

## ABSTRACT

*This essay analyzes two concurrent processes that are taking place as democracy is restored in Argentina, and which affect the citizenship and self-confidence of the country's Jews. The more pluralistic and democratic that Argentinean civil society becomes, the more unacceptable traditional antisemitism becomes, although it won't disappear. At the same time, the more Jewish institutions in the public sphere participate in demanding justice after the two lethal terrorist attacks perpetrated in 1992 and 1994, the more they are valued and appreciated by non-Jews as citizens deeply involved in fighting for democracy and against impunity. This essay explores the effects of the tangled judicial investigation of both criminal attacks and the interplay between democracy, pluralism, impunity, and antisemitism in the last twenty years in democratic Argentina.*

### DIFFICULTIES DURING THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN ARGENTINA

No study of Argentine antisemitism can ignore the excessively large number of Jews among the junta's victims during the last military dictatorship of 1976-83. Almost 10 percent of the more than ten thousand documented cases of disappearance during this period of state terrorism are estimated to have been Jews. With the return to an elected government in December 1983, the officially appointed National Commission on the Disappeared, which investigated the country's clandestine detention centers, revealed that Jewish prisoners had received "special" bad treatment. Evidence of antisemitism in interrogation reports came to light and Nazi slogans were found on the walls inside the prisons of these centers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP), *Nunca Mas*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA, 1984; CO. SO. FAM, *La violación de los derechos humanos de Argentinos Judíos bajo el Régimen Militar, 1976-1983*, Barcelona, 1999; See articles published by Ignacio F. Klich, Edy Kaufman-Beatriz Cymberknopf, y J. Simonovich, in Leonardo Senkman (ed) *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1989; Edy Kaufman "Jewish Victims of Repression in Argentina under Military Rule, 1976-1983," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 4, 1989, pp. 479-500; see an updated version in Hebrew of Kaufman's article in *Final Report of Inter Ministerial Commission for the Investigation on Disappeared Jews in Argentina*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice, Jerusalem, July 2003; in the same Report, based on archival Israeli declassified documentation, see Efraim Zadoff, "Findings on Disappeared Jews of Argentina in the archives of the Israel Foreign Affairs and the Jewish Agency: a Summary," *Ibidem*, pp. 58-73. Leonardo Senkman y

The restoration of democracy raised high expectations for putting an end to human rights violations and Judeophobia. However, the unsolved deadly attacks on the Israel Embassy in 1992 and then in 1994 on the building of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina –AMIA (the central Askenazi *Kehilla* of Buenos Aires) demonstrated that antisemitism continues to be a plague under the new democratic administration. In other words it is not simply a part of the historical legacy of authoritarian and military regimes in Argentina.<sup>2</sup>

The twenty year re-democratization process since the military dictatorship confirms the pessimistic claim of Guillermo O'Donnell that at best Argentina enjoys a democracy of a “delegative” kind. Liberalization and democracy soon came into conflict because Argentinean republican institutions lack sufficient independence of each other and of the state –an essential defense against abuse of power, violence and injustice.<sup>3</sup> As in other Latin American countries, the working and middle-class population are experiencing a severe deterioration in living standards. Social exclusion has replaced marginality in re-democratized Argentina as a means of characterizing the situation of the new poor among the middle class, to which the bulk of the Jewish community belongs. Inequality, vulnerability and lack of security are seen as the major challenge for Argentina's transition into democracy over the last twenty years. The recovery of democracy granted a high level of citizenship to the whole population, including Jews who ceased to be “second-class citizens” and could participate in

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Mario Sznajder, *El Legado del autoritarismo. Derechos humanos y antisemitismo en la Argentina contemporánea*, Buenos Aires, GEL, 1995; Marisa Braylan, Daniel Feierstein, Miguel Galante y Adrián Jmelniczky, “Informe sobre la situación de los detenidos desaparecidos judíos durante el genocidio perpetrado en la Argentina,” *Índice, Revista de ciencias sociales*, No. 20, Buenos Aires, DAIA, 2001, pp. 297-362; Miguel Galante y Adrián Jmelniczky, “Acerca de una dimensión antisemita en el terrorismo de estado en Argentina, 1976-1983,” *CD Historia y Memoria*, Centro de Investigaciones Socio-Históricas, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Buenos Aires, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Of the 313 antisemitic incidents recorded worldwide in 1977 – one year after a military regime took power in Argentina – 142 were perpetrated in Argentina. However, this figure was in fact lower than the comparable figure at the peak of anti-Jewish violence in 1962-65, under democratic regimes in the country. See *Antisemitism World Report 1997*, IJP, London, p. 4; for a study on the eruption of antisemitism in Argentina under democratic regimes in the 1960s, see Leonardo Senkman, *El antisemitismo en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1999, pp. 11-194.

<sup>3</sup> See Guillermo O'Donnell, “Delegative Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, 5, 1, January 1994, pp. 55-69.

the public sphere without suffering ethnic or religious discrimination. In addition, a very solid civil society developed, and an infrastructure has been created for participation of community organizations and grassroots associations. This trend was reinforced by the national and international non-governmental organizations whose intervention has brought more emphasis on the rights, identity, education and responsibilities associated with citizenship and participation. Despite this new spirit of inclusiveness and re-democratization, social exclusion still exists in Argentina.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, during the political re-democratization process most citizens were increasingly losing trust in liberal institutions and especially the judicial system. This loss of popular confidence coincided with a sharp increase in crime and violence during the 1990s in Argentina's large cities.

Furthermore, the neo-liberal economic policies of governments during the last two decades of re-democratization in Argentina persuaded citizens to expect less from the public sector or the state, as well as the political and judicial system. The government insisted that the state could no longer be expected to provide employment or other material benefits.<sup>5</sup> This was true of the Union Cívica Radical (UCR) government party of Raul Alfonsín (1983-1989), through the two Peronist administrations of Carlos S. Menem (1989-1999) to the ill-fated Alianza government led by De la Rúa (1999-2001).

Argentina's democratic but weak liberalization process has been under heavy pressure since 1983 to give in to corporate-led centers of power. Confrontations with the unreformed army (for example, the three abortive coups since 1983) became prevailing forms of political expression in this unstable democratic transition. Instead of evolving carefully negotiated political alternatives or a balance of power between the major parties, the civilian regime was forced to deal with economic crises by pushing down the real earnings of workers and the salaried middle class, inevitably provoking widespread labor disputes. Consequently, policies to deal with the economic recession rapidly dissipated the initial popularity of the elected regime and became the primary cause of its instability. This hardship contributed to Alfonsín

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<sup>4</sup> Bryan R. Roberts, "From Marginality to Social Exclusion," in *Latin American Research Review*, 39: 1, 2004, pp. 195-196.

<sup>5</sup> See Geoffrey Hawthorn, "Liberalism and Democracy in Latin America," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe (EIAL)*, 13: 1, Tel Aviv University, 2002, pp. 5-8.

and De la Rúa's dramatic falls.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, there was an authoritarian reaction to liberal demands in the areas of human rights, rule of law, and education. This was the second cause of instability. In this context, antisemitism once again proved to be a political weapon in the hands of those forces interested in destabilizing the fragile democratic process.

It is my belief that this social and political instability made outbursts of antisemitism possible during difficult phases in the transition to democratization in Argentina.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, for the first time in Latin America, a democratic regime put members of the military junta and other officials on trial for violation of human rights during the previous dictatorship. Unfortunately, the Alfonsín government followed a path of judicial concessions to the military, which sought an amnesty for those prosecuted for human rights violations. The process ended with full pardons and a comprehensive amnesty granted at the beginning of the 1990s by the government of Carlos Menem. This amnesty was finally revoked with the inauguration of President Nestor Kirchner in September 2003.<sup>8</sup>

The ineffectiveness of legislative measures to fight defamation and antisemitism needs to be understood against this regressive background. Although the unprecedented law No. 23592 against discrimination was passed by Congress at Alfonsín's initiative with the support of Peronist congressmen in 1988, extreme antisemites and ultra-Right gangs seemed scarcely aware of these legal constraints against defamation. Moreover, the law proved ineffective in preventing individual expressions of incitement to racial hatred and violence. More effective were judicial inquiries that invoked law No. 23592 for the prohibition of antisemitic publications and Holocaust denial books as well as against the use of

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<sup>6</sup> For historical legacy of instability in Argentine democracy, see Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Political cycles in Argentina since 1965," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore 1986), vol. 2, pp. 11-25; for socioeconomic causes of the Alfonsín government's collapse, see Mario Rapoport et al., *Historia Económica, Social y Política de Argentina, 1880-2000* Buenos Aires, ediciones Macci, 2000, pp. 908-931.

<sup>7</sup> See Leonardo Senkman, "The Restoration of Democracy in Argentina and the Impunity of Antisemitism," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 24: pp. 2-4, Winter 1990, pp. 34-60.

<sup>8</sup> See Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, *The Legacy of Human Rights Violations in the Southern Cone. Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay* (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 20-28.

Nazi symbols.<sup>9</sup>

In sharp contrast with the democratic governments of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when only a handful of Jewish officials handled key cultural and educational positions, in the Alfonsín and Menem administrations the number of Jews in public services was quite large. Six Jews were elected to the Chamber of Deputies in October 1983 and, once in office, President Alfonsín appointed numerous Jews to important public posts, such as Minister for the Economy Bernardo Grinspun, Vice President of the Central Bank Leopoldo Portnoy, Treasury Secretary Mario Brodershon, Undersecretary of Research and Administrative Reform Oscar Oszlak, Undersecretary for Information and Development Roberto Schteingart, and others. The Catholic Church and its allies regarded the admission of Jewish officials to public and political life as less dangerous than entrusting well-known Jews with high and intermediate level posts within the education and culture ministries. These appointments included Marcos Aguinis for the post of First Undersecretary of State and afterwards Secretary of Culture, Adolfo Stubrin as Minister of Education, Professor Manuel Sadosky as Secretary of State for Science and Technology and, for the first time in Argentina, an academic position, with Dr. Oscar Shuberoff being elected Rector of the University of Buenos Aires. Thereafter approximately one-third of newly appointed deans at this university were Jews. These appointments were regarded by the conservatives and the Right as insupportable provocation by the “Radical Synagogue.”<sup>10</sup>

The definitive attack on this “silent infiltration” by Marxists and the so-called “Sinagoga Radical” was launched by the ultra-right wing magazine *Cabildo* against the Secretary of State for Culture Dr. Marcos Aguinis. This periodical, which had great influence upon rank-and-file

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<sup>9</sup> On the political bi-partisan support for the anti-discrimination law 23, 592 see Ignacio F. Klich, “The Peronist Challenge in the May 1989 Argentine Presidential Election. An Assessment of Jewish Concerns,” *Research Report*, No. 2, Institute of Jewish Affairs (IJA), London, 1989 pp. 5-6; also, Leonardo Senkman, “The Restoration of Democracy,” pp. 51-52; for legal precedents in Argentina and scope of the law 23.592, see Bernardo Beiderman, “La política antidiscriminatoria en Argentina,” in Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznajder, op. cit. pp. 171-182; on the shortcomings of the law, see Pablo Slonimski, *La Ley antidiscriminatoria*, Editorial Fabian di Placido, Buenos Aires, 2001; in recent months of 2004, the law was sharply criticized on legal grounds by a Judge of Salta, see Gabriel Giubellino “Una ley que fue aprobada de apuro y con defectos,” *Clarín*, 14 April 2004.

<sup>10</sup> See Leonardo Senkman, “The Restoration of Democracy,” op. cit., pp. 42-43.

opinion in the army, defined Dr. Aguinis as “cultural and ideological commissar of the “Radical Synagogue” and infiltrator on behalf of “International Zionism.”<sup>11</sup> Predictably, this background prompted antisemitic violence during the first years of democratic transition. The Judeophobic upsurge was not limited to arson at synagogues and community centers. Particularly macabre was the desecration of a memorial to Patricia Uchansky, victim of the terror years between 1976 and 1983. On 14 November 1984 an ultra-right wing murder squad, Legion Condor-Escuadra 33, took responsibility for sending a jawbone and femur, allegedly belonging to Patricia, to her parents through the post. Abraham Rubinstein, the father of Patricia, was president of Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA, the major political umbrella of Jewish institutions in Argentina) in the city of Mar del Plata at the time his daughter was abducted. This sadistic incident occurred scarcely one and a half months after the Comisión Nacional de Desaparición de las Personas (CONADEP) had revealed the fate of thousands of Argentinian ‘disappeared’ and the harsh antisemitic treatment meted out to Jews by members of the armed and security forces. This sinister desecration marked a clear warning on the part of the ultra-Right against the Alfonsín government’s policies of putting on trial those responsible for human rights violations. The ultra-Right labeled the official enquiry an act of “Jewish provocation” against the military by the “Radical Synagogue,” accused of damaging the prestige of the armed forces.

The alleged connection between subversion and Jews was supported by families of the security forces who had fallen in the “dirty war” during 1976-83. In 1984 at the monthly Mass organized by the Relatives and Friends of Victims of Subversion (FAMUS), members had concluded the gathering by shouting offensive slogans against Jews. Similarly, after a Mass in the San Francisco Basilica in Buenos Aires in September 1986, several people shouted “Heil Adolf Hitler” and denounced “the government of Jews.” Among those attending the monthly Mass of the FAMUS organization was General Reynaldo Bignone, president of Argentina during the military dictatorship, as well as the wife of former

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<sup>11</sup> Tomas Rotula, “Aguinis: mala letra,” and “Un proyecto totalitario,” *Cabildo*, vol. 10, no 102, July 1986, pp. 6-7. See Aguinis remarks in *Nueva Presencia*, vol. 7, no 478, 29 August 1986, p. 7; Marcos Aguinis et al., *Memorias de una siembra. Utopía y práctica del PRONDEC* (Programa de democratización de la cultura), Buenos Aires, Planeta, 1990.

President General Jorge R. Videla.<sup>12</sup>

After the abortive coup of April 1987, right-wing antisemitic groups launched a terrorist strategy against the Jewish community, as part of their long-term aim of attacking democratic institutions. DAIA's president publicly warned of the threat to democracy as a whole, revealed by the discovery of right-wing terrorist cells. President Alfonsín himself pointed out in a radio and television address in April 1987 that the defense of democracy in Argentina was linked to the fight against Nazis and extremists of every type, including antisemites, who were trying to capitalize on public frustration at the economic malaise.

The discovery and arrest of several members of ultra-Right terrorist groups by the Argentine federal police in August and October 1988 shed more light on the connections linking para-police gangs, the intelligence services, and violent antisemitic groups. Those convicted of terrorism were jailed for terms of three to six years. However, two other defendants as well as the leader of the cell (son of the convicted General Ramon Camps) were acquitted. Alejandro Biondini, leader of the right-wing antisemitic organization *Alerta Nacional*, (politically identified with Peronism), enjoyed similar immunity and was released despite charges implicating him in two acts of violence. In both cases there was evidence that the two released men had good connections with the state intelligence services.<sup>13</sup>

From the moment he took office in 1989, President Carlos Menem sought to dispel growing Jewish fears and apprehensions about the new Peronist government run by a man of Syrian ancestry with links to the Damascus regime. Not only did President Menem appoint Jews among his advisors – the economist Samuel Muzykansk and private secretary Alberto Kohan, a businessman – but they also held top government positions like the Minister of the Interior Dr. Carlos Corach and Deputy Minister of Justice Elias Jassan.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Síntesis Informativa DAIA*, Buenos Aires, January 1986 and August 1986; El Arcángel, Buenos Aires, no. 10, June 1986; Jacobo Kovadloff, "The Jewish Invasion. A Case History of Anti-Semitic Propaganda in Argentina," Institute of Human Relations, American Jewish Committee, New York, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> See Ernesto Tenenbaum's well-documented survey on the connection between the increase in ultra-Right attempts to destabilize democracy and the protection it enjoyed from intelligence army services, *Nueva Sion*, 3 September 1988, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Two aides of Minister Carlos Corach had an ultra-nationalist background, like Carlos Tortora and Norberto Belladrich; Deputy Minister Elias Jassan was entrusted with the justice portfolio

In the domestic arena, President Menem urged the prosecution of the ultra- right wing antisemitic Colonel Ali Seineldin and Lieutenant Aldo Rico because of their involvement in a military rebellion. The latter founded the far-right Movement for Dignity and National Independence (MODIN) in 1991. However, since MODIN's inception, its leaders have deliberately distanced themselves from anything that appears anti-Jewish in order to participate in the electoral process as a “respectable force.” Among those who condemned the blast of the Israel Embassy in 1992 was Aldo Rico. Following the condemnation, running in ballot-box politics, MODIN gained four seats in the lower house and became the third largest party in the Buenos Aires province.

In contrast, on the eve of the Israel Embassy blast, Alejandro Biondini, well-known antisemite and leader of the neo-Nazi Partido Nacionalista de los Trabajadores (PNT), was released from a short jail term on the grounds of defective legal procedure after he was caught putting up posters depicting an Argentina flag with a swastika. However, in 1996 Biondini was sentenced for violating the Anti-Discrimination law. In the 1990s, the PNT attempted to legalize the organization in order to run in parliamentary elections. Antisemitic propaganda was mainly disseminated via the website Libertad de Opinión. Although the party hardly reached 300 members in the whole country, more than 1,500 followers reach the PNT Libertad de Opinion web page. In 2002 the PNT ceased to spread antisemitic propaganda for tactical reasons, considering as central their fight to legalize the organization since they could not obtain the required number of members in order to participate in the municipal elections.. In 2004 a renewed request to legalize PNT as a formal party and to present candidates for the Buenos Aires city council elections was denied by tribunal.<sup>15</sup>

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after the scandal of the revelation on the ultra-nationalist and antisemitic past of the Minister of Justice Rodolfo Barra who was obliged to resign, see, *Antisemitism World Report 1997*, JPR, London, 1996, pp. 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> *Antisemitism World Report 1992*, IJPR, London, 1992, p. 118; Partido Nuevo Triunfo (PNT) has a populist origin and its leader Alejandro Biondini in 1981 was appointed General Secretary of the Peronist Youth of the city of Buenos Aires and also participated in the electoral campaign that led Carlos Menem to the national presidency in 1989; afterwards his relationship with Peronism ended. In the second semester of 2002, PNT openly announced the presentation of 2, 057 signatures to the electoral judge, and since then, PNT made serious efforts to ‘clean’ it image in the site page as a non-antisemitic party; but in May 2004, the National Electoral Court sentenced against the appeal of PNT to get a legal status as a eligible party for running in general

It should be remembered that on the eve of the Israel Embassy bombing in 1992 thirty neo-Nazi groups still operated in Argentina. But President Menem and his successors did manage to reduce bigotry and antisemitism by the turn of the new millennium. According to a DAIA report, in 2001 only two, very small, neo-Nazi groups remained: Partido Nuevo Orden Social Patriótico (PNOSP) and the Partido Nuevo Triunfo (PNT).

In 1999, PNOSP tried to obtain the necessary legal permission to participate in the elections. But the electoral judge rejected this request on the grounds that the party incited antisemitic hatred and exalted violence.<sup>16</sup> Unlike France, where the extreme Right in 2002 won unexpectedly strong support playing on antisemitic resentments as well as anti-Muslim acts and speeches, in Argentina the opposite happened. The two small right-wing parties with antisemitic orientations had become politically irrelevant during the years 2000-2002.

However, antisemitism was still grounded in Argentina's political culture of violence as well as in its fragile socioeconomic fabric. Aware of the difficulties in eliminating the legacy of Argentine antisemitism, President Menem sought favorable publicity for his new foreign policy as a way to combat Jew-hatred. In the international arena Menem took a pro-Israeli stand in order to gain the sympathy of Jews in Argentina and worldwide. In sharp contrast to the Alfonsín administration, President Menem devoted much effort to improving relations with Israel as part of his strategy towards a dramatic rapprochement with the United States. Prior to Menem's visit to Israel in October 1991, his Foreign Minister Domingo Cavallo – the first Argentinean foreign minister to visit Israel, anticipated Menem's decision to freeze the Argentine-Iraq association and officially disengaged its Condor II missile project from the Egyptian-Iraqi Badr missile - 2000. Also, Senator Eduardo Menem, brother of Argentina's President, paid a visit to Israel in late November 1990 and

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elections; see *Report of Antisemitism in Argentina 2000-2001*, DAIA, Buenos Aires, 2001, pp. 42-43, *Report of Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, DAIA, Buenos Aires, 2002, pp. 40-41, note 33; *Report of Antisemitism in Argentina 2004*, pp. 51-52, 54.

<sup>16</sup> See those groups operating in Argentina at the start of 1990s, as they are listed in Claudio Diaz and Antonio Zucco's book: *La ultraderecha argentina y su conexión internacional*, Buenos Aires, 1991. Also, Raul Kollman, *Sombras de Hitler. La vida secreta de las bandas neonazis argentinas*, Editorial Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2001; also see *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2000-2001*, pp. 38-39; for the restricted scope of circulation of neo-Nazi and ultra-Right publications by 2001 see *Ibidem*, pp. 43-48.

proposed to Prime Minister Shamir that Argentina play the role of mediator in the peace process.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the Menem government's efforts to improve Argentina-Israel relations, marked by his personal visit to the Jewish State, other positive developments included his personal commitment to combat antisemitism and to rid the country of its stigma as a safe haven for Nazi criminals and collaborator fugitives from World War II. Following the extradition of Second World War criminal Erich Priebe in 1995, temporarily freed by an Italian military tribunal, the Menem government decreed in August 1996 that the former SS member, responsible for the mass execution in the Ardeatine Caves near Rome, would never be allowed to return again to Argentina. In addition, one of Argentina's significant efforts to abandon the image it acquired during the Nazi era was Menem's decision to release records of Nazi gold bullion transactions. In the first quarter of 1996, the Argentine Congress ratified Law No. 24515, which created a National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior. Among its functions, INADI can initiate judicial and administrative action against Nazi criminals. In 1997 the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de las Actividades del Nazismo en la Argentina (CEANA) was set up under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, comprising distinguished local and foreign scholars. CEANA aimed to investigate the entry, infiltration and official support to Nazi war criminals and acceptance of Nazi gold into the Argentine since 1943. A few years before, the Menem administration allowed the declassification of secret files in state archives, a measure that benefited DAIA's "Testimony Project" conducted since 1992. The project aimed at investigating the supposed Nazi penetration of the country in the period 1930-1960, their source of funds, and the aid they received from government officials.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> On the changes in Menem's foreign policy, see *La política exterior del gobierno de Menem. Seguimiento y reflexiones al promediar su mandato*, Rosario, 1994. y Carlos Escude, *Realismo periférico. Fundamentos para la nueva política exterior argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> On the E. Priecke extradition, see Paul Warszawski "Respuestas del Estado Argentino ante los pedidos de extradición de Criminales de Guerra y Reos del delito contra la humanidad bajo el Tercer Reich, ", *Proyecto Testimonio-DAIA*, Planeta, Buenos Aires, 1998, vol. 2, pp. 315-420; for the main findings of DAIA project, see *Proyecto Testimonio. Revelaciones de los Archivos Argentinos sobre la Política Oficial en la Era Nazi-Fascista*, Prologo y compilación de Beatriz Gurevich, DAIA, Buenos Aires, Planeta, 1998, two vols; for the research reports of CEANA project, see its three

However, such political developments and official good-will towards Jews and Israel did not signal a halt to violent antisemitism. In fact, the two bomb attacks in 1992 and 1994 perpetrated against Jewish targets spotlighted the real dimension of danger for the Jewish community – transnational terror with local support. Contrary to expectations that traditional antisemitism would decrease after the two lethal bombings, in 1996 it once again took a turn for the worse. Between the years 1991 and 1996, the Buenos Aires Jewish cemeteries were vandalized five times: in the greater Buenos Aires district of La Tablada on 19 October 1996, and once again a week later. On 17 November 1996, the Jewish cemetery of Villa Clara in the Entre Ríos province was attacked. In the three preceding months, sixty-six graves were also desecrated in two attacks on Córdoba's new Jewish cemetery in the neighborhood of San Vicente, the first of these on the Jewish New Year. There was also an attack on the Jewish cemetery of Salta, as well as a failed grenade attack against a Home for the Jewish Aged in the province of Buenos Aires. Since then, gravestone desecration in Jewish cemeteries has continued to occur.<sup>19</sup>

The deterioration in equitable income distribution, the high rate of unemployment, and the increasing number of cases of corruption at government level provided a compelling background to the action of the Right, including anti-Jewish manifestations and xenophobia by groups like the Juventud Nacional Socialista de Salta (JNSS) in the northwestern province of Salta. The JNSS daily *El Tribuno* reported on graffiti disseminated by some of its members calling for the death of Bolivians, Jews and homosexuals. Although hostility continued unabated towards immigrants from neighboring and nearby countries, especially Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru (some of whom entered Argentina illegally) and expressions of intolerance were directed against South Korean immigrants, the awakening of Jew-hatred proved that antisemitism was not only a legacy of the authoritarian former regime but was grounded also in the fragile recovery of Argentine democracy.

Two MODIN legislators participated in a group involved in merchandising firearms purloined from army arsenals. MODIN

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publications edited by Ignacio Klich in *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, XIV, 43 (1999); *CICLOS*, X, 19 (2000), and *Nazis y nazismo en la cultura argentina*, Hispamérica, University of Maryland, College Park, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> *Antisemitism World Report 1997*, op. cit. p. 7, *Antisemitism Worldwide 1996-97*, Tel Aviv University, pp. 244-245; *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2003*, DAIA, pp. 166, 178, 179 and *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2004*, DAIA, Buenos Aires, 2005, pp. 143, 148, 185.

sympathizers were also suspected of having been involved in an attack on a journalist who attempted to investigate a local connection in the AMIA bombing.<sup>20</sup> A more violent anti-Jewish group, Verdad y Justicia, Movimiento Cívico Militar por la Recuperación Argentina, was active in 1996 in Buenos Aires province. Four of its members were detained in connection with the vandalization of the Jewish cemetery in La Tablada. More offensive telephone calls to individuals and Jewish institutions were recorded during 1996 than the previous year. In addition, at the end of 1995 and beginning of 1996, a group of citizens calling themselves “A group of Argentinean Muslims and Catholics” began sending threatening letters to the Israeli ambassador that contained antisemitic and anti-Israel slander.<sup>21</sup>

In the arena of mainstream politics, a former ultranationalist in office nominated by Menem provoked a scandal. Rodolfo Barra became Menem’s public works secretary in 1989 and also served as a Supreme Court judge from December 1993 to June 1994. Barra was in office as Minister of Justice when DAIA demanded his resignation after the press exposure of Barra’s nationalist past, as a member of the right-wing Catholic and antisemitic Tacuara movement. Although Barra expressed contrition regarding his Nazi youth, he was obliged to resign his post under pressure by DAIA, whose president claimed that in view of the unsolved Israel embassy and AMIA attacks “the average Jew {finds} it inadmissible that Barra should continue in charge of a ministry.”<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding multipartisan initiatives against antisemitism in Congress and the Buenos Aires provincial legislature, and the official desire to stamp out Judeophobic manifestations, the assessment of the Menem administration towards Jews cannot be judged only by anti-discriminatory judicial inquiries or by the government's performance in tackling the country's “Nazi past.” Unlike the xenophobic reaction against Muslim offspring of the old immigrant community, the “Jewish question” in Argentine is not a matter of mere prejudice or the expression of intolerance towards non-Christian people. The unsolved atrocities of 1992 and 1994 pose the historical “Jewish question” in the larger and broader context of impunity of justice, as well as violence and the lack of protection that vast sectors of the civilian population suffer.

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<sup>20</sup> *Clarín*, 7 May 1996.

<sup>21</sup> *Antisemitism Worldwide 1996-97*, p. 245.

<sup>22</sup> *Noticias*, 22-29 June 1996; Síntesis Informativo, *DAIA*, July 1996.

THE SHORTCOMING OF STATISTICS FOR UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL  
ANTISEMITISM IN ARGENTINA

The statistics of antisemitic events in Argentina, which were monitored and published annually by DAIA do not show important variations during the period 1999 to 2004, with the exception of 1998-1999 when their number rose from 90 to 166. The figures remain much lower than in European countries such as France and Germany. Compared with the recent European wave of antisemitism, statistics for Argentina reflect fewer serious incidents; no ultra-Right political party has experienced any kind of growth, and there is no evidence of an incremental trend of Jewish hatred such as exists elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

Cyclical waves of violent antisemitism in Argentina are perpetrated quite independently from global waves of antisemitism. Quantitative comparisons with previous cycles of violent antisemitism in Argentina since 1983 are not available since there was no systematic data collection of such incidents. However, examining the few reports of incidents from the mid-1980s and early 1990s (before the bombings of the Israel Embassy and AMIA building), we learn that violent antisemitic events occurred in Argentina with a steady regularity, irrespective of the worldwide eruption of Judeophobia.

In contrast to the “new antisemitism” that swept the world since 2002, acts of vandalism against cemeteries and Jewish communal institutions in Argentina remain below the annual total number reported in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The few quantitative statistics fail to disclose the real qualitative dimension of antisemitism in Argentina. They do not tell us whether antisemitic incidents are spontaneous or supported by civilian sectors; nor do they clarify if the local police was involved. Most importantly, statistics are not useful for reflecting the compliance of public officers in granting leniency to perpetrators of antisemitism.<sup>24</sup> This was epitomized by the Judeophobic utterance of Alberto Pierri, president of the Lower House of the Argentine Parliament, who in a TV dispute with a Jewish journalist called him a

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<sup>23</sup> *Report of Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, DAIA, Buenos Aires, May 2003, pp. 18-19; *Report of Antisemitism in Argentina 2004*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>24</sup> See Simcha Epstein “The ‘highest wave of antisemitism since 1945’- is it so?” *SICSA, Annual Report*, October 2001, pp. 7-8, and “Anti-Jewish Violence in Western Countries since 2000: An Initial Assessment,” *Antisemitism International: An Annual Research Journal of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism*, 2003, pp. 54-58.

“lice-ridden Jew.”<sup>25</sup>

Association with antisemitism in democratic Argentina is not uncommon among army intelligence and police officers. Although the extreme neo-Nazi Nationalist Worker’s Party (PNT), a collection of marginalized far-Right Peronists and others, failed in the 1991 elections to field its own candidates and became politically irrelevant, its members continued to attack Jews. One of those detained for the vandalism of the Berazategui Jewish cemetery was linked to PNT militants and an army intelligence official until February 1986. He was also a junior member of a special group in the Defense Ministry set up years before to investigate the disappearance of businessman Osvaldo Sivak, a well publicized abduction with anti-Jewish overtones.<sup>26</sup>

Statistics on Argentina’s antisemitism do not provide a clear background about the popular base of Jew-hatred, the degree of acquiescence of the security forces in granting immunity to offenders and criminals, or provide information on the identity of the antisemites and their social-ideological background.

Unlike the new wave of European antisemitism since 2000, antisemitic acts in Argentina conform more to the traditional model. However, since the 1992 and 1994 attacks, traditional anti-Jewish violence has become a “politically incorrect” phenomenon in Argentina. But this “low profile” antisemitism, is still nourished by the sense of impunity left by those yet to be solved terrorist attacks.

Statistics on antisemitism, it should be remembered, provide no clear indicators about the link between terrorist attacks against Jewish institutions as such, and violence directed against Jews at the individual level. During 1992, for example (the year of the bombing of the Israel Embassy), DAIA recorded dozens of antisemitic incidents; these included thirteen physical assaults as well as telephone threats and twenty institutions were daubed with swastikas and graffiti. A quantitative approach tells us nothing about the real meaning of this antisemitic activity at a time when verbal insults and offenses against Jews in the media became politically incorrect. More recently, however, a new category of verbal offense has increased in civilian society, namely

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<sup>25</sup> *Anti-Semitism Worldwide-1993*. Tel Aviv University, pp.66-67 The incident led to a lengthy exchange of letters between the heads of the Jewish World Congress and President Menem, and deputy Alberto Pierri sent letters of apology to different people.

<sup>26</sup> *Antisemitism World Report 1992*, p. 116.

sadistic references and sarcastic remarks regarding AMIA victims.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, declining statistics of antisemitic incidents are insufficient evidence to assume that the position of the Jewish community under democratic governments has improved dramatically. It is simplistic, for example, to attribute antisemitism exclusively to the former military dictatorship. Even more mistaken is the assessment by the *Antisemitism World Report* of The Institute of Jewish Affairs, of the attack against the Israel Embassy, where 30 people died and 250 were injured, which claimed that there was insufficient evidence to justify calling the outrage “anti-Jewish.” According to this report, the blast could have an anti-Zionist reprisal linked to the Middle East conflict.<sup>28</sup>

Assessments of antisemitism in Argentina and elsewhere, relying on statistical techniques disregard a whole range of qualitative indicators such as the new social legitimacy enjoyed by Jewish communities, the leniency with which offenders are treated by courts, and the extent to which the legal arena is equipped for fighting antisemitism. The results can be seriously misleading. Thus, according to the Israeli Report of the “Forum for the Coordination of the Fight Against Antisemitism” (2003) of the total number of antisemitic incidents worldwide, only 6 percent occurred in South America and 4 percent in the U.S., in contrast to 79 percent in Western Europe (47 percent in France and 29 percent in Great Britain). In Eastern Europe and Africa, only one per cent each of such incidents were recorded and 9 per cent happened in the ex-USSR.

However, these global figures on antisemitism blur differences in legal protection and possibilities for self-defense in different societies where Jews reside. For example, France has comprehensive legal provisions against racism and antisemitism, which in Argentina barely exist or are not implemented. Statistics alone tell us nothing about the insecurity to which Jews are exposed to in countries where there is greater leniency such as Argentina. The antisemitic wave may seem smaller, but the lack of sanctions against crime in general and anti-Jewish violence in particular is incomparably higher than in France.

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<sup>27</sup> On the increasing number of antisemitic graffiti in public places, see *Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina 2004*, DAIA, op.cit. p. 161.

<sup>28</sup> The reporter was surprised by the “unparalleled display of sympathy for Argentine Jewry on the part of the government and Argentine society at large, for what was not prima facie an antisemitic attack.” See *Antisemitic World Report 1993*, op. cit, p. 173. See an assessment on both Israel Embassy and AMIA blasts in the section “Effects of Anti-Zionism” in *Antisemitism World Report 1995*, pp.5-6.

The report on antisemitic incidents collected by DAIA showed figures climbing from 90 in 1998 to a peak of 185 in 2001, but declining to 149 in 2002. There was a rise during the years 2003 and 2004 with 177 and 174 incidents respectively. However, more careful scrutiny of the figures indicated that the high increase after 1998 was partly due to the availability of additional sources, especially those received by the Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación (INADI).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, even now, many antisemitic incidents go unreported because the victims are afraid, or due to the distance of rural or other urban communities to the DAIA Buenos Aires office, or because they had already been disclosed by the mass media.

The mass media have highlighted the steady increase of violent antisemitism in France since 2000. Antisemitic manifestations in France are compiled in a much more rigorous and strict manner than the data collection undertaken by DAIA for the same years. They list more than four hundred antisemitic attacks during the fall to spring period in 2002. But whereas the Tel Aviv University report does look at social factors in France, it pays scant attention to their influence on antisemitic variations in Argentina

In effect, although the number of cumulative manifestations in Argentina for the period 1999-2001 registered 515 incidents (higher than the 400 incidents in France during a similar period), the *Antisemitism Worldwide Report* for 2001-2002 only states that in Argentina “the number and nature of antisemitic manifestations remained relatively unchanged in 2001.”<sup>30</sup> But if the number of incidents is not disturbing because it remained relatively unchanged, neither did the Report focus on the alarming nature of some recurrent incidents springing from Argentina's civilian society as well as state agencies during the restoration of democracy.

According to the DAIA report, the categorization of antisemitic events that occurred in 2002 details the following: 35 percent of antisemitic events occurred in the media and 23 percent were inscriptions (including graffiti) in public places, compared to a mere 5 percent rate of injuries to individuals, and 3 percent involving damage to Jewish institutions.<sup>31</sup> Obviously, attacks against Jews in Argentina were

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<sup>29</sup> “Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina 1999,” *Índice*, Revista de Ciencias Sociales, no. 21, DAIA, 2001 pp. 135, 164.

<sup>30</sup> *Report on Antisemitism Worldwide*, p. 158.

<sup>31</sup> *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, DAIA, p. 22.

much less serious than the rise of antisemitism in France since the last quarter of 2000, continuing into 2001 and 2002. However, some violent acts in Argentina during this period might have had tragic consequences. These include two shots fired at a synagogue in Moron, a suburb of Buenos Aires, a bottle containing an inflammable liquid thrown into the playground of a Jewish school in Buenos Aires, and an attempt to place an anti-tank grenade inside the Jewish Cultural Institution in La Plata.<sup>32</sup> In 2003, although 177 events were identified as antisemitic by DAIA and its annual report states that Jews were not facing an intensification of hate actions and expressions in the country, insults and verbal Judeophobia were still accompanied by violence against Jewish people and homes.<sup>33</sup>

Threats and attacks against Jewish institutions did not cease after the two terrorist bombings in 1992 and 1994, including five anonymous threatening calls in 2001 to blow up the rebuilt AMIA premises. This threat would be repeated during 2002-2004, sometimes accompanied by simulated shooting and false alarms of bombings of buildings which house Jewish institutions.<sup>34</sup>

In Argentina the steady rise in the crime rate and social violence nourished by urban insecurity, against a background of economic crisis and political instability, may partially explain the threats and attacks against individual Jews. In addition, there are two decisive factors that characterize the persistence of social antisemitism during the democratization process. Firstly, the legacy of popular violence is grounded in societal divisions, lending legitimacy to the use of aggression against Jews. One striking and persistent example is football matches.

Football matches continue to be a popular forum for rival fans to chant offensive slogans against Jews with total impunity. The DAIA *Report on Antisemitism* records seven such incidents between February and June 2000 at football matches in major stadiums of Buenos Aires DF, capital of the country, and in the provinces, which would also be

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<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, pp. 80-81, 91.

<sup>33</sup> For a record on antisemitic expressions, injuries to individuals, and damage to private homes of Jews for the year 2003, see *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2003*, DAIA, pp. 166-188.

<sup>34</sup> *Antisemitism Worldwide 2001-02*, p. 158; see "Informe de agresiones con armas a algunas instituciones judías," in *Informe sobre antisemitismo en Argentina*, DAIA, Buenos Aires 1999, pp. 142, 145. Attempts to throw a grenade in front of the building of Jewish Communal Institutions, and damaging its doors, see *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2003*, DAIA, pp.136, 138, 142; also *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2004*, pp. 165-189.

repeated in the fall of 2001. Jew-hatred is not a new phenomenon in the world of football –the most popular Argentine sport. A good example surfaced at a football match in Ferrocarril Oeste stadium on Saturday 15 October 1996 between the “All Boys” and “Atlanta” teams. The latter is identified with the Jewish quarter of Villa Crespo, although the players are not Jewish. At the match the “All Boys” fans sang the following refrain: We blew up their Embassy,/We blew up their “Mutual” (AMIA),/We’ll burn their football field,/So they won’t cause any more trouble.<sup>35</sup>

The Atlanta team is linked with Jews only because of its geographic association: its stadium is located in a Jewish neighborhood of Buenos Aires, and usually anti-Jewish chants were sung during the match involving Atlanta participation. Far worse, no action was taken by the Argentine Football Association to prevent such incidents, nor did they punish the persons responsible for allowing the anti-Jewish manifestations during the matches.<sup>36</sup> In fact, in 2003, discriminatory statements were voiced in a TV program by the president of the Argentine Soccer Association, Julio Grondona.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “Les volamos la embajada / les volamos la Mutual. / les vamo-a-quemar la cancha / para que no jodan mas.” See, *Antisemitism Worldwide 1996-97*, Tel Aviv University, ADL-WJC, p. 246. In May 2004, non-Jewish fans of Club Atlanta were ambushed and attacked violently by fans of the rival All Boys Club who shouted antisemitic curses at them. See, Informe sobre antisemitismo en Argentina 2004, DAIA, p.171.

<sup>36</sup> *Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina, 2000-2001*, DAIA, pp. 55-61, 91, 95, *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, DAIA, p. 97; in June 2000, bars of soap were thrown onto the field by supporters of Defensores de Belgrano during a match against the Atlanta team, which has no Jewish players but is from a Jewish neighborhood. Another match was suspended by the referee after fans sang antisemitic songs. See *Antisemitism Worldwide 2000-01*, pp. 279-280.

<sup>37</sup> Julio Grondona said during the TV program: “There are no Jewish referees in Argentina because this is a very difficult job and they don’t like to perform this sort of task because they always choose the easy way.” Grondona apologized before DAIA, but a criminal complaint for serious defamation under the Anti-discriminatory Law was brought against him; see *Report on antisemitism in Argentina 2003*, DAIA, pp. 21, 170; also see *Revista Fútbol Argentino*, 18.11.2003, for a serious claim against Grondona, denounced by the president of Club Independiente, an Argentine Jew who gave evidence of discrimination.

## ANTISEMITISM AT THE STATE ECHELON

Despite the fact that antisemitism became “politically incorrect” following the tragic Israel Embassy and AMIA bombings, there are still official spheres that continue to delegitimize Jews at the state level. One of these is the army. Although the democratic breakthrough in 1983 gave a boost to Jews seeking to participate in the state sphere by encouraging pluralism and greater inclusiveness, three events involving high military officers deserve attention in assessing contemporary antisemitism in Argentina. The first concerned the former Argentine Chief of Staff, General Ricardo Brinzoni, and General Suarez Mason, both under investigation for human right violations during the last military dictatorship. The second case involved the present army chief, General Roberto Bendini, who supported the democratization process from the beginning.

In 2001, following petitions by different human rights organizations against 662 army officers ( including General Ricardo Brinzoni), it emerged that the lawyer representing the Army was the attorney of the neo-Nazi New Triumph Party headed by Alejandro Biondini, a confessed antisemite. Although General Brinzoni apologized to the DAIA, and the Ministry of Defense ordered that the attorney be fired, the DAIA demanded that the Ministry of Defense undertake a full investigation.<sup>38</sup>

In 2002 Chief-of-Staff General Brinzoni once again landed in trouble. He had invited the journalist Hector Timerman (son of Jacobo Timerman, a prominent Jewish editor, who was kidnapped and tortured during the last military dictatorship), together with other noted personalities, to speak at a conference attended by the heads the armed forces. The younger Timerman demanded as a condition of attending the conference that the Chief of Staff accompany him to his parents’ tomb and apologize to them. General Ricardo Brinzoni's reaction was an insulting letter containing antisemitic allusions and quoting excerpts from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. Many democratic and pluralistic voices were heard in reaction to Brinzoni’s letter, which, once again, reveals the continued presence of antisemitism among military officers.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina, 2000-2001*, DAIA, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> See fragments of the letter, in *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, DAIA, pp. 24-25, and *Report on Antisemitism en Argentina 2000-2001*, DAIA, pp. 25-26; for an historical account of the attitude of the Argentine army towards the Jews, see Cristian Buchrucker, Fabian Brown and

The second case involved General Suarez Mason, responsible for major human rights violations under the last military dictatorship, who was prosecuted after DAIA filed a criminal complaint regarding his antisemitic comments during an interview published in the weekly *Noticias*. He was convicted and the three-and-a-half year prison sentence was appealed without success. However, some daily newspapers, such as *Clarín*, highlighted Mason's declaration that "Jews are Argentines, but they are a separate group," seeming to justify suspicions against Jews that they had an ethnocentric and self-segregating attitude towards the nation.<sup>40</sup>

The third case involving a high army officer erupted in September 2003 and enjoyed the widest coverage, when the press attributed antisemitic motives to the new Chief of Staff, General Roberto Bendini – a professional officer who was a strong supporter of democratization. He was appointed by President Kirchner immediately after he took office in May 2003. General Bendini addressed forty officers at the Escuela Superior de Guerra, warning of the risk that foreign intervention, including by Israeli groups, might appropriate vital resources in the southern Argentine territory of Patagonia. Although Bendini's speech about a hypothetical foreign conspiracy was released by a marginal Buenos Aires newspaper, it provoked a public scandal and a strong reaction by the DAIA which asked for an investigation. The Defense Ministry ordered an inquiry to clarify whether Bendini's alarm call had links with the infamous Plan Andinia, an anti-Jewish libel of the early 1970s that accused Israeli commandos and local Zionists of planning to seize Patagonian territory for Israeli objectives. As early as January 1986, under the Alfonsín government, the same libel had been revived by the local press of Rio Negro province, with information provided by intelligence services sources.<sup>41</sup>

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Gladys Jozami, "Los Judíos en el Ejército: Ausencias y Presencias," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, 14: p. 43, 1999, pp. 303-322.

<sup>40</sup> See *Report on Antisemitism 2003*, DAIA pp. 19, 170-171. Suarez Mason's conviction due to his declarations against the Argentine Jewish Community, the Jews, and Israel, received wide coverage in the daily press because of his record of human rights violations during the junta years. Although Suarez Mason was serving another sentence at the same time for human rights violation, it is very significant that the newspaper *Página 12* highlighted the fact that this former violator of human rights was convicted for antisemitism as a consequence of the DAIA file.

<sup>41</sup> For an historical account on Plan Andinia, see Leonardo Senkman, "The Right and Civilian Regimes, 1955-1976," in Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, *The Argentine Right. Its*

The official commission dispelled all suspicions of ulterior motives in General Bendini's speech, while President Nestor Kirchner gave his full support to the Chief of Staff. AMIA and DAIA reluctantly accepted the official inquiry's final report that denied any antisemitic undertones in the speech. Nonetheless, the incident demonstrated the likely hypothesis that there were some officers interested in using the press to discredit General Bendini for political purposes, attributing to him anti-Jewish prejudices<sup>42</sup>

It should be pointed out that the Argentine Army underwent profound changes during the 1990s, with a positive democratic orientation, designed to recover its prestige after its repressive practices during the previous military dictatorship<sup>43</sup>.

The army was not the only state institution that disseminated suspicion against the Jews in democratic Argentina. A previous public scandal at governmental level surfaced on 11 July 2002 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs in President Eduardo Duhalde's cabinet published a decree entitled "Designation of a Special Representative for Subjects Related to the Jewish Community in Civil Society." By that decree, the Executive Branch appointed Mr. Saul Rotsztain as honorary ambassador, in effect creating a liaison with the national and international Jewish community. The reaction of the Jewish community was to urge the Argentine President to immediately cancel the decree due to its discriminatory character and assumption that the Jewish minority would require a middleman of its own. Finally the decree was abolished. As the DAIA Report correctly observed, it seems that the only immigrants in Argentina that need to prove their national loyalty are the Jews. Nothing else could explain the appointment from above of a "special" spokesman to take care of communal issues as if Jews were "foreigners."<sup>44</sup>

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*Historical and Intellectual Origins, 1910- to the Present*, Wilmington DE, Scholarly Resources Inc, 1993, pp. 136-137; on the reappearance of the Plan Andinia plot in early 1986, fed by intelligence sources, see "Nueva version del Plan Andinia," *Nueva Sion*, 25 Enero 1986, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> See, *Página 12*, 15 Sept. 2003, p. 18; 18 Sept. 2003, p. 17; *Clarín*, 18 Sept. 2003, p. 18; *Diario Popular*, 18 Sept. 2003, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> See Marcelo Fabián Saim "Nuevos horizontes, nuevos dilemas. Las Fuerzas Armadas en la Argentina democrática" *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 42, no. 166 July-September, 2002, p. 263-238

<sup>44</sup> *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2000*, p. 27. By decree no. 1223, July 2002, Saul Rotsztain was appointed by the Foreign Minister Carlos Ruckauf as "special representative for subjects concerning the Jewish community in the civil society sphere," see *Clarín*, 13 July 2002.

The objection to the candidacy of Peronist senator Jose Alperovich to the government of the province of Tucumán in 2003 by local Church authorities was additional evidence of discrimination in the public arena on the grounds of a provincial constitutional requirement to take the oath of office on the New Testament. This constitution, passed during the governorship of General Bussi – a populist military man who embodied the legacy of Argentine authoritarianism, bars any citizen who does not profess to the Catholic faith from running for the governorship. DAIA's president condemned the public objections of the Tucumán Archbishop. In addition, some Buenos Aires newspapers deplored statements made by Avila Gallo, former ultra-nationalist legislator from Tucumán, accusing DAIA of following instructions of the State of Israel and arguing that for this reason it should not interfere in national issues like the Alperovich case. DAIA decided to file a criminal complaint in the Tucumán province against Ezequiel Avila Gallo for his publication during the electoral race of an antisemitic public announcement reinforcing the popular myth that Jews are plotting to take over the world. Fortunately, after Senator Alperovich appealed to a federal court against this discriminatory provincial constitutional provision, it was agreed that he could swear on the Old Testament during his investiture as new governor of Tucumán.<sup>45</sup>

In 2004 two prestigious public institutions were also the arena for antisemitic incidents. The incident most widely covered by the press concerned antisemitic insults voiced by Buenos Aires Legislative Deputy Mirta Onega, to her Jewish secretary. Although public opinion and some political sectors repudiated the offensive behavior of the deputy and demanded sanctions against her, the majority of the council's members reacted in a corporate mood, granting leniency to deputy Onega. The second verbal antisemitic incident occurred at the Faculty of Communication of the Universidad Nacional de Entre Rios, when a young rabbi was insulted and harassed by right-wing students during a public debate to which he was invited on a controversial subject relating to public health. Although the faculty staff did voice expressions of solidarity towards the rabbi, for such an incident to occur in a public and pluralistic place such as a national university is indeed cause for

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<sup>45</sup> See Sergio Rubin, "El primer gobernador que juró sobre la Biblia hebrea," *Clarín*, 23 Nov. 2003. *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2003*, DAIA, pp. 21, 160-161. A few years before, the non-observant Jew Nestor Perl took office as governor of southern province of Chubut.

concern.<sup>46</sup>

#### ANTISEMITISM AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL LEGITIMACY OF JEWS IN DEMOCRATIC ARGENTINE

After the two bomb attacks – the Israel Embassy in 1992 and the AMIA building in 1994 – the general assumption was that terrorists chose a “soft target” in a country with poor security standards in the face of international terrorism. Few believed that such a terrorist crime could be perpetrated because, beyond the easy access for foreign terrorists seeking to cross its international boundaries, Argentina is vulnerable precisely because of its unreliable internal security forces and judicial system.

Argentina, like other Latin American countries that underwent the political process of democratization after the brutal human rights violations of the 1970s, has not succeeded in implementing democratic reforms in the judiciary and police forces, which do not have power independent of the executive branch. After the collapse of the authoritarian regime, it was expected that democracy, through the rule of law, would protect citizens from any type of crime, including antisemitic violence. However, more than ten years after the AMIA bombing, Argentina's return to democracy is still perceived by many as unable to protect its vulnerable population, including its Jewish citizens and their communal institutions. In addition to the increased fear of crime felt by all civilians, the victims of anti-Jewish abuse also lost their trust in the institutions responsible for fighting terror and punishing criminals and offenders.

Instead of unveiling the so-called local link that perpetrated the worst anti-Jewish attack since World War II, the tangled investigation of the Israel Embassy and AMIA bombings highlights the public's distrust of the police, as well as the corruption that existed in the Argentine judiciary system. Rather than prosecuting antisemitism, the trial of suspects in the 1994 AMIA bombing uncovered a Pandora's box of corruption in the two major institutions responsible for security: the Argentine police and the judicial system. Democratic governments in Latin America – and Argentina is no exception – have been unable to protect their populations because, among other reasons, they have not implemented fundamental reforms of the security forces. The police forces were militarized during the dictatorships of the past and the

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<sup>46</sup> *Informe sobre Antisemitismo en la Argentina*, 2004, DAIA, p. 161.

democratic governments failed to control them. Many of the officers who were dealing with urban crime in the 1990s had participated in the “dirty wars” of the 1960s and 1970s, and are currently using similar tactics. As Menendez puts it: “the result is that police and security bodies are, for all practical purposes, unaccountable to civilian authority and immune to serious scrutiny by any institutional mechanism.”<sup>47</sup>

As far as post-dictatorship Argentina is concerned, some social scientists concluded that the re-emergence of social and political violence in the 1990s was due to the state's limited capacity for self-regulation in channeling demands, basically maintaining law and order, in a process of democratization with social dislocation produced by economic liberalization.<sup>48</sup> It should be remembered that the AMIA bombing occurred during a turbulent period in the democratization process, represented by an inflection point in the relationship between state and society in Argentina.<sup>49</sup>

It should be remembered that the complex transformation of the relationship between state and civilian society in the 1990s took place when pluralism and the civic participation of Jews in Argentina reached an unprecedented peak. Indeed, not only did Jewish institutions benefit, but other networks of autonomous associations and non-government organizations became strengthened. However, although this pluralist process reinforced the Jewish communal capacity for self-regulation in civilian society and for vigorously launching its anti-defamation campaigns in the public agenda, the changed Jewish status in the public sphere was not sufficient to modify old prejudices towards Argentine Jews rooted in either the social or the political sphere during the 1990s.

My central premise is that after the two tragic bombings, and in spite of increasing visibility in the public sphere, the Jewish community still suffers from the government's incapacity to grant the protection of law and order against general crime and terror targeted against Jews.

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<sup>47</sup> J. Mendez, “Problems of lawless violence: Introduction,” in J. Mendez, G.O'Donnell & P.S. Pineheiro, *The (Un)Rule of Law and the Underprivileged in Latin America*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> Carlos Waisman, “Civil Society, State Capacity, and the Conflicting ‘Logics’ of Economic and Political Change,” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe (EIAL)*, Tel Aviv University, vol. 13: 1, 2002, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> See Carlos Escude and Beatriz Gurevich, “Limits to Governability, Corruption and Transnational Terrorism: The cases of the 1992 and 1994 Attacks in Buenos Aires,” *EIAL*, vol. 14: 2, Tel Aviv University, 2003, pp. 127-148.

Moreover, Jews have yet to receive clear social legitimacy as a collective distinctive Argentine community among certain sectors of civilian society. While the former issue should be discussed through the tangled judicial investigation of the Israel Embassy and AMIA attacks, the latter issue may be studied by assessing the key findings of various public opinion surveys.

Soon after the AMIA blast, according to a public opinion poll conducted in March 1992,<sup>50</sup> 42 percent of the interviewees attributed the attack to an ethnic/religious general cause – allegedly the struggle between Islam and Judaism, 29 percent believed it was inspired by revenge for the assassination of a Palestinian leader, and 14 percent pointed to local political reasons. Only 6 percent thought it could have been triggered by antisemitism. More meaningful, 49 percent of the interviewees responded that the bombing target of international terrorism was Argentine society at large, while 39 percent claimed that the target was the Jewish community. However, for the interviewees who considered a third bombing avoidable, the key problem was not the Jews but the insecurity and lack of protection in Argentina (69 percent), and the ineffectiveness of the intelligence services (12 percent). In addition, the poll demonstrated a high degree of pessimism regarding the criminal investigation of the bombing due to the lack of trust among a large sector of society towards the country's justice and security forces.

From another limited poll conducted in 1994, we learn again that the real victim of the AMIA bombing was Argentine society at large; it was stressed that the Jewish community must be considered part and parcel of the entire population (70 percent), although Jews are perceived as Other (different race, religion, or a separate people). However, this democratic proclamation of inclusion and non-exclusion (fed by the mass media explanation that the attacks were targeted against the entire Argentine society) reveals fears and insecurity about terror that, according to interviewees, affected in different ways the Other and civilian society of Argentina alike.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Heriberto Murano, "Los atentados terroristas contra la Embajada de Israel y la AMIA según la opinión pública del área metropolitana de Buenos Aires," *INDICE*, Revista de Ciencias Sociales, DAIA, no. 7, 1995, pp. 159-166.

<sup>51</sup> Poll conducted in 1994 among candidate students for Social Sciences at Buenos Aires University to study ethnic identity and discrimination in Argentine society, see main findings and preliminary assessment in M. Lischetti et al., "Imágenes de alteridad y homogeneidad en las representaciones sociales," *INDICE*, , o. 7, op. cit., pp. 175-178, 180-184.

According to the results yielded by two important opinion surveys – the first conducted in 1992 and the second eight years later in 2000 with sponsorship by the American Joint Committee<sup>52</sup> – antisemitism is not presently a “high intensity” phenomenon in Argentina. The answers given by the respondents did not claim that there were no clear alarm signs or that virulent or consistent events had not occurred. In the same year, 1992, the Argentine consulate in New York held a symposium to publicize the survey, which showed that anti-Jewish sentiment was on the wane in the country, to the extent that prestigious political scientist Carlos Floria asked rhetorically whether some sectors of Argentine Jewry had not become “affixed to a sort of imaginary anti-Semitism.” The study in question had clearly disturbed Argentine Jewry’s umbrella body. DAIA argued that its findings were preliminary, and declined to take part in the symposium.<sup>53</sup>

However, beyond theoretical and methodological misgivings about the validity of the polls, it is likely that after the two bombings “politically correct” answers to the Jewish question were influenced by interviewees in the Gallup survey in 2000, who perhaps avoided a discriminatory answer about Jews. While in 1992 not less than 31 percent of the 1,900 respondents considered Jews and Arabs among the least integrated in the country, according to the Gallup survey in 2000 only 22 percent of the 1,333 interviewees considered Jews “less integrated” as compared to 32 percent for Arabs. In comparison with other ethnic-religious groups, Jews as a group integrated into society according to the last survey. If we exclusively focus on rejection expressed by interviewees, Jews and Arabs obtained 15 percent, as compared to rejection of Gypsies (45 percent), Koreans (26 percent), Peruvians (25

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<sup>52</sup> Survey conducted in 1992 by Edgardo Catterberg and Nora Vanoli, American Jewish Committee, New York, 1993; *Attitudes Toward Jews and the Holocaust in Argentina. A Public Opinion Survey*, conducted for the American Jewish Committee and AMIA by Gallup Argentina, April 27-May 3, 2000.

<sup>53</sup> From the outset DAIA has emphasized that the survey findings conducted by E. Catterberg in 1992 based on 1,900 interviews from Buenos Aires and provinces were preliminary. DAIA’s own earlier, more limited probe among nearly 1000 entry candidates to Buenos Aires University had yielded a less encouraging picture of anti-Jewish and other forms of bigotry. See *Latin American Weekly Report*, 14 October 1993, p. 474.

percent) and Paraguayans (19 percent).<sup>54</sup>

But if we focus on the issue of Jewish community particularity, the key finding of the 1992 survey was that not less than 40 percent of respondents considered that Jews and Arabs belonged to a separate people, different from the Argentine one. In the 2000 survey this prejudice diminished, though it persisted: a majority of Argentinians “strongly agree” (28 percent) or “somewhat agree” (35 percent) with the statement “The Jewish community in Argentina shows greater interest in itself than in national life.” In addition, to the question “whether they would like to have a Jewish person as a neighbor,” 75 percent of interviewees replied “it makes no difference,” 8 percent that “they would like to” and 15 percent that “they would rather not.” A solid majority of respondents “strongly agree” (26 percent) or “somewhat agree” (44 percent) with the statement: “The Jewish community has a right to its own institutions – schools, mutual aid societies, bank and hospitals – oriented to its own needs.” Although the number of affirmative answers to the question on rejection of Jews is not particularly high, the large majority gave an intermediate answer, which is most likely a meaningful indicator for grasping the Otherness of Jews among their non-Jewish neighbors.

The findings of both surveys lend credence to the DAIA assumption that a certain reasoning line of “relativism” in antisemitic manifestations is consolidated in public opinions and perception;<sup>55</sup> however, it should be noted that at the same time important sectors of Argentine society perceive the very presence of Jews as the reason for the attacks. This extreme perception of ‘Otherness’ is well substantiated by the survey conducted in 2000 on the issue of the AMIA bombing. According to this survey only 7 percent believed that the attack was aimed at “AMIA specifically;” 52 percent claimed that “Jews generally” were the target, while 31 percent saw the attack as aimed at “all Argentinians.” In addition, 34 percent of interviewees stated that Argentine society should take the lead in insisting that the AMIA bombing be solved; 17 percent thought that this task should be undertaken by “relatives of the victims,” 12 percent pointed to “human rights organizations” and 23 percent to

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<sup>54</sup> DAIA *Reports on Antisemitism* reveal during the 1990s a steady high degree of discriminatory expressions and manifestations suffered by Oriental immigrants (Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese) as well as by Latin American immigrants from neighboring countries, see pp. 50-54).

<sup>55</sup> *DAIA Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2000-2001*, p. 37.

the “Jewish community.”<sup>56</sup>

This specific kind of ‘Otherness’, implying neither exclusion nor discrimination, that characterizes Jewish citizens is also shown by a pioneer attitudinal study that was conducted by the Bnai Brith in Buenos Aires between November 2002 and January 2003 to measure the extent to which the economic crisis in the fall of 2001 might have prompted antisemitic outbursts. In a comparison with other discriminated immigrant communities in the country, the main finding was that Jews in Argentina were not the target in the December 2001 violent riots on socioeconomic grounds, and were not discriminated against like other “foreign” immigrants such as Koreans, Paraguayans and Bolivians. However, in the eyes of the respondents, Jews’ Otherness as citizens is salient precisely because both their positive stereotype (envied by Argentine citizens under the assumption that Jews were able to overcome the economic crisis more easily than ‘ordinary people’) and their negative stereotype (that they hate, usually repeating Judeophobia clichés ) exemplify the difference between Jews and Argentinians. This extreme perception of Otherness results in viewing the repelled Koreans (rejected among the foreigners living in Argentina) as more similar to Argentinians as fellow citizens than Jews.<sup>57</sup>

Although this finding relating to the Otherness of Buenos Aires Jews dispels any bias of exclusion, we need to assess in depth the meaning of inclusion of Jews in Argentine civilian society and go beyond the common bias that Jews deliberately isolate themselves within the Jewish

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<sup>56</sup> Edgardo Catterberg and Nora Vanoli, *Attitudes toward Jews in Argentina: a Public Opinion Survey*, American Jewish Committee, New York, 1993; *Attitudes toward Jews and the Holocaust in Argentina. A Public-Opinion Survey*, AJC and AMIA, conducted by Gallup Argentina, April 27-May 3 2000, New York, July 2000, pp. 2-5. An earlier and more limited poll, this one conducted by DAIA in 1991 among some 1000 candidates for entry to Buenos Aires University alone, revealed that Jews (77 percent) and Arabs (47 percent) were considered among the ethnic groups that work exclusively for their own benefit, see Beatriz Gurevich-Rubel, *Heterogeneidad cultural, étnica y religiosa: Prejuicio y discriminación*, DAIA, 1992 pp. 9, 11, and 14.

<sup>57</sup> I thank Mr. Roberto Nul, former chairman of Bnai Brith Argentina, for letting me examine the main findings of an unpublished sociological survey on attitudinal orientations of the Buenos Aires population towards the Jewish community, directed by Lic.Jorge Karol, conducted by Moiguer Consultants during November 2002-February 2003, under the auspices of Bnai Brith Argentina.

community.<sup>58</sup> This type of ambiguous inclusion of Jews although they are still perceived as the “Other” must be examined in the broad context of new discriminated ethnic minorities and Others in Argentina today. According to reports received by the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), antisemitic events represented only 7 percent of the total number of reports. This low number in 2003 can be understood against the background of the well-perceived Other, for example, ethnic/immigration groups (from neighboring countries and Korea) (30 percent) and persons with disability/disease (25 percent). For 2004, antisemitism figures declined, only 5 percent, as did figures for ethnicity, 14 percent, and rose for persons with disability/diseases (30 percent)

#### PUBLIC INSECURITY, IMPUNITY, AND FEAR OF ANTISEMITISM AFTER THE UNSOLVED BOMBING OF AMIA

Regardless of these declining figures, fear of antisemitism increased in Argentine society already hit by violence and lack of justice. Such fears among the Jews may be explained as a result of the state's inability to provide a legal mechanism to deal with the general public sense of insecurity and the failure to democratize the security forces and to prevent the rising crime rate.

After the bombing of 1994, at a large demonstration in downtown Buenos Aires attended by at least 150,000, one of the slogans on display read “We are all Argentine Jews,” reflecting not only the general sense of solidarity with the Jewish community but the hope that the bombing would not unleash further acts of violence. Unfortunately, these expectations were not fulfilled. Fear of antisemitism after the unsolved AMIA massacre paralleled the general fear of crime and the extent of public insecurity, irrespective of the real number of anti-Jewish incidents and the global wave of antisemitism. The corrupt performance on the part of Argentine intelligence and police agents in the criminal investigation as well as the obstructionist role of the judge in the AMIA trial received extensive media attention and contributed to the Jews' increasing loss of trust in the justice system.

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<sup>58</sup> In 1996 a poll conducted in Buenos Aires DF and greater Buenos Aires neighborhoods revealed that 49 percent of the 400 interviewees believed that Jews deliberately isolated themselves within the Jewish community. See the poll published by the Buenos Aires weekly *Noticias*, 27 July 1996).

In the years following the 1992 and 1994 attacks there was an alarming correlation between a steady increase in unemployment, the worsening of income distribution, and an increase in crime. Since 1992, this trend suggests a causal relationship between the restructuring of the economy according to neo-liberal lines and rising crime in a scenario where violence is perceived by some members of the vulnerable population, especially youth, as a means of participating in a social network and being able to survive. This alternative social network for surviving was, in turn, reinforced by a high degree of corruption in the police force, and criminal acting with impunity, among other reasons, because police officers were involved in crime and extortion practices. Perhaps this explains, in part, the low rate of reporting crimes to police stations and the steadily increasing sense of insecurity in the population. Not surprisingly, public opinion polls conducted after the 1994 bombing reveal deep concern about insecurity, lack of police protection and transnational terror.<sup>59</sup>

The issue of the Buenos Aires police is paramount regarding the lack of government accountability and its involvement in crimes. In 1994, the year of the AMIA bombing, a group of police officers was involved in the “Wilde massacre” (in the province of Buenos Aires) where five people were killed by 239 bullets. The victims were innocent. After a lengthy legal process, nine police officers were convicted of homicide, but the sentence was reversed by the Supreme Court in 1996 and in October 1999 the case was closed. None of the convicted remains in jail. The investigation of the bombing revealed the net of corruption within the Buenos Aires police; one of the right-hand men of the chief of police was involved in both the Wilde case and the AMIA blast.

Some police officers were also charged with the killing of the news photographer Jose Luis Cabezas on January 1997. Like the investigation of the AMIA case, this inquiry also uncovered a web of corruption involving police officers and criminals. A pioneer attempt to reform the Buenos Aires police, initiated by Minister of Justice Leon Carlos Arslanian, was launched after Cabezas’s killing. On 23 December 1997, the governor of Buenos Aires announced that the province’s police force

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<sup>59</sup> I agree with the analysis of Lucia Dammert and Mary Fran T. Malone, “Inseguridad y Temor en la Argentina: El Impacto de la Confianza en la Policía y la Corrupción sobre la Percepción ciudadana del Crimen,” *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 42: p. 166, July-September 2002, pp. 286-287; after the AMIA bombing, the sense of insecurity and loss of confidence in the police were emphasized in a public opinion poll, see Heriberto Murano, op. cit., pp. 159-166, supra (49).

would be reformed. A large number of men had been dismissed from the Buenos Aires police force in the course of a major reorganization. A Federal Commissioner was appointed chief of police for 90 days and several important positions were eliminated. The police force was made directly accountable to the Supreme Court of Justice, a measure unprecedented in Argentina.<sup>60</sup>

A few days later, gravestones were desecrated in two Jewish cemeteries in Buenos Aires – thirty-five in the La Tablada cemetery on Christmas Eve 1997, and nineteen in the Liniers cemetery on New Year's Eve. Jewish leaders had reason to suspect that some of the discharged policemen were responsible for the vandalism in the cemeteries. Even more, it was claimed by both Jewish and local leaders that the desecration was a direct response to the reforms within the police force. As news of the extent of police corruption spread, so too did the suspicion that certain groups within the federal police force were involved in antisemitic acts.<sup>61</sup> However, the reforms of Minister Arslanian were cancelled during the 1999 electoral campaign and the incoming governor, Carlos Ruckauf, named a former officer involved in three aborted putsches, as Minister of Security.<sup>62</sup> In 1998, 173 people were killed by police in Buenos Aires city and the greater Buenos Aires area, and 201 were injured. At the same time, 53 policemen were killed and 97 injured.<sup>63</sup> In the first eight months of 1999, ninety people were killed by the Buenos Aires police.

Corruption in the performance of both police and judges in the

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<sup>60</sup> Laura Tedesco, "La ñata contra el vidrio: urban violence and democratic governability in Argentina," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 19 (2000), pp. 535-539.

<sup>61</sup> See *Informe antisemitismo en Argentina*, DAIA, December 1997 (unpublished report).

<sup>62</sup> Aldo Rico was one of the leaders of the Carapintadas movement, which organized three military rebellions against President Raul Alfonsín. The main demand, then, was to stop the trials against human rights violations perpetrated during the 1976-1982 military dictatorship. After the second rebellion, Rico separated himself from the Carapintadas and organized a political right-wing party, MODIN. He was elected Mayor of San Miguel in the Buenos Aires Province and in October 1999 was re-elected with more than 70 percent of the vote. Later, Aldo Rico was fired and a police officer was named Minister of Security. As L. Tedesco explains, this clearly shows that the electorate preferred a hardliner to deal with the Buenos Aires police (human rights abuses included) rather than a process of demilitarization and civil control, which were key aims of Minister Arslanian reform. See L. Tedesco, *Ibidem*, pp. 540-541.

<sup>63</sup> Centro Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), *Derechos Humanos en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA-CELS, 1998, p. 16.1.

AMIA investigation revealed a scandalous picture of the link between the mafia and impunity. In 1995, the U.S. State Department's Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, Philip C. Wilcox, attributed the lack of substantive investigation results to poor coordination among Argentine security and intelligence networks, and to the ill-will of the Buenos Aires provincial police.<sup>64</sup> The Buenos Aires police force has a long tradition of involvement in corruption, connections to violent right-wing groups, and antisemitic events.<sup>65</sup>

When the AMIA Jewish community center was blown up, its leaders' hopes of finding those locally responsible were not high. Jewish leaders believed that although the bombing was carried out by foreign Islamic terrorists, they were assisted by agents of the local police who provided them with the necessary intelligence, vehicles, explosives and immigration documentation.<sup>66</sup> Several of the twenty suspects brought to trial and accused of participation in the AMIA bombing were former officers of the Province of Buenos Aires. The most conspicuous was Juan Jose Ribelli, a high-ranking officer (comisario) of the provincial police. But also prosecuted were another comisario, six sub-comisarios, and two official policemen and two official inspectors.<sup>67</sup>

In 1997, there appeared to be a major breakthrough in the case. Links between the car bomb that blew up the building and the Buenos Aires police force led to the arrest of four police officers. It was discovered that the father of police commander Juan Jose Ribelli, a retired railway worker, had received two and a half million dollars prior

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<sup>64</sup> U.S. Department of State, 28 Sept. 1995 Testimony: Philip Wilcox on International Terrorism in Latin America, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "International Terrorism in Latin America," Testimony to the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, 28 Sept. 1995, Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr., Coordinator for Counterterrorism; Department of State

<sup>65</sup> See Carlos Dutil and Ricardo Ragendorfer, *La Bonaerense. Historia criminal de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1997; on the involvement of policeman and the men incriminated by justice in the AMIA bombing case, see pp. 76-92, 103, 105, 118, 205-208, 240-250, 259-264, 302-306.

<sup>66</sup> See *La Denuncia, DAIA-AMIA. El documento completo presentado al juez Galeano con los hechos y los nombres de quienes obstaculizaron la investigación*, document presented by DAIA-AMIA authorities to Judge Jose Galeano in September 1997, Buenos Aires, Planeta, 1997.

<sup>67</sup> For the backgrounds of the police and army officers sent to jail by Judge Galeano, see Sergio Kiernan, *Unfinished Business. The AMIA Bombing, Six Years Later*, American Jewish Committee, New York, 1999, and *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2000-2001*, DAIA, op. cit, pp. 20-21.

to the bombing. This money had apparently been given to his son, who then signed it over to him. Juan Jose Ribelli has since been charged with supplying the van used to carry out the attack. Former chief of police Pedro Klodczyk, who retired in 1996, admitted that some policemen did make money illegally. He conceded that those under his command were out of control and he called Ribelli a “criminal.”<sup>68</sup>

But it was not until 27 February 2000 that Judge Galeano filed charges, and then against only five suspects, who he considered “necessary parties” to the bombing: one civilian, Carlos Telleldin, and four senior officers in the Buenos Aires Province police force, the most notorious being Comisario Juan Jose Ribelli. Telleldin, picked up by Argentine authorities after the 1994 bombing, was charged with recombining car parts and fencing stolen property. He repaired, painted and resold the Renault Traffic van used allegedly as a car bomb eight days before the AMIA explosion. Telleldin has a criminal record, and his father held the rank of major inspector in the Cordoba Province police department. During the military dictatorship, Telleldin senior ran a clandestine detention center.<sup>69</sup>

The four policemen, according to the judge, were the heads of an organization that dealt in stolen goods and collected “protection payments” from criminals; they had the van eight days prior to the explosion. While the judge claimed at first that Telleldin had been blackmailed by the policemen and gave up the van as payment, and then that he was their business partner, according to Kiernan's survey there was no conclusive evidence of the connection between the policemen and the terrorists.

One of the gravest revelations made by Galeano in his writ detailing the charges against the suspects was that Buenos Aires police actively sabotaged his investigation in order to protect themselves. Tapes went missing, raids turned up less evidence than expected, and important clues were not pursued. A whole chapter of the writ is dedicated to detailing the several false leads fed to the judge by policemen trying to derail the investigation: false witnesses coached to sound convincing, forged documents, phony forensics. Another serious charge by the judge against parties that hindered his work was the sabotage against the investigation

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<sup>68</sup> See *La Denuncia, AMLA-DALA*, op. cit. pp. 99-100, 113-132.

<sup>69</sup> See Carlos Dutil and Ricardo Ragenderofer, *La Bonaerense*, op. cit. pp. 79-82; Sergio Kiernan, *Atrocity in Buenos Aires, The AMIA Bombing, One Year Later*, American Jewish Committee, New York, 1995, pp. 11-12.

by the Protection of Constitutional Order force of the Federal Police, an outfit supposedly dedicated to combating terrorism. Galeano suspected that the force made “a gentleman’s agreement” with the Buenos Aires Province police force according to which they would not investigate each other.<sup>70</sup>

The Argentine intelligence agency SIDE, on the other hand, tried to disengage the local policemen from any sort of links with Islamic terrorism. In the confidential report of its discoveries to Judge Galeano, SIDE states that both the planning and the execution of the bombing were carried out exclusively by Iranian citizens: the Traffic van used in the attack was rented in Buenos Aires by Iranian diplomat Rabbani, while the explosive used was purchased in 1990 in Colombia, smuggled to Venezuela, and from there taken to Brazil on an Iranian ship. The cargo remained in Brazil for three years before passing to Argentina. Finally, Ibrahim Hussein Berro, a member of the Lebanese fundamentalist group Hizballah, carried out the attack.<sup>71</sup>

To date there is no evidence that the AMIA bombing could have been organized and carried out by Argentinians; however, it most likely was organized abroad and carried out by non-Argentinians with local help. But it will not come as a surprise if the charges of the alleged involvement of retired policeman in the local connection are substantiated, bearing in mind the many complaints about hostility voiced by policemen in service towards the victims’ families.<sup>72</sup>

In May 2003, the newly inaugurated President, Nestor Kirchner, made several moves in the right direction by ordering the release of documents held by SIDE that could shed light on the role of the intelligence state agency in the investigation. The opening of SIDE files was triggered by demands made by DAIA, AMIA, Memoria Activa (one of the leading victims’ families organization), and several other groups in order to establish the role of the intelligence agency in the investigation. Late in 2002, the Federal Criminal Oral Tribunal ordered fourteen agents

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<sup>70</sup> Sergio Kierman, *Unfinished Business: The AMIA Bombing, Six Years later*, AJC Publication, www.ajc.org. In The Media/Publications Print. asp. did+146, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> See Sergio Kiernan report *A Tangled road to Justice*, AJC, New York, 2003, p. 9, based on press release from *El País*, Madrid, 23 June 2003.

<sup>72</sup> On 20 December 2000, in La Plata, former agents of the Provincial Police of Buenos Aires broadcast recorded speeches by Hitler during a visit paid by families’ of the victims of the AMIA blast to the Ministry of Security, Government of Buenos Aires Province Buenos Aires, see, *Informe sobre antisemitismo en Argentina, 2000-2001*, DAIA, p. 71.

and former agents, including Menem's chief of intelligence, Hugo Anzorregue, to appear before them for interrogation. But former President Eduardo Duhalde issued a presidential decree blocking the initiative on national security grounds.<sup>73</sup>

#### CORRUPTION IN THE JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION

Striking evidence of corruption and lying in the AMIA judicial investigation was shown by the removal in December 2003 of the official in charge, Federal Judge Galeano, after more than five years to substantiate the case; and by the fiasco of the oral and public proceedings regarding the terrorist attack against the AMIA building. This tribunal started on September 2001 its public proceedings against the twenty suspects of being part of the local connection that helped to blow up the AMIA building.

The scandal around the judge's performance was preceded by a public disclosure against him written by Claudio Lifschitz, former under-secretary of Galeano's court, who denounced some serious irregularities during the judicial investigation.<sup>74</sup> In the same year, one of Galeano's former aides, Javier de Gamas, was jailed and charged with obstruction of justice, perjury, and lying to the court, which further tarnished Galeano's prestige.

One of the trial's major aims was to investigate the extortion committed by policemen of the Buenos Aires police force and the furnishing and final delivery of the vehicle to carry out the attack.<sup>75</sup> By the end of 2003, AMIA, DAIA, and family and friends of the victims presented a unified criminal complaint. They together requested that the tribunal impose sentences of life imprisonment on four of the detained (one civilian and three policemen) due to primary participation, and a twenty-year prison term on the fifth policeman detained for secondary participation. The criminal complaint presented by the group Memoria Activa requested the maximum sentence for Carlos Alberto Telleldin

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<sup>73</sup> See Sergio Kiernan, *A Tangled Road to Justice*, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Claudio Lifschitz worked for more than two years together with Galeano in the judicial investigation, and also denounced obstructive practices committed by SIDE. See his book, Claudio Lifschitz, *AMIA. Por que se hizo fallar la investigación*, Buenos Aires, Departamento Editorial 2000, pp. 10-12.

<sup>75</sup> See Juez Juan J. Galeano "Texto completo del auto de elevación a Juicio Oral", *Diario Judicial*, 14/9/2001; *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, DAIA, pp. 30-31.

only; the prosecution requested life imprisonment for the five above-mentioned detained and very harsh prison sentences for related crimes.

On the other hand, the extent of the crime itself prompted more than fifty related proceedings for crimes committed in connection with the investigation, such as the removal by the Federal Police of evidence essential for the investigation, false testimony, violation of house arrest, and other wrongs. The oral and public proceedings, instead of satisfying the public's need for a thorough investigation, put Argentine state institutions on the rack.

In May 2003 Judge Galeano made public a four hundred-page judicial statement calling for arrests and explaining his findings on the Iranian connection. The writ had serious shortcomings about the identity of the van's suicide driver, how he came into the country and who helped him carry out the attack.

Notwithstanding these lacunae and doubts, the Iranian connection and Hezbollah perpetrators were presented by both the Argentine SIDE and the Israeli-Intelligence services as the ultimate and final proof for incrimination against the criminals responsible of the Embassy and AMIA bombings.<sup>76</sup>

Judge Galeano was obliged to resign in the fall of 2003, in view of the impending costly suit by AMIA for his dereliction as judge and that organization's call for his impeachment. In addition, in mid-April 2004, the Federal Public Tribunal decided to acquit all the prosecutors in the AMIA case. In fact, in a dramatic turn the Tribunal decided to accept the legal argumentation against the prosecutors posed by Telleldin's lawyer.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, on 2 September 2004, after the special proceeding against the entire police brigade suspected of being involved in the bombing was declared null, the Tribunal pronounced a verdict of not guilty and the four policemen and the civilian Carlos Telleldin were freed.

This scandalous fiasco of the court in the case of the AMIA bombing diminishes even further the hope that the attack against the Israel Embassy building in March 1992, will eventually be solved.

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<sup>76</sup> See Yossi Melman's account of the secret SIDE report handed personally to the Mossad chief by the head of the security agency Miguel Angel Toma during his visit to Israel, English version of *Haaretz*, 11 March 2003. According to Melman, the final SIDE report's interpretation of the Iranian determination to support both attacks was grounded in hatred of Jews and Israel as well as retaliation against President Menem's cancellation of the promised nuclear technology to Iran.

<sup>77</sup> *Informativo OJI-Latin American WJC*, March 2004, *Clarín*, 14 April 2004, *Diario Judicial*, 15 April 2004.

In 2002, a special commission comprised by judges was set up to investigate judicial seriously defective procedures in more than twenty files of the Supreme Court. Supreme Court's delay in the proceedings on the Embassy blast is among the more serious imputations presented by the prosecution<sup>78</sup>.

After the lapse of one decade and the governorship of three presidents, President Nestor Kirchner prompted the impeachment of Supreme Court President Julio Nazareno and passed a law providing for an American-style system of judicial appointments with public hearings. The president explicitly stated that this reform was aimed at “cronyism.” The Israel Embassy case seemed to be very much on everybody’s mind at the time of parliamentary discussion about the proposed new law.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that instead of presenting reliable findings from a thorough judicial investigation in progress, during the last decade conspiracy theories and unproved political interpretations on both bombings emerged, aiming to politically discredit the Menem administration.

The Syrian connection theory aims to link Menem himself with Syrian terrorists due to his Syrian family ancestry and Syrian friends. According to this conspiracy theory, Munzer al-Kassar masterminded both bombings in 1992 and 1994. Al-Kassar was a one-time business partner of exiled former Syrian Vice President Rifat Assad, uncle of the current President Bashar al-Assad, and also brother-in-law of Syrian Military Intelligence chief Ali Dubah. Involved in drug and arms trafficking and terror since the 1970s, al-Kassar escorted then-presidential candidate Menem on his 1988 trip to Syria. Al-Kassar was also present at a Damascus meeting with Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Haddam at which Menem signed a document promising Argentine technical expertise for a Syrian nuclear reactor. At the same meeting, al-Kassar also brokered the planned sale to Syria by Argentina of Condor II ground-to-ground missiles with a range of one thousand kilometers. In exchange, according to this theory, the broker received an offer of 100,000,000 dollars to help finance Menem in the next elections. Once Menem had won the 1989 elections, with ease, he reneged on the nuclear reactor promise and, to strengthen ties with the U.S., canceled the

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<sup>78</sup> See a resume account provided by *Iton Gadol* services (Israel), and Informativo DAIA, March 2004; also Sergio Kiernan, *A Tangled Road to Justice*, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Justice Nazareno quit his office early in July 2003, and other Menem-appointed Supreme Court members were removed, see *A Tangled Road to Justice*, p. 9, *Nueva Sion*, August 2003.

Condor II program.

Another conspiracy theory that developed in recent years refers to a cover-up fabricated by Menem administration officers to obscure investigation on both the Embassy and AMIA bombings. This theory, intimately related with the other, claims that important clues and information linked to the Syrian connection were never acted upon by the court, and were not made available to the Supreme Court or to Judge Galeano.<sup>80</sup>

The cover theory was vigorously denounced by Congresswoman Nilda Garre, head of the special force for investigation of the Embassy and AMIA cases during the Fernando de la Rúa administration.<sup>81</sup> Escude and Gurevich's scholarly essay attempts to prove with the cover-up theory the hypothesis that government reluctance to advance the investigation in any direction might prove incriminating (to the Menem administration) or destabilizing to either the Menem or the De la Rúa administration. According to the authors, the interplay between corruption, incipient state disintegration and a transnational terrorist menace that struck twice in Argentina was possible, among other reasons, because local elements involved were officially linked to a state apparatus that does not fully respond to legitimate chains of command.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Among accounts written by journalists and politicians on the Syrian connection theory, see Jorge Lanata y Joe Goldman, *Cortinas de humo. Una investigación independiente sobre los atentados contra la embajada de Israel y la AMIA*, Buenos Aires, Planeta 1994; Norberto Bermudez, *La pista Siria*, Montevideo, Urraca, 1993; Norberto Bermudez y Carlos Torrenzo, "Lo que no se investigó sobre los atentados," newspaper *Río Negro* (11, 12 and 13 January 2000); Horacio Lutzky, *Caso AMIA, La Deuda Interna*, Nueva Sion, Informe especial, 10 July 2003; former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Menem government, Domingo Cavallo recalled in a book the pressure exerted by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker to cancel the Condor project in order to gain U.S., European and Israeli confidence in Argentina, see Domingo Cavallo, *El Peso de la Verdad*, Buenos Aires, 1997; see also the legislative first and second reports, "Informe de la comisión bicameral especial de seguimiento de la investigación de los atentados a la embajada de Israel y al edificio de la AMIA", Congreso de la Nación, Buenos Aires, 1997 and 1999; "Por qué se silenció la pista Siria: atentado, investigación," *Nueva Sion*, October 1999, and 11 August 2000; Gabriel Levinas, *La ley bajo los escombros. Amia: lo que no se hizo*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998

<sup>81</sup> See the interview of Nilda Carre with Diego Rosenberg and her charges in *Tres Puntos*, 20 September 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Carlos Escude and Beatriz Gurevich, "Limits to Governability, Corruption and Transnational Terrorism: The Case of the 1992 and 1994 Attacks in Buenos Aires," *Tel Aviv University: ELAL*, 14: 2, 2003, pp. 127-148

Finally, considerable evidence linked to the cover-up theory prompted Memoria Activa in July 1999 to accuse the Argentine state of denial of justice before the Inter-American Committee on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS).<sup>83</sup>

#### DEMOCRATIZATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE LEGACY OF ANTISEMITISM IN ARGENTINA: SOME CONCLUSIONS

The transition to democracy granted Jews full participation in civilian society and contributed largely to breaking new ground for their social legitimacy as integrated citizens in Argentina. Cultural, traditional and religious events, which constitute the institutional activity of the Jewish community in the country, gained considerable exposure in the mass media and the public sphere. However, the question is if this increased exposure gained a parallel degree of social legitimacy to the Otherness of the Jewish community. On the one hand, the legacy of antisemitism has been waning as the liberalization process of democracy advances, giving a boost to countering Jew-hatred; on the other, it resists moving away.

Democratized civil society played a crucial role in turning anti-Jewish discrimination into a “politically incorrect” phenomenon, especially after the two lethal bombings that shocked Argentine society. The fact that Jewish umbrella organizations and major institutions have succeeded in gaining respectability and much attention precisely for their demand for justice in the Argentine public sphere merits careful monitoring and analysis. Two concurrent processes are taking place in Argentina that affect the citizenship and ethnicity of the Jews. The more pluralistic and democratic that Argentine civil society becomes, the more politically incorrect traditional antisemitism appears to be, though it has hardly disappeared. On the other hand, the more Jewish institutions in the public sphere participate in demanding justice, the more they are valued and appreciated by non-Jews as citizens who are deeply involved in fighting for democracy and against impunity. Paradoxically, the plight of the victims of the two attacks that the Argentine judicial system has been unable or unwilling to solve has in fact resulted in them being the recipients of ‘top citizenship compensation’, precisely because they are victims of a defenseless democracy. The full access of Argentine Jewry to the public sphere to demand justice is perceived by some Jewish leaders

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<sup>83</sup> For the Memoria Activa presentation before the OAS Committee on Human Rights, see URL <http://www.memoriaactiva.com/oea.htm>; Sergio Kiernan, *A Tangled Road to Justice*, p. 10.

as a way of becoming more “Argentine,” being granted “full citizenship” by the democratized public opinion precisely because they participate together with other Argentine citizens in the common fight against impunity. However, this sort of upgrading citizenship is a very paradoxical compensation, since the Jewish institutions are fenced by cement blocks marking symbolic boundaries between outside-inside, the public street of the citizen and the protected ‘ghetto’ of the Jew. As Laura Glanc point it out, “the fences build a threshold before the Jews: inside the fence the Jew is just a Jew, when he passes to the outside he becomes a Jewish citizen.”<sup>84</sup>

At the popular level, antisemitic discourse has continued. Football matches provide one disquieting example. Preventive measures, including an education campaign aimed at furthering tolerance, have been implemented jointly by Asociación de Fútbol Argentino (AFA) and DAIA in order to discourage anti-Jewish insults and injurious chants by rival fans voiced during popular matches. But the problem of Judeophobia is deeply grounded at the grassroots level.<sup>85</sup>

Another important point is the social consensus in democratic Argentina regarding the denunciation of antisemitism in the broader context of human rights, and the fight against other forms of ethnic, religious, sexual or cultural discrimination. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in press headlines reproving compulsive expulsions, physical coercion and detentions for indefinite periods of ordinary citizens, as well as arbitrary acts by officials against illegal immigrants. Against this background, the dimension of danger posed by antisemitism is lessened.

Non-governmental Human rights organizations are very active in fighting the legal framework set up by the National Immigration Office and Auxiliary Immigration Police’s agencies for regulation purposes. They focus on policies aimed at immigrants from neighboring countries that promote prejudice and discriminatory actions, especially against Bolivian laborers.<sup>86</sup> In this context, it is no surprise that a leading human

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<sup>84</sup> See, Laura Glanc “Vallados”, in *Índice*, Revista de Ciencias Sociales, No 23, Buenos Aires, 2005, p.128.

<sup>85</sup> Informe sobre Antisemitismo, 2000/01, DAIA p. 23. For a discursive analysis at grassroot level of popular antisemitism during football matches between 1995-2004, see Mauricio Dimant, “Antisemitismo y Cultura Popular en Argentina. El judío como el Otro en el football” (unpublished research project, Jerusalem, 2005)

<sup>86</sup> 2002-2003 Centro Estudios Legales y Sociales-(CELS) *Report on Human Rights*.

rights organization like CELS has disregarded antisemitism as an urgent topic in its anti-discrimination agenda. Other urgent problems, such as institutional violence, and discrimination against disabled persons, old-age pensioners, homosexuals, immigrants from neighboring countries and refugees, took precedence in the CELS report on the situation of human rights in Argentina for the years following 2000.<sup>87</sup>

Furthering pluralism and cohabitation in a more liberal civic society prompted joint projects of the Jewish community, the media, the Catholic and other Christian churches, as well as important ONG associations in Argentina for humanitarian, ecumenical, and pluralist purposes. Cultivating the memory of the Holocaust also occupies a significant place at both civilian society and governmental levels. Cardinal Primate Antonio Quarrachino unveiled a Holocaust memorial in one of the chapels of the National Cathedral, and other memorials were also erected in the provinces of Chaco and Tucumán. The National Institute against Discrimination, Racism and Xenophobia (INADI), under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, has taken a leading role in preventing antisemitism and punishing its perpetrators. Following the extradition of former SS captain Erich Priebke from Argentina, INADI signed an agreement on the transfer of information regarding Nazi war criminals still living in South America. Simultaneously, since 1998, efforts were made to expand and tighten the anti-discrimination law, which INADI invoked to try anti-Jewish offenders. In accordance with a law promulgated in 1995, Jews were remunerated for the High Holy Days (the Jewish New Year and the Day of the Atonement), while DAIA asked the Labor Commission of the Congress to consider including these dates as national holidays.

Also at the official level, the Menem and Kirchner governments permitted access to classified archival documents and released those concerning the arrival of alleged war criminals in Argentina in the post-war years. For the first time, the Argentine Foreign Affairs Ministry sponsored and financed the official CEANA Scholar Commission, an unprecedented international team for investigating Nazis who entered Argentina during and after World War II, their bank accounts and their deposits of gold in the country. DAIA was an active member of this government commission and also of the committee set up by the Ministry of Education to plan the construction of a national monument

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<sup>87</sup> *Informe sobre antisemitismo en Argentina 2000-01*, p. 24; 2002-2003 CELS Report on Human Rights.

to the memory of the Holocaust. All these examples are part and parcel of what DAIA qualifies as “positive context” of the new political culture in Argentina, aimed at “highlighting positive attitudes on the part of the State, non-governmental organizations and civilian society with respect to antisemitic discrimination.”<sup>88</sup>

None of the official DAIA *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina* emphasizes the impact of the violent events of the Intifada al-Aksa since September 2000 to the present. Quite the opposite; in fact both reports claim that, in sharp contrast with the European scenario, the impact of this violence has not caused an increase of Judeophobia or raised the level of conflict in local relationships between Arab-Muslim communities and the Jewish community. The most outstanding evidence of this good relationship recalled by the last DAIA *Report on Antisemitism 2002* is a joint public declaration signed by DAIA and FEARAP, umbrella organizations of both communities. This declaration, without precedent, merited the sponsorship of President Eduardo Duahde, and was signed at the Palacio Presidencial (Rose House) on 8 April 2002. The respective leaders expressed the mutual desire to reach a peaceful solution for the conflict in the Middle East and avoid any hostilities that would affect Jews and Muslims in Argentina. According to the DAIA report, this joint strategy of DAIA and FEARAB created a scenario for positive cohabitation between Jews and Arabs, avoiding the possibility that an external conflict “may be transformed into a platform for discriminatory expressions and actions that could be antisemitic, anti-Arab, or anti-Muslim.”<sup>89</sup>

This constructive position adopted by the Arab organization notwithstanding, FEARAB was also involved in organizing anti-Israel

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<sup>88</sup> See DAIA *Report of Antisemitism in Argentina 2003*, pp. 98-123, and DAIA *Report 2004*, pp. 135-159.

<sup>89</sup> *Report on Antisemitism in Argentina 2002*, p. 72. FEARAB-Argentina (Federación de Entidades Argentino-Árabes de la Republica Argentina) is the umbrella federation of Arab entities in the country, created by inspiration of the Syrian Baath party. Its creation is evidence of the growing political influence of the ruling party in Damascus on the Arab community in Argentina. One indication of rapprochement between FEARAB and DAIA began on the occasion of DAIA's 60th founding anniversary when the head of the Arab umbrella federation appeared in the company of President Carlos Menem; another indication was DAIA's warning against anti-Arab generalizations and bigotry in the Argentine media following the AMIA bombing, see Ignacio Klich, ‘Argentina’ *American Jewish Year Book 1996*, New York, 1996, p. 232. On FEARAB-Argentina, see [www.fearab-arg.org.ar](http://www.fearab-arg.org.ar)

public demonstrations under the increased pressure of an Islamization process that the principal Arab communal institutions have been undergoing in Argentina.

True, the public debate on Israeli policy since the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000 has not been accompanied by reports of a dramatic rise in antisemitic incidents. But the mainstream Argentine media has witnessed a revival of double standards in judging Israel's reaction to Palestinian terrorism. There has been no lack of anti-Zionist articles associated with motifs inspired by the classical myths of Jewish conspiracies concealed behind anti-Americanism and anti-Imperialist discourse.<sup>90</sup>

According to a pioneer survey conducted by Ionit Yaari more than ninety events took place in Latin America between the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000 and June 2002. Of these, fifty anti-Israel events occurred since the staging of Operation Defensive Shield (the military operation in Jenin to flush out terrorist leaders.). Despite differing degrees of violence and anti-Jewish motifs, a common feature was the involvement of local Arab associations in organizing those public demonstrations, with FEARAB sponsorship.<sup>91</sup>

However, in comparison with other anti-Israel events organized by Arab institutions in Latin America, the Argentine rallies were, until recently, much less violent, and the number of local demonstrators with an Arab immigrant background was generally less than the three thousand persons who carried swastikas and shouted insults outside the Israeli Consulate in Rio. Even the leftist demonstrators in Buenos Aires were less virulent in their anti-Zionist rhetoric, and never voiced openly Judeophobic slogans or held anti-Israel images such as happened in Brazil and Santiago<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> See a content analysis of three major daily newspapers in Argentina – *Clarín, Página 12*, and *La Nación* – conducted by Martina Weisz, in the article “Continuity and Change in Argentinean Antisemitism,” to be published in the forthcoming *Antisemitism International*. Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2006.

<sup>91</sup> See Ionit Yaari, “New Trends of Antisemitism and anti-Zionism in South Latin America since the Al-Aqsa Intifada,” unpublished MA seminar paper, 2003 (Hebrew), p. 3; FEARAB organized in November 2000 its first solidarity rally with the Palestinian people and for defending the Muslim Holy Places in Jerusalem, see the bilingual Spanish-Arab (under Syrian auspices) bi-weekly *Al Watan*, Buenos Aires, 31 January 2001, p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> Ionit Yaari, op. cit., p. 10.

There was a change for the worse during the recent Lebanon war. Both leftist and radical anti-U.S. groups, together with FEARAB, were involved in organizing violent anti-Israel demonstrations along the streets of Buenos Aires, and a large rally took place in front of the Israel Embassy building. Even on the campus of the Universidad de Buenos Aires, one found Judeophobic slogans scrawled on the walls inside the Faculty of Humanities. For the first time, an official anti-Israel declaration with antisemitic overtones was signed by the Dean and academic board of this Faculty. At a round table held on campus, representatives of the local Syrian community, and the ambassador of Lebanon in Argentina voiced insults against Israel and the Jews alike. In addition, the local press published a number of paid advertisements against the “genocide perpetrated against Israel,” signed by academics and intellectuals.

Despite the steady advance of Argentine Jewry in both civilian society and the public sphere, the unsolved and tangled investigations into the bombings of the Israel Embassy and the AMIA reveal the limits of the judiciary in Argentina. Without a resolution of the legal issues surrounding the local connection, it is unclear if the rule of law can adequately protect the citizens of Argentina.

Recently, an international arrest warrant was issued against seven top former Iranian government ministers and a Lebanese citizen, a high-ranking officer in Hezbollah. The indictment names former Iranian President Al’ Rafsanjani, his Minister of Information and Security Ali Fallahijan, and his Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, among others. They are accused of direct involvement in planning the AMIA attack, while Hezbollah is named as carrying it out<sup>93</sup>. This important decision of Federal Judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral may provoke diplomatic retaliation by the government of Iran, and furthermore, it may seem to absolve Argentina from pursuing further investigation into local criminal responsibility in the matter<sup>94</sup>.

The long delay in prosecuting the “internal connection”—which certainly provided an Islamic terrorism infrastructure—may serve to divert attention from home-grown anti-Jewish networks, and lend

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<sup>93</sup> See OJI No. 781, Congreso Judío Latinoamericano, October 31, 2006

<sup>94</sup> On diplomatic retaliation from Iran, see *La Nación*, November 14, 2006

credence to the claim that the bombing was primarily an anti-Israel, rather than an anti-Jewish, attack<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> The shift in the focus of the judiciary from the internal connection to the role of external Islamist terrorist planners leads one to suspect that the government is disinterested in investigating the role of politicians and judges in the cause of AMIA. See Jorge Urien Berri, “A dos años del fallo AMIA: faltan investigar importantes denuncias,” *La Nación*, October 14, 2006. After the blast, it was usually assessed as “the effects of anti-Zionism”; see, for example, *Antisemitism World Report 1995* (IJA-AJC, pp. 5, 9.)