

Despite the discrediting of Argentina's recent military dictatorship, right-wing elements have not accepted the country's young democratic regime. One weapon in their campaign to undermine the constitutional government of President Raúl Alfonsín is anti-Semitism, which is still endemic in Argentina. Bizarre falsehoods concerning Jewish conspiracies against Argentina crop up periodically, are publicized by right-wing propagandists and reported in the media, and then fade. A recent example, exposed by Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas de la Argentina (DAIA), the umbrella organization of the Argentine Jewish community, alleged a Jewish plot to colonize Patagonia, Argentina's vast and sparsely populated southern portion.

THE PLOT REVEALED

On January 4, 1986, the Argentine news agency Diarios y Noticias (DYN) disseminated throughout Argentina a report that Israeli explorers, disguised as backpackers, were surveying the El Calafate region of Santa Cruz province in Patagonia for the possible settlement there of 10,000 Israelis over the next ten years. The report implied that the project had been approved by national and local government officials. It included confirmatory statements by an alleged "Jewish leader," one "Albert Levy" -- a surname often used to identify a Jew in anti-Semitic propaganda in Argentina.

The DYN report was carried in the influential Buenos Aires daily La Nación and in a number of provincial papers, including La Opinión Austral (Río Gallegos), Río Negro (Río Negro), La Nueva Provincia (Bahía Blanca), La Voz del Pueblo (Tres Arroyos), La Gaceta (Tucumán), Diario de Cuyo (San Juan), and El Tiempo (Azul). Some of these papers are known as supporters of right-wing factions in the armed forces and vehicles for anti-Semitic propaganda. La Nueva Provincia, for example, in the 1970s castigated the banker David Graiver for his alleged handling of guerrilla funds and later his business associates, including the journalist Jacobo Timerman.

For several weeks, local agitators exploited the "settlement" issue with the cooperation of some provincial newspapers. On March 14,

Prensa Confidencial referred to the "likely" settlement in Patagonia of 30,000 Soviet Jews with the "consent" of the Argentine, U.S. and Soviet governments. The "Jewish invasion" was publicized in nationalist and anti-Semitic Buenos Aires newspapers such as Bastion and Independencia.

In February the monthly Cono Sur, published in Comodoro Rivadavia, headlined an article "Patagonia -- the New Palestine?" In May another article's headline asked "The Beginning of a Jewish Settlement in Patagonia?" This concerned one "Dr. Guillermo Boslavsky," a Jewish furrier from La Plata, who was seeking to buy 40,000 hectares of fertile land in southern Argentina presumably for Jewish settlement. Also in May, La Nueva Provincia reported that a Peronist deputy from Santa Cruz province had made a "serious" accusation about a "planned invasion" of southern Argentina involving "England, Chile and Israel."

When representatives of DAIA tried to discover the source of the original report, DYN officials could give them no information, nor had DYN even kept a copy of the wire communication. A spokesman for the government of Santa Cruz province "had no information as to the source of the report." The governor himself wrote in Tucumán's La Gaceta that he had no knowledge of the alleged Jewish settlement and that he rejected any kind of xenophobia. On January 17 DAIA president Dr. David Goldberg told La Nación that the story was "one of the many lies or canards spread by certain organizations with clearly anti-Semitic leanings and a general antidemocratic stance." In August 1986, the DAIA published a 46-page booklet, "The Jewish Invasion" -- A New Anti-Semitic Fraud, identifying the story as another device of reactionary forces to manipulate anti-Semitism to undermine the current democratic regime.

THE BACKGROUND

The "Jewish invasion" of Patagonia has a long history. As early as 1939, Nazi Germany reportedly eyed Patagonia as a site for future German colonization. Nazi agents may have been involved in plans to bring about the secession of Patagonia from Argentina.

The idea that Patagonia might be detached from Argentina was revived in 1971 by Walter Beveraggi Allende, a prominent anti-Semite (who in the 1940s had been deprived of his citizenship for seeking U.S. military intervention in Argentina). In an article titled "Argentina Self-Defense Against Zionist Aggression," Beveraggi Allende revealed a plot by international Jewry, worked out during a visit of "New York Chief Rabbi Gordon" to Argentina in March 1969, to establish a Jewish state in Patagonia. The alleged conspiracy was publicized throughout Argentina by pro-Franco journalists connected with the official Spanish news agency who claimed to have seen documentary evidence of the plot. The so-called Andinia Plan even included a "gigantic natural refrigerator" in the Antarctic that would serve as a food-storage zone once "Jewish genius" had achieved the "superproduction of food" in Patagonia.

Soon a Tucumán lawyer, Ezequiel Avila Gallo, took up the story of the Andinia Plan. At his instigation, a local newspaper published a series of anti-Semitic articles in 1972, although another newspaper pointed out that Avila Gallo had in the past been a disseminator of unsubstantiated allegations. In 1986 Avila Gallo embraced the story of the "Jewish invasion" of Patagonia. He was supported by La Gaceta of Tucumán, which condemned the Jewish "conspiracy."

As the DAIA took pains to point out, the Andinia Plan and the "Jewish invasion" report share certain features of the notorious forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Both schemes are products of an alleged international Jewish conspiracy (which Argentine reactionaries identify with Zionism, Freemasonry, multinational corporations, and other bogeys) and both are "proved" by documents that have happened to fall into the hands of racist agitators.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The DAIA's booklet failed to lay to rest the fear of a Jewish invasion. In September 1986 the Associated Press reported that President Alfonsín, on his visit to Moscow in October, was planning to ask Soviet authorities to permit the emigration of Soviet Jews to Argentina. The report was attributed to a "presidential spokesman." When Dr. Goldberg of the DAIA inquired about the report, he was told that it was false. In a statement to Radio Argentina in Buenos Aires, Dr. Goldberg noted that "the report stems from certain ultranationalist quarters of the press. This deplorable fiction is related to other precedents. What prompted this fabrication is anybody's guess."

But another Associated Press report, dated September 19, 1986, quoted a government spokesman as saying enigmatically that the report about the emigration of Soviet Jews to Argentina "can neither be rejected nor confirmed."

Meanwhile, Beveraggi Allende has sued Dr. Goldberg for libel for identifying him as an anti-Semite in the DAIA booklet, "The Jewish Invasion"; Beveraggi Allende asserts that he is anti-Zionist, not anti-Semitic. The trial opened in Buenos Aires at the end of October. There is considerable interest in the Argentine Jewish community about how the judiciary will handle this case under existing Argentine law.

An antidiscrimination bill sent to Congress two years ago by President Alfonsín was passed by the House but is still pending in the Senate. Under its original provisions, Beveraggi Allende, the plaintiff in the libel case, should have been subject to prosecution.

7796 - (PUB-2)
11/11/86

86-590

Gregorio
Palom
OCT 1 -
cayn