

Argentina, Russia and the Richmond District

According to television, there is one police radio call which has top priority: "Police officer in trouble." The Jewish community has had to broadcast too often in recent years: "Jew in Trouble."

This week, there is the case of Mr. and Mrs. Alejandro Deutsch and their three daughters, of Cordoba, Argentina. They were kidnapped from their home on August 27, and are being held by the Argentine army. Alejandro Deutsch is a businessman, and, according to his niece, Frances Fagin, who lives in San Jose, has never been "political." He is also a diabetic whose life is threatened without his special diet.

"Anti-semitism in this country is a simmering volcano," one Argentine Jew recently said. The head of government, Jorge Rafael Videla, has not himself been accused of being an anti-semite. But many of the right-wing, neo-Nazi and paramilitary groups associated with his government are openly anti-semitic; and he has not been able to control them. Neither has the government been able to control the potent left-wing guerrilla movement, parts of which have also been openly anti-semitic.

The latest wave of anti-semitism apparently springs from the ranks of the military, which now holds Alejandro Deutsch and his family. Deutsch is accused of being part of a subversive left-wing operation. This charge helps the right-wing establish its claim that the Argentine economy is being mismanaged because of a "Jewish Marxist connection." It is a classic pattern.

At the request of the American Jewish establishment, the U.S. Embassy caused the Argentine government to announce that the Duetsch family was in army custody. Otherwise, they would have just been in a state of "disappearance," as so many others are. Now, the spotlight must be kept on the family to protect them. At best, they should be released. At worst, their legal situation and the case against them should be made public; their physical safety should be assured: Alejandro Deutsch should get the health care he needs. For "spotlight" purposes, individual letters of concern would be written to Secretary Cyrus Vance of the U.S. State Department: with copies to Senators Cranston and Hayakawa, and local Congressman, asking them to make further inquiry; and with a copy also to the Argentine Embassy at 1600 New Hampshire Ave., N.W. in Washington.

Another "Jew in Trouble:" Ernest Axelrod, arrested last week in the Soviet Union. He is charged with "parasitism," which means he was without a job. He was without a job because it was taken away from him when he applied for a visa to emigrate. Josef Begun is now serving five years in prison on the same charge. Ernest Axelrod needs the "spotlight" treatment, too. Write Soviet Consul Alexander Zinchuk, 2790 Green Street in San Francisco, with copies to Senators and Congressmen.

Finally, a preventive note on "Jews in Trouble," not in Argentina and not in the Soviet Union, but in the Richmond District of San Francisco. Signs have been appearing in that district, attacking Gordon Lau, one of the candidates for the Board of Supervisors, because he is Chinese; and smearing him and the whole Chinese community with the recently headlined criminal events involving several Chinese youth gangs.

~~He~~^{H2} may or may not be the best candidate for the job; but he has long been a highly reputable member of the San Francisco community, ~~who has often worked closely with the Jewish community here~~. And the fact is that the Chinese community has a notably low crime rate and a notably high achievement rate. These racial smears must be met with everyone's indignation.

Also in the Richmond District last week a swastika was painted on the Beth Sholom Synagogue. The police are trying to get leads, and are keeping the synagogue and the JCRC informed of their efforts, although the success rate in such cases is not high.

But the point is that anyone who doesn't see the connection between the swastika and the racial smears against the Chinese is historically myopic.