toward the end of 2007.

As a result of the new CES investigation, DAIA created in 2001 a Commission for the Study and Analysis of the Institution’s Role during the Period 1976–1983.³² A database, the Historical Archive on the Role of DAIA during the Military Dictatorship, 1976–1983 (*Archivo histórico sobre el rol de la DAIA frente a la dictadura militar, 1976–1983*),³³ was set up to house all the documents amassed. In the report, Professor Haim Avni provides a series of guidelines for creating this collection. Three points stand out, together with a limitation to the proposed task: 1) the realization of a systematic effort to collect documentation from and on the period; 2) recognition of DAIA as the most appropriate organization for carrying out the project because of its national

31 Ibid., 316.

32 The commission was formed on July 12, 2001, and made up of the president of DAIA, Dr. José Hercman, and “distinguished intellectuals”: Gregorio Klimovsky, Marcos Aguinis, Manuel Tenenbaum, Tova Schwartzman, Diana Sperling, Bernardo Klisberg, Leopoldo Schifrin, Natán Lerner, Leonardo Senkman, and Daniel Colodenco.

33 As proposed in the introduction to the archive inventory, the sources that make up its contents come from national and international printed media, the local Jewish press, declassified documents of the US Department of State, the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, and material housed in the Seminario Rabínico de Buenos Aires. CES-DAIA, *Inventario del archivo histórico sobre el rol de la DAIA frente a la dictadura militar, 1976–1983* (Buenos Aires: CES-DAIA, n.d.), 6.

and international status, and 3) making the documentation accessible to the public.

Avni subsequently made, nevertheless, the following restrictive observation:

On the other hand, I excluded from my suggestions the possibility that CES researchers be charged with the preparation of a self-study on the activities of DAIA and that of other Jewish community institutions regarding the crimes of the military government ... In order that such a study be considered serious and adequately documented, it should be based on the broad documentation mentioned above. But despite all this academic effort, even when it is properly supervised by the DAIA Academic Committee, it will not be free of doubts and criticism regarding its impartiality. On the other hand, the proposed project for a Documentary Archive may attract the collaboration of those very same critics, along with others from the public at large, and allow the possibility of elaborating their own studies.³⁴

While the historical archive constitutes fourteen boxes holding valuable research material, what is remarkable is its dearth of any original documentation deposited by DAIA, even though the objective of the collection was to “analyze the role of the institution during the period 1976–1983.” Except for “Box 14—the files turned over by Dr. Resnizky”—which contains various publications, news bulletins, and community periodicals, the absence of official material from DAIA is surprising.³⁵

Nevertheless, the CES researchers proffered a series of concerns in the report on DAIA’s conduct. The third chapter of the mimeographed version of the report contains the section “Attitudes and actions of DAIA during the period 1976–1983 in the face of declarations regarding the detention and/or disappearance of Jews.” Here, as part of the analysis of the 1984 report, one finds the response of family members and appeals made by relatives of detained/detained Jews to various national and international organizations complaining that the actions pursued by DAIA were marked by “an evasive and indifferent attitude” when faced by their demands:

34 Ibid., 12.

35 As explained to the author, this is a consequence of the devastation resulting from the attack on AMIA in 1994. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that during the process of the formation of the historical archive on the role of DAIA, other sources of information were not consulted in the search for documents. For example, the IWO Archive contains a considerable number of DAIA news bulletins produced during the period.

The documentation mentions some institutional behaviors toward the military authorities, but in general the testimony underscores the limited role pursued by the institution. Emphasis lay in presenting lists of arrested/detained individuals, declarations made to international organizations, spiritual support provided to Jewish detainees in the jails, and some internal statements. Nevertheless, despite concrete demands made by relatives of the detained/disappeared, in those years the institution often adopted an evasive or indifferent attitude. Suffice it to point out that the first official claim dates from as early as 1976. The necessary legal representation was refused, doubts were expressed as to the Jewishness of the detained/disappeared, and generally such claims were considered to be of a “political character” alien to the institution’s mission.³⁶

It is also emphasized that DAIA displayed ambiguous public positions regarding the policies of the military dictatorship:

With respect to public declarations, there were some contradictory positions taken. On the one hand, there was criticism from some sectors and international forums denouncing human rights violations, while on the other there were expressions of acquiescence with the de facto government. With respect to the latter, we can point to statements made by President Nehemías Resnizky at the November 17, 1977, plenary session which referred to a project of the National Executive Power on combating incitement to racial hatred, in which he stated that “this project provided a positive image of our country.” Similarly, Mario Gorenstein, who during the period served as president of the institution, held that “anti-Semitic acts were sporadic in Argentina.”³⁷

Unlike the rest of the report, these excerpts composed by those who were charged with preparing it were never made public. In a September 22, 1999, letter to DAIA president, Dr. Rogelio Chihowolsky, and its secretary, Claudio Avruj, the CES researchers requested authorization to include the chapter referred to in issue no. 20 of *Revista Índice*, “as a way of opening a necessary and crucial discussion for our community.” While the report was presented on

36 DAIA Archive, “Evaluaciones preliminares y propuesta de trabajo del Centro de Estudios Sociales-DAIA,” created by Marisa Braylan, Daniel Feierstein, Adrián Jmelnizky, and Miguel Galante, n.d., no information (mimeo).

37 “Evaluaciones preliminares y propuesta de trabajo del Centro de Estudios Sociales-DAIA,” DAIA Archive.

successive occasions,³⁸ the observations regarding the “role of DAIA” made by the institution’s team of researchers continued to be suppressed.³⁹

Another of the initiatives resulting from the opening of the debate regarding DAIA’s role was the awarding of the DAIA Prize in Recognition of Outstanding Institutions in Promoting the Defense of Human Rights to a number of organizations with prominent public visibility. Members of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, the Argentine section of B’nai B’rith, the Poder Ciudadano Foundation, and the MJDH were given awards on August 31, 2005. Pedro Resels, from the MJDH refused it, condemning the lack of “public, sincere, and in-depth self-criticism.”⁴⁰

The news of Pedro Resels’s rejection appeared in an important weekly of the community press, *Nueva Sión*.⁴¹ The writer, Guillermo Lipis, took an emphatic position regarding DAIA’s role and its behavior during the period of state terrorism:

The story is not a new one. It is, at least, another chapter involving two conflicting sectors of the community which have demonstrated yet again the obvious impossibility for dialogue and mutual understanding. On the one side is DAIA, which is attempting to conceal, in Machiavellian fashion a lack of self-criticism with regard to the conduct of its leaders during the dictatorship, and on the other is the MJDH, which cannot give up the historic banners of its struggle despite serious internal differences among its top leaders.⁴²

Nevertheless, *Nueva Sión* also published a series of articles by community leaders who were prepared to take a stand on the commemoration of detained/disappeared Jews. For example, a plaque was unveiled in 2004 memorializing Argentina’s disappeared Jews.⁴³ Further, DAIA granted an award recognizing outstanding institutions for the promotion and defense of human rights to

38 The first version appeared in issue no. 20 of *Revista Índice*. A final version was published in 2007, when Dr. Eduardo Luis Duhalde spoke at the presentation.

39 Nevertheless, the original versions of the research project can be found in the Historical Archive on the Role of DAIA during the Military Dictatorship.

40 Guillermo Lipis, “¿Ingenuos o maquiavelos de 70 años?” *Nueva Sión*, September 1, 2005.

41 It is interesting to underscore how for its author the news article did not make waves since Resels’ refusal was not made public in the mass distribution media. Nevertheless, *Página/12* devoted an article to his rejection of the prize. See Raúl Kollman, “Cuentas no saldadas,” *Página/12*, September 3, 2005.

42 Lipis, “¿Ingenuos o maquiavelos de 70 años?”

43 “28 años para un reconocimiento oficial. AMIA con los familiares de desaparecidos judíos,” *Nueva Sión*, March 24, 2004.

Rosa Roisinblit, from the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo,⁴⁴ and it held its first event paying tribute to detained/disappeared Jews.⁴⁵

The last occasion was attended by an appreciable number of senior officials who provided public recognition, on the one hand, to the question of detained/disappeared Jews, and on the other, to the initiatives of the communal leadership. Among those present were President Néstor Kirchner, Sen. Cristina Fernández, musician León Gieco, writer Ernesto Sábato, Education Minister Daniel Minister Filmus, and Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires Felipe Solá.⁴⁶

These initiatives, oriented toward revising “forms of memory” regarding the recent past and also giving new meaning to the conduct of community institutions during the period of the dictatorship, increased in subsequent years. In 2005, for example, an event commemorating disappeared Jews was again held at the AMIA building, where the offices of DAIA were also located.⁴⁷ In 2006, with the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the military coup, a series of declarations, documents, tributes, and other activities were held by institutions of the organized Jewish community.⁴⁸ Toward the end of 2007, a new tribute to the disappeared of Jewish origin was conducted at the AMIA⁴⁹ headquarters. A “Report on the Situation of Detained-Disappeared Jews during the Genocide Perpetrated in Argentina, 1976–1983”⁵⁰ was presented at the Emilio Mignone Auditorium on November 21, 2007. And a sculpture “to the memory of Jewish victims of the military dictatorship in Argentina” was unveiled at La Tablada’s Israelite Cemetery.⁵¹

44 Guillermo Lipis, “Premiaron a ‘Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo’ pero no presentan el informe de la Comisión de análisis de sus acciones durante la dictadura,” *Nueva Sión*, July 13, 2004.

45 Bárbara Lichtman, “Tardío, pero justo,” *Nueva Sión*, December 8, 2004.

46 Ibid.

47 “Homenaje comunitario: Desaparecidos argentinos de origen judío,” *Nueva Sión*, December 8, 2005.

48 See Laura Kitzis, “Vencidos pero no olvidados,” *Nueva Sión*, March 22, 2006; Asociación de Familiares de Desaparecidos Judíos en Argentina, “Resignificar el pasado para construir el futuro,” *Nueva Sión*, March 22, 2007; “Homenaje de la AMIA,” *Nueva Sión*, March 22, 2006; “La República sigue herida,” *Nueva Sión*, April 12, 2006; Tulio Guterman, “Recuerdan a Gregorio ‘Guyo’ Sember,” *Nueva Sión*, May 22, 2006; “Homenaje en el Parque Indoamericano,” *Nueva Sión*, October 3, 2006); Daniel Goldman, “Demonios,” *Nueva Sión*, December 8, 2006.

49 “Continúa el reclamo por justicia,” *Nueva Sión*, December 7, 2007.

50 See Guillermo Lipis, “Nunca más indiferencia, nunca más pasividad,” *Nueva Sión*, November 22, 2007.

51 Guillermo Lipis, “Somos aquello que recordamos,” *Nueva Sión*, December 3, 2007. As in the case of the presentation of the CES-DAIA report, the unveiling of the monument depended on the presence of the National Secretary of Human Rights, Eduardo Luis

Echoing the CES-DAIA report, during this last event, Luis Eduardo Duhalde stated:

The memory of Jewish victims of the dictatorship coincides with that of the victims of the Shoah (Holocaust), those [who died in the 1991 attack] on the Embassy of Israel in Buenos Aires, and those [who died in the 1994 attack] on AMIA, as brutal expressions of an anti-Semitism that obliges all of us Argentines to fight in order to make it evident and to eradicate it once and for all.⁵²

The arguments over the form of memorial events for detained/disappeared Jews closed, toward the end of 2007, with a series of meetings in which, in his position as a state official, Duhalde—whose public legitimacy in the defense of human rights was well-known—considered the review of the conduct of the DAIA leadership in a positive light, and said he would equate the experience of detained/disappeared Jews during the recent military dictatorship with Jews who died in the Holocaust.

In the pantheon of memory at La Tablada's Israelite Cemetery Ernesto Pesce's sculpture could be contemplated among the monuments dedicated to the victims of attacks on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires and the AMIA headquarters.

3 Conflict, Memory, and Victims

The present chapter has attempted to address the discourses and actions regarding detained/disappeared persons of Jewish origin, and DAIA's conduct with respect to them, as found in two reports generated by the institution itself and in the reply of relatives of the victims, as well as in the series of commemorative events that took place between 2004 and 2007. Without drawing conclusions, the analysis attempts to understand their particularities in relation to the context and the perspectives of the people involved. The reflection is brief,

Duhalde. In his speech, he established a parallel between the "politics of memory"—a banner of the Kirchner government—and the "role that memory has played in the history of the people of Israel." Thus, as observed previously, the presence of a high-ranking state official accorded importance to the event by giving official recognition to the question of detained/disappeared Jews, as well as to the organizers. See "Acto en recordatorio a desaparecidos judíos," *Página/12*, December 2, 2007; "Homenaje a las víctimas judías," *Página/12*, December 3, 2007.

52 "Acto en recordatorio a desaparecidos judíos," *Página/12*, December 2, 2007.

as there are few works dealing with the specifics of the “Jewish case” during the military dictatorship, with the exception of the ones cited here.

The “Special Report on Detained and Disappeared Jews, 1976–1983,” presented in 1984, highlights DAIA’s behavior regarding the issue of those victims and the actions it took in order to ensure a functioning Jewish institutional life in the country. DAIA’s role during the period was particularly emphasized. This happened at the same time that the CONADEP was making its research on the characteristics of state terrorism; therefore, DAIA’s institutional rationality could be explained as a way of yielding to the new social sensibility for human rights issues.⁵³

DAIA’s insistence on maintaining its activism in civil and international society resulted in conflict with the relatives of the victims and other community organizations, which, in turn, led to the publication of public statements of dissent and the first studies on the subject. While some individuals testified to the indifference they were subjected to, others questioned the narrative regarding institutional commitment to the defense of the human rights of Jewish victims of state terrorism.

Moreover, as relatives of the victims pointed out, there was no explicit condemnation of the military dictatorship in DAIA’s first report. However, the second report focuses on a description of the most savage features of the illegal repression, going so far as to equate it with the depersonalizing and dehumanizing forms of death at the hands of the state, the pinnacle of which was Nazi extermination. But this account, which served to condemn the military dictatorship, fails to discuss DAIA’s conduct during that period. Why is DAIA’s behavior portrayed as active in the first report, and not referred to after criticism of its conduct in the second?

There seems to be no easy answer. The fifteen years that separate the two reports enable a more systematic reconstruction of what happened. This reconstruction, carried out by the principal researchers, can be understood along the lines of what Michael Pollak calls *the task of framing* memory.⁵⁴ Memory is understood to be a collective operation with respect to the events and interpretations of the past that one wishes to safeguard, integrating them into our ways of defining and reinforcing, more or less consciously, relevant links and social borders between diverse social collectivities.⁵⁵

53 Klich even points out, as a form of criticism, that the report was not addressed to family members of the victims, but to the investigatory commission and other governmental and civil institutions. See Ignacio Klich, “Política comunitaria durante las Juntas Militares,” 278.

54 Michael Pollak, “Memoria, olvido, silencio,” in Michael Pollak, *Memoria, olvido, silencio* (La Plata, Editorial Al Margen: 2006), 25–29.

55 *Ibid.*, 25.

As can be observed in its development, the task of framing requires “trained figures, professionals of whatever organization of which they are members.”⁵⁶ For the case at hand, the report produced in 1999 by staff of the CES gave new meaning to concerns regarding the situation of the “victims” and what happened to detained/disappeared Jews during the last military dictatorship. More in tune with the opinions formulated in the reply by the Association of Relatives of Disappeared Jews, these new interpretations and condemnation of state terrorism would take center stage.

Nevertheless, the conduct and actions of DAIA leaders during the period of the dictatorship remained suppressed. Now, access to the historical archive on DAIA’s role has been made public. This archive includes fourteen boxes that contain valuable research material. Still, it is remarkable that original documentation of DAIA has not been deposited there, even though the objective was to “analyze the role of the institution during the 1976–1983 period.”

Thus, the work of framing carried out by the CES-DAIA team produced a new narrative regarding what happened, upgrading the representation of detained/disappeared Jews to victims, first, of state terrorism and, second, as generic victims of anti-Semitism. The equation with the Holocaust—acknowledged even by government officials—and the attacks on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires and AMIA headquarters, allowed for the “Judaization” of an appreciable group of individuals who were affected by Argentine state terrorism.

While the conflicts and dissonant voices did not cease after the publication of the second DAIA report, the existence of a diverse public discourse, and addresses by the National Human Rights secretary and representatives of the Jewish community leadership made it possible to propose recognition of a new consensus regarding the question of detained/disappeared Jews. Nevertheless, it is worth heeding Pollock’s words:

It appears evident that the collective memories imposed and defended by a specialized work of framing, without being the only unifying factor, are certainly an important ingredient of the perpetuation of the social fabric and institutional structures of a society. Thus, the common denominator of all these memories and also the tensions among them play a role in definition of the social consensus and conflicts at any given critical moment. But no social group, no institution, no matter how stable and solid it may appear to be, is guaranteed perpetuity.⁵⁷

56 Ibid., 26.

57 Ibid., 28.

Nueva Presencia and Resistance to the Military Dictatorship

On November 15, 2007, the legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires passed a resolution, based on a proposal presented by Representative Miguel Talento, to honor the weekly *Nueva Presencia* “for its commitment to human rights and struggle against the recent military dictatorship”:¹ a plaque would be placed at the entrance to its editorial offices at 330 Castelli Street in Buenos Aires city.

A little over a year later, on December 9, 2008, the plaque was unveiled. In his speech as editor-in-chief, Herman Schiller made a connection between the repressive policies of the past—the forced disappearance of persons—and those of the present: the criminalization of poverty and “shoot first, ask later” policy being applied by the police. What did this have to do with the tribute to *Nueva Presencia*? Schiller asked early in his speech; his answer:

There is a lot in common because the latter policy would today be one of the basic themes of this weekly if it were able to reappear ... *Nueva Presencia* was a publication which, in the midst of terrible external and internal hostilities, attempted, from the point of view of Jewish identity, to identify directly with the most oppressed sectors, with the most exploited sectors and, as they are called today, the most excluded sectors. Then it was a struggle against the fascist military regime that brought about the disappearance of those opposed to it. *That is why it put its body and soul into denouncing those responsible for the massacre and their close and more distant accomplices. Nueva Presencia was a Jewish periodical. And a Jewish periodical that made the decision to assume a vanguard position in the struggle against fascism was, at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, a phenomenon that surprised some as esoteric ... But as it grew it became clear that its goal was not to whitewash anyone, but simply to dedicate itself to taking up the revolutionary tradition of Jewish workers. It was the revolutionary tradition that made thousands of Jews participants in the October Revolution. And it was that very same tradition*

1 Resolution 416/2007 passed by the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

*that caused thousands of Argentine Jews to become part of the ERP and other oppositional organizations.*²

Thirty years after that publishing experience, Schiller would maintain that *Nueva Presencia* had been an outstanding medium that “made the decision to assume frontline roles” during the dictatorship. That choice, he recognized, did not constitute a path but an obstacle. Nevertheless, obstacles were there to be overcome in order, seemingly, to be a part of a revolutionary genealogy in which Judaism played a part.

Schiller himself ascribed to a tradition that, while acknowledged in the case of *Nueva Presencia*, was not of his making. The weekly was valued, within and outside the institutional framework of the Jewish community in Argentina, for its combative stand against the military regime that devastated Argentina during the period 1976–83, and for its denunciation of human rights violations that the regime committed. These positions were recorded from early on. During an event marking the fifth anniversary of its founding, Marcos Aguinis, who was among its first contributors, reconstructed its story:

It is no secret that *Nueva Presencia* became one of the most courageous voices of an Argentina subject to fear and depredation. When history comes to write about these recent years, its pages will consist not only of illuminating expressions but will be the document showing how there were Argentines (Jews and non-Jews) who resisted subjection ... And if I do not give equal relevance to the [Buenos Aires] *Herald*, it is because there continues to exist in Argentina a prejudice that accords a privilege to English origins, while degrading Israelite ones.³

The *Humor* magazine would soon follow with a series of notes entitled “The Misery of the Press during the Process.” Written by journalists Carlos Alberto Gabetta, and Sergio Joselovsky, this section was devoted to setting out the different stances of the communications media during the military dictatorship.⁴ *Nueva Presencia* was highlighted for its condemnations of human rights violations perpetrated by the repressive forces.

2 Author's recording and emphasis.

3 Marcos Aguinis, “Si, claro, ahora es más fácil,” *Nueva Presencia*, June 18, 1982.

4 At least eight articles appeared in issues 124–131, corresponding to the months January–July 1984. In June 1995, *Humor* published a special issue devoted to the press during the National Reorganization Process. In contrast to the “serious” media, *Humor* underscored its own efforts, along those of *Nueva Presencia* and *The Buenos Aires Herald*, of “adopting praiseworthy positions.”

From the onset of democracy until the approval of resolutions that would officially honor *Nueva Presencia* as one of the media that stood up to the military dictatorship, the narratives regarding the efforts undertaken by the periodical praised its critical posture and its denunciation of human rights violations. Nevertheless, its relevance and the influence of its contentious ideas have not been studied in-depth.

The few attempts that have been undertaken focus on the “heroic” perspective of its editors.⁵ Nevertheless, an analysis of *Nueva Presencia* and its combativeness demands a systematic analysis of its editorial line, its agenda for discussion, and its proposals, as well as the particular features that characterized a publication that circulated in its early days among a relatively small group of members of the Jewish-Argentine community.

Instead of looking at articles on the weekly’s denunciation of human rights, this chapter is part of a larger research project whose goal is to evaluate the specific weight of the editorial line, its changes, and its continuities. This, then, is a new approach to *Nueva Presencia*, which seeks to answer the following question: Is it possible to comprehend the particular nature of a weekly through an analysis that focuses merely on the articles and/or petitions regarding human rights violations it published?

1 Toward a Possible Characterization of *Nueva Presencia*: A Jewish Weekly on the Road to “Argentinization”

The first issue of *Nueva Presencia* appeared on July 9, 1977, and it was published continuously up to June 1996. The first number was a Spanish-language dossier in the Yiddish periodical *Di Presse*. In subsequent years it would become a Spanish-language weekly distributed by the same publishers. After the closure of *Nueva Presencia*, editor-in-chief Herman Schiller’s undertaking would continue for an additional year under the name *Nuestra Presencia*.

Yet, this chronology is imprecise and incomplete. Most studies on *Nueva Presencia* only followed the weekly until the resignation of its first editor-in-chief. Nevertheless, *Nueva Presencia* continued under the sponsorship of

5 Hernán Dobry, “*Nueva Presencia* y los desaparecidos” (Undergraduate diss., Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Palermo, August 2004); Carlos Alberto Medina, “El papel de los medios gráficos durante la dictadura: el Semanario Nueva Presencia” (paper delivered at the XI^a Jornada Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia, 2007); Laura Herbert, “Fighting Anti-Semitism: *Nueva Presencia*,” in Laura Herbert, “The History of Argentine Jewish Youth under the 1976–1983 Dictatorship as Seen through Testimonial Literature” (Senior Honors diss., Ohio State University, 2007).

Di Presse until the latter's closure in April 1995. Schiller was succeeded by one of the weekly's oldest columnists, Sergio Leonardo. His leadership lasted, at least, until 1989.⁶ Yaco Nowens would be the new editor-in-chief until 1994. Finally, the person who directed the weekly until it closed on April 11, 1995, was Davidi Berezavsky.

Between July 9, 1977 and December 9, 1983, *Nueva Presencia* published 338 issues.⁷ No complete documentary run of the weekly exists in Argentina, but the IWO⁸ archive contains a large part of the material: 230 issues from the period, that is, 68 percent of those published. Thus, the present chapter attempts to explore various aspects of the weekly's editorial line on the basis of an analysis of the available issues published during that period.

The methodological categories were determined by the researcher during the process of indexing the issues of *Nueva Presencia*, with the goal of making the study as rigorous as possible, based on classifying all the columns and articles appearing in the weekly. This approach enabled identification of the specific and/or relative weight of editorial positions at various moments with respect to the following themes:

- *Comunidad Judía Argentina (CJA)* (Argentine Jewish Community): References to publishers, news, statements, and advertisements regarding activities and/or meetings of Jewish community institutions in Argentina.
- *Comunidad Judía Mundial (CJM)* (World Jewish Community): References to statements, news, and advertisements of activities and/or meetings held by representative bodies of other diasporic Jewish communities and/or international Jewish organizations.
- *Identidad Judía (IJ)* (Jewish Identity): Articles or essays reflecting on some singular aspect of Jewish identity: religion, Zionism, sexuality, interpretations of religious texts and/or Jewish thinkers.
- *Actualidad Israelí (AI)* (Israeli Current Affairs): News about contemporary politics, economics, social issues, and labor matters in Israel. Similarly, items on the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as peace negotiations, hostilities involving

6 The collection for the period following Herman Schiller's editorship is in disarray. I was able to track down and reconstruct the continuity of the weekly on the basis of issues found deposited in AMIA's Marc Turkow Central Archive of Documentation.

7 The dates selected for carrying out this research correspond to the period of the military dictatorship. Although in subsequent issues of the weekly there are references to the military regime, human rights violations, and the repercussions on the community, the present research attempts to analyze the characteristics of the editorial line of *Nueva Presencia* during the period 1977–83.

8 IWO is the Yiddish acronym for Instituto Científico Judío, based in Buenos Aires. It is the depository of a large amount of documentation concerning the Argentine Jewish community.

neighboring countries, and Israel's relations with other states, fall into this category.

- *Vida Cultural (VC)* (Cultural Life): Reviews of books, theater, and films, as well as literary texts: short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels.
- *Efemérides (EF)* (Major Historical Events): Articles and/or editorials designed to highlight some Argentine or Israeli historical event or tradition, Jewish festivities, and such. It also includes articles on past cases of anti-Semitism in Argentina and the history of political parties.
- *Antisemitismo (AS)* (Antisemitism): Records of anti-Semitic threats and attacks in Argentina and other countries.
- *Otros Países (OP)* (Other Countries): Items on contemporary political, economic, and social affairs in countries other than Argentina and Israel.
- *Derechos Humanos (DH)* (Human Rights): Editorials, articles, statements, petitions, letters, and interviews relating to human rights violations in Argentina.
- *Política y Economía en Argentina (P&E-A)* (Argentina's Politics and Economy): Editorials, articles, interviews, and statements published by *Nueva Presencia* or originally published other press organs regarding current political, economic, social, and labor affairs in Argentina.
- *Otros (OT)* (Other): Various articles of general interest.

During 1977, as Chart No. 1 demonstrates, the weekly dealt with numerous themes related to current events in Israel and the Middle East conflict.

The 107 items analyzed demonstrate the importance of the change in government in Israel for the editors of *Nueva Presencia*. The crumbling of Labor's hegemony and the assumption of Menachem Begin as prime minister was one of the leading topics dealt with. Moreover, it stands out among the editorials and special events as part of the celebrations of the beginning of the Jewish New Year.⁹ Similarly, there is a large amount of information regarding meetings between Israeli leaders and senior representatives of the Palestinians and other Arab countries.

Nevertheless, despite the predominance of Israeli issues, an examination of articles concerning the Argentine Jewish community can be revealing with respect to some of the characteristics of the institutional dynamic which have been overlooked by studies analyzing this aspect during the military dictatorship: for example, the holding of free elections for a new slate of leaders of

9 "5737—Acontecimiento principal: Gana el Likud," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 10 (September 19, 1977): 1. In the following issue there is even an article dealing with the major events of the Jewish year 5737 and themes related to Israeli current affairs. See "Todo lo ocurrido en 5737," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 11 (September 27, 1977): 4–5.

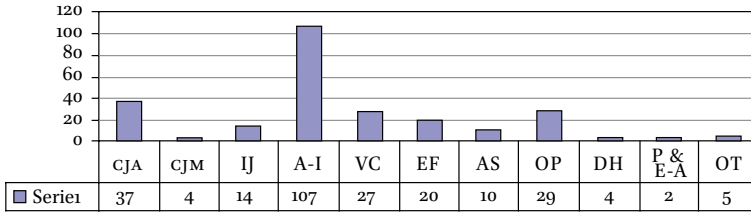


CHART 1 1977 – 26 analyzed copies (100%)

the OSA, meetings such as the Youth Movement’s Convention, activities of the Club de Padres de Escuela, expansion of activities at various communal centers, and a round table marking the publication of a book by Simja Snhe, *El pan y la sangre* (Bread and Blood).

At the same time, there were denunciations of threats, attacks, and publications of an anti-Semitic nature. Among the articles devoted to this theme, most noted that the majority of anti-Semitic manifestations were a reaction to events taking place abroad. Nevertheless, condemnation of the journal *Cabildo* and fear of provocations that might occur due to the visit to Argentina of Monsignor Marcel Lefebvre¹⁰ reflect concern over anti-Semitism in Argentina.

Finally, it is relevant to point out that among the issues published during this period two articles relating to the situation of the journalist Jacobo Timerman stand out. The first was part of a report on statements of the past DAIA president, Nehemías Resnizky, regarding the legal status of the detained journalist.¹¹ The second was a translation of an article by James Neilson that appeared originally in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, in which Timerman’s arbitrary detention is equated with that of Alfred Dreyfus.¹²

Nevertheless, throughout 1977, in general, *Nueva Presencia* refrained from publishing editorials on or taking a stance on the Timerman case. On the other hand, there was a report on a speech made by Argentina’s ambassador to Venezuela, Héctor Hidalgo Solá, who pointed out that “the democratic process cannot be speeded up if we wish it to be solid and stable”;¹³ and a favorable commentary on the participation of the heads of the navy in the presentation of Marcos Aguinis’s book, *Brown*, which took place at the DAIA headquarters.¹⁴

10 “La ofensiva latinoamericana de Lefebvre,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 3 (June 23, 1977): 1. Note also the comments on anti-Semitism in Argentina that Leonardo Senkman published in the first four issues.

11 “DAIA: Después de Washington,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 20 (November 19, 1977): 5.

12 “El fantasma de Dreyfus,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 23 (December 10, 1977): 1.

13 “No hay que apurarse,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 2 (July 16, 1977): 1.

14 “Altos Jefes de la Armada asistieron a la presentación de ‘Brown’ de Marcos Aguinis, editado por la DAIA,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 17 (October 29, 1977): 8.

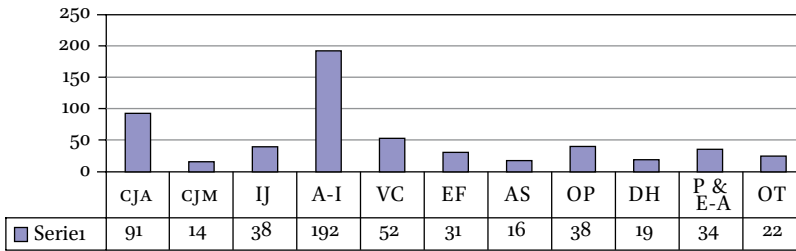


CHART 2 1978 – 44 analyzed copies (84%)

Two considerations should be underscored here. First, references to the Timerman case are presented in neutral fashion. That is, while one can point to how the affair was reported on, such as re-publication of an article that appeared originally in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, there is no value judgment or expression of condemnation on the part of *Nueva Presencia* writers. The same abstention of value judgment happens in the articles about the presence and statements of representatives of the military dictatorship during the launch of Aguinis' book. Second, an overview of the articles published in 1977, demonstrates that references to the Timerman case, as well as to human rights violations that were taking place in Argentina, is marginal.

In 1978, the editorial line of *Nueva Presencia* continued to focus on events in Israel and the Middle East. A central place is devoted to articles and editorials dealing with two particular events in the region: the signing of the first peace accord with Egypt¹⁵ and belligerent incursions into Lebanese territory. Economic recession in Israel and activities of the Peace Now movement also comprise an important part of the articles scrutinized.

As for local Jewish community activities, while there are numerous references to their expansion in the various Jewish institutions, the weekly demonstrates a strong tendency to highlight tensions within the communal sector. For example, there is an item about the treatment of members of a youth group from Herzl School, in the Flores neighborhood, The report condemns how, before the young people were expelled, all the publications used in the ideological formation of the group were burned. It also notes that this was not the first case of the expulsion of youth groups: students from other institutions in Florida and Villa Sabores were dealt with similarly.¹⁶

15 "Camp David: Ansiedad y conjeturas," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 60 (August 25, 1978): 1; "Camp David: Imposible fracasar," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 61 (September 1, 1978): 7; "Beguín-Carter-Sadat," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 62 (September 7, 1978): 1.

16 "Lo que faltaba: quema de libros en nuestra comunidad," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 72 (November 17, 1978): 14.

It is significant that the 19 references to human rights concern mainly the Timerman case. As in 1977, it is possible to find a large variety of material reproduced from other morning newspapers—*The Buenos Aires Herald*, *La Prensa*, and *La Nación*—and the views of DAIA president Nehemías Resnizky. Nevertheless, among the outstanding items are expressions of support for the concession of house arrest for Timerman, a speech by Admiral Emilio Massera at a conference that took place at the American Jewish Center (AJC),¹⁷ and a report of a plea for *habeas corpus* submitted by Timerman's wife, Risha Mindlin-Timerman.¹⁸

As in the preceding year, *Nueva Presencia* does not express an editorial opinion on the case. It only reports, sporadically, on the progress of the affair. Nevertheless, in 1978 one can find an initial inquiry regarding the disappeared: following the victory of the Argentine team in the World Soccer Cup and a description of the multitudes celebrating it, the editorial suggests:

Now, following the exorcizing of pent-up anxiety comes the hardest part: returning to the major problems of the country, from those who have been thrown out of their homes to the disappeared. Meanwhile, a great paradox has emerged: what Perón was unable to accomplish in 1945, or the leaders of the 1955 coup, or other regimes that appeared in subsequent years—namely, motivating the entire populace to rally behind their respective leaders—has been accomplished by [soccer players] Kempes, Filloy, and their companions ...¹⁹

In the midst of the festive climate, which *Nueva Presencia* echoed, references to the disappeared began to appear. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that the Timerman case would not be the central issue criticized. More emblematic was an interview Leonardo Senkman conducted with the rabbi of the Chilean community, Ángel Kreiman, in which the latter described his participation in the defense of human rights, alongside Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, who

17 "Massera y la libertad de Timerman," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 68 (October 20, 1978): 1.

18 "Presentación a favor de Jacobo Timerman," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 68 (October 20, 1978): 2.

19 "Un domingo para pensar," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 52 (July 1, 1978): 1. It is important to point out that on the same page—the front page of the publication—there is an announcement, of considerable importance, to judge by the layout, concerning the visit of then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to DAIA. It goes on to state that during the meeting the president of DAIA informed the Secretary of State that the "broad array of Jewish activities ... relating to religion, culture, education, and social and sports activities are continuing normally and without interruption in accordance with existing laws." See "Kissinger recibió a la DAIA," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 52 (July 1, 1978): 1.

held the position of *Vicar of Solidarity*.²⁰ Subsequently, a relative of one of the disappeared published a letter,²¹ and, finally, toward the end of 1978, there is an important and extensive interview with Rabbi Marshall Meyer.²²

In 1979, certain shifts in the editorial line can be discerned, which deepen in 1980–81. While Israel and the Middle East continue to be central, the dynamic of conflict and problems faced by the Jewish community leadership take on greater relevance: the project to incorporate in the school curriculum the subject of “Moral & Civic Formation,”²³ condemnation of the nationalist journal *Cabildo*,²⁴ censorship of the television series *The Holocaust*²⁵ and the economic crisis in the community, reflected in the dismissal of teachers from the Red Escolar Judía²⁶ and support for the Israelite Hospital,²⁷ are representative of the 81 articles devoted to this aspect.

20 “Los judíos y la lucha por los derechos humanos en Chile,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 66 (October 6, 1978): 7. The Vicar of Solidarity (1976–1992) was an institution created by the Chilean Catholic Church and coordinated by Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, whose aim was to assist victims of Pinochet’s military dictatorship.

21 “Misiva de un padre dolorido: Boris Pasik,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 73 (November 24, 1978): 4.

22 “El judaísmo no puede sobrevivir en una sociedad donde no rijan derechos humanos: Entrevista al Rabino Conservador Marshall T. Meyer,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 77 (December 22, 1978): 5, 12.

23 See “También se oponen los protestantes: Formación Moral y Cívica continua suscitando controversias,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 105 (July 6, 1979): 3; “Inquietud, sorpresa y dolor,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 106 (July 13, 1979): 2; “Formación Moral y Cívica: También se oponen los maestros,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 107 (July 20, 1979): 2; “Mostrando el juego señores,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 109 (August 3, 1979): 1; “Flagrante violación del derecho de los padres,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 111 (August 17, 1979): 14; “Formación Moral y Cívica: Opina un rabino reformista,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 113 (August 31, 1979): 9; Leonardo Senkman, “Nacionalismo, catolicismo y laicismo en la Argentina Contemporánea,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 113 (August 31, 1979): 10; “¿El que no es católico no es ser humano?” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 115 (September 14, 1979): 1; “Formación Moral y Cívica: Opina un rabino ortodoxo,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 121 (October 26, 1979): 5; “Una renuncia y una versión,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 128 (December 14, 1979): 1.

24 “Otra circunstancia inquietante: El sobreseimiento de Cabildo,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 105 (July 6, 1979): 6; Carlos Polak, “Peligrosa doctrina judicial,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 106 (July 27, 1979): 2; “Al cierre: Cabildo Uber alles,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 115 (September 14, 1979): 3.

25 Carlos Polak, “¿Quién le teme a *Holocausto* en nuestro país?” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 112 (August 24, 1979): 2, “Una censura que fomenta la obscuridad,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 126 (November 30, 1979): 10.

26 “Una denuncia,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 115 (September 14, 1979): 4.

27 “Hospital Israelita EZRAH: llamado al rabinato,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 120 (October 19, 1979): 6; “La desaparición del Hospital Israelita redundaría en un prejuicio de nuestra imagen,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 125 (November 23, 1979): 9.

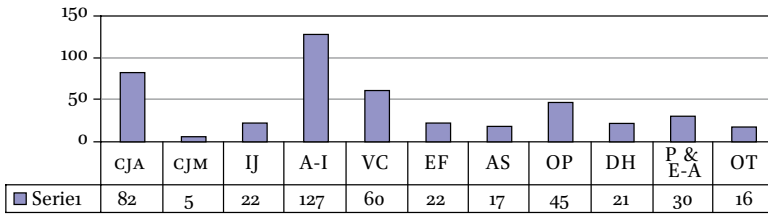


CHART 3 1979 – 27 analyzed copies (52%)

In contrast to previous years when the expansion of Jewish institutional activities were highlighted, throughout 1979 *Nueva Presencia* focused on arguments over the legitimacy of the community leadership, presenting differences of opinion and tensions among key entities: the Permanent President’s Plenary [PPP]²⁸ and the Club de Padres de Escuelas Hebreas (Horim) (see Chapter 4).²⁹

Similarly, questions relating to the politics and economy of Argentina take on greater relevance. The inclusion of Daniel Muchnik as a columnist for *Nueva Presencia* turned out to be a big plus in the analysis and critique of the regime’s economic policies. Although in limited fashion at first, the weekly even began to be a good source for following labor activity, factory strikes, and massive layoffs of employees.

References to the Timerman case takes on additional dimensions in 1979. The weekly reflects international pressures and the growing possibility of Timerman’s release.³⁰ But outstanding items are the publication of a letter addressed to Herman Schiller, signed by Risha Mindlin-Timerman,³¹ an interview with Héctor Timerman (Jacobó’s son),³² and the editorial following his release.³³ The latter, nevertheless, does not condemn the reasons for his arrest. While it notes that the journalist was detained arbitrarily, after the acquittal handed down by the military tribunal and the Supreme Court of Justice, concern focuses on the decision to strip Jacobo Timerman of his Argentine citizenship.

28 “Las tres P: una sigla que inquieta a muchos,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 110 (August 10, 1979): 10; “PPP: ¿quién gana la guerra?” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 112 (August 24, 1979): 9; “PPP: Opinan los movimientos jalutzianos,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 113 (August 31, 1979): 17.
 29 “Horim: Festival de coros y discurso para la polémica,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 121 (October 26, 1979): 4.
 30 See Leiser Madanes, “Relaciones óptimas, pese a los reflujos,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 110 (August 10, 1979): 7; and “Dulzin y Timerman,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 113 (August 31, 1979): 3.
 31 “Carta de un esposa,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 114 (September 7, 1979): 1.
 32 “Desde chicos hemos aprendido a ser judíos íntegros: Entrevista a Héctor Timerman,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 116 (September 21, 1979): 2.
 33 “Jacobó Timerman: Trabajosa libertad,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 116 (September 28, 1979): 1.

The problem, according to the editors of *Nueva Presencia*, is that these measures would give rise to the accusation that “a Jew is not a good Argentine.” This view is reinforced, as noted in a subsequent article by Daniel Muchnik, when Timerman declared upon his arrival in Israel that “he is proud to be a Jew. Israel is the homeland of the Jews.” The article highlights fear about a possible intensification of anti-Semitism provoked by Timerman’s release and his subsequent declarations and denunciations.³⁴

The question of human rights and references to the forced disappearance of persons is also discussed in the weekly. For example, in an editorial on the occasion of the Jewish New Year, concern is expressed over re-instituting respect for human rights:

Today, clearly, the meridian of the new dichotomy runs through those two words (human rights), the public discussion of which is now unavoidable. Perhaps the symbol of this national tragedy—one in which there is no sector of the country that has not been subject to the aggression of left-wing subversives or right-wing abductors—is captured by the photograph that General Alejandro Agustín Lanusse showed to the HR [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights]. There, along with the former president, one can discern those who served as minister of interior, his aide-de-camp, and his press secretary. The first two were killed by terrorist subversion and the third, whose last employment was an executive position with Timerman’s *La Opinión*, was abducted, probably by one of the gangs of the far right on the loose today. From the photograph one can see the aspirations of the vast majority of Argentines: neither terrorist subversion nor the disappeared. Let us hope for a return of the sanity and harmony that have been lost during this terrible decade of blood and suffering.³⁵

While toward the end of 1979 *Nueva Presencia* highlights human rights violations as one of the most pressing problems, the editorial points out that this issue is part of the two poles that must be rejected: terrorist subversion and the special forces. Thus, it is important to underscore how the events of the 1970s are considered from the perspective of what will subsequently be

34 Daniel Muchnik, “Las declaraciones de Jacobo Timerman,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 118 (October 5, 1979): 7.

35 “Comienzo el Año Nuevo judío bajo dos invocaciones: La lucha por la paz y los derechos humanos,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 116 (September 21, 1979): 1.

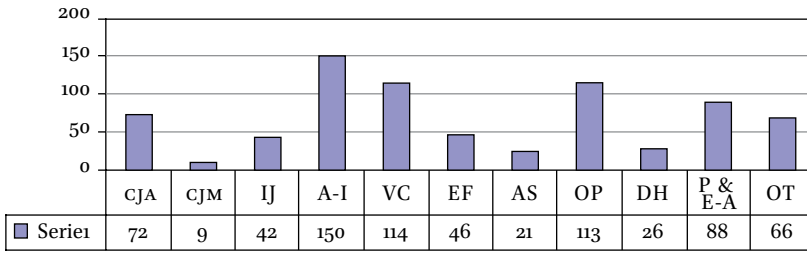


CHART 4 1980 – 43 analyzed copies (83%)

conceptualized as the logic of “the two demons”: two implacable groups facing off against each other before a civil society that has become a victim of their battle.

As can be seen in Chart No. 4, 1980 may be considered a year of transition, between a typical publication of the Jewish community and a weekly running national news. The relative weight of Israeli Current Affairs versus Argentina’s Politics and Economy is reduced substantially. When we take into consideration that Human Rights is an operational category framing articles, letters, petitions, and interviews referring to the violations of such rights, it is even less.

Although Israeli issues continue to be preponderant, in the international sphere, denunciations of apartheid in South Africa, political processes in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and dictatorships and violations of human rights in Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay also take on relevance. Similarly, in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, articles appear profiling Ayatollah Khomeini.

On the local level, the lacunae in the economic program highlighted in articles by Daniel Muchnik are among top items under Argentina’s Politics and Economy. However, official censorship—mainly of the audiovisual and print press, as well as of film and theater—and the bill for a higher education law are also dealt with.

There were three central topics: the deterioration of the economy, the takeover of the executive power by retired Lieutenant General Roberto Eduardo Viola, and the disappeared. As noted previously, Daniel Muchnik’s analyses of the first topic are incisive. In respect to the installation of Viola, he also points out the problems the new leadership of the armed forces needs to confront:

[I]n 1976 Videla assumed a very different task ... radically opposed to the one Viola had to confront. In 1976, there was a consensus supporting the government in political and business circles. The government was not alone. Certain leaders received government officials with open arms,

anxious for stability and order. Now, by contrast, inflammatory statements from circles affected by the economic measures and political oppression are what stand out. If Viola does not act calmly and pacify those spirits, we could well look forward to greater problems in the future.... *Viola will have to face different fronts. The economic one is seriously ailing. On the political front, things have not yet reached boiling point, but there will be a bit more participation. And what will happen in the area of labor?*³⁶

Daniel Muchnik's editorial is spot-on, first, since it consolidates the idea regarding an initial consensus backing the National Reorganization Process. But, it also shows that at least for the editors, political opening was not an urgent matter. Rather, their main criticism lay in the economic orientation of the regime. And, in the area of human rights, the desire was similar to that expressed in the greetings for the Jewish New Year: "*neither terrorist subversion nor the disappeared*. Let us hope for a return of the sanity and harmony that have been lost during this terrible decade of blood and suffering."³⁷

Nevertheless, the weekly gives increasing relevance throughout the year to reports concerning rallies organized and condemnations made by various bodies in defense of human rights. It is surprising that, in comparison with previous years, references to the Timerman case are absent in 1980. Still, great importance is attached to news about the inauguration of new offices for the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, the marches of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared for Political Reasons,³⁸ and the interview by Herman Schiller and Rabbi Marshall Meyer with the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel.³⁹

News and information concerning local Jewish life has special relevance, since it focuses on the complexity of issues and tensions faced by various sectors of the leadership. For example, as in the preceding year, actions seeking to impugn implementation in schools of the subject "Moral & Civic Formation" continued to be a priority in community action. Schiller's evaluation of the term of the outgoing DAIA president is also significant. Nehemías Resnizky was considered to be a leader who knew how to "adapt himself with the greatest honor possible" to manifestations of national political conflicts.⁴⁰

36 Daniel Muchnik, "Viola y las peripecias del poder," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 171 (October 10, 1980): 1 (emphasis added).

37 "5741: paz y derechos humanos," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 167 (September 13, 1980): 1.

38 "Concentración en Plaza de Mayo," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 180 (December 12, 1980): 1.

39 "Por los derechos humanos, contra la violencia," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 172 (October 17, 1980): 1, 14, 18.

40 Herman Schiller, "Diez años volcánicos," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 155 (June 20, 1980): 1, 3. Notably, for the first time, the editorial mentions protests by some mothers regarding

Yet, a turning point in *Nueva Presencia's* participation as a key player in the field of community entities can be found following a television interview conducted by journalist Enrique Llamas de Madariaga with a citizen of Jewish origin, engineer Jaime Rozenblum. During the program, which took place on September 27 on Channel 9, Llamas de Madariaga insisted on discussing topics such as the alleged dual loyalty of the Jews and Israel's destabilizing actions in the Middle East. *Nueva Presencia* published a strongly critical editorial by Schiller, and opinion pieces by Rabbi Marshall Mayer and columnists Daniel and Edgardo Muchnik,⁴¹ as well as the complete text of the dialogue between Llamas de Madariaga and Rozenblum.⁴² The weekly also organized a round table to "repudiate Llamas de Madariaga's televised provocation."

This action is relevant for two reasons. First, it shows how the weekly went about turning itself into a key player, with its own initiatives in the community area, by organizing events, meetings, and round tables where it stated its position on certain matters.⁴³ Second, it created tensions between itself and DAIA, headed by Mario Gorenstein. For example, in an earlier issue, *Nueva Presencia* questions the absence of the DAIA chief at the abovementioned round table organized by the weekly.⁴⁴

The year 1981 was unusual, first, because of the conflictive nature of the national political dynamic and the diminishment of the legitimacy of the military dictatorship; second, because of the addition of Gerardo Yomal to the staff of *Nueva Presencia* as an incisive analyst on problems of a political nature. *Nueva Presencia* published a positive editorial on the creation of the Multi-Party Commission.⁴⁵ The year would also feature a large number of interviews with personalities such as former constitutional presidents Arturo Froindizi and Arturo Illia; politicians as Antonio Troccoli, Oscar Alende and Francisco Manrique; union leaders as Saúl Ubalidini; journalists as James Neilson and Rear Admiral Jorge Fray.

disappeared persons and the insufficient attention they received from DAIA. On the other hand, the editorial points out that many others asserted the opposite.

41 "Sospechosa impunidad," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 174 (October 31, 1980): 1, 3, 4.

42 "Texto completo del diálogo entre Llamas de Madariaga y J. Rozenblum," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 174 (October 31, 1980): 10, 19, 25, 26.

43 As can be seen from other initiatives, *Nueva Presencia* also became a vehicle for cultural development. For example, during this year, it published the following monographs: Ricardo Feierstein, *El caramelo descompuesto* (1979); Eliahu Toker, *Homenaje a Abraxas* (1980); León Dujovne, *El judaísmo como cultura* (1980); Leonardo Senkman, *La identidad judía en la literatura argentina* (1980); Pedernal, *Pequeño Kleinmatch ilustrado* (1980).

44 "No exacerbar el temor," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 179 (December 5, 1980): 7.

45 Herman Schiller, "Multipartidaria: Ilusiones y expectativas," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 211 (July 17, 1981).

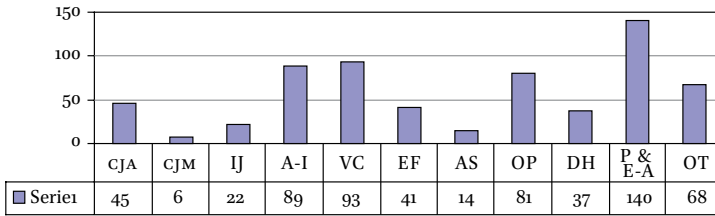


CHART 5 1981 – 37 analyzed copies (70%)

For the first time, during this year the relationship between Israeli Current Affairs and Argentina's Politics and Economy becomes inverted in favor of the latter, a tendency that will prevail until 1983. A perspective that began around 1980 is explored substantially during the course of this year. There are reports of strikes and declarations of workers from companies such as La Cantábrica, SASETRU, and SEVEL, as well as the tobacco, port, metallurgical, textile, and other sectors. There is also a series of articles devoted to pointing out the shrinking salaries of workers. Ongoing articles by Daniel Muchnik on the economic crisis in which the country was immersed also feature in this period. While the columnist dealt with these matters in previous years, few issues were published in 1981 without a column written by him.

In the area of human rights, a greater degree of relevance is accorded to the presence of human rights organizations in 1981, including the publication of communiqués from various groups. Similarly, there is a reference to the possibility that President Roberto Viola would receive a group of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association,⁴⁶ and a report on visits the latter would pay to some bishops.⁴⁷ The weekly spoke out in favor of rallies organized by various human rights organizations,⁴⁸ and published an item on the hunger strikes that the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association was planning to conduct in the cathedrals of Quilmes and Neuquén.⁴⁹

While references to activities held by organizations affected by state terrorism occupy a major place in comparison with previous years, editorial opinion with respect to the motives of the anti-subversion struggle continues the line adopted previously: "Neither terrorist subversion nor the disappeared."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the relevance given to reports on human rights generated a dispute among readers. In the section "Voces de aliento, crítica y comentarios,"

46 "Entre la angustia y la expectativa," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 197 (April 10, 1981): 1.

47 "Madres de Plaza de Mayo visitarán obispos," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 201 (May 8, 1981): 5.

48 Herman Schiller, "Derechos Humanos: ¿un callejón sin salida?" *Nueva Presencia*, No. 225 (October 23, 1981): 1, 4.

49 "Ayunan en Quilmes y Neuquén," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 233 (December 18, 1981): 5.

50 "Comienza el Año Nuevo judío bajo dos invocaciones: La lucha por la paz y los derechos humanos," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 222 (October 2, 1981): 1, 4.

Gregorio Shapira expressed his uneasiness over the interest that *Nueva Presencia* was according to human rights:

You people devote yourself to pandering to the Left and talking a lot about the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association and social problems—the whole spiel. That is, you shield yourself behind the community, but in reality, save for the issue devoted to Llamas de Madariaga and, perhaps, another one, you're nothing but one more broadsheet. You criticize the government and imagine that they won't touch Schiller because he's a Jew. You're wrong, because *Nueva Presencia* is not *La Opinión* and Schiller is not Timerman.⁵¹

Another pertinent change in 1981 is the approach to information regarding the Argentine Jewish community, namely, the response to human rights violations within the community. Two issues stand out in contrast to their previous handling: the Timerman case, again, and the Resnizky case. Regarding the first, DAIA demonstrated how, following Timerman's statements regarding treatment in the clandestine detention centers and his denunciation of the military regime as anti-Semitic, communal Jewish life became at risk.⁵² Thus, there was fear that the national authorities would act against the Jewish community leadership.

The second, concerning the denunciations made by Timerman and referring to the DAIA president, illustrates two aspects, the first relates to the early public accusations against Resnizky over his criticism of the detained/disappeared of Jewish origin. During the course of the controversy, Schiller, like Resnizky, underscored the steps taken by DAIA to obtain Timerman's release.⁵³ Despite its criticism of DAIA toward the end of the period of dictatorship for its inaction in the matter of the detained/disappeared, Schiller's favorable coverage saved Resnizky's reputation.

Following an interview with Resnizky published by Schiller in November 1981, he became another of the weekly's star columnists. Toward the end of 1981, the former DAIA president published two articles.⁵⁴ And in the following years,

51 Gregorio Shapira, "Franela," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 188 (February 6, 1981): 24.

52 "DAIA: Schoenfeld goza de la admiración de la colectividad judía," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 210 (July 10, 1981): 15.

53 "Resnizky dice su verdad," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 230 (November 27, 1981): 10, 11, 16.

54 Nehemías Resnizky, "Porque amamos al país, debemos ser sinceros en la evaluación," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 233 (December 18, 1981): 5; ídem, "Holocausto: traumatizante, pero aleccionadora," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 235 (December 31, 1981): 7, 13.

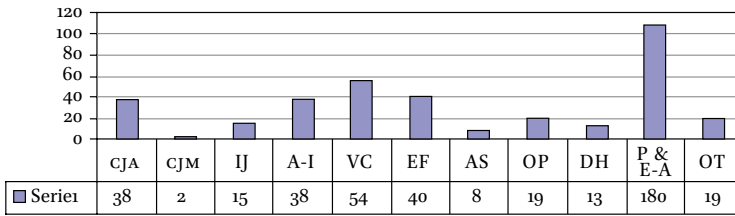


CHART 6 1982 – 25 analyzed copies (48%)

Resnizky was one of the advocates at *Nueva Presencia* urging democratization of communal institutions.⁵⁵

Throughout 1982, the tendency that began in 1981 continued: namely, focus on the country's politics and economy. Prior to the impact of the Malvinas War, the weekly had stressed the need for political opening.⁵⁶

An analysis of the weekly's editorial line identifies greater weight accorded to interviews with political, social, and labor leaders. Similarly, the publication of petitions of political movements remained steady, as in previous years. But what is new is that during this year there began to appear editorials referring to the national situation written by individuals who were not part of the community—such as journalists Vicente García Costa and Carlos Brocato; moreover, *Nueva Presencia* sent a press correspondent to the meeting of the Justicialista Party that took place in the Atlanta stadium.⁵⁷

The list of interviews conducted by Gerardo Yomal or Herman Schiller serves to illustrate the weekly's burgeoning interest in national issues: politicians such as Raúl Alfonsín, Juan Carlos Pugliese, Conrado Storani and Luis León, from the Radical Civic Union (UCR); Vicente Solano Lima, Vicente Leónidas Saadi, Nilda Garré and Enrique Vázquez from the Justicialist (Peronist) Party (PJ); Guillermo Esévez Boero from the Socialist Party (PS); Jorge Altamira from the Workers Party (PO); and journalists as Luis Gregorich and Emilio Corbier and Roberto García.

Editorial references to political questions suddenly appear during the period of hostilities between Argentina and Great Britain. The Malvinas War took center stage in the weekly and new columnists (Abel Wolfer and Ricardo Monner Sans) gave accounts of various activities and statements from leading Jewish institutions, underscoring foreign support against "British colonialism." Outstanding is *Nueva Presencia's* repudiation of the decision by the Newspaper

55 Nehemías Resnizky, "Profundizar las estructuras democráticas," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 287 (December 31, 1982): 10; idem, "Desechar el corporativismo y acrecentar la democracia representativa," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 295 (February 25, 1983): 7.

56 Herman Schiller, "Verano caliente, tensiones y expectativas," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 236 (January 7, 1982): 1, 4.

57 "Entre los palos y las cadenas," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 277 (October 22, 1982): 8.

and Magazine Distributors' Society to boycott distribution of *The Buenos Aires Herald*.⁵⁸

The Malvinas War was one topic that produced many news items about the Argentine Jewish community. While there were also other items of significance, demonstrations of support, rallies, and campaigns to raise funds for supporting the young men who fought in the Malvinas Islands predominated. Nevertheless, despite the considerable space taken up by news and statements regarding the conflict, the weekly continued to criticize the economic model of the military dictatorship. Alfredo Lewin assisted Daniel Muchnik in this task throughout the year.

As for the human rights question, *Nueva Presencia* continued to be an open forum for the publication of petitions and letters in its readers' section. Nevertheless, three instances further illustrating the process of political opening that began in 1981 should be noted: first, the publication of an extensive testimonial signed by Julio Raffo, former rector of the National University of Lomas de Zamora, describing the difficult situation of those who were forced into exile for political reasons.⁵⁹ Likewise, an earlier article analyzes the presence of human rights advocate and Peace Nobel Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel during a religious ceremony in the Templo Bet-El, led by Rabbi Marshall Meyer.⁶⁰

Finally, an advertorial celebrating the anniversary of *Nueva Presencia*, published on July 9, 1982, demonstrates a shift from participants in the celebrations of the previous year. Instead of community members, those who saluted the weekly are political, cultural, and religious figures, such as Rabbis Marshall Meyer and Daniel Goldman; renowned writers as Ernesto Sábato, Marcos Aguinis, Enrique Medina, Juan José Sebreli, and Isidoro Blastein; scholar Horacio Tarcus; journalist and historian Emilio Corbiere; workers union leader Saúl Ubaldini; and politicians as Héctor Polino, Alexis Latendorf, Oscar Alende, Alfredo Concepción, Raúl Alfonsín and Ernesto Guidici.

While the bulk of periodicals analyzed in 1983 is significantly less—the analysis shows a tendency that will hold steady: problems and descriptions of Argentina's politics and economy will dominate the columns of the weekly.

As in the previous two years, more than a dozen interviews were published in the run-up to the election. These included a diverse spectrum of political and cultural personalities: presidential candidate and future president Raúl Alfonsín, and other politicians as Nilda Garré, Rubens Iscaro and Jorge

58 "Una torpe medida," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 249 (April 8, 1982): 4; "Las amenazas viene de la extrema derecha," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 250 (April 16, 1982): 17.

59 Julio Raffo, "Reflexiones sobre el exilio," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 277 (October 22, 1982): 5.

60 "Paz y libertad," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 253 (May 7, 1982): 15.

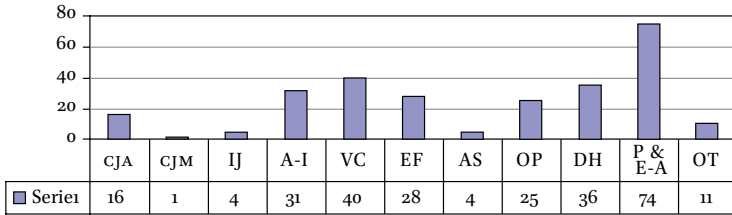


CHART 7 1983 – 18 analyzed copies (48%)

Spilimberg, writer Juan José Sebrelí, journalists Gabriel Levinas and Ariel Delgado, economists Antonio Elio Brailovvsky and Manuel Cywin, and workers union leader Miguel Gazzera.

Editorials and articles throughout this period also ask some tough questions about the self-amnesty project and the “final document” issued by the military dictatorship.⁶¹ In addition, a large part of the items identified describe the electoral process, which ended with the victory of the Unión Cívica Radical ticket, made up of Raúl Alfonsín and Víctor Martínez.

With respect to activities and statements of human rights organizations, *Nueva Presencia* took an active role. For example, it published an article on the fast of Adolfo Pérez Esquivel on behalf of the release of political prisoners, accompanied by a photo of Herman Schiller alongside the Nobel Peace Prize winner.⁶² This militant turn could be explained by the creation, by Schiller and Rabbi Marshall Meyer, of the Jewish Movement for Human Rights (MJDH) in 1983. As a result of the weekly’s editorial line and the founding of the MJDH, the DAIA leadership was rebuked by the last head of the military dictatorship, General Reinaldo Bignone.⁶³ This, in turn, deepened the profound conflict between the community leadership and Schiller’s agenda.

61 “¿Terminó la impunidad de los criminales?” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 296 (March 4, 1983): 1; Carlos Brocato, “El discurso de la locura,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 300 (March 31, 1983): 1; “La hipocresía de los represores,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 305 (May 6, 1983): 1; Marshall Meyer, “El informe de los represores es un *Jilul Hashem* (Profanación de Dios),” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 305 (May 6, 1983): 2; “Pérez Esquivel responde al documento final,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 307 (May 20, 1983): 7; “El pánico está cambiando de trinchera,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 3012 (June 24, 1983): 1; “La trampa de la amnistía,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 320 (August 19, 1983): 1; “Ley de amnistía: Nulidad, investigación y responsabilidad,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 322 (September 2, 1983): 1. The dictatorship’s “final document” was a public declaration justifying the criminal actions perpetrated by the state and officially stating that all the disappeared citizens were in fact dead.

62 “Por la paz, contra la violencia,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 308 (May 27, 1983): 16.

63 “Bignone se queja ante la DAIA por la línea editorial de *Nueva Presencia*,” *Nueva Presencia*, No. 322 (September 2, 1983): 2.

These would not be the only tensions between the community and the human rights sector. During the same year, the group of young people who had interviewed Herman Schiller in La Plata (see Chapter 5) organized an event marking the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, sponsored by Schiller. The Juventud Judía Independiente asked Federico Storani (Civic Radical Union), Oscar Alende (Intransigent Party), and Alfredo Bravo (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights), among others, to speak. Additionally, Rabbi Baruj Plavnik and Nehemías Resnizky were present. The gathering of individuals from outside the community provoked criticism from the DAIA leadership and the editors of *Mundo Israelita*. They held that turning the memorial event into a platform for agitation had downplayed its uniqueness.⁶⁴

The gap between Schiller and the community leadership over issues related to the Jewish community agenda continued to broaden. From then on, as shown in Chapter 5, *Nueva Presencia* turned into a weekly that intensified its criticism of the Jewish establishment by drawing closer to the human rights sector, to the extent that it would begin to question publicly the leadership of the central institutions for their position vis-à-vis the military dictatorship.

As in the case of the editorial line, which would continue to open up toward themes outside the community, an analysis of those who participated in the writing of articles (as shown in the table on the following pages) illustrates the course of Herman Schiller's agenda. In addition to Gerardo Yomal, who conducted the series of interviews in 1981 noted above, the staff was expanded to include journalists such as Emilio Corbiere, Emilio Guidici, Roberto Hugo Mero, and Juan José Sebrelí. Subsequently, the involvement of the founding group of editors, among them, Carlos Polak, Eliahu Toker, Ricardo Feierstein, Lázaro Schallman, Leonardo Senkman, and Marcos Aguinis, along with Jewish contributors such as Abraham Sokolowicz, Gustavo Perednik, Sergio Leonardo, Roxana Morduchowicz, Nehemías Resnizky, began to decline.⁶⁵

64 "Mundo Israelita: Uber Alles," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 305 (May 6, 1983); "La Juventud Judía de La Plata responde a las diatribas de dos publicaciones," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 310 (June 10, 1983). See the polemic in Chapter 5 of this book.

65 When I examined and indexed the issues, including the authorship of each one of the articles, I discovered that the person who had directed this MA thesis, Dr. María Dolores Béjar, had published an article in *Nueva Presencia* entitled "El pacto Perón-Dickman." After mentioning this discovery to her, she indicated that this had been her first research article and that she had sent it to the mass-circulation magazine on historical issues, *Todo es Historia*. How did the article cross from one publication to the other? A possible answer might be found in a look at *Nueva Presencia*'s list of "collaborators": the editor of *Todo es Historia* was at that time Emilio Corbiere, a frequent collaborator with the weekly since 1981. Possibly, the change of destination of Béjar's article had occurred as a result of a dialogue between the two editors. How could an article on the relationship of Juan Domingo

TABLE Nueva Presencia contributions by year

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis	Marcos Aguinis
Jaime Barylko	Daniel Colodenco	Ricardo Feierstein	Victor Aguirre	Mario Albin	Angélica Aguirre	Alejandro Alem	
Ricardo Feierstein	Alberto Daj	Daniel Filc	Ricardo Atronskid	Moshe Asheri	Gabriel Bezchinsky	Roberto Ares Ponts	
Manuel Loterztein	Amós Etinguer	Manuela	Jaime Barylko	Jaime Barylko	Jorge Bragulat	María Dolores	
Carlos Polak	Ricardo Feierstein	Fingueret	Alfred Berfrein	Roberto Borbow	Carlos Alberto	Béjar	
Lazaro Schallman	Mario Galer	Cristina Giuzzo	León Dujovne	Emilio Corbiere	Brocato	Gabriel	
Herman Schiller	Abraham	Daniel Iunowicz	Arie Eliahu	Moises Freide	Pablo Calvo	Berzchinsky	
Leonardo Senkman	Huberman	Ignacio Klich	Shimon Farja	Daniel Fresco	Ricardo Feierstein	Héctor Borrat	
Oded Sverdlík	Daniel Iunowicz	María Krasmor	Ricardo Feierstein	Eugenia Gaster	Vicente García	Carlos Alberto	
Eliahu Toker	Tobías Kamenszain	Sergio Leonardo	Daniel Filc	Emilio Guidici	Costa	Brocato	
	Luis Kartner	Leiser Madanes	Manuela Fingueret	Sergio Leonardo	Víctor García Costa	Emilio Corbiere	
	Marcos Koifman	Daniel Muchnik	Daniel Fresco	Alfredo Lewin	Eugenia Gaster	María del Carmén	
	Sergio Leonardo	David Ner	Mario Goloboff	Jorge Lozano	Ernesto Guidici	Fejoo	
	Merle Rachman	Pederal	Luis Gregorich	Roberto Hugo	Guillermo Gleyzer	Ricardo Feierstein	
	Herman Schiller	Carlos Polak	Juana Guinzburg	Mero	Santiago Kovadloff	José Luis Fraga	
	Leonardo Senkman	Iaacov Rubel	Miguel Gutman	Roxana	Sergio Leonardo	María Cristina	
	Abraham	Herman Schiller	Victor Hugo Reck	Morduchowicz	Alfredo Lewin	Gaiati	
	Sokolowicz	Leonardo	Hugo Kantz	Daniel Muchnik	Roberto Hugo	Enrique Garber	
	Oded Sverdlík	Senkman	Aharon Keren	Gustavo Perednik	Mero	Jorge Gelman	
	Eliahu Toker	Abraham	Sara Kermel	Carlos Polak	Ricardo Monner	Ernesto Guidici	
	Marcel Zohar	Sokolowicz	Lidia Lerner	Eugenio Pucciarelli	Sanz	José Itzigzohn	
	Oded Sverdlík	Oded Sverdlík	Reuven Meltsen	Mario Rapoport	Roxana	Sarah Karmel	
	Eliahu Toker	Eliahu Toker		Nehemias Resnizky	Morduchowicz	Armando Ledesma	

TABLE Nueva Presencia contributions by year (cont.)

1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
			Luis Messyngier	Graciela Safranchik	Luis Alberto Murray	Alicia Moreau de
			Daniel Muchnick	Fernando Sanchez	Gustavo Perednik	Justo
			Edgardo Muchnick	Torres	Jacobo Perelman	Eugenia Moreno
			David Ner	Herman Schiller	Federico Polak	Daniel Muchnick
			Samuel Peccar	Daniel Schulman	Leopoldo Portnoy	Vicente Palermo
			Gustavo Perednik	Juan José Sebreli	Julio Raffo	Adolfo Peréz
			Nelson Pilosof	Shlomo Slutzky	Mario Rapoport	Esquivel
			Adriana Rofman	Abraham	Nehemías Resnizky	Baruj Playnick
			Rafael Rofman	Sokolowicz	Graciela Safranchik	Nehemías
			Graciela Safranchik	Rodolfo	Lazaro Schallman	Resnizky
			Daniel Samoilovich	Stavenhagen	Herman Schiller	Jorge Rulli
			Herman Schiller	Mario Szychman	Juan José Sebreli	Graciela
			Daniel Schulman	Eliahu Toker	Leonardo Senkman	Safranchik
			Leonardo Senkman	Baruj Vega	Abraham	Mario Salvin
			Delia Sheber	Hugo Vezzetti	Sokolowicz	Juan Sasturain
			Marcos Silver	Moshe Wainstein	Mario Tesler	Herman Schiller
			Abraham	Gerardo Yomal	Eliahu Toker	Eliahu Toker
			Sokolowicz		Baruj Vega	Ismael Viñas
			Eliahu Sorel		Ismael Viñas	Sofía Wachter
			Luis Tenembaum		Abel Wolfer	Moshe Wainstein
			Mario Vargas Llosa		Gerardo Yomal	Vicente Zito Lema
			Maurico Wainstein		Jacobo Zudker	

2 The Centrality of Human Rights in *Nueva Presencia*

From its first issue in July 1977 until the end of the military dictatorship *Nueva Presencia* pursued a long trajectory: from a Jewish-Argentine weekly concerned with Israeli events, the conflict in the Middle East, and the development of community activity, to an open forum for debating the social, political, judicial, and economic problems, and their effects and consequences, of a country that was distancing itself from the military dictatorship. The index of the issue of *Nueva Presencia* which appeared just before Raúl Alfonsín took over the executive branch, perhaps serves to illustrate the point of arrival attained by Herman Schiller's enterprise: an editorial titled "See You Never Again, Military Dictatorship" is followed by an interview with Víctor Martínez, who would assume the vice-presidency of the state that same week. There is also an interview with Robert Cox, editor-in-chief of *The Buenos Aires Herald*, titled "The Military Is Leaving Us a Country in Ruins." In addition, the issue features articles by Emilio Fermín Mignone, president of the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), and by journalist Carlos Alberto Brocato, as well as an interview with politician Hipólito Solari Yrigoyen (Civic Radical Union). Finally, there is an announcement of the awarding of a prize by the Navarro Correas Foundation to Herman Schiller for his journalism in 1983, and an article by Nehemías Resnizky, "Further Thoughts on the Proposal to Convoke a Jewish Argentine Congress."⁶⁶

This issue, published toward the end of the military dictatorship, concluded a stage in *Nueva Presencia's* editorial line. After 1984, a new tendency is observable: the incorporation of some of the leading members of human rights organizations as writers/collaborators. As in early 1981 with the displacement of Jewish community writers, these included people like Rene Epelbaum, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, and Emilio Mignone, who focused more on human rights-related topics.

Without downplaying the interviews held with the Nobel Peace Prize winner or the publication of petitions by the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo during the period 1980–83, beginning in 1984 the public agenda of human rights organizations was given priority in *Nueva Presencia*. And part of this was a questioning of the politics of Raúl Alfonsín's government concerning the review of the actions of the armed forces during the period 1976–83.

Perón and a Jewish Socialist leader not be of interest to a Jewish-Argentine weekly? See "¿Qué pasó en la entrevista Perón-Dickman?" *Nueva Presencia*, August 19, 1983.

66 *Nueva Presencia*, No. 338 (December 9, 1983).

Second, the centrality given to the question of human rights would enhance Schiller's reputation. The publication of petitions and calls for a public meeting of the MJDH, and his presence—immortalized in photos—at the end of some of the rallies and other events held jointly with leaders of human rights organizations, would elevate the image of the editor-in-chief of the Jewish weekly.

Tensions over focus on the pro-human rights discourse at the expense of the community agenda characterized the ties between *Nueva Presencia* and the institutional leadership of the Jewish community. As evidenced in the dispute over the rally against anti-Semitism organized by the MJDH in the Plaza de la República (see Chapter 5), the relevance given to human rights and the presence of *Nueva Presencia* and the MJDH in this area generated a series of clashes over who had the right to represent the community leadership.

Marking this new stage was a redefinition of the ties between Schiller's publishing enterprise and the Jewish community. In relation to central institutions, such as DAIA, AMIA, and OSA, *Nueva Presencia* adopted a confrontational tone. While the tensions were noted previously—when Mario Gorenstein, as president of DAIA (1980), did not participate in the round table about the "Videoshow" case (see Chapter 3), this approach continued. In contrast to the period after Nehemías Resnizky's departure from DAIA when Schiller praised his leadership, post-1984 the discourse resembles that of the reply of the Asociación de Familiares de Desaparecidos Judíos en la Argentina, denouncing the leaders of DAIA as "collaborators with the process" because of their "complicit silence."⁶⁷

The similarity of *Nueva Presencia's* discourse to that of organizations defending human rights, as well as the distancing from and/or questioning of topics on the Jewish community agenda, caused a displacement of a different nature. The weekly's original writers from the period 1977–79 disappeared from the staff to reappear in the re-launching of the Socialist-Zionist periodical *Nueva Sión*. Eliahu Toker, Daniel Filc, Leonardo Senkman, and Manuela Fingueret, among others, resigned from *Nueva Presencia* to join this new venture.

The shift gave rise to a new conflict: the debate surrounding Schiller's "heroism" versus the hidden face of the Socialist Zionist leadership. The last issue of *Nueva Presencia* during 1983 features an interview Schiller conducted with Jacobo Timerman, during which the latter intensified his criticism of the

67 "Replica al Informe sobre detenidos y desaparecidos judíos 1976–1983," in Leonardo Senkman, *El antisemitismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1989).

Argentine Jewish community leadership.⁶⁸ But unlike what he describes in his widely-read memoirs, he reveals here that the organizations close to the Socialist Zionism of the Hashomer Hatzair-Mapam movement eschewed the public stage after the 1976 coup.⁶⁹

The response of Zionist movement leaders was featured in the first issue of the second edition of *Nueva Sión*. A letter from Pesaj Zaskin, which was also sent to *Nueva Presencia*, rejects the accusations in Schiller's weekly. According to Zaskin, there was no "self-censorship"; rather they "complied with a normal and programmed cycle: the greater part of those involved immigrated to Israel (aliyah)."⁷⁰ Although Zaskin recognizes that the term "socialist" was, indeed, relegated, activities continued under the name "Jewish University Group."

Finally, Zaskin recalls that the last issue of *Nueva Sión*, published in July 1977—the same month and year in which *Nueva Presencia* began—"was confiscated by the Argentine security services, preventing its circulation." This issue included the complete transcript of a "report by Dr. Nehemías Resznitzky [*sic*], president of DAIA, dedicated to the efforts of that organization on behalf of victims of Jewish origin who had been kidnapped or disappeared." This report, Zaskin points out, did not appear in any other Jewish publication in circulation.⁷¹

The polemic is significant because it serves to illustrate two characteristics of the process, following the new democratic opening. First, and perhaps

68 "Reportaje a Jacobo Timerman," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 340 (December 23, 1983).

69 "Un doloroso desencuentro," *Nueva Presencia*, No. 341 (December 30, 1983):1. In the article referring to meeting between Knesset's representative Jaika Grossman and the MJDH's representatives, there appears the idea that leaders of Mapam also did not take legal action to save persons persecuted by the dictatorial regime.

70 Pesaj Zaskin, "Carta a Herman Schiller," *Nueva Sión* 1, No. 1 (April 1984).

71 Interestingly—even if it is not the topic of analysis of this chapter—the editors of *Nueva Sión* also engaged, at the beginning of the transition to democracy, in a reconstruction of their own recent past, which placed them as victims of the military dictatorship. According to Zaskin, closure of the publication was the result of the confiscation by the security forces of the July 1977 issue in which Resznitzky published a report on the actions taken by DAIA with respect to detainees of Jewish origin. While the testimony of various persons close to the Socialist Zionist movement recognizes that some of the issues did not reach their addresses because they were confiscated by the postal service, the version giving the impression that the issue with Resznitzky's article was the last one does not correspond with my documentary findings. First, Resznitzky's testimony was published in the context of the Graiver affair in May 1977 and in the statements of the ex-DAIA president there is no reference to the matter of the disappeared. The report centers on the anti-Semitism that characterized the communication media in their handling of the Graiver case. See "Resznitzky denuncia a factores que juegan la carta antijudía," *Nueva Sión*, May 1977. Second, the last issue is from September 1977, following the two issues published during the month of August, and there is no reference to current affairs.

central to this chapter, is recognition of the early process of the construction of a congratulatory narrative about the conduct of *Nueva Presencia*. Schiller himself would be a part of the production of this line, legitimized by his close ties to human rights organizations. As in the case of the debate with *Nueva Sión*, this narrative ended up impugning all community entities—with the exception of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano and the Bet-El Community, led by Rabbi Marshall Meyer, as well as *Nueva Presencia* itself.

The second aspect, a consequence of the narratives related to “heroism,” “complicity,” and “self-proscription,” was the attempt of Jewish organizations to construct a line in which they could reposition themselves and justify or emphasize their conduct during the period of the dictatorship. The case of DAIA was analyzed in the previous chapter. But that of Socialist Zionism requires an in-depth study, although already, judging from the development of the polemic under review, questions can be raised and conjectures made.

Were not those who participated in the *Nueva Presencia* project members or fellow travelers of factions of Socialist Zionism? It is relevant to point out that Timerman’s accusation with respect to the Socialist Zionists’ “self-censorship” was directed at a large share of those who were participants in Schiller’s own editorial enterprise: journalists who worked for *Nueva Sión* before the dictatorship and re-launched the periodical at the dawn of democracy had been staff members of *Nueva Presencia*.

The first editorial in the re-launched *Nueva Sión*, written by its chief editor, attempted to deal with responsibilities while at the same time recognizing the various possibilities of action:

But the organized Jewish community got involved in a fruitless and historic debate where what is at issue are the small rivalries and displays of arrogance rather than mature analysis ... The point is not to adopt a proud and vainglorious attitude, nor one of masochism.... We were all afraid and the first step toward being sincere consists of admitting it. To come off subsequently as the hero one was not is counterproductive ... And those who in those years had the responsibility of heading DAIA had the right—and the obligation—to be afraid for the entire Jewish community. The question is, what was done with that fear? ... Could we have acted better? Maybe yes, maybe no. Let us engage in self-analysis with humility to learn from what did not happen. *Nueva Presencia* fulfilled a historic role in that period, and anyone who says otherwise is shortsighted or is willfully lying. This does not mean that the formula that Schiller applied to his periodical was applicable to an entire community. The

responsibility of a sharpshooter is very different from that of someone who is responsible for an entire community.⁷²

Thus, *Nueva Sión* would commend *Nueva Presencia's* conduct and back the initiatives put forth by the MJDH. Thus, the narratives that attacked the Jewish leadership during the military dictatorship were resolved. However, in contrast with the editorial line of *Nueva Presencia*, *Nueva Sión* would focus on community debates and the situation in the Middle East from a perspective akin to that maintained by the former in its formative period.

3 Some Considerations

As can be seen in the present chapter, the trajectory taken by *Nueva Presencia* from its origins up to the beginning of the democratic period was characterized by displacement of the focus given to various issues. As Dobry maintains, a possible perspective for consideration is the growth in importance of the human rights issue and claims against the government.⁷³ Dobry has drafted a periodization in which this transformation grows proportionately to the relevancy given to denunciation of human rights violations perpetrated by the military dictatorship.

Without underestimating the pioneering work undertaken by the periodical, it is suggested, based on a systematic review and indexing of all the existent issues in Argentine archives, that the relevance given to condemnation of human rights violations obscures recognition of the singular nature of Herman Schiller's editorial enterprise.

The centrality given to the issue of human rights in *Nueva Presencia* does not allow for the observation of other topics covered in the weekly. The notion that resistance to the dictatorship was circumscribed by denunciation of the detained/disappeared precludes the discernment of other topics that might have caused fissures in the official discourse of the regime.

72 Eliahu Toker, "Hablemos en serio," *Nueva Sión* 1, No. 1 (April 1984).

73 The stages are as follows: 1) from its launch on July 9, 1977, to the end of the World Soccer Cup that took place in Argentina (1978); 2) from the end of the World Soccer Cup to the end of the Malvinas War (1982); 3) from the Malvinas War to the twilight of the military dictatorship (1983); 4) from the return to democracy to its separation from the Yiddish newspaper *Di Presse*, of which it was the Spanish-language weekly (1986); and 5) from its name change to *Nuestra Presencia* to its demise (1987). See Hernán Dobry, "Nueva Presencia y los desaparecidos," 39.

Two of the operational categories, which, nevertheless, were not granted a greater relevance in the development of the chapter, might illustrate this last point.

Under the categories of Cultural Life and Other it is possible to find, under the conservative and dictatorial regime, groupings of original, incisive, and unsettling reflections dealing with sex, the place of women—in the workforce, in the family, in a relationship, and in bed—and the issue of psychoanalysis. Graciela Safranchick, Manuela Fingueret, and Abraham Sokolowicz, among others, addressed matters which, a priori, it could be argued, did not confront the regime directly. Nevertheless, their contributions put in doubt the cultural values that the dictatorship sought to instill.

This chapter has allowed for the construction of a new chronology that serves to illustrate the characteristics and tendencies of *Nueva Presencia*. The analysis has recognized three periods: 1) the founding one, 2) the phase dealing with political opening, and 3) the human rights agenda phase. The first stage, from July 1977 to the end of 1979, was typified by the weekly's persistency in taking up problematic issues relating to the agenda of the Jewish community: the political situation in Israel, the conflict in the Middle East, and dynamics and tensions within and between Jewish-Argentine community organizations, among others. Not even the commentaries and articles relating to anti-Semitism in Argentina make any allusion to the Jewish detained/disappeared, only to the publication of pamphlets or threats of an anti-Semitic nature similar to the coverage found in any community publication in periods before and after the military dictatorship.

The second stage, which concludes at the end of 1983 with the inauguration of the democratic period, was marked by the incorporation of staff members Daniel Muchnik (1979) and Gerardo Yomal (1980). It was during those years that the periodical began covering aspects of politics and economy in Argentina. This can be seen in the list of authors of the articles surveyed. It is possible, too, to identify, within each stage, two sub-periods: one focusing on economic criticism, and the other on the demand for political opening. The first is recognizable by the entry of Muchnik, while the second begins with the incorporation of Yomal and approval of the meeting of the Multi-Party Commission.

Finally, the period from the end of 1983 to the beginning of 1984 is typified by the focus on the agenda of human rights organizations. The incorporation of well-known figures as columnists, the organization of public events by the MJDH, reports on rallies, and highlighting the Jewish presence in the streets feature during this stage. In addition, the confrontation with the Jewish

leadership over its conduct during the military dictatorship and the construction of a narrative designed to establish the identity of the “collaborators,” “self-censors,” and “heroes” mark this period.

But what is the relevance of such a detailed examination of the weekly’s editorial trajectory? As indicated at the outset, one question guided the course of the investigation: Is it possible to understand the singularity of a periodical via a focused analysis of the articles and petitions published around the question of human rights’ violations? First, the pertinence of observing the construction of the publication’s editorial line, identifying its continuities and changes, and determining the specific or relative weight of the issues addressed allowed for suspension of a few of the notions built around the “heroism” of *Nueva Presencia*. While the weekly presented itself as an open forum for the publication of letters and petitions from human rights organizations, this occurred only after 1980, following the visit in 1979 of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC), when the term “the disappeared” assumed a greater public presence than it had had before.

Additionally, in contrast to what Dobry points out, the approach to the Timerman case was based on articles and notes that were published in other sources: *The Buenos Aires Herald*, *La Nación*, and *La Prensa*, among others. This could be considered a stand against the silence regarding this question maintained by other publications of the Jewish community. When the articles on Timerman were authored by members of *Nueva Presencia*’s staff, they referred to problems and debates that tended to underscore the Jewish problematics of the case rather than on the circumstances of the chief-editor of *La Opinión* as a detained/disappeared person.

Thus, was *Nueva Presencia* a print medium that said more than the others? The present study suggests that the perceived originality of some of the perspectives found in the weekly requires revising, if we take into account what was happening in other publications. For example, as Borrelli points out with regard to the newspaper *Clarín*, from early on strong criticism of the economic model of the military dictatorship can be observed.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it could be pointed out that, in contrast to *Clarín*, the relevance of the references appearing in *Nueva Presencia* lay in their realm of influence: namely, readers from the Argentine Jewish community. Yet, other community publications, such as

74 Marcelo Borrelli, “El diario Clarín y la participación civil en los primeros años de la dictadura (1976–1978): Gobernar con los ‘mejores hombres’, pero sin la ‘partidocracia’” (paper presented at the v° Jornadas de Trabajo sobre Historia Reciente, 2010).

the monthly *Tiempo*, published early on their own critical articles about the economic program.⁷⁵

Still, Schiller's enterprise is regarded as one of the communication media that "resisted" the dictatorship at an early stage. However, since, as observed previously, the letters and communiqués of human rights organizations began to appear after 1981, it is possible to argue that the "heroic" representation was constructed contemporarily with the shift that took place in 1983, when *Nueva Presencia* incorporated the demands of human rights organizations into their own agenda.

Nevertheless, a topic not taken up in this chapter needs to be addressed. Schiller's closeness to political agencies of the Left did not begin during those years. As he himself recognized in an open letter sent to the publisher Centro Editor de América Latina and reproduced in *Nueva Sión* in October 1974, his militant journalistic presence began during the mid-1970s "in Peronist, Left-wing and specifically Jewish media."⁷⁶

75 Emmanuel Kahan, "Tiempo al *Tiempo*: La revista mensual del ICUF entre la primavera camporista y la dictadura militar. (1973–1983)" (paper presented at the AMILAT Conference, August 2009).

76 Herman Schiller, "Carta Abierta al Centro Editor," *Nueva Sión*, October 1974: 4.

Conclusions: Memories that Lie a Little

Peter Fritzsche opens his work *Life and Death in the Third Reich* with an excerpt from the testimony of Victor and Eva Klemperer, illustrating some of the problems that this current research has sought to present. In September 1938, on their way from Dresden to Leipzig, the couple stopped at a truck drivers' restaurant where they listened to speeches on the radio from a Nazi Party assembly in Nuremberg. While the narrative and the speeches they heard demonstrated both the jubilation and solemnity of the assembly, there was pandemonium in the restaurant. While everyone there was giving the "Heil Hitler!" salute, no one paid any attention to the points the Führer was outlining. "Truly: Not one of a dozen people paid attention to the radio for even a single second, it could just as well have been transmitting silence or a foxtrot from Leipzig," Victor Klemperer asserted.¹

Does this mean we are left with the image of the pervasive Nazi salute to prove the public's endorsement of the regime? Or, rather, did the din indicate a lack of interest in or the audience's opposition to Nazi policies? The scene the Klemperers described demonstrates some of the problems presented in my examination of key players of the Jewish community and the questions I posed: Was it perhaps possible to endorse the regime while at the same time being a vacillator, an opponent, or a combatant? If I had spent my time observing each trace of acceptance of the military dictatorship in every statement of those entities, I could maintain that they were collaborators with the regime. But if I were to look for the opposite—just as Passerini found inscriptions in restrooms making fun of Il Duce in order to prove the extensive resistance to Fascism²—I would be able to conclude that they questioned the policies of the military junta.

Thus, the historiographic narrative is constructed through researcher's questions. But, to what degree—when adhering to our prior preconceptions regarding the historical period and the problems in question—we move away from the possibility of creating a text that could retrieve that historical moment's tensions? By contrast, one can turn to the bibliography devoted to analyzing the attitudes of the Jewish community leadership during the military dictatorship. Jacobo Timerman's early testimony on the period of his

1 Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19.

2 Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

incarceration at the hands of the thugs under the command of Ramón Camps leads to the consolidation of an interpretive frame that rests on a severe moral judgment which condemned, in particular, those identified as the leadership of DAIA, branding them as “collaborators” (at worst) or indifferent (according to more benevolent descriptions), in regard to the demands of the families of the detained/disappeared.³

The question raised by this research—albeit with variations—is the following: how was it possible that the Jewish leadership did nothing when confronted with the evident anti-Semitic bent of the regime, which resulted in the detention/disappearance of some 2,000 individuals of Jewish origin? In light of the dramatic number and evidence based on numerous testimonies, Guillermo Lipis, for example, asks “Why was there a denial of anti-Semitism and a failure to speak of disappearances, thereby reinforcing, as we have seen, the idea of the existence of a ‘flourishing community’?”⁴

This query may be sub-divided into three problems which I have attempted to address. First, why deny anti-Semitism and fail to acknowledge the evidence of the disappeared? In truth, as analyzed in Chapter 3, it can be affirmed that anti-Semitism was one of the most constant preoccupations during the period, as much for the Jewish leadership as for senior state officials. Even at the beginning of the military dictatorship, when faced with the emergence of an anti-Jewish threat, DAIA leaders presented their demands which, in many cases, led to active policies on the part of the regime for restricting public anti-Jewish activity: from decrees banning the circulation of publications such as *Milicia* and *Odal* to authorization for broadcasting the television series *Holocaust* in October 1980. Although these are only a few examples, the Jewish leadership also moved to condemn anti-Semitism in the communal press.

Yet, the anti-Semitism to which Lipis’s question refers appears to be limited to the “special treatment” suffered by Jewish victims of the repression, or to what has been called here, *clandestine* anti-Semitism. Thus, the research suggests two relevant aspects. First, as discussed in Chapter 2, widespread *consensus* and/or *acceptance* on the part of Jewish key players for one of the priorities of the dictatorial regime, the anti-subversion struggle, can be discerned. In addition, one can perceive various mechanisms of *adaptation* to the ideas of social “reorganization” promoted by the military dictatorship, including to promote circumspection among the young, or DAIA’s suggestion to repudiate the nation’s political past by extirpating the Peronist blight from the

3 These topics are examined in the Introduction to this book.

4 Guillermo Lipis, *Zikaron-Memoria: Judíos y militares bajo el terror del Plan Cóndor* (Buenos Aires: Del Nuevo Extremo, 2010), 49.

community. The institution also sought to take advantage of the dictatorship's "anti-subversive struggle" by equating Argentine "terrorist organizations" with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

At least, until mid-1978, the community leadership denied the existence of anti-Semitic motives in the treatment received by individuals of Jewish origin detained by the security forces. Some of the examples given in the chapter referring to anti-Semitism of a clandestine nature are illustrative. Various figures, from Jacobo Kovadloff, Latin American representative to the American Jewish Committee, and Rabbi Marshall Meyer, local representatives of B'nai B'rith, to Jacobo Timerman, himself, issued statements rejecting characterization of the dictatorial regime as anti-Semitic.

Did that denial—including by people who would later join the ranks of those denouncing the regime for its policy of systematic violations of human rights—imply that at the time key figures were unaware of what was happening to individuals detained by the security forces? As the analysis in Chapter 2 demonstrates, these representatives had early knowledge of repressive mechanisms utilized by the military dictatorship. Judging by the analysis of the abduction in Córdoba of the JAI delegates, for example, information about the brutalities turned out to be very detailed. Rather than lack of knowledge, it could be maintained that there existed limits—and fear—regarding what to denounce and/or some degree of acceptance concerning the inevitability of repressive policies for re-establishing social and political order.

In any event, by citing these cases, it is not the intention to provide evidence of the weakness of Jewish key players—including those that later became prominent detractors of the dictatorship—but to appeal to the work of historiographic reconstruction in order to make a more nuanced re-examination on the issue of how the Jewish community should have acted. As Gabriela Aguila points out in her work on attitudes toward repressive policies in the city of Rosario, no one could not have known about the majority of cruel mechanisms that took place in the persecution/detention of political, social, and union militants.⁵ Thus, registering the various degrees of acceptance of the regime's repressive policies among broad and diverse sectors of civil society helps suspend the meanings constructed around the tranquilizing innocence of some, the enthusiastic collaboration of others, and the strong resistance of the rest.

Nevertheless, attention to the hierarchy of those entities makes it necessary to point out that not every voice could have the same effect or repercussions on both the local and international scenes. DAIA's denial of clandestine

5 Gabriela Aguila, *Dictadura, represión y sociedad en Rosario: Un estudio sobre la represión y los comportamientos y actitudes sociales en dictadura, 1976–1983* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2008).

anti-Semitism, for example, was beneficial to the interests promoted by the military authorities. The tensions that emerged with international Jewish organizations over complaints regarding the detention of individuals of Jewish origin tainted the global effect of DAIA's support for condemnation of the anti-Argentine campaign. Thus, the January 1979 letter signed by René Epelbaum and other Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were a wake-up call to community leaders.

From then, and up to the period considered to be the transition to democracy, DAIA continued to maintain a policy of silencing and discrediting public criticism by relatives of the detained/disappeared. On the other hand, some of the entities that had supported the initial legitimacy of the coup began to *distance themselves, reject, and/or oppose* the regime's policies, demanding, first, economic reform, and then, political opening. Finally, after the Malvinas War, they began focusing on accusations of systematic violations of human rights.

The second problem that the Lipis' inquiry presents requires a redefinition of some hard-and-fast categories, both in the general community sense and outside it, with regard to the representation of the Jew as a targeted victim of state terrorism. From the Amnesty International report (1976) through the Inter-American Human Rights Commission's visit (1979) to the last DAIA report (2007), there is insistence on the existence of special treatment for Jews in the clandestine detention centers (CDC). However, documentation of the testimonies narrating the horrific forms of torture suffered by all detainees in the CDC can also lead to the conclusion that aside from certain specific tortures administered to the Jewish disappeared—which did exist—the latter did not experience especially cruel treatment compared to the other disappeared. Or rather, the brutal treatment in the CDC extended to all of the detainees.

Any reference to this problem must put on hold narratives generated to re-victimize the experience of the Jews in the CDC. Not because they were not victims, but because they were not the only ones: *genocidal practices*—to quote a category proposed in the DAIA report—extended to Jews and non-Jews, men and women, young and old, Argentines and foreigners, alike.

Two questions might shed some light on what these reflections seek to suggest: What is the difference between the curses "fucking Jew," "fucking whore," "fucking Negro," or "fucking guerrilla," yelled by members of the military task forces at detainees during torture sessions? And where exactly would lie the distinction in forcing detainees of Jewish origin to shout "Heil Hitler!," the systematic rape of women, or the abduction of their children? In light of the emergence of so many "special victims," the particular character of each of them could be subject to different shades. While there were various "special

treatments”—for “Jews,” “women,” “Negros,” and “guerrillas,” among others—the CDC experience does not allow for a hierarchy of victims.

Similarly, the notion of “over-representation” of Jewish victims among the arrested/disappeared stressed in the various reports should be suspended. Not because the numbers are irrelevant, but because they might be due to their over-representation in militant political or social organizations which were targets of the military junta. Thus, the reconstruction and analysis of militant trajectories could be revealing.

Use of the notion of “over-representation,” moreover, can lead to various methodological problems, such as: on the basis of what statistics does one evaluate the number of detained/disappeared of Jewish origin? Thirty thousand claimed by human rights organizations, more than nine thousand cases documented by CONADEP, or the insignificant number labeled as “excesses” given by the perpetrators of state terrorism? Who were the Jewish individuals who were detained/disappeared and how were they counted? What factors determine who is or is not a Jew? This latter problem, for example, is not insignificant. The final lists elaborated by the CES-DAIA, between 1999 and 2007, continue to show considerable variation. While the local organization counted 794, the Barcelona-based one registered 1,296 “detained-disappeared of Jewish origin.”

In turn, the very category of “detained/disappeared of Jewish origin” should be a problem for historians and social scientists. While its use was coined early on,⁶ its utilization has become so broad as to constitute more of a common sense notion regarding the Argentine detention center experience. Yet its invocation is problematic.

According to testimony of the sister of a “detained/disappeared of Jewish origin,” obtained during the filming of the documentary *Kadish*,⁷ prior to her brother’s detention and subsequent disappearance, he had rejected his identification as a person of “Jewish” descent. Why? The reply, although it may be the product of multiple personal decisions, has a general framework of reference extending prior to the military outbreak and including the persecutions conducted against political, union, and social militants. Many young people who had joined the ranks of young Zionist and non-Zionist movements began to distance themselves from “Jewish” militancy at the beginning of the 1970s, especially between the Lanusse dictatorship and the Cámpora Spring.

6 Laura Schenquer, “Inicios de una disputa por la memoria de los detenidos-desaparecidos judíos” (final paper for the seminar “Memorias sociales: construcciones y sentidos,” Instituto de Desarrollo Social/IDES, 2007).

7 Produced by Bernardo Kononovich, Buenos Aires, 2008.

Many of them filled the ranks of politico-military formations, university groups, and/or social organizations, dissociating themselves from the various forms of identification proposed by the “Jewish” world, which some had not even been a part of previously. Others had come to impugn it. But it is also correct to say that, once in the jaws of clandestine repression, they were returned to their Jewishness by their torturers.

What is the relevance of names in the notion of “detained/disappeared of Jew origin”? This question suggests not only a conceptual problem but a political one as well. While we are faced with a category frequently accepted and utilized, we are confronted by the fact that many of the young people who filled the lists of the arrested/disappeared were “re-Jewified” by their torturers. On what basis were they “re-Jewified”? Mainly, by the sound of their last names. This is a criterion shared by those who, a posteriori, and with praiseworthy intentions constructed the lists with the numbers of “Jewish” victims of state terrorism.

Perhaps the research might be based more accurately on the personal and militant trajectories of those young people who today are identified as “Jewish disappeared”? To return to the debates surrounding their paths, their distancing from the various forms of “Jewish” militancy and renunciation of the socialist life of the kibbutz might help in understanding how it was that these young people were devoured by their experiences in the CDC. Returning to the period immediately preceding the rise of the military junta might lead to comprehension of the radical nature of that discourse and the degree to which it marked subsequent positions about whether or not to make claims on behalf of young people who had been detained but had stopped identifying themselves as members of the community. The debate between Marcos Blank and David Ben-Ami, analyzed in Chapter 1, is indicative of the arguments made by some young people when they abandoned the Zionist cause. But it also helps in understanding how those who defected from this cause were called traitors by various representatives of the Jewish community, including radical Zionist militants.

At the risk of being excessively polemical, one could propose that the debate over Marcos Blank’s “Letter from an Anti-Zionist” led to an understanding of the origins of an attribution originating within the Jewish community, which could be applied—as part of the proof of the accusation—to the Jewish leadership: in effect and prior to the coup, many young people stopped being considered “Jewish” by the majority of community organizations. Thus, the documentary record of the period shows that while some young people dissociated themselves from Jewish causes, those who remained maintained that, basically, the former had ceased to be Jews. So, why demand that the Jewish

leadership come to the aid of individuals who had repudiated institutional life—some with an openly explicit rupture—if they were considered “traitors” by many of those who had shared their cause in the ranks of the youth movements? Hence, it was not only DAIA that supported the criterion regarding the detention of these young people for their political affiliations and not due to their Jewish descent.

Nevertheless, one cannot downplay the impact that the concept of “detained/disappeared of Jewish origin” has had throughout the last thirty years. As maintained in Chapter 6, it has served as a tool for political denunciation on the part of relatives to the detriment of community leaders, as well as an instrumental category to legitimate the intervention of Spain’s justice system in the investigation of crimes against humanity that took place in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. Nevertheless, research on the Jewish community during the military dictatorship should gather a mass of militant experiences and trajectories that can be juxtaposed against the category of “disappeared Jews.” And this is no minor problem, since then we would have to suspend notions regarding responsibility, complicity, and resistance of diverse sectors of the broad Jewish community.

Finally, the third problem concerns the “flourishing community life.” Two questions highlighted in Chapter 4 turn out to be useful for understanding the perspective I adopted. Why should we be surprised at the description of Jewish institutional life during the dictatorial as “flourishing” or “normal”? Might it not be more correct to point to a record of “normalized” life in the context of a *state of exception*?

As pointed out in that chapter, Carlo Ginzburg’s considerations regarding the appropriateness of analyzing an *anomalous* case turn out to be relevant.⁸ The Judeo-Italian historian’s perspective allowed me to rethink approaches to researching the life of the Jewish community during the military dictatorship. Thus, if studies on the dictatorship have centered on explaining the repressive nature of the regime, it is quite a significant leap to grasp how it was possible that a key figure—supposedly sensitive to policies of persecution—could pursue an active public life without feeling threatened. That is, the notion of “normalcy” could help in understanding why the Jewish leadership did not denounce the disappearance of individuals of Jewish origin; because, in contrast to the testimonies demonstrating the repressive climate of this period, institutional life flourished in ways that were unprecedented in recent memory.

⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, “Brujas y chamanes,” in Carlo Ginzburg, *El hilo y las huellas. Lo verdadero, lo falso, lo ficticio* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 424.

Some examples of this anomaly can illustrate this point: the first public event authorized by the military junta, less than a month after the coup, was commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, held by ICUF in the Astral Theater. Similarly, AMIA was able to hold, at a time when political activity in Argentina was banned, a series of elections for leaders in which a significant number of Zionist and religious political parties participated. Also, while channels for access to and the circulation of knowledge were blocked, bodies such as the Centro de Estudios Judíos, the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Sociedad Hebraica, the Hacoaj Thursdays, and Tzavta Uno, among others, prospered. These all held activities in which important figures of the worlds of journalism, culture, and art participated, and which (to augment the anomaly), in effect, defied the state of siege, as they were activities that might end around midnight.

Without underestimating the pioneering work carried out by other researchers, it is possible to formulate, on the basis of a systematic analysis of existing documentation, that the relevance given to denunciations of human rights violations did not allow for recognition of the uniqueness of the various social attitudes that existed within the Jewish community during the military dictatorship. Perhaps, the well-known adage, “you can’t see the forest for the trees,” might help explain this omission. The centrality given to the question of human rights impeded observation of other characteristics relevant to the period. The notion that resistance to the dictatorship was limited to condemnation of the detained/disappeared—an a priori assumption of researchers—did not allow for consideration of how other topics might have constituted breaches in the official discourse of the regime.

Returning to the question formulated by Fritzsche, might we not maintain that key players of the Argentine Jewish community did not resist or express opposition because the interest some of them had in human rights came late? Once again, this question reveals my concern with the tensions among those key figures. Does the preoccupation with human rights violations need to be considered a priority for questioning the positions they held? Or were this preoccupation and the question constructed subsequent to the events?

This probing, which is certainly rhetorical, presented itself as a central problem in the development of this research. The lack of statements, actions demanding the release of detainees, or open appeals to international forums have led to a mind-set in which some of the key figures are considered collaborators. Nevertheless, we might ask to what degree was the subject of human rights a problem for them and when did it begin? Although they were silent in the face of human rights violations, they did protest to the maximum—and with a high degree of success—the course on Moral & Civic Formation promoted by the

Ministry of Education, and sponsored by the influential Catholic sector: the course was not implemented, at least based on the precepts that motivated it.

Thus, after reading a wealth of documentation regarding the dictatorship, analyzing the behavior of the Jewish community during that period, and perusing the testimonies given by survivors, the accused, the “heroes,” and the “devils,” I sought—as Deleuze proposed⁹—to “suspend judgment.” I have attempted to construct a historical text that does not rest on moral evaluations. In the final analysis, as Ginzburg states in what was the first text I read as a history major, *The Judge and the Historian*,¹⁰ this work does not have punitive effects.

9 Gilles Deleuze, “To have done with judgement”, in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

10 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian: Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth-Century Miscarriage of Justice* (New York: Verso Books, 2002).

Glossary: Institutions

- Asociación de Beneficencia y Socorros Mutuos Ezrah: Ezrah Charity and Mutual Aid Association
- Asociación Cultural Judeo-Argentina: Jewish-Argentine Cultural Association
- Asociación de Familiares de Desaparecidos Judíos en Argentina: Association of Relatives of Disappeared Jews in Argentina
- Asociación Israelita de Sobrevivientes de la Persecución Nazi: Israelite Association of Survivors of Nazi Persecution
- Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA): Argentine Israelite Mutual Aid Association
- Centro de Educación Judía: Center for Jewish Education
- Centro de Estudios Judíos (CEJ): Center for Jewish Studies
- Centro de Estudios Sociales de DAIA (CES-DAIA): DAIA Center for Social Studies
- Centro Literario Israelita y Biblioteca Max Nordau: Max Nordau Israelite Literary Center and Library
- Círculo Social Hebreo Argentino: Argentine-Hebrew Social Circle
- Club Atlético Sefaradí Argentino (CASA): Sephardic-Argentine Athletic Club
- Club Náutico Hacoaj: Hacoaj Sailing Club
- Club de Padres de Escuelas Hebreas (Horim): Parents of Jewish Schools Club
- Comité 19 de abril: April 19 Committee
- Comité contra el Antisemitismo: Committee against Anti-Semitism
- Comité Israelita de Apoyo a los Candidatos Peronistas y Comunistas: Israelite Support Committee for Peronist and Communist Candidates
- Comité Israelita de Familiares de Desaparecidos en Argentina: Israelite Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Argentina
- Comité Judeo Argentino: Jewish Argentine Committee
- Comité Representativo de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile (CRCICh): Representative Committee of Chile's Israelite Community
- Comunidad Israelita de Buenos Aires: Buenos Aires' Israelite Community
- Confederación Juvenil Judeo Argentina (CJJA): Jewish-Argentine Youth Confederation
- Congregación Concordia Israelita: Israelite Concord Congregation
- Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina (CIRA): Israelite Congregation of the Argentine Republic
- Consejo Central de Educación Judía: Central Council of Jewish Education
- Consejo Central Juvenil Sionista: Central Zionist Youth Council
- Convención de Instituciones Judías de la República Argentina: Convention of Jewish Institutions of the Argentine Republic

- Coordinadora de Agrupaciones Universitarias Sionistas de la Argentina (CAUSA):
Zionist University Groups of Argentina Coordinating Board
- Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Argentina (DAIA): Delegation of Israelite
Associations of Argentina
- Ente Coordinador Sefaradí Argentino (ECSA): Argentine-Sephardic Coordinating Body
- Federación Argentina de Centros Comunitarios Macabeos (FACCMA): Argentine
Federation of Maccabean Community Centers
- Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de la República Argentina: Federation of
Israelite Communities of the Argentina Republic
- Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías (ICUF, Yiddish acronym): Federation of
Jewish Cultural Entities
- Federación Universitaria Sionista (FUSA): Federation of Zionist University Students
- Frente de Bases de la Izquierda Sionista Realizadora: Zionist Left Grassroots Front for
Realization
- Informativo DAIA: DAIA's News Bulletin
- Instituto Científico Judío: Jewish Scientific Institute (IWO, Yiddish acronym)
- Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (IDES-SHA): SHA
Higher Studies Institute
- Juventud Judía Independiente: Independent Jewish Youth
- Juventud Judía Independiente de La Plata (JJI): Independent Jewish Youth of La Plata
- Juventud Judía Justicialista: Jewish Justicialista (Peronist) Youth
- Juventud de Macabi: Maccabi Youth
- Juventud Sionista Socialista (JSS): Socialist Zionist Youth
- Linea Socialista Sionista: Zionist Socialist Line
- Movimiento Judío por los Derechos Humanos (MJDH): Jewish Movement for Human
Rights
- Movimiento Juvenil Betar: Betar Youth Movement
- Organización Hebrea Argentina Macabi: Argentine-Hebraic Maccabi Organization
- Organización de Maestros Hebreos: Hebrew Teachers' Organization
- Organización Sionista Argentina (OSA): Zionist Organization of Argentina
- Organización Sionista Femenina Argentina (OSFA): Women's Zionist Organization of
Argentina
- Paz Ahora: Peace Now
- Rabinato Superior de la República Argentina: Chief Rabbinate of the Argentine
Republic
- Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano: Latin American Rabbinic Seminary
- Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA): Argentine Hebraic Society

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Index

- Abramovich, Teresa 60
Aguinis, Marcos 132, 136, 173, 205, 209–210, 221, 223–224
Akerman, Salvador 107
Albano Harguindeguy, Eduardo (general) 80, 97, 101, 105, 117, 120, 189
Alende, Oscar 92, 153, 181, 217, 221–222
Alfonsín, Raúl 2, 220–223
Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista 49
Allende, Salvador 22, 24, 26–27, 29–30, 35, 62, 83–84
Almogy, Josef 79
Alon, Igal 79
Alsino Bea, Andrés Ernesto 163
Altamira, Jorge 220
American Jewish Committee 10, 67, 109, 111–112, 211
Amnesty International 95, 237
Anti-Defamation League Bnei Brith 10, 108–109, 111, 192
Anug, Ieshaiahu 79, 112
Arafat, Yasser 87
Argentinian Communist Party (PCA) 7, 152
Asociación Cultural Judeo-Argentina (Jewish-Argentine Cultural Association) 182
Asociación de Beneficencia y Socorros Mutuos Ezrah (Ezrah Charity and Mutual Aid Association) 51
Asociación Israelita de Sobrevivientes de la Persecución Nazi (Israelite Association of Survivors of Nazi Persecution) 37
Asociación Mutual Israelita de Argentina (AMIA) (Argentine Israelite Mutual Aid Association) 6–7, 74, 80, 87, 90, 92, 124, 129–130, 140–144, 149, 167, 164–175, 181, 200–201, 203, 227, 241
Avodá 26, 39, 47, 126, 120–130, 142
Avruj, Claudio 198
Baderej 182
Bar-On, Mordejai 81
Barromi, Joel 79, 80, 82
Barylko, Jaime 103, 105, 224
Begin, Menachem 79, 125, 208
Bekerman, Eduardo 35–36
Belloc, Enrique 136
Ben-Ami, David 31–32, 63, 239
Ben-Dov 24–26, 63
Benhamú, Shlomo (rabbi) 124, 172, 190
Benjamin Menendéz, Luciano (general) 78
Benzaquén, Saadia (rabbi) 172
Ber Gelbard, José 38–39, 47–49
Beraja, Rubén 172
Berezavsky, Davidi 207
Bet-El Congregation 6, 134, 172, 185, 221, 228
Bignone, Reynaldo (general) 87, 222
Blank, Marcos 31–33, 63, 239
Blastein, Isidoro 173, 221
Bloss, Jochen 136
Blum, Amram (rabbi) 74
Bnei Hakiva youth 56, 151
Bonasso, Miguel 163
Botana, Natalio 137
Brailowsky, Alberto 173
Bravo, Alfredo 222
Braylan, Marisa 186
Brenda, Joni 33, 38, 52, 118
Brocato, Carlos 220, 224, 226
Bronner, Julio 47
Buenos Aires University 49
Cabildo 99–101, 112, 158, 209, 212
Calderón, Horacio 66
Camp David Accords 124–125
Cámpora, Héctor 5, 13, 18–19, 21–24, 38, 62, 128, 238
Capucci, Hilarión (monsignor) 85
Carballo, Carlos 138
Carter, Jimmy (US president) 113
Castresana, Carlos (prosecutor) 193
Centro de Educación Judía (Center for Jewish Education) 56, 129, 139
Centro de Estudios Judíos (CEJ) (Center for Jewish Studies) 137, 241
Centro de Estudios Sociales de DAIA (CES-DAIA) (DAIA Center for Social Studies) 87, 185, 195, 201, 203, 258
Centro Literario Israelita y Biblioteca Max Nordau (Max Nordau Israelite Literary Center and Library) 149
Chehebar, Isaac (rabbi) 172

- Chernicoff, Rudy 173
 Chihowolsky, Rogelio 198
 Círculo Social Hebreo Argentino (Argentine-
 Hebrew Social Circle) 125, 173
 Civic Radical Union 91, 154, 181, 222, 226
 Club Atlético Sefaradí Argentino (CASA
 (Sephardic-Argentine Athletic Club) 59,
 132, 134
 Club de Padres de Escuelas Hebreas (Horim)
 (Parents of Jewish Schools Club) 129, 213
 Club Náutico Hacoaj (Hacoaj Sailing Club)
 59, 132, 138–139, 173, 241
 Cohen, Gueula 12
 Comisión Nacional sobre Desaparición de
 Personas (CONADEP) (National
 Commission on the Disappearance of
 Persons) 9, 188, 190, 194, 202, 238
 Comité 19 de Abril (April 19 Committee) 26,
 123–124
 Comité Representativo de la Colectividad
 Israelita de Chile (CRCICH)
 (Representative Committee of Chile's
 Israelite Community) 27–29
 Confederación General Económica (CGE)
 47
 Confederación Juvenil Judeo Argentina
 (CJJA) (Jewish-Argentine Youth
 Confederation) 7, 33, 45, 58–59, 61,
 89–91, 124
 Congregación Concordia Israelita (Israelite
 Concord Congregation) 134
 Congregación Israelita de la República
 Argentina (CIRA) (Israelite Congregation
 of the Argentine Republic) 124, 172
 Consejo Central de Educación Judía (Central
 Council of Jewish Education) 32, 55, 63,
 105
 Consejo Central Juvenil Sionista (Central
 Zionist Youth Council) 182
 Consigna Nacional 48
 Convicción 3, 86–87
 Coordinadora de Agrupaciones Universitarias
 Sionistas de la Argentina (CAUSA) (Zionist
 University Groups of Argentina
 Coordinating Board) 36
 Coral, Juan Carlos 43, 47, 50
 Corbiere, Emilio 221, 223–224
 Córdoba case 78, 80, 107
 Cortes Conde, Roberto 137
 Crupnicoff, Alberto 173
 Cywin, Manuel 221
 de Bonafini, Hebe 91
 del Corro, Fernando 133
 Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas de
 Argentina (DAIA) (Delegation of Israelite
 Associations of Argentina) 4, 6–7, 9–15,
 19–22, 30, 34, 37–43, 45, 48, 50–51, 54,
 56, 58–62, 64, 67–68, 73–75, 80, 84–87,
 89–90, 92, 95–111, 113–120, 121, 124,
 126–131, 136, 142, 144, 160–162, 165, 167,
 170–174, 179–184, 185–203, 209–211,
 216–219, 222, 227–229, 235, 237–238, 240
 Delgado, Ariel 221
 Devoto (bishop) 36
 Diamant, Mario 132–133
 Directorate of Intelligence of the Province of
 Buenos Aires Police (DIPBA) 96
 Domingo Perón, Juan 13, 20–24, 32, 37–41,
 47, 62, 73–74, 128, 211
 Drucarof, Berta 92, 123
 Dujovne, León 138
 Dujovne Ortíz, Alicia 133–134
 Ebery, Mordejai (rabbi) 104
 Efrón, Marcos 51
 El Caudillo 48
 El Descamisado 23, 43
El Mundo 31, 44
 Elio Brailovsky, Antonio 221
 Elnecave, Nissim 33, 72–77, 85, 90, 110–111,
 125, 136, 160, 162–165, 168
 Ente Coordinador Sefaradí Argentino (ECSA)
 (Argentine-Sephardic Coordinating
 Body) 8, 61, 144
 Epelbaum, René 117, 180, 226, 237
 Erlich, Norman 173
 Erlich, Pinjas 82
 Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada
 (ESMA) (Higher School of Mechanics of
 the Navy) 78
 Estévez Boero, Guillermo 220
 Estrugo, Clara 78
 Ezrah (the Israelita Hospital) 51
 Fayt, Carlos 61, 138
 Federación Argentina de Centros
 Comunitarios Macabeos (FACCMA)

- (Argentine Federation of Maccabean Community Centers) 59–60, 132, 144
- Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de la República Argentina (Federation of Israelite Communities of the Argentina Republic) 69
- Federación de Entidades Culturales Judías (ICUF, Yiddish acronym) (Federation of Jewish Cultural Entities) 7, 13, 19–23, 25, 29–30, 34–35, 37, 39, 45, 50–52, 54–56, 58–64, 69, 84, 123, 130, 135, 152, 154–155, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179–180, 232, 241
- Federación Universitaria Sionista (FUSA) (Federation of Zionist University Students) 139–140
- Feierstein, Daniel 194
- Feierstein, Ricardo 224
- Feld, Luis 61, 90
- Feldman, Adrián 174–175
- Fernández, Cristina (senator) 200
- Filc, Daniel 224, 227
- Fingueret, Manuela 224
- Finkelsztein, Jaime 52
- Firmenich, Eduardo 85, 87
- Fischermami, Alberto 173
- Foster, Arnold 111
- Fraser, Donald (US senator) 108
- Frente de Bases de la Izquierda Sionista Realizadora (Zionist Left Grassroots Front for Realization) 36
- Fronzizi, Arturo 61
- Gak, Abraham 131, 144
- Galimberti, Rodolfo 87
- Gally, Ezequiel 137
- Galtieri, Leopoldo (general) 144, 158
- García Enciso, Isaías 172
- Garzón, Baltasar (judge) 193–194
- Gazzera, Miguel 221
- Geller, David 111
- Gelman, Juan 163
- Ghiano, Juan Carlos 138
- Glaser, Lily 78
- Goldman, Daniel (rabbi) 185, 221
- Goldstraj, Zenón 129
- Goldwater Jr, Barry (US senator) 28
- Gorenstein, Mario 69, 105, 142, 172, 198, 217
- Graetz, Roberto (rabbi) 1, 88, 132, 134, 138, 167, 190
- Graiver case 100–102, 113, 159, 166, 168
- Graiver, David 11, 100, 112, 164
- Grinberg, Mario 92, 133–134
- Grinberg, Miguel 133–134
- Grondona, Mariano 102
- Guidici, Ernesto 169, 221, 223–224
- Gurevich, Juan 61, 67, 98, 100–101, 138
- Gusman, Luis 138
- Guzzetti, César 79, 85, 110
- Halac, Ricardo 173
- Hatzair, Hashomer 17, 36, 45, 79, 182, 227
- Hecker, Liliana 122
- Hecker, Saúl 35
- Heinemann, Helmut 109
- Hermitte, Ester 137
- Herzl-Shinui Youth Movement 92
- Hidalgo Solá, Héctor 90
- Histadrut Hamorin (Organización de Maestros Hebreos) 55
- Hollzman, Elizabeth 109
- Huberman, Silvio 138
- Humor magazine 205
- Ianulewicz, León 123
- Idisher Folks Teater (IFT) 122–123, 139
- Ignacio López, José 133
- Ignacio Rucci, José 24, 47
- Illia, Arturo 217
- Inter-American Human Rights Commission 85
- Intransigent Party 153, 222
- Iscaro, Rubens 221
- Israeli Embassy in Argentina 12, 15, 26, 60, 80, 124, 201, 203
- Israeli Knesset 12, 79
- Jaimovich, Luis 50
- Jaritonsky, José 129
- Jasiuk, Isaías 149
- Jassen, Raúl 46, 50
- Jewish Agency for Israel (JAI) 11–12, 32, 52–54, 78–80, 92, 137
- Jewish Argentine Progressive Youth 34
- Jusid, Juan José 138
- Justicialist (Peronist) Party 16
- Justicialist Liberation Front (FREJULI) 16–19
- Juventud de Macabi (Maccabi Youth) 60

- Juventud Judía Independiente de La Plata (JJI) (Independent Jewish Youth of La Plata) 91, 152, 181, 184, 222
- Juventud Judía Justicialista (Jewish Justicialista [Peronist] Youth) 179
- Juventud Sionista Socialista (JSS) (Socialist Zionist Youth) 7, 16, 26, 31, 33, 39, 44, 60, 62, 89, 91
- Kamenszain, Tamara 133, 135
- Kennedy, Norma 40, 64
- Kirchner, Néstor (president) 200
- Klimovsky, Gregorio 137–138, 173, 196
- Kolton, Samuel 50
- Korenblit, Bernardo 138
- Korey, William 109
- Kovadloff, Jacobo 67–68, 110, 173, 236
- Kovadloff, Santiago 173, 224
- Kreiman, Ángel (rabbi) 27, 211
- Lanusse, Alejandro Agustín 214
- Latendorf, Alexis 221
- Lavagna, Roberto 138
- Lebrl, Hernán 91
- Lefebvre, Marcel (monsignor) 209
- León, Luis 220
- Leonardo, Sergio 149–150, 173, 207, 224
- Lerner, Jacobo 71, 107
- Levinson, Burt 108–110
- Levy, Daniel 103
- Levy, Fernando 51
- Levy, Robert 28
- Lewin, Boleslao 102
- Likud Party 13, 125, 129–130
- Lincovsky, Cipe 173
- Llamas de Madariaga, Enrique 105, 109, 171, 216–219
- Llerena Amadeo, Juan Rafael (education minister) 103–104, 132
- López Rega 39, 42, 48, 50, 70, 72, 135
- Luis de Imaz, José 137
- Luis Duhalde, Eduardo 185–186, 199, 201
- Luis Romero, José 61, 137
- Luna Park Stadium 36
- Ma'alot massacre 32
- Maariv 81–82
- Maas, Richard 11
- Macabi 59, 132
- Machado, Antonio 3
- Madanes, Leiser 162
- Madres de Plaza de Mayo 117, 150
- Malvinas/Falklands War 83, 93, 145, 147, 154–155, 158, 168–278, 183, 220, 237
- Manrique, Francisco 217
- Martínez de Hoz, Alfredo (economy minister) 134–135, 141, 146, 157, 177
- Martínez de Perón, María Estela 13, 37–39, 40, 93, 152
- Martínez Sotomayor, Rodolfo 67
- Massera, Emilio 3, 67–68, 78, 86, 93, 210–211
- Medina, Enrique 221
- Melman, Guiorah 45
- Meyer, Marshall (rabbi) 6, 13, 88, 110, 120, 134, 149, 172, 182h, 190, 212, 216, 221–222, 229, 236
- Military Junta 27, 67, 71, 74, 77–78, 99, 123, 145, 154, 187, 234, 238–239, 241
- Mindlin-Timerman, Risha 213
- Moguilévsky, Simón (rabbi) 172
- Monner Sans, Ricardo 220, 224
- Montesinos Hurtado, Augusto 163
- Montoneros 23, 35, 47, 86–87, 94, 163–164, 190–191
- Mordejai Anilevich Youth 43
- Morduchowicz, Roxana 223–224
- Moskovits, José 37
- Movement of Priest for the Third World 36
- Movimiento Judío por los Derechos Humanos (MJDH) (Jewish Movement for Human) 12–13, 181–184, 185, 199, 222, 226–227, 229, 231
- Movimiento Juvenil Betar (Betar Youth Movement) 59
- Muchnik, Daniel 132–135, 138, 156, 162, 164, 213, 215–217, 221, 231
- Müller, Martín 133
- Multipartidaria 158
- Neilson, James 114, 209, 217
- Neuburguer, Alfredo 109
- Never Again (Nunca Más) 9, 167–168
- Nicolaidis, Cristino (general) 87
- Nigrad, Ram 12, 61, 78–79
- Non-Aligned Nations 86–87, 129
- Nowens, Yaco 207

- O'Donnell, Pacho 138
 Onganía, Juan Carlos 18
 Oppenheimer, José (rabbi) 134
 Orenstein, Daniel 78
 Organización de Maestros Hebreos (Hebrew Teachers' Organization) 55
 Organización Sionista Argentina (OSA) (Zionist Organization of Argentina) 8, 16, 19, 21, 37, 39, 46, 56, 58, 61, 74, 80, 82, 90, 92, 124–125, 128–130, 144, 174, 209, 227
 Organización Sionista Femenina Argentina (OSFA) (Women's Zionist Organization of Argentina) 172
 Ottalagano, Alberto 49
 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) 14, 57, 236
 Pasik, Boris 118–119, 180
 Paz Ahora (Peace Now) 124–125
 People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) 21, 79, 86, 163, 191, 205
 Perednik, Gustavo 223
 Pérez Esquivel, Adolfo 172–173, 182, 216, 222, 225–226
 Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH) 116, 167, 190
 Permanent Plenary of Presidents (PPP) 131–133, 144, 213
 Pesce, Ernesto 201
 Pik, Catalina 78
 Pik, Josef 79
 Pimentel, Eduardo 123
 Pinochet, Augusto (general) 22, 25, 27–29, 72, 158
 Plavnik, Baruj (rabbi) 174, 181, 222
 Polak, Carlos 102, 106, 223–224
 Polino, Héctor 153, 221
 Polite, Daniel 91
 Pucciarelli, Eugenio 136–137, 224
 Pugliese, Enrique 138, 220
 Pugliese, Juan Carlos 138, 220
 Pundak, Itzhak 12, 78
 Quarracino, Antonio (monsignor) 136
 Queraltó, Juan 50
 Rabanal, Rodolfo 138
 Rabin, Yitzhak 124
 Rabinato Superior de la República Argentina (Chief Rabbinate of the Argentine Republic) 37
 Rafael Videla, Jorge (general) 70, 79, 101, 111–112, 128, 151, 157–159, 177, 215
 Ramón Camps 95, 165, 235
 Rascován, Mauricio 92
 Rearte, Gustavo 35
 Resels, Pedro 199
 Resnizky, Nehemias 6, 40, 50, 67, 73–74, 80, 82, 89, 97–104, 113, 114–118, 126–128, 167–168, 180–181, 190, 197, 209–210, 216, 219, 223–226
 Revolutionary Peronist Tendencia 31, 35
 Robledo, Ángel 153
 Rogoski, Eduardo 138
 Roisinblit, Rosa 200
 Roit, Moshe 58
 Rosen, Rosa 173
 Rosenthal, Morton (rabbi) 111
 Rossi, Elbio 92
 Rotenberg, Abrasha 166
 Rozenblum, Jaime 105, 119, 216–217
 Rubinson, Lázaro 55, 82
 Rudin, Amón 78
 Rudni, Alberto 138
 Ruiz Palacios, José (colonel) 97
 Sábato, Ernesto 61, 138, 155, 179, 200, 221
 Safranchik, Graciela 135, 225
 Sante Urbie Barbieri (bishop) 136
 Sapir, Pinjas 52
 Schallman, Lázaro 223–224
 Schiller, Herman 2–3, 13, 66, 69, 77, 114, 128, 132, 149–150, 162–163, 167, 169–170, 175–176, 178, 181, 204–205, 207, 213, 216–229, 233
 Schoo, Ernesto 133, 138
 Schtime, Fraie 129, 141
 Schulman, Lily 78
 Sebreli, Juan José 221
 Selser, Gregorio 16
 Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano (Latin American Rabbinic Seminary) 6, 36, 166, 228
 Sharon, Ariel 174
 Sigaut, Lorenzo (economy minister) 157
 Silva Henríquez, Raúl (cardinal) 211

- Sinay, Gil 28–29
 Sinay, Rubén 123
 Singerman, Berta 138, 173
 Skyobysz, Henry 92
 Sneh, Simja 209
 Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA)
 (Argentine Hebraic Society) 59, 69, 72,
 124, 132–133, 137–139, 173, 182, 241
 Sokolowicz, Abraham 224–225, 230
 Spilimberg, Jorge 221
 Spitzer, Jack 87
 State of Israel 11, 36, 41, 43, 45–46, 48, 55, 58,
 60, 85, 89, 91, 137, 149, 151, 171, 193
 Storani, Conrado 220
 Storani, Federico 91, 181, 222
 Szlifman, Marcelo 89
- Talento, Miguel 204
 Talice, Roberto 138
 Tarcus, Horacio 221
 Tenenbaum, Ernesto 181
 Tiempo, César 61, 138
 Timerman, Héctor 161, 213
 Timerman, Jacobo 1, 11, 47–49, 75, 95, 101,
 106, 12, 114, 117, 120, 127, 147, 159–166,
 188, 209, 211, 213, 227, 236
 Toker, Eliahu 181–182, 224–225, 227
 Torres, Camilo 61
 Triple A (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance)
 50, 72, 84
 Troccoli, Antonio 217
- Ubaldini, Saúl 221
 UNESCO 28, 136
 Unión Industrial Argentina 47
 United Nations 28, 58, 171
 Urondo, Francisco 163
- Vaiser, Eduardo 135, 154
 Vador, Augusto 35
 Vázquez, Enrique 220
 Villareal, Rogelio (general) 99
 Viola, Roberto (general) 87, 144, 156–158,
 213, 218
- Walsh, Rodolfo 44
 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 26, 71, 84, 91–92,
 124, 146, 151, 181, 222, 241
 Warszawsky, Paul 104
 Weinberg, Gregorio 136, 173
 Weltman, Grisha (Gregorio Gelmán) 135
 Wiesel, Elie 166–167
 Wolfer, Abel 169–170, 220, 225
 Worker's General Confederation 24
 World Zionist Organization 52
- Yanovsky Brothers, Co. 171
 Yom Kippur War 24, 41, 46, 49, 57
 Yomal, Gerardo 217, 220, 223, 225, 231
- Zabelinsky, Mauricio 104
 Zaskin, Pesaj 227
 Zionist youth movement 33
 Zohar, Marcel 117, 120