

## Introduction

## Jewish Refugees' Lives in Latin America after Persecution and Impoverishment in Europe

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This issue concerns Jewish refugees and their lives in Latin America in the 1930s and 1940s. The refugees in question had fled the persecution and impoverishment that they had experienced in Nazi-occupied Europe. After Hitler came to power in January 1933, Jewish individuals and families gradually started leaving Germany for nearby countries in which they thought that they would be safe. When Germany began annexing or occupying other European territories, Jews fled from these areas as well. In some of these places, the persecution and flight began before the German administration was established. For example, in the border region of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland, pro-Nazi individuals and organizations were persecuting Jews before Germany had fully taken control of the area.<sup>1</sup> In other eastern European countries, the persecution had been going on for years. Jews in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Latvia, and Lithuania were experiencing discriminatory taxes, boycotts, the destruction of Jewish property, and officially sponsored pogroms long before the Nazis arrived.<sup>2</sup> In several areas, local authorities and civilians continued to participate in the persecution of Jews after Germany took control. However, locals also helped Jews hide, flee, or pass as Gentiles.<sup>3</sup>

Germany's annexation and occupation of other countries began in 1938. Austria and the Sudetenland were annexed in 1938. In 1939, Germany occupied more of Czechoslovakia and invaded Poland.<sup>4</sup> In 1940, Germany successfully invaded Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France. In the same year, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania joined the Axis. In 1941, Germany invaded Greece, Yugoslavia (retaining control of part of Yugoslavia), the Soviet Union, and the Baltic States.<sup>5</sup> Also in 1941, Bulgaria, Croatia and Finland joined the Axis. On 8 September, 1943, the German army seized control of Rome and northern Italy, and in 1944, Germany occupied Hungary.

Many Jewish refugees did not emigrate straight from their homeland to Latin America. They tended first to flee to a nearby European country, hoping to return home once the situation improved. Alternatively, if they could acquire visas, they emigrated to the

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<sup>1</sup> Osterloh, 2015, pp. 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> Elkin, 2011, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> On the participation of locals in the persecution of Jews in France, see Ryan, 1996. On assistance given to Jews, see Semelin, 2018, Tec, 1986, and Oliner, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> The Russian invasion of Poland two and a half weeks after the German invasion also caused Jews to flee.

<sup>5</sup> The Baltic States had been occupied by the Soviet Union since June 18, 1940.

United States, Palestine, and other areas. France received large numbers of refugees; it had a tradition of taking in persons seeking asylum, and refugees may have gone there because they knew other refugees who were already there. It was the main haven for German and Central European refugees after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933.<sup>6</sup> However, refugees who had fled to France or another nearby country found themselves having to flee again when Germany occupied or annexed their new home. When Germany occupied northern France, for example, Jewish refugees fled south to the “unoccupied zone,” which was the southern half of France except for a strip of land along the west coast down to the Spanish border, and a thin strip on the southeastern border, occupied by Italy. The unoccupied zone turned out not to be a safe haven, however, because the authorities that governed there (the Vichy government, under Marshall Pétain) created their own anti-Semitic laws, collaborated with the Germans, and complied with German requests for the deportation of Jews, beginning in 1942.<sup>7</sup> Where possible, Jews hid or left, some 37,500 going to Spain, and 21,304 to Switzerland.<sup>8</sup> Those who chose Spain wanted merely to transit through Spain to Portugal, and cross the Atlantic or Channel from there. However, very significant numbers were delayed in Spain for weeks, months, or even years, having been arrested soon after crossing the Franco-Spanish border. They were trapped in jail or a detention camp, or were delayed because they had to obtain visas and boat tickets to final destinations, and the wait was often long. While waiting, they were permitted to live in freedom subject to regular reporting at a police station. In Portugal also, many were held up waiting for visas and boat passage. For a great many refugees, it was only after a long sojourn in Spain or Portugal that they were able to leave Mainland Europe.<sup>9</sup>

For a great many Jewish refugees, Latin America was not the preferred destination. The first choice was more commonly the United States, Palestine, Britain, or Canada, but significant numbers of refugees were unable to acquire visas for these places.<sup>10</sup> The reasons for this included restrictive immigration quotas; policies that accepted only refugees who had made significant contributions in intellectual and artistic arenas or who were willing to work as domestics (in the case of Britain); the failure of the 1938 Evian Conference to encourage countries to open their doors further to Jewish refugees; refugees’ difficulties with acquiring affidavits and other documents required for the issuance of visas; and obstructionism by American consuls in Spain, Portugal, and other European countries. Refugees found it somewhat easier to acquire visas for some Latin American countries.<sup>11</sup> Those who took up this opportunity may have done so because they realized that they may have to wait a long time before receiving a visa for their preferred destination, and they thought it safer to leave Mainland Europe as soon as possible. Moreover, in Spain and Portugal at least, they were under pressure to leave. They had only short-term permits for resi-

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<sup>6</sup> Caron, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Ryan, 1998; Weisberg, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> On Spain, see Avni, 1982; on Switzerland, see Commission Indépendante d’Experts Suisse-Seconde Guerre Mondiale, 2002. This official figure is probably lower than the actual figure, according to the historian Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann, who considers 22,000 to be a more accurate approximation; personal communication, 13 November, 2020. On Jews who went to Switzerland from France, see Fivaz-Silbermann, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> On Spain, see Avni, 1982, pp. 106-116; Calvet, 2014; Eiroa, 2005; and Pallarés and Espinosa de los Monteros, 2005. On Portugal, see Kaplan, 2020; and Pimentel, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Dwork and van Pelt, 2012; Dwork, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Barasch, 2001; Piller-Greenspan and Branting, 2006; Ringel and Magalnik, 1986.

dence there, were never sure of being able to renew these permits, and risked prison if they overstayed.<sup>12</sup> The refugee relief organizations and diplomatic representatives that helped the refugees in Spain also wanted them to leave because their leaving would make it possible for more refugees to enter Spain; in addition, it would ease relations with the local authorities. These authorities wanted to avoid a build-up of refugees and would allow more in as others left.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, some refugees may have hoped that they could emigrate from Latin America to their preferred destination at a later date. Many did indeed stay in Latin America for a few years and then leave for the United States and other countries.<sup>14</sup>

Latin American governments admitted relatively few Jewish immigrants in the years that Hitler was in power. Indeed, "Latin American governments officially permitted only about 84,000 Jewish refugees to immigrate between 1933 and 1945, less than half the number admitted during the previous fifteen years. Others entered these countries through illegal channels."<sup>15</sup> The refusal of Latin American governments to admit more refugees may be attributed to growing antisemitism and fear of economic competition. The Great Depression saw the rise of anti-immigrant political parties or platforms and strong press campaigns against immigration throughout the region, as political leaders and governments in Latin America developed populist bases. In some contexts, there was resentment of the fact that some refugees, who had been admitted on condition that they work in agricultural areas, had drifted to the cities. Moreover, some Latin Americans of German descent were sympathetic to Nazi ideology and racial theories, and this contributed to the antisemitism. Taken together, these attitudes were reflected in increasingly tight immigration laws introduced throughout the continent in the late 1930s. Argentina officially admitted 24,000 Jewish immigrants between 1933 and 1943, although another 20,000 entered illegally by crossing the border from neighboring countries. It had admitted over three times as many (79,000) between 1918 and 1933. Brazil admitted 12,000 Jewish immigrants between 1933 and 1941, having admitted 96,000 between 1918 and 1933. Mexico admitted 1850 between 1933 and 1945, whereas it had issued at least 16,000 visas to Spanish Republican refugees between 1938 and 1945. Bolivia admitted more than 20,000 Jewish refugees between 1938 and 1941. El Salvador made up to 20,000 passports available to Jews under Nazi occupation through its Consul General in Geneva, beginning in 1942. The Dominican Republic issued about 5000 visas to European Jews between 1938 and 1944, but most of the recipients did not settle there. It admitted 645 Jews between 1938 and 1945.<sup>16</sup>

The Jewish refugees who went to Latin America during Nazi domination in Europe were not the first Jews from Europe to settle or seek a haven there. The migration of Jews to Latin America began long before the 1930s. Judith Elkin, a prominent historian on the subject, analyzes the history of this migration, and I summarize her work here so as to offer readers some historical context for the articles in this issue. Jews started emigrating to Latin America shortly after the imposition of Spanish and Portuguese rule there. In 1501, Queen Isabel of Spain told the Governor of Hispaniola to prohibit Jews, New

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<sup>12</sup> On Portugal, see Kaplan, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Avni, 1982; Ringel and Magalnik, 1986.

<sup>14</sup> Spitzer, 1998; Binazzi and Daniel, this issue.

<sup>15</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Refuge in Latin America."

<sup>16</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Refuge in Latin America." An important article by Haim Avni contains 2004 figures (Avni, 2004).

Christians, persons penanced by the Inquisition, and their children and grandchildren, from settling in the Indies. New Christians, also called *conversos*, were Jews who had converted to Catholicism. In Spain, they were coerced into doing so during waves of violence unleashed against them in 1391, and they were again coerced a century later, in 1492, by Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand. In Portugal, King Manuel I forced Jews to be baptized *en masse* in 1497. In later years, Jews in the Iberian Peninsula converted because of other forms of pressure.

Charles V repeated Queen Isabel's prohibition from settling in the Indies in 1522 and the instructions were incorporated into the Laws of the Indies, the "entire body of law promulgated by the Spanish crown during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries for the government of its kingdoms (colonies) outside Europe, chiefly in the Americas."<sup>17</sup> Hence, "those who arrived in the New World were technically illegal immigrants who were committing a crime merely by virtue of being there, and they were subject to action by the state and by the Inquisition if they were caught. Nevertheless, the intense pressures exercised in Spain and Portugal against persons of Jewish descent resulted in the flight of numerous *conversos* and crypto-Jews to the New World, where the opportunity for anonymity was considerably greater than at home," Elkin writes<sup>18</sup>. Crypto-Jews were Jews who continued to believe and live as Jews in secret, while publicly professing to be Christians. Immigration to Latin America was restricted to those who could be categorized as "pure of blood," in accordance with the notion of "*limpieza de sangre*," that is, being neither Jewish nor having Jewish ancestry. Permits of exemption could be bought, however, and one could also buy a certificate of *limpieza*. Sailors, soldiers and servants were not required to have a certificate, and some *conversos* emigrated to Latin America in these roles. "Numerous persons of Jewish descent did in fact settle in Mexico by the mid-Sixteenth century, but they lacked assurance that they could live out their lives there," Elkin tells us.<sup>19</sup> In Latin America, the Inquisition continued the work it had begun in Spain, burning a man at the stake in Mexico in 1528, and beginning to operate in Peru in 1570. Hence Jews and converted Jews were forbidden by law to enter the colonial dependencies of Spain, but arrived in Latin America all the same.<sup>20</sup>

Most New Christians who went to the New World were in fact Portuguese. Portugal tolerated the emigration of *conversos* to Brazil, and indeed, in Portugal there were periods during which New Christians were encouraged to emigrate. Portuguese laws of purity of blood excluded *conversos* from public life in Portugal, and although these same laws applied in Brazil, New Christians held government and administrative posts in the northeastern city of Bahia. However, once in Brazil, the *conversos* felt that their lives were in danger. There was no autonomous office of the Inquisition there, but Inquisitorial inspectors travelled there from Portugal periodically. When Spain ruled Portugal, between 1580 and 1640, Portuguese could enter the Spanish possessions freely, and large numbers of Portuguese *conversos* travelled from Brazil into what is now Argentina.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Britannica, "Law of the Indies," consulted online 7 November 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Laws-of-the-Indies>.

<sup>18</sup> Elkin, 2011, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Elkin, 2011: p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> This paragraph and the one preceding it contain points made in Elkin, 2011, pp. 3-11.

<sup>21</sup> Elkin, 2011: pp. 3, 12-14.

In the mid-Seventeenth century, open manifestations of Jewish life appeared in regions of Latin America captured from Spain or Portugal by other powerful European entities. One such entity was the Dutch West India Company, which occupied part of northeastern Brazil. Jews from Holland settled in the area and gained permission to establish a synagogue in Recife shortly after 1642, and also in Mauricia. But in 1654, the Dutch were driven away by the Portuguese Brazilians, and the Jewish community left with them. Some went to the island of Curaçao, which the Dutch had captured, off the coast of Caracas. Jews from Italy, Suriname, Guadeloupe and Portugal lived openly as Jews there. Jews also settled openly on other Caribbean islands and the mainland areas nearby, such as Suriname; Sephardic merchants from Amsterdam and Dutch-controlled areas such as Curaçao settled in these places. Beginning in 1657 and 1658, the States General of Holland recognized Jews as Dutch citizens. In Caribbean lands under French dominion, Jews were also granted the privilege of settling; one such area was what later became the Dominican Republic. In these colonial outposts, Jews did not enjoy the same political and social acceptance as other members of white society. Nonetheless, many Sephardim who settled on Caribbean islands achieved substantial commercial success.<sup>22</sup>

During the process leading to the independence of Latin America from Spain and Portugal, changes in the region legitimated the presence of Jews and made it possible for Jews to settle there. However, the belief system that had mandated their exclusion was not rejected. Jews were hesitant to settle in the Spanish Latin American regions shortly after they attained independence from Spain in the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century. They feared that Spain might intervene to regain control, and reinstitute the Inquisition. The republics abolished the Inquisition at different rates. The institutionalization of “limpieza” (the legal qualification for permanent residence and for holding office) was also abolished, but a stigma associated with Jewishness remained. Nonetheless, as the Nineteenth Century advanced, Sephardic merchants moved from the Caribbean islands into the countries of the mainland. In the early decades of Latin American independence, nominally won between 1810 and 1824, and during the middle decades of the century, Jewish immigration to Latin America was slight. Jewish communities formed where religious toleration and economic incentives to immigrate were both been present. The massive immigration of heterogeneous peoples, as occurred in Argentina, had helped create tolerant environments.

Between 1830 and 1889, Jewish migration to the Americas “had a dual motivation: economic necessity and the need to find new homes where their fundamental human rights would be secure”.<sup>23</sup> The first European migratory wave to the Americas (1830s-1880s) consisted of German and French Jews. A reactionary political current had reversed the trend of increasing civil rights for Jews after the Napoleonic wars ended. The Spanish-Moroccan wars of 1859-60 displaced Moroccan Jews, who, in the following decades, settled in Argentina and Brazil. Despite this emigration, very few Jews settled in Latin America during the first century of Latin American independence.<sup>24</sup>

The years 1889 to World War I, however, saw mass Jewish emigration to the continent. Most of the immigrants were European Ashkenazim from the Russian Empire,

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<sup>22</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 15-18.

<sup>23</sup> Elkin, 2011, p. 28

<sup>24</sup> This paragraph and the previous one contain points made in Elkin, 2011, pp. 19-22, 25, 28, 29, 47, 49.

Poland, and Rumania. They migrated because intense pressures were exerted on Jews in these countries, because international travel was cheap, and because most countries in the Americas had unrestricted immigration policies. In their European countries of origin, the commercial and industrial Jewish bourgeoisie were tolerated but the majority of Jews experienced ruthless oppression and deprivation. The objective behind this policy was to drive impoverished Jews to emigrate. In Russia, the czarist government encouraged brutal waves of pogroms in an effort to divert attention from economic upheaval and social and political struggle. The "May Laws," introduced by Czar Alexander III in 1882, forced Jews in rural areas to move to certain towns and townships. The government envisaged mass destruction, and this caused Jews to flee by the thousands, first to Germany and then to the New World, with the help of relief organizations.

By the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, some regions of Latin America were experiencing economic growth because of foreign investment in raw materials and in the infrastructure required for their extraction and shipment. Ashkenazim went to these places. Sephardic immigration also increased between 1889 and 1914, with Jews emigrating from the Ottoman Empire in greater numbers after 1880, and from the Balkans between 1900 and 1914, due to natural disasters and worsening economic conditions. The majority of immigrants went to countries that separated Church and State.<sup>25</sup>

All Latin American countries received Jewish immigrants between 1880 and 1914. Both the Ashkenazim in Eastern Europe and the Sephardim in the Balkans were experiencing pressures pushing them to leave, and were forced to emigrate to places that had not attracted them previously. Their choice of Latin American republic was determined by historical circumstance, shipping agents, and the availability of financial support. Some 150,000 Jews are estimated to have been living in South and Central America and the Caribbean in 1917, according to a survey by the American Jewish Committee. Of these, between 110,000 and 113,000 were in Argentina. Ashkenazim now constituted about 80 per cent of Latin American Jewry. The Eastern Europeans arrived penniless, and Jewish philanthropies helped many of them. They tended to come from shtetls, were attached to Yiddish, and did not have a tradition of freely mingling with Gentiles. They felt the need to continue their communal life together and struggled to maintain their way of life through communal organizations like those they had had in Europe. They still feared pogroms.<sup>26</sup>

Jewish immigrants needed a social context in which they could fit, and so were drawn to countries with heavy European immigration. The largest cohorts went to the southernmost Latin American republics. These had predominantly European populations, nascent middle classes, and social milieux favorable to industrialization. Where there were modernizing economies, there were jobs for skilled and unskilled workers of the laboring and middle classes. In Argentina, southern Brazil, Uruguay, and Panama, values were becoming more secular in orientation, and the Catholic Church was disestablished and relegated to secondary status. This made it possible for Jews to live as Jews or to intermarry comfortably. Argentina attracted more Jews than any other Latin American country. It offered an optimal combination of religious toleration, strong government support for immigration,

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<sup>25</sup> This paragraph and the previous one contain points drawn from Elkin, 2011, pp. 51-53.

<sup>26</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 68-69.

industrial employment, and land for farming. Jews emigrating there went to both cities and rural areas, the latter under the patronage of the Jewish Colonization Association. By World War I, some 65,000 of Argentina's 100,000 Jews lived in Buenos Aires. By contrast, peasant societies with an indigenous or mestizo mass and Hispanic criollo elite did not appear to offer a place into which Jewish immigrants could fit, and hence attracted few. Moreover, the religiosity in such countries made it difficult to live as a Jew or to assimilate. It was predominantly Sephardim and Arabic-speaking Jews who migrated to these regions, and they lived in relative isolation, almost as a merchant caste.<sup>27</sup> Writing about Sephardic immigration to Latin America as a whole, Margalit Bejarano, Yaron Harel, and Marta F. Topel inform us that "with the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Sephardic Jews began to immigrate to Latin America in large numbers. Jews from Syria, Turkey, and the Balkan countries dispersed throughout the continent since the beginning of the twentieth century, establishing communal infrastructures based on sub-ethnic affiliation."<sup>28</sup>

The articles in this issue focus on Jewish refugees who arrived in Latin America when Hitler was in power (1933-1945). In "La República Dominicana y los Refugiados Judíos en Sosúa. Claroscuro de una historia exitosa," Alice Binazzi and C. Pricila Daniel describe Jewish refugee emigration to the rural area of Sosúa, in the Dominican Republic. At the Evian Conference, which President Roosevelt organized in France in 1938, most countries declared that they did not want to admit additional refugees. Latin American countries expressed that they wished to limit immigration to farmers and other workers with expertise in the agricultural sector. But the Dominican Republic, under Generalissimo Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, offered to open its doors to 100,000 Jewish refugees. At the end of 1939, an organization by the name of Dominican Republic Settlement Association was created in New York to finalize the agreement with the Dominican Republic, and organize and finance the settlement of the Jewish refugees; it was to support the refugees until they became self-sufficient. The state offered the Dominican Republic Settlement Association an area with no hospitals, schools or houses for the refugees, on poor agricultural land in a region called Sosúa. The first immigrants who arrived in May 1940 farmed with great determination and some success. Only 757 immigrants came, despite Trujillo's offer. Binazzi and Daniel report that the immigrants socialized a great deal with the local community and did not experience discrimination. At the end of the Second World War, many left for the United States. They recall in interviews that they feel gratitude towards the Dominican Republic, which enabled their lives to be saved, or provided them with happy childhoods.

Mexico was less forthcoming as far as offering a haven to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution was concerned, as this issue's article by Yael Siman describes. Historically, Mexico had received very few Jewish immigrants. The first Mexican federal constitution of 1824 stated that the religion of Mexico would always be Roman Catholic Apostolic. The holding of non-Catholic services was illegal. A later, liberal constitution of 1857 did not mention the Roman Catholic religion. Nonetheless, the small numbers of Jews in Mexico remained apprehensive due to popular attitudes, and the Church and Inquisition led them to hide their Jewish identity. Between 1867 and 1877, the political climate was anti-

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<sup>27</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 53-55 and 70-71.

<sup>28</sup> Bejarano, Harel, and Topel, 2017, p. ix.

religious and there is no evidence of Jewish communal activity in the records. When the dictator Porfirio Díaz rose to power in 1877, he opened up the country to immigrants with capital and entrepreneurial skills, in the interests of the economy. Religious toleration was made to prevail in Mexico City. From 1879 onward, the number of Jewish residents increased and Jewish immigrants took on important roles in the railways, mining, banking, and intellectual life, and a number of Jewish family businesses were created. But despite the pro-immigration policies of the Díaz government, which lasted for most of 1877-1911, Jewish immigration remained individual, idiosyncratic, and focused in small trade.<sup>29</sup> In 1910, Revolution broke out in Mexico. During the first two decades of the Twentieth Century, increasing numbers of Syrian, Turkish, and Lebanese Jews came to Mexico, and the numbers of Jews from the Balkans also increased due to wars in that region. However, Mexico was on the whole not attractive to immigrants between 1889 and 1914, and many Jews who arrived there attempted to hide their identity.<sup>30</sup>

In “Tránsito y Llegada de Refugiados Judíos y Sobrevivientes del Holocausto a México, 1939-1960,” Yael Siman states that during the Second World War, Mexico received about 1850 Jewish refugees, that is, considerably less than several other Latin American countries. However, it became a permanent destination for many refugees, rather than a place of transit, as was the case for the Dominican Republic. Yael Siman asks, how might one describe the process whereby this country became a home? And how did the experience of migration to Mexico influence this process? She analyzes the experiences of a survivor of the Lodz ghetto named Bronislaw Zajbert, who moved to Venezuela and Mexico after the Second World War. She also examines other survivor-refugee oral history interviews, memoirs, and a logbook, comparing Bronislaw’s experiences of being in a ghetto for five years with the experiences of refugees on the move through Europe. Individuals displaced by violence, she states, ask themselves about their social norms and the local culture, and about the meaning of their loss, uprooting, and abandonment. Some refugees who settled in Mexico stopped feeling strange and like strangers there, but others experienced ambivalence about their identity and subsequently decided to move elsewhere.

Two articles in the issue examine Jewish refugee flight to Cuba. Cuba had gained independence from Spain quite late, and Jews had participated in the wars of Independence. By 1900 there were about 300 Jewish families living there. Between 1902 and 1914, some 5700 immigrants arrived in Cuba from Turkey and Syria. The Turkish Jews left Europe because of the negative impact that the reforms of the Young Turk movement had had on them, and because of the Balkan wars. They chose Cuba because the Ladino that they spoke was similar to Spanish. By 1916, there were some 4000 Sephardim in Havana but their numbers dwindled as the war came to an end, and some of the Sephardim left. Between 1910 and 1917, Cuba was a place of transit for 4000 Eastern European Jews, but the United States and other European countries were their preferred destinations. In 1919, the total Jewish population in Cuba is estimated to have been 2000.<sup>31</sup>

The article “Polishing Diamonds in Havana: A Personal Account of the Flight of a Jewish Refugee to Cuba, 1938–46,” by Judy Kreith, is about a refugee adolescent’s experi-

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<sup>29</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 36-38.

<sup>30</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 60-62.

<sup>31</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 66-67.



ences in Cuba. Cuba granted refuge to close to 12,000 refugees during World War II.<sup>32</sup> The first half came in 1938-1939, mostly from Germany and Austria, but beginning in May 1939, several ships with Jewish refugees were turned away at Havana harbor. The second wave arrived in 1940-1942, many from Belgium.<sup>33</sup> Marion, who is the subject of the article, fled the area around Hamburg, Germany, after Kristallnacht, with her sister and parents. They went to Belgium, where her father was caught and sent to a French detention camp near Marseille. In 1941, Marion's mother took the family to unoccupied, Vichy France and to Marseille so as to acquire visas for Cuba. The family travelled through Spain to Portugal, where they took a Portuguese ship bound for Cuba. Marion entered the workforce at 15, polishing diamonds so as to help support the family. Belgian Jewish refugees had just set up the diamond polishing industry in Cuba, and by government decree, 50 per cent of the employees were Cubans. As news of relatives' deaths in Europe arrived, Marion wondered why her family had the privilege of being away and safe. The family received American visas in 1946, and left the island.

The article, "La gravitación cubana de la estrella de David" by Luis Edel Abreu Veranes and Claudia Pérez Castro explains the waves of Jewish immigration to Cuba over the centuries, identifying fascism, antisemitism, the Holocaust, and World War II as factors that explain the arrival of German and eastern European Jews on the island in the 1930s and 1940s. German and Austrian Jewish immigrants saw Cuba as a point of transit in their flight from the Nazi inferno, particularly after the annexation of Austria. The Jewish community created associations for its members, and these, too, are the subject of Edel and Pérez's research. Some of these associations were formed so as to help preserve Jewish values and assist with the integration of new Jewish immigrants. A number contributed to the creation of the Communist Party of Cuba; indeed, Jewish immigrants rapidly became involved in sociopolitical changes in the country. The 1930s witnessed the rise of fascist groups and antisemitic propaganda in Cuba. The government's turning away of the ship *St. Louis* in 1939, with 900 Jewish refugees from Europe on board was a manifestation of such antisemitism. The Jewish community reacted to the fascist groups and antisemitism by creating an organization that would represent all the Jews of Cuba, the Comité Central de las Sociedades Hebreas de Cuba. A strong Zionist movement emerged in the 1940s, in support of the creation of Israel. The Jewish community in Cuba became economically successful in the second half of the 1940s and in the 1950s, and began identifying as Cuban, producing publications in Spanish. However, the Jewish community shrank in size in the second half of the 1940s.

This issue's articles by Sarah Valente and Giovanna Campani focus on Jewish immigrants in Brazil. In the century before these immigrants' arrival there, Jewish immigration to Brazil increased substantially. The Catholic Church became less predominant and economic opportunities opened up. Brazil's constitution of 1824, which was in place until 1889, recognized Roman Catholicism as the official religion but guaranteed the right to exercise other religions in private. The Church gave its consent to mixed marriages. Shortly after independence was declared in 1822, Jews began emigrating from Morocco to the Amazon region, where they flourished as traders, in export and import, in navigation of

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<sup>32</sup> Bejarano, 1991, cited in Kreith (this issue).

<sup>33</sup> Bauer, 1974; Bejarano, 2014; and Levine, 1993, all three cited in Kreith (this issue).

the Amazon, and in exploration of land along the river's banks. Western European Jews, most from Alsace and Lorraine, began emigrating to Brazil in the latter part of Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro II's reign (1841-1889). Immigration to Brazil came only in a trickle, however, until 1888. That year, slavery was abolished and 133,000 immigrants arrived. Following the emperor's abdication, positivist and other influences brought about the separation of church and state, and the guarantee of religious freedom.<sup>34</sup>

Jewish immigration to Brazil increased in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century. Jews came, as they had previously, from North Africa and Western Europe, and to these were added immigrants from the Eastern Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. They organized themselves, creating synagogues and mutual aid societies on the basis of country of origin. Between 1900 and 1910, Eastern European immigration increased, with immigration agents acquiring free boat passage by promising that the immigrants would be agricultural laborers; most in fact became peddlers. On the eve of the First World War, the most important Jewish community in Brazil was the Sephardic community living in various centers of the north of the country; Rio de Janeiro also had an organized Sephardic community at that time. There may have been 5000 Jews in Brazil in 1917, compared with Argentina's 112,000. Brazil was relatively unattractive to immigrants at the turn of the century, because the rural and regimented nature of plantation labor did not seem to offer prospects to better their lives.<sup>35</sup>

Sarah Valente's article, "Post World War II Brazil: A New Homeland for Jews and Nazis?" focuses on Holocaust survivors who emigrated to Brazil before, during, and after the Second World War, and on the ways in which they co-existed with Nazis who had escaped from Europe after the War. Valente demonstrates that between 1872 and 1973, the 1920s and 1930s were the decades during which Jewish immigration was highest. She says that although Brazilian diplomats and representatives were instructed not to issue immigration visas to Jews from 1937 into the 1940s, Jews with baptismal records bypassed these restrictions and settled in three Brazilian cities. Jewish immigration to Latin America did not end with the Second World War. Significant numbers of Holocaust survivors moved to the continent after the War. More than 20,000 displaced persons immigrated between 1947 and 1953. Argentina received 4800 survivors, and Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Panama and Costa Rica were other receiving countries.<sup>36</sup> In her article, Valente asks how Jewish immigrants negotiated their position as survivors, immigrants, and members of a minority group, and how they experienced the imagined and real presence of Nazis in Brazil. She also explores the ways in which Nazi war criminals managed to live freely in Brazil and evade justice. She focuses on the high-ranking Nazi officials Herbert Cukurs and Gustav Franz Wagner, neither of whom hid their identity; both were known to the Jewish community. During the military dictatorship of 1964-1985, foreigners and Jews were viewed as subversives, communists and possible threats to society. Fear prevented some Jewish immigrants from publishing their memoirs, but memoirs were published, and Valente describes their central themes.

In "*Il mondo di ieri e la terra del futuro. Ricordando Stefan Zweig, europeo, cosmopolita, pacifista*," Giovanna Campani describes the life and writings of Stefan Zweig, who

<sup>34</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 41-44.

<sup>35</sup> Elkin, 2011, pp. 61-62.

<sup>36</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Refuge in Latin America."

produced fiction, biography, plays, and essays, winning acclaim in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Zweig was a cosmopolitan and well-travelled Jewish pacifist who grew up in Vienna to Moravian and Italian parents. In 1934, he left Vienna for London. There, at the onset of the Second World War, he experienced restrictions on his freedom because he was born in a country that was an enemy of Britain. Consequently, he and his wife left for Brazil with six-month visas, in June 1940. In Brazil, Zweig wrote *The World of Yesterday* and part of *Brazil: Land of the Future*. Zweig admired Brazil because he thought that it lacked the tensions around racial belonging that plagued Europe. In Brazil, he found an appreciation for blended ancestry. Brazil called into question the validity of racist ideology and seemed to him to be a model for the building of a humane and peaceful culture in Europe.

These articles on Brazil will provide insights into immigrant reflections on local norms, and immigrants' feelings about other immigrants who had persecuted people like themselves. The other articles in the issue will shed light on government policies that facilitated or constrained emigration to Latin America, immigrant experiences of work and of contact with locals, and immigrants' associations and political involvement in the local society. In nearly all the articles, some or all of the immigrants discussed leave Latin America or exit in other ways. For them, Latin America, in the end, was a place of sojourn rather than settlement. Why they left, how they experienced immigration on the next continent, and why their experiences were different from or similar to those that they had had in Latin America, are fruitful questions for future research.

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