

## Jews In The Argentine

The Concordia-Argonaut Club has announced that later this month, as part of its international series, it will present "a tribute to Argentina, good neighbor and good friend," honoring Consul-general Ricardo Elizondo.

There being some Jewish aura about the Concordia-Argonaut Club, it is to be trusted that some recent problems of Argentine "good-neighborliness" towards Argentine Jews might be raised in the course of the tribute.

Argentina has indeed been a receptive and important haven for beleaguered world Jewry, paralleled by few countries. In the years 1905-1914, there were over 80,000 Jewish emigres from Russia; and over 65,000 more between 1920 and 1929. From 1930 to 1939, Argentina received about 35,000 Jewish refugees, mainly from Germany. Given the fact that Argentina's population is one-tenth the size of America's, those are pretty hefty emigration figures. With a half million Jews, Argentina has just about the same proportion of Jews in the population as does the United States.



Raab

**Nor have Argentine Jews been excluded from the economic life of their country. More than three quarters of that Jewish population has some middle class or professional occupation. And Jews attend the universities at a rate three times higher than the rest of their countrymen. So this is not a case of governmental or institutional oppression of the Jews in the mold, say, of the Soviet Union. However, there have been some recent problems which have caused deep concern to Argentine Jewry.**

Argentina, neutral during World War II, became the chief international refuge for Nazis fleeing Germany. Peron had a number of former high Nazis around him, although the Peron government itself was considered quite friendly by Argentina's Jews. However, some virulent anti-Semitic periodicals and organizations were started during this postwar period. Also, there are about as many Argentians of Arab ancestry as of Jewish ancestry. Relations between those two communities had been notably good—until the establishment of Israel. A strong anti-Israel and anti-Jewish campaign began to be developed from Arab quarters in Argentina.

In the early 1960's there were some serious anti-Semitic outbreaks. Jewish synagogues were bombed, a Jewish newspaper machine-gunned. A Jewish girl was kidnapped, tortured, a swastika carved on her chest—as it was on the leg of a Jewish male student. Such incidents multiplied, so much so that the entire Jewish community went on a twelve hour strike in order to protest. Most public officials deplored the anti-Semitic events, but little was done to control the groups perpetrating them.

**Again, this year, there seems to be a similar, perhaps more ominous, anti-Semitic build-up in Argentina. Much of it is related to Middle East politics, but bears directly on the internal security of Argentine Jews. Most distressing to them is the fact that it was kicked off by a government official. Lopez Rega, the Minister of Social Welfare, returned from a trip to Libya in February and convened a group of Arab diplomats and Argentinian Arabs in the Presidential palace. There he made the statement that Argentine's foreign position had been compromised by "the presence of Jews in the Argentine government." The divisive implications were clear.**

This was followed by a television panel in which participants made allegations that Jews were planning to set up a second state in Argentina, "to maintain their domination of all humanity," and so forth. The JCRC of Argentina, known as D.A.I.A., began to see an organized campaign against Jews and complained bitterly. When a Buenos Aires synagogue was then bombed on April 3, the D.A.I.A. claimed that it was the culmination of an anti-Semitic campaign linked to "foreign groups endowed with enormous economic resources who try to transfer to our country the problems of the Near East."

The concern, of course—especially following the statement of Lopez Rega—is that the status of Argentine Jews will degenerate from that of first class Argentine citizens, to second-class pawns in Argentine politics and foreign policy. An especially strong and continued government stand is needed to prevent that situation from developing. Those attending the Concordia-Argonaut Club tribute will undoubtedly convey their concerns to the Argentine Consul-General.