



## Changing the landscape: The study of Argentine Jewish women and new historical vistas

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In September 1941 a diverse set of women in Argentina created the Junta de la Victoria (Junta of Victory). In this organization, Jewish women figured prominently. One of the largest and best publicized of the antifascist organizations that arose in this nation in the 1930s and early 1940s, the Junta recruited an estimated 45,000 women to support the Allied cause in World War II. Yet we know little about it or its Jewish membership.

The case of the long-forgotten Junta de la Victoria calls attention to broader gaps in the historiography on Argentina, on its Jews, and on its women. Jewish women have played critical roles in Argentina and its sizable Jewish community, the largest in Latin America and the third largest in the hemisphere. They helped create communal organizations, farm settlements, labor unions, and human rights groups. However, Argentine Jewish women are virtually absent from the secondary historical sources. Studying them is vital for its own sake, to recover the voices and tell the untold stories of the unheard half of the Jewish population.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is also crucial for another reason, as the example of the Junta demonstrates. In the course of my research on the history of Argentine Jewish women from 1880 to 1955, I conducted interviews with Jewish women of varied ethnic and class backgrounds. My informants discussed what was important to them in their own lives,<sup>2</sup> and they often raised issues that had not occurred to me. One matter of importance to women of Eastern European backgrounds was their participation in the Junta de la Victoria. Once alerted, I began to find discussion of the Junta in written sources as well. My interviewees belied the notion

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often conveyed by Argentinists that opposition to fascism primarily motivated the Europhile elite and served to mask its desire to return to power. As Aurora Levins Morales has noted, putting women and their concerns at the center of our inquiries “changes the landscape.”<sup>3</sup>

Four examples from Argentine Jewish women’s lives illustrate this point very well. They are the daily routines and education of Ashkenazic women in the farming communities; Zionism and philanthropy among women of Ashkenazic and Mediterranean origins; and the participation of Ashkenazic women in the Communist party and in the Junta de la Victoria. Placing these examples at the center of our interest changes the landscape of the history of Argentina, Argentine Jews, and Argentine women both metaphorically and spatially.

First one must situate these women within larger Argentine and Argentine Jewish contexts. Argentine Jews created a set of communities of diverse origins. A few relatively well-off Jews from Western Europe and others from Morocco arrived before 1889, when a mass migration from Eastern Europe began. A significant minority of the Eastern Europeans became farmers, but most settled in the cities. Here, starting out as workers and peddlers, some men managed to build small industries. The Eastern Europeans and their offspring form the majority of Argentine Jews. Jews from the Balkans, Turkey, North Africa, and Syria and other parts of the Middle East came before 1930. Many men from these groups became peddlers and merchants, and others went into the manufacture of textiles. Generally more privileged than their predecessors, Central European and Italian Jews entered during the Nazi era, and the men of these communities augmented the numbers of Jews in the professions and light industry. After World War II a handful of Holocaust survivors and Jews from Egypt and Morocco completed the local Jewish population. “Sephardim” accounted for perhaps 17 percent of Argentine Jews in 1930 and 10 percent in 1985.<sup>4</sup> Rich and poor; rural and urban; of many different geographical origins; Argentine Jews are hardly a monolithic presence.

The Jewish population grew to 310,000 in 1960,<sup>5</sup> constituting only a small part of the immense flow of immigrants to Argentina. During the peak years between 1870 and 1910, about 2.2 million people settled permanently in the country. In 1914, about 30 percent of the total population and an even greater percentage of the inhabitants of the economically dynamic portions of the country were foreign-born.<sup>6</sup> These were higher proportions than those ever reached in the United States. However, most of the immigrants were Italians and Spaniards, who were Catholic and similar culturally to native-born Argentines.

Jews stood somewhat apart in an immigrant nation that was more homogeneous than the United States.

### **Pioneer women**

Many of the Eastern European Jews who arrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s headed directly to the agricultural settlements. These settlements have received much scholarly attention. Existing histories of the colonies focus on communal politics, the formation of cooperatives, and conflicts with the landlord, the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA). Women participated only indirectly, or informally, in these activities, and studies have accordingly overlooked them. The JCA awarded land titles to male heads of households alone; the few female titleholders were widows who inherited deeds from their husbands. The rare women who appear in the records of the cooperatives as members or petitioners also were widows. Only in recent years, well after the decline of the colonies, have women participated actively in the rural political arena. Viewed through women's eyes, during its golden years Jewish rural life revolved around education, philanthropic and Zionist groups, and daily routine.

The daily routine included rearing, feeding, and clothing large families and cleaning the home under arduous, pioneer conditions. It also meant absorbing local customs, such as food preparation, from Creoles (native-born, generally mestizo Catholics) who worked in Jewish homes and farms or lived nearby. Women worked the fields alongside the men, tended gardens and animals, and sold produce in nearby towns.<sup>7</sup>

The struggle for education helped define women's lives. In 1914 less than half of the Russian-born women in the country were literate.<sup>8</sup> (This is only an approximation of the Jewish population. At the time most Jews in Argentina were of Russian origin, but some Russians were not Jewish, and this category excludes the Mediterranean and Western European Jews.) Many hungered for learning, for themselves and their daughters. Children often had to ride a horse or carriage long distances to attend the first few grades at a rural school. Any further education meant living with relatives or in a pension in a distant city. Lacking financial resources, unwilling to lose their daughters' labor, or loathe to risk the possibility of their daughters moving out of a Jewish orbit, some parents did not encourage them to seek education. However, aware that the horizons in farming were limited, others did, risking criticism from neighbors.<sup>9</sup>

Attending normal school became a formative experience for Jewish women able to continue their studies. These women absorbed pride in the liberal national project and a sense that women could contribute to it through teaching; both notions had characterized President Domingo F. Sarmiento (1868–1874), who had promoted secular education and teacher training.<sup>10</sup> Jewish women's involvement in the teaching profession raises broader questions. Teaching at the primary level appears to have constituted the typical path of upward mobility for young women in the countryside and city alike, and not only for Jews. This pattern probably was true for all Argentine women. How did they perceive their experiences? How did women teachers help incorporate children of immigrant backgrounds into the nation? Scholars have barely explored these important issues.<sup>11</sup>

Teachers were respected despite the low pay. There was much competition for teaching positions, and political influence was needed to secure a job. That Jews acquired teaching jobs suggests that some had made these valuable connections.<sup>12</sup> Much of the literature on Argentine Jews emphasizes anti-Semitism, yet the study of women indicates that Jews were not as marginalized as one might think.

Jewish women educators were also active politically, in teachers unions, Socialism, Communism, and other progressive circles. Some even went to Spain in the 1930s to participate in the Civil War. The authorities were aware of these political affiliations; even where they did not exist, officials tended to identify Jews with leftist attachments, because many were of Russian origin. Such linkages dated back to the early 1900s in Argentina and figured in incidents of mob violence against Jewish workers.<sup>13</sup>

In 1943, rightist military officers took control of the government, and their underlings carefully monitored the political leanings of Jewish and other Argentines. Accusing them of being unpatriotic citizens and Communists or fellow travelers, in 1944 Governor Lieutenant Colonel Carlos María Zavalla of Entre Ríos province, the center of Jewish agricultural settlements, fired the Jewish teachers of Villa Domínguez, all of whom were women. One attributed her dismissal to the fact that her principal denounced her and her colleagues for laughing at a speech given by the president. Zavalla followed this action by firing about 120 teachers from the entire province, most of whom were Jewish and many female. Some of these teachers were, however, fired simply because of Jewish-sounding last names, yet, in fact, were of German Christian descent. These Christian teachers immediately returned to work, not the Jews. The Jewish teachers and their supporters within

and outside the community, including teachers unions, protested for months until the new governor, General José Humberto Sosa Molina, reinstated them.<sup>14</sup>

This incident belies the common notion that Jewish women's public and especially political roles were muted until the 1960s. It also changes the landscape of Argentine women's history. Scholars have concentrated on how women entered the public arena through feminism, unions, and Peronism.<sup>15</sup> Teaching constituted another path.

Women's lives in the colonies also revolved around charity work. Like their Catholic counterparts, wealthier Jewish women collected, administered, and distributed aid to the poor, communal institutions, and local schools. Groups of older pious women gave alms to the needy, prepared bodies for burial, and provided trousseaus for impoverished women.<sup>16</sup> Such circles were the precursors of the ladies' beneficent societies that arose in many Jewish communities. Providing healthcare for the indigent and maintaining Jewish hospitals were additional tasks. The beneficent societies often contributed funds to Jewish institutions in Buenos Aires and sent people to the federal capital to access these services. Such establishments also had branches in the interior that collected money for them. Parents – but more typically mothers – formed “protective societies.” Members watched over the schools, served milk and snacks to pupils, inspected the premises for cleanliness, supplied equipment, and provided children with clothes. To raise money, these charities held dances, picnics, theatrical and musical performances, films, and other cultural events, which enriched social life.<sup>17</sup>

The study of Jewish women calls attention to the dense associational networks in the small towns and colonies, which created links among women, assisted the poor, enhanced children's education, and maintained the quality of local services. They strengthened the bonds of community yet also may have highlighted the divisions within it, since women of means dispensed largess to those who needed it, emphasizing a social pecking order. Ignored in most of the published work, these networks were a vital feature of daily existence. In addition, placing women at the center of Jewish rural life changes the landscape in a concrete spatial sense. It demonstrates how women helped fill in the terrain of the colonies by opening new spaces for communal sociability.

Women also struggled to create spaces for themselves. Associational records chronicle their continual negotiations and conflicts with male organizations over self-expression, competing activities, and securing their own meeting places. In 1928, the female auxiliary of the Hospital Clara in Villa Domínguez received the male board's permission to at-

tend and speak out at its meetings, but not the right to vote. In another instance, in 1926 the local ladies' beneficent society repeatedly complained to the male board of the Basavilbaso hospital about the lack of cleanliness at the facility. The men reacted rudely and refused to clean the hospital up. Additional frustration arose when the board insisted that the society delay a long-planned fundraiser to help it construct its headquarters. The men wanted to schedule a benefit of their own. In the end, the society's protests forced the board to compromise.<sup>18</sup>

The battle over the fundraiser related to the society's larger struggle to attain its own building. Over the years the ladies had met in private homes and the local Jewish library, but these arrangements proved unsatisfactory. Having their own space would allow the women to congregate and voice their concerns freely, as well as to extend and more fully control their activities. Acceding to the ladies' request, the JCA gave them a piece of land in 1916. However, the society could not secure the money to develop it, and by late 1925, the JCA threatened to repossess the land if construction did not begin. The beleaguered women bargained with the JCA until, at last, they raised the funds, which included a grant from the provincial governor. By 1935 they had their own building.<sup>19</sup>

The existing histories of the colonies barely mention women, let alone their relations with men.<sup>20</sup> The silence leaves the impression that women compliantly followed the men's lead in the struggles to survive in the difficult rural environment and attain their rights from the JCA. Focusing our gaze on women shows that they were not passive. They constantly negotiated with men, at times contentiously, and created, maintained, and developed spaces for themselves.

### **Ashkenazic women and OSFA**

Jewish women created the Organización Sionista Femenina Argentina (OSFA; Argentine Feminine Zionist Organization), the Argentine branch of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), in 1926. OSFA spread across the country, with the Jewish agricultural settlements hosting particularly active chapters. In 1931 the rural centers of Moisés Ville and Villa Domínguez boasted 222 and 205 members, respectively, while Córdoba, a major city, only had 100.<sup>21</sup> Some have claimed that the entire female population of colonies and small towns belonged to OSFA, rather than the small percentage of women who joined in the cities.

Setting themselves apart from other Jewish women's groups, OSFA members described their purpose as primarily one of liberating and reconstructing a nation, instead of dispensing alms. Their task was to help create a new country and tighten the links between it and Argentine Jews. They sent aid to the Jewish community in Palestine and contributed funds to a school in Afulah that trained young Jewish women in agricultural work. To heighten a sense of Jewish identity tied to Zionism, they ran cultural programs, founded libraries, formed kindergartens, and disseminated information on Palestine through lectures, meetings, and a magazine.

Women's duties in OSFA took them outside the usual female roles. Many Argentine Jewish families deposited spare change destined for the Jewish National Fund in little boxes they kept in their homes, and which OSFA members traveled hours down rugged country roads in horse-drawn carriages to collect.<sup>22</sup> Like women in the beneficent societies, OSFA women grew accustomed to keeping records, handling finances, and organizing; much more than the philanthropists did, however, they also learned how to write articles and give speeches. The articles appeared in their magazine, which was inaugurated in 1935.<sup>23</sup> Women gave talks at local, regional, and national OSFA meetings, cultural events, and, in the case of leaders such as long-time president Berta W. de Gerchunoff, community forums. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, some left their homes to travel unescorted on OSFA business throughout Argentina or to other nations.

These experiences may have inspired OSFA activists to work not only to revive the Jews as a people, but, as the *Revista WIZO* put it, to convert homemakers who, until this point, had been "a passive element" into an "active" one. Once such women became members, many discovered previously unknown talents. On the tenth anniversary of the periodical, the first to be created and published exclusively by Argentine Jewish women, the editors recalled that when they had set out to launch a magazine, they had little confidence in their abilities, not to mention that they lacked resources, experience, and guidance from the central office in London. Yet their desire to express their Zionism helped them attain their goal.<sup>24</sup>

The magazine was significant for another reason as well. In it many articles and photos appeared featuring Jewish women's participation in the military, agriculture, and other uncustomary arenas in Palestine/Israel. This was also a favorite topic for OSFA orators. Members read or heard – however true these reports were in fact – about Ashkenazi coreligionists in Palestine, who lived in "almost complete equality"

with men, even in public life, enjoyed the same rights, and freely entered the professions.<sup>25</sup> The constant repetition of this theme may have led OSFA members to reflect upon the differences between their lives and those of their counterparts and so to regard their activity in OSFA as a means of lifting women's status. According to one long-time activist, OFSA/WIZO did more for women in Argentina and Latin America than it did for women in Israel.<sup>26</sup> Centering on women enables one to see that they believed they had a dual mission, not only to pursue Jewish national fulfillment, but to enhance the status of Jewish women.

### **Activism among Mediterranean women**

Women of Mediterranean origin did not come to Argentina through the auspices of the Jewish Colonization Association. The few such women found in the colonies were the wives of JCA administrators and teachers, the latter chosen for their knowledge of Spanish. The Moroccans dispersed throughout towns in the interior and in Buenos Aires, where the majority of Ashkenazim also lived. Jews from the Balkans, Turkey, and the Middle East settled in larger cities, particularly Buenos Aires. Although most Mediterranean women, like their Ashkenazic counterparts, saw themselves at this time primarily as homemakers, women commonly "helped out" in family enterprises, or they earned money sewing and embroidering.

Members of these communities themselves have assumed that Mediterranean Jews were less active than Ashkenazim in communal affairs. According to this view, unlike the Ashkenazim, many of these Jews went to Argentina planning to save money and return to their homelands. Organizing was not on their minds. In addition, at this time few Mediterranean Jews were involved in Zionist affairs. Either they had not yet developed a Zionist consciousness, or they were suspicious of the predominantly Ashkenazi Zionist leadership and doubted that the movement would help their brethren.<sup>27</sup>

Many have also assumed that until recently women of these backgrounds were less likely to attain a higher education or involve themselves in endeavors outside the home. Such notions about education and careers may have some foundation; the first Argentine Sephardi woman to become a physician, Victoria Simsolo, received her degree in 1946, whereas her Ashkenazi counterpart graduated in 1909.<sup>28</sup> However, there is evidence of female participation in philanthropic groups as early as the late nineteenth century, predating the rise of the principal urban Ashkenazi women's association, the Sociedad de Socorros de Damas

Israelitas de Beneficencia (Israelite Beneficent Ladies Aid Society) of Buenos Aires, in 1908.<sup>29</sup>

A first example comes from the Moroccan community; not coincidentally, early Moroccan immigration preceded the mass migration from the Russian empire. In existence by 1899, the Sociedad de Beneficencia “Damas de Sión” (“Ladies of Zion” Beneficent Society) in Buenos Aires helped the indigent and sick and sent groups to visit the bedridden. They particularly were interested in aiding expectant mothers, whom they supplied with bed sheets, wine, chocolate, and small daily stipends.<sup>30</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Mediterranean women activists mainly participated in groups associated with synagogues. Jews of a particular origin, such as those from Aleppo or Rhodes, organized their own synagogues, and the women members distributed aid to the poor of these communities. These were small groups that received little publicity. The Sociedad “Damas Sefardí de Beneficencia” (Sephardic Ladies Beneficent Society), the female charitable arm of the Etz Ajaim synagogue (founded in 1909), which served the Moroccans of Rosario, is a good example. It is not clear when the Damas consolidated, but they had been engaged in philanthropy for some time before 1917. That year their head was the mother of the president of the synagogue.<sup>31</sup>

There were other forms of female activism. Women gave small donations to communal causes and figured among the contributors to the Comité Israelita pro Víctimas de Salónica, which sent relief to the victims of the disastrous fire of 1917.<sup>32</sup> Social clubs and youth groups had male and female members. The Sephardi Ateneo Juventud Hebraica Argentina (Argentine Hebrew Youth Atheneum) of Rosario had a female pro-treasurer in 1928, and five of the eight “members at large” on its governing body were women.<sup>33</sup> Young women in these groups typically raised money and organized social gatherings.

Mediterranean women’s participation in Zionist programs began in earnest in the 1940s. Aside from the reasons already mentioned, the use of Yiddish within OSFA no doubt put off, if it did not exclude by default, Arabic, Ladino, Italian, and Spanish speakers. The first evidence of broader participation in this organization appeared in 1937, with the creation of an OSFA sub-center in the prosperous Belgrano neighborhood of Buenos Aires. Sharing class affiliation, neighborhood, and the use of languages other than Yiddish, well-off Central European and Mediterranean Jewish women joined this chapter.<sup>34</sup> By 1940, the Comisión de Señoritas del KKL (Young Women’s Commission of Keren

Kayemet Israel) formed within the Centro Sionista Sefaradí (Sephardic Zionist Center).<sup>35</sup>

The catalysts for greater involvement were World War II, German persecution of Jews in southeastern Europe, and the impending creation of the state of Israel. Assisting the OSFA executive, the Comisión helped lay the groundwork for Sephardic participation by compiling names of potential members and contacting them. Building on this foundation, Sara de Cuenca, the president of the WIZO Sephardic chapter in Montevideo (Uruguay), and Alegre de Bonomo founded the Centro Sefaradí in Buenos Aires in 1946. The Italians formed their own OSFA center in 1954. By 1955 there was a full-blown Sephardic sector within OSFA, containing 1340 members in centers in the Buenos Aires area and several provinces.<sup>36</sup> One prominent member was Bruria Elnecavé, an ardent Zionist of Bulgarian origin recruited by Gerchunoff for the OSFA executive in 1950. As director of the department of culture, Elnecavé gave speeches, taught classes, and directed a publication series.<sup>37</sup>

Judith Cohen de Isaharoff, originally of Samarkhand, was responsible for another Zionist initiative. Previously involved in philanthropy, in 1940 Isaharoff had helped organize a benefit for the Jewish girls' orphanage. A speech given by the Argentine Socialist feminist leader Alicia Moreau de Justo on the Histadrut, the Jewish labor federation in Palestine, intrigued Isaharoff, who leaned toward socialism; her interest in Moreau de Justo indicates that Jews of non-Ashkenazic origins were not as isolated from Argentine politics as some have thought. Personally convincing women of different communities to put aside their particularisms, Isaharoff created the Amigas Sefaradíes de la Histadrut (Sephardic Friends of the Histadrut; now Amigas Sefaradíes de Naamat) in 1946, and she served as its president for forty years. By 1947, the Amigas, whose principal activity in its early years was to send clothing and financial contributions to Palestine, had 600 members in its main Buenos Aires chapter. Other members belonged to affiliate chapters in various neighborhoods of the capital city, and there was a youth chapter in Rosario.<sup>38</sup>

Meeting in 1948, the Segunda Convención Regional Sefaradí Argentina (Second Regional Argentine Sephardic Convention) resolved to create a Consejo Central de Damas Sefaradíes (Central Council of Sephardic Ladies). The idea was to unite the various communities, involve women in Zionism, and gather funds for needy Sephardim throughout the world. The Convención invited women of Zionist groups, beneficent societies, and social clubs to participate. Some members of

OSFA responded, siphoning off personnel and energy from its Sephardi sector. Consejo members grouped themselves in subcommittees according to their places of origin: Italy, Palestine, Morocco, Aleppo, and Damascus. Division by place of origin thus persisted, although the women came together under the umbrella of a single organization. Aside from holding cultural events, the Consejo sent clothing, blankets, medicine, hospital equipment, and funds to Israel. Despite the rivalry between the two groups, the Consejo contributed to OSFA causes in Israel, for example, by constructing a kindergarten building in Afulah.<sup>39</sup>

In 1944 the youth department of the Centro Sionista Sefaradí, headed by Julieta Camji, inaugurated the custom of an annual Purim party to raise money for the Zionist cause and convoke the various communities. According to the magazine *Israel*, never in local history had so many young people of these backgrounds attended the same social event. Over 1200 youths whose family roots lay in Aleppo, Damascus, Smyrna, Salonika, Bulgaria, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and the Central Asian cities of Bukhara and Birobidzan participated in the festivities. As the magazine observed, “the youth no longer understand the old distinctions of origin;” most were “Argentine-born, sharing the same tastes and language.” Another factor of unity was their sense of allegiance to a Jewish nation. Candidates nominated by social clubs and youth groups vied for the titles of Queen Esther and Miss Congeniality – significantly replaced in subsequent years by the title “Miss Sefaradí.”<sup>40</sup> The Gran Baile de la Colectividad Sefaradí quickly became *the* yearly social event, featuring the crowning of Miss Sefaradí, who symbolized the merging of the various collectivities.

The Amigas, Consejo, OSFA Sephardi sector, and young women of the Centro Sionista Sefaradí stood out for several reasons. Bigger than their predecessors, they attracted more attention in the press. They also performed the role of uniting the disparate communities and forging a broad sense of Sephardi identity that overrode narrow regional and city boundaries. Although the word “Sephardi” had appeared in the names of institutions, periodical subtitles, and visionary articles, until the 1940s, in Argentina, it existed mainly in theory. The dances, meetings, collections of goods, and recruitment of members for the Zionist cause fostered interaction among the various groups and helped convert this abstract term into a reality.<sup>41</sup> The literature on Argentine Jews often emphasizes the divisions among the Jewish communities, including the Sephardic ones. Putting women at the center of interest teaches us how Sephardi Argentine Jews came together and broke these barriers down.

### The Communist party

Before a firm sense of Sephardi identity consolidated, a strong working class of Yiddish-speaking origins had formed in Buenos Aires. Concentrated in the needle and weaving trades, women labored in factories, small workshops, and home industries largely located in Villa Crespo, La Paternal, and the suburb of Villa Lynch. Jewish workers resided, shopped, and socialized in the same neighborhoods, reinforcing the ties among them. Jewish working-class women became active in unions, the Socialist and Communist parties, anarchist circles, and smaller leftist factions. Seasoned in work outside the home and union struggles, Polish women arriving in the 1920s and 1930s added to this developing sense of militancy.

Jewish women were especially conspicuous in the Communist party, where they played important roles in cultural outreach toward other Yiddish speakers. In the 1920s and 1930s, women began to educate the community, teaching children in the Jewish worker schools, coaching Jewish immigrants in Spanish and Marxism, and working in Jewish Communist libraries. Mothers of young pupils went from door to door, encouraging other mothers to enroll their children in the schools associated with the party. Drawing upon amateur actors and actresses who were wage earners, the IFT theater presented leftist-oriented plays in Yiddish. ICUF (Idischer Cultur Farband, or Yiddish Culture Organization), the Argentine branch of the Soviet-sponsored global organization founded in 1937, which promoted a progressive Yiddish-based Jewish identity divorced from religion or Zionism, took over these activities. Women were involved in all the ICUF ventures, which included schools, children's programs, the Zumerland camp, IFT, and a translation and publication series. Through its reading circles and magazine, entitled *Di Idische Froi* (The Yiddish Woman), the ICUF female commission, created in 1947, awakened women to issues of broader concern to the party, such as opposition to the arms race. It concentrated its efforts on homemakers generally ignored by Communist leaders, thus complementing the party's recruitment strategy among women.<sup>42</sup>

Jewish women also involved themselves in arenas beyond that of the Yiddish speakers. In the early 1920s the party sent Ida Bondareff de Kantor to speak to workers outside factories and at union halls. She served as secretary general of the women's branch of the central committee, but clashed with party leaders and left for Russia. In the 1940s Fanny Edelman headed the party's National Feminine Commission and entered its central committee. At lower levels, Jewish women organized discussion meetings, distributed and sold Marxist literature,

and wrote articles for Communist periodicals. Many participated in labor unions, particularly those of textile workers and seamstresses. Those who returned from serving in the Spanish Civil War gave lectures on that conflict and helped organize aid for the refugees. Jewish girls participated in the Communist high school and university student movements, selling their newspapers and attending demonstrations and youth conferences. Women joined the various party-sponsored groups of the 1930s and 1940s that opposed anti-Semitism and fascism, such as the Organización Popular Contra el Antisemitismo (Popular Organization Against Anti-Semitism) and the more select Agrupación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores (Group of Intellectuals, Artists, Journalists, and Writers).<sup>43</sup>

Jewish women were particularly active in efforts to help those detained for political reasons. As members of the local branch of Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid) and its successor, the Liga Argentina Por los Derechos del Hombre (Argentine League for the Rights of Man), they raised money for prisoners' legal defense and visited them in jail, bringing them meals, clothing, and messages. The Jewish feminine section of the Liga was known for its solidarity and courage, and no one stood out more than its legendary figure Compañera Zlate, a mother of political prisoners whom the police detained several times. Other women of Jewish origins, such as the aristocratic Dalila Saslavsky, gave speeches on human rights at Liga events.<sup>44</sup>

The rich texture of Jewish women's participation contrasts with the treatment of the Communist party in the historical literature. Except for Communist participation in the labor movement, there are few serious studies of this political persuasion, or indeed of any leftist group after 1930.<sup>45</sup> Existing accounts tend to be narrowly partisan, in part, because decades of fierce political conflict and repression resulted in the destruction and scattering of primary sources. Some of these have become accessible only recently. Archives in the former Soviet Union were also long closed.

Yet there is another compelling reason for the lack of work on Communists and other leftists. Coming to power in 1946, Juan and Eva Perón appropriated the mantles of the labor movement and progressives, saying they would Argentinize and fulfill the reformist programs of these groups; they would also convert what had been an unofficial colony of Great Britain into an independent nation. The message they projected was that the struggle for legitimate, nationalist change had culminated in Peronism, rendering other organizations outmoded and

unnecessary. The government suppressed independent trade unionists and leftists who were unwilling to forsake partisan, internationalist, and revolutionary aspirations. Pro-Peronist authors treated competing movements as preludes to Peronism, dismissing those that did not fit this narrative as peripheral, foreign-inspired, or antinational. Its pursuit of goals that often corresponded more with Soviet than Argentine needs made the Communist party an easy target, as did the party's frequent accord with liberals.

Peronists successfully criticized the Communists about their role in the presidential election of 1946, in which the Communists had joined with other leftists and centrists in the Unión Democrática (Democratic Union) – also backed by the conservative elite – to run against Perón. Endorsed by United States Ambassador Spruille Braden, this coalition denounced Perón as a fascist. However, this claim did not outweigh the popular social welfare measures Perón had implemented while secretary of labor during the military government of 1943–1946. These reforms gave a powerful boost to his election bid. Its association with conservatives and the United States, as well as its opposition to Peronism, severely weakened the Communist party's progressive and anti-imperialist credentials.<sup>46</sup>

Many historians have subjected various aspects of Peronism to close scrutiny, yet Peronist interpretations of Communists and other leftists still stand. The history of anarchism has fared better, but then anarchist ascendancy ended by 1930, and the groups that remained afterward were small and splintered, posing little challenge to Peronism. Historians have written extensively on this movement, undeterred by concern that what they say could undermine a triumphalist vision of Peronism. By contrast, Argentine Socialism and Communism, the most important leftist group of the 1930s and 1940s, persisted, and it was necessary for Peronism to combat them, including on paper. While the Peronist-inspired criticism of Communist leaders is cogent, it tells us little about the motivations, mindsets, and daily activities of the rank and file. But this may be remedied. Just as in other areas where studying the activities of Jewish women has shed new light on Argentine history, here too, it indicates the need for researching the grassroots after 1930. Such work could bring to the surface a different world of popular mobilization and counterhegemonic projects.<sup>47</sup>

### **Junta de la Victoria**

Any exploration of the Communist party from the ground up would have to include consideration of the Junta de la Victoria, which is best viewed within the context of the mobilization against fascism in Argentina that began in the early 1930s. Anarchists, Radicals, Socialists, Communists, and others protested the repressive policies of the right-wing military dictatorship of 1930–1931. They demonstrated and fought with fascist-influenced Nationalists in the streets. In the middle of the decade the struggle gained steam, as centrist and leftist political parties used antifascist rhetoric to contest the fraudulently elected conservative government that succeeded the dictatorship, as well as to oppose the Nationalists, who sometimes were its allies. Leftists, including Jewish women, formed organizations throughout the country to work against the German Nazi threat in Europe, as well as the threat that they sensed at home. Rosa M. de Ziperovich, a teacher, Communist, and future union leader, founded such a group in the small town of Palacios, in the Jewish agricultural zone of Santa Fe province.<sup>48</sup>

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 catalyzed opponents of fascism. Leftist intellectuals and workers alike saw these events as the opening salvo of a battle between fascism and democracy that could soon envelop the world, including Argentina. The war was pivotal in raising the political consciousness of many Jewish women. Girls walked from door to door and collected newspaper, metal scraps, and donations; women participated in Jewish- and Communist-organized groups that sent aid to the Republic and its refugees. Communists Raquel Levenson, Dora Trumper, and Fanny Edelman, among others, went to Spain to contribute to the Republican war effort. There, the former anarchist and Communist converted to Trotskyism, Mika Felman Etchebéhère, captained a regiment of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Worker Party of Marxist Unification).<sup>49</sup> For many Jewish women, the Spanish Civil War marked the beginning of their political involvement in the left; for others it represented a culmination of militancy.

From helping the Spanish Republicans it was a logical step to work for the Allies during the Second World War, despite Argentine neutrality until near the end of the conflict. The greatest effort began after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Before this, the Soviet-German defense pact had kept Communists from taking part in such activities; afterward, they became the main impetus behind the aid effort. In September 1941 Dr. Cora Ratto de Sadosky, a Communist; María Rosa Oliver, an upper-class Communist sympathizer; and a small

group of women formed the Junta de la Victoria. The group was dedicated to defeating fascism overseas and preventing it from spreading to Argentina. Ratto and Oliver became secretary and vice-president, respectively. The president was Ana Rosa Schlieper de Martínez Guerrero, an aristocrat active in Pan American feminist circles, member of the centrist Radical party, and secretary general of the antifascist *Acción Argentina* (Argentine Action). The Junta included women from different sectors and classes: feminists like Oliver and Schlieper who had belonged to the pro-suffrage *Unión Argentina de Mujeres* (Argentine Union of Women); intellectuals and artists; members of the Argentine upper class, who idealized the British and French cultures; liberal Catholics; prominent immigrants and wives of diplomats from antifascist nations; plebeian urban and rural women, many of them originally from the occupied countries; and political militants.<sup>50</sup> During the war the Junta's diversity represented strength, since it guaranteed widespread involvement. On the other hand, heterogeneity presaged the difficulties Perón's opponents would eventually face.

Inspired by solidarity and the desire to defeat Hitler, many Ashkenazic Jewish women in the cities and colonies affiliated with the Junta. These included the sculptor Cecilia Marcovich, the writer and educator Berta de Braslavsky, and Fanny Edelman and Dalila Saslavsky. All were associated with the Communist party, and they figured, too, in the Junta's national leadership. Others, such as Clara de Filer, a medical doctor and Jewish community activist, served as officers in local chapters, in her case, as president in Villa Domínguez, Entre Ríos.<sup>51</sup>

Raquel A. de Monín, a Jewish immigrant from Poland, married to a Socialist and living in a working-class suburb of Buenos Aires, belonged to a chapter located in a nearby, more privileged neighborhood. Most of its members were wealthy Anglo-Argentines or their Argentine wives. They rented a house, where they held benefit teas and raffles and knit clothes to be sent overseas. Monín and her daughter went from house to house in her *barrio* selling raffle tickets, while other members collected materials for recycling.<sup>52</sup> In the Argentina of the 1940s, there were few such opportunities for working-class women of any origin to intermingle and collaborate with women of radically different class backgrounds. By helping to construct these spaces, Jewish women changed the landscape.

Collecting, making, and sending materials and supplies to the Allies involved many tasks. The leaders established ties with diplomats of the Allied countries, solicited donations from businessmen, and traveled through Argentina, founding an estimated 125 chapters. They drafted

press releases and delivered speeches. The Junta executive organized exhibitions of antifascist artists, teas to honor Allied female dignitaries and dedicated Junta members, and large benefits featuring well-known performers, statesmen, and thinkers. At the chapter level, members met to knit or pick up wool to knit at home, organize smaller benefits, and discuss civic and women's concerns. They also were supposed to look for and document the activities of Nazi sympathizers.<sup>53</sup>

The members' discussions of issues indicated that the Junta defined its purpose broadly: "to definitively annihilate fascism, establish peace, defend the rights of the woman and solve the problems of children's health and education."<sup>54</sup> Defeating fascism entailed incorporating women into the public arena and relieving poverty, although such measures would have to await the end of the war to begin;<sup>55</sup> it also meant an egalitarian style of debating and decisionmaking. In May 1943, 200 delegates attended the Junta's national congress to discuss their labors. Ratto noted that each of the chapters had "democratically" formulated work plans to be submitted to the assembly and that the goal of the meeting was to articulate the aims of women who asserted their defense of democracy in the world and practiced it in their daily lives.<sup>56</sup> Through their involvement in the Junta, observed Schlieper, women gained expertise in "norms of getting along with others collectively and training in tasks useful to the State and its defense."<sup>57</sup> In the context of growing authoritarianism, however, these practices appeared subversive.

The Junta faced detractors, particularly from the far right. Hostile to Communist influence, sympathetic to fascism, and favoring a neutrality policy that tilted toward the Axis, Nationalists denounced the Junta as "a movement of social dissolution."<sup>58</sup> Foreshadowing future discourse, another frequent Nationalist complaint was that the Junta ignored local problems and focused on matters that did not affect the country. For example, María Esther Méndez compared her fellow women Nationalists, who collected aid for impoverished Argentines, with (those she labeled as) the Jews, Communists, and oligarchs of the Junta, who shipped goods abroad.<sup>59</sup>

The Junta also faced opposition from two successive governments. During President Ramón S. Castillo's increasingly repressive administration (1940–1943), the police kept the Junta from holding some of its meetings, public rallies, and benefit performances, and broke up others in progress. From time to time, the authorities in the federal capital detained Junta members. Junta leaders talked with government officials about their goals and demanded the right to continue

their activities.<sup>60</sup> Such action did not bring lasting results. The even more rightist military government that ousted Castillo indeed closed the Junta down, in June 1943, shortly after coming to power.<sup>61</sup> This was part of the regime's policy of clamping down on all pro-Allied, leftist, and democratic movements.

The Junta, however, did not end here. When the Allies liberated Paris in 1944, the leaders of the dormant organization invited women to the Plaza Francia in Buenos Aires; many others unconnected to the Junta, including men, also gathered there. One who turned up was the Jewish actress Berta Singerman, known for her dramatic poetry readings. Sympathetic to the left and the Allied cause, Singerman had also belonged to the Junta and performed at its benefits before 1943. She recited "La Marseillaise" to the cheering crowd of about 200,000. The democratic message of the song and assemblage and the demonstration of support for the Allies did not appeal to the authorities, who tried to break up the rally.<sup>62</sup>

As part of the democratic opening that accompanied the campaign for the election of 1946, the military government permitted the Junta to reopen, in April 1945. Although the group continued to send clothing to European refugees, the end of the war compelled it to redefine its goals. From now on, it would focus on women's issues: daycare for working mothers, enforcement of legislation protecting female workers, the high cost of living, and preparing women to vote. It redirected its antifascism by organizing rallies, fundraising, and aid against the dictatorship of Francisco Franco in Spain and on behalf of the Republican exiles. Another part of its antifascist campaign, as the Junta saw it, was to support the Unión Democrática and oppose "Nazi-Peronism." Although it continued some of its activities after Perón's election in 1946, loss of focus, an inability to attract large numbers of workers, not to mention police repression, contributed to its final decline.<sup>63</sup>

Pro-Peronist authors have regarded the participants in the antifascist and pro-Allied campaigns of the 1930s and 1940s as "sepoys" who emphasized foreign over local concerns. They have pointed out how these activists ignored the opportunity offered by neutrality to free Argentina of foreign, mainly British, economic control. In their view, by the time the war ended, fascism was a chimera, fostered by the Unión Democrática for its electoral advantage. More, these writers have pointed out that this "unholy alliance," the Unión, drew upon accusations of fascism framed by the United States and therefore were tainted. Some Unión members themselves had collaborated with previous dictatorships and benefited from electoral fraud; their

criticism of Perón for not being democratic was hypocritical. The main intention of the so-called antifascists, they said, was to prevent Perón from delivering social justice to the workers and liberating the country from foreign capital. A disguise for oligarchical and imperialistic machinations, antifascism was a trumped-up cause that attracted little popular support.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps influenced by such opinions, scholars have not considered the antifascist movement important enough to warrant examination. Women's antifascism has received even less attention.<sup>65</sup>

Focusing on Jewish women allows us at last to catch a glimpse of the scope of the antifascist movement. One cannot simply collapse all the antifascist and pro-Allied sentiments into a monolithically antipopular and anti-national scheme, as pro-Peronist authors have done. The motives of antifascists were varied, and their goals, especially those for the homefront, were more diverse than many historians have recognized. Apart from efforts for Spanish Republicans and, later, the Allies, antifascist women sought to strengthen democracy at home, which had so frequently been assaulted by fraudulently elected governments, the military, and the Nationalists during these years. The story of women's grassroots efforts thus adds complexity to existing treatments of politics in the 1930s and 1940s.

## Conclusion

The insertion of Jewish women changes the landscape of Argentine, Jewish, and women's history. It adds nuance and texture to the study of the colonies, Zionism, Sephardim, the Communist party, and the antifascist struggle. It provides a more rounded portrait of Argentine Jews, for female perceptions and experiences were not necessarily the same as those of the men on whom the histories have been based.

Putting women at the center alters the historical terrain of the colonies from one that focuses on relations with the JCA to one of education, the daily routine, and philanthropy. Teacher training provides a useful window through which to view the incorporation of Jews into the Argentine milieu and liberal project. That Jewish women had the political influence needed to secure teaching positions indicates there was more pluralism in Argentina than many might have thought. The controversy in Entre Ríos shows that Jewish and other Argentine women entered the public arena not just through feminism, unions, and Peronism, but through the highly visible task of educating the young. Through their institutional networks women helped fill in the landscape of rural life, securing spaces for themselves and the community, provid-

ing aid for the needy, and enhancing local services. Women's groups negotiated with and contested male leaders, demonstrating that male-dominated harmony between the sexes did not always prevail in the agricultural settlements.

Zionism expanded the horizons of women of all the Jewish collectivities in different ways. It acquainted homemakers with the possibility of expanded roles outside the household, through organizational activity, travel, and identification with Israeli women. Through Zionist activity, Mediterranean women changed the landscape of their communities by breaking down the walls that separated them to forge a larger Sephardic identity. Their participation in the Jewish national cause and synagogue-based charities shows that they were more involved in communal matters than many have thought, and this realization may prompt reevaluation of the degree of male activity.

Ashkenazic Jewish women were leading participants in the Communist party and the Junta de la Victoria. The rich texture of their involvement suggests a new historical terrain, one that takes account of the vitality of Communism at the grassroots level and the broad appeal of democratic sentiments. Historians cannot simply reduce these phenomena to a static vision of antinationalist activity dictated by Moscow, the elite, or the United States. Thus, the insertion of Jewish women contests hegemonic narratives.

## Notes

1. On recovering voices see Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 26. The only works focusing on the history of Argentine Jewish women are Myriam Esliar, *Mujeres. En la literatura y la vida judeoargentina* (Buenos Aires, 1996); Sandra McGee Deutsch, "Women: The Forgotten Half of Argentine Jewish History," *Shofar* 15, no. 3 (Spring 1997), 49–63; Nora Glickman, *The Jewish White Slave Trade and the Untold Story of Raquel Liberman* (New York, 1999). A third of Esliar's short book, however, is devoted to literary depictions of these women. Donna J. Guy's *Sex and Danger: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln, 1991), also contains historical data on Jewish women.
2. On oral history methodology see John D. French and Daniel James, "Oral History, Identity Formation, and Working-Class Mobilization," in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers. From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box*, eds., French and James (Durham, 1997), 298; Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York, 1991).
3. Levins Morales, *Medicine Stories*, 26–27.
4. Simón Weill, "Población israelita en la República Argentina," in *Estudios sobre las comunidades judía y francesa en Argentina. Los escritos de Simón Weill*, ed.,

Alberto Kleiner (Buenos Aires, 1983), 82. On Jewish immigration to Argentina see, for example, Haim Avni, *Argentina & the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration*, trans. Gila Brand (Tuscaloosa, 1991); Victor A. Mirelman, *Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890–1930: In Search of an Identity* (Detroit, 1990).

I use the word Sephardim in quotation marks because the various Mediterranean communities did not forge a generalized Sephardic identity until later, as explained below.

5. Sergio DellaPergola, “Demographic Trends of Latin American Jewry,” in *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*, eds., Judith Laikin Elkin and Gilbert W. Merkx (Boston, 1987), 92.
6. República Argentina, Dirección Nacional del Servicio Estadístico, *Cuarto censo general de la Nación* (Buenos Aires, 1947), 1, lxii, I; Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas* (Buenos Aires, 1962), 179, 188.
7. Daniel Fernando Bargman, “Un ámbito para las relaciones interétnicas: las colonias agrícolas judías en Argentina,” *Revista de Antropología*, no. 11 (1992), 54–55; Avni, *Argentina*, 62–63. For first-hand accounts of women’s lives in the colonies, see Raquel Zimmerman de Faingold, *Memorias* (Buenos Aires, 1987); Hélène Gutkowski, *Rescate de la herencia cultural. Vidas . . . en las colonias* (Buenos Aires, 1991); Haim Avni and Leonardo Senkman, eds., *Del campo al campo. Colonos de Argentina en Israel* (Buenos Aires, 1993), esp. 135–146, 193–211.
8. República Argentina, *Tercer censo nacional levantado el 1 de junio de 1914* (Buenos Aires, 1916), 3: 329. It was unclear whether the census takers included literacy in Yiddish.
9. María Arcuschin, *De Ucrania a Basavilbaso* (Buenos Aires, 1986); Lea Literat-Golombek, *Moisés Ville: crónica de un shtetl argentino* (Jerusalem, 1982); Tuba Teresa Ropp, *Un colono judío en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1971); Osías Shijman, *Colonización judía en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1980); Dora Bortnik de Duchovny, *Recuerdos de una maestra de campaña* (San Isidro, 1980).
10. Georgette Magassy Dorn, “Sarmiento, the United States, and Public Education,” in *Sarmiento and His Argentina*, ed., Joseph T. Criscenti (Boulder, 1993), 77–89; Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, 1991); Marifran Carlson, *Feminismo: The Women’s Movement in Argentina From Its Beginnings to Evita Perón* (Chicago, 1986), 63–79.
11. The exception is Beatriz Sarlo, *La máquina cultural: maestros, traductores y vanguardistas* (Buenos Aires, 1998), 9–92.
12. Luisa Furman de Bendersky, interview with author, Villa Domínguez, 8 July 1997.
13. Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1890–1932: The Argentine Patriotic League* (Lincoln, 1986), 34, 74–75, 78–79.
14. On this incident see Furman de Bendersky, interview; Olga Kipen, interview with author, Basavilbaso, 7 July 1997; U.S. Department of State, “The Fascist-Totalitarian Character of the Present Argentine Regime,” Oct. 1944, 835.00/6-1848, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; *La Acción* (Paraná), 5 Sept. 1944, n.p.
15. Carlson, *Feminismo*; Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890–1940* (Lincoln, 1995); Marysa Navarro,

- “Hidden, Silent, and Anonymous: Women Workers in the Argentine Trade Union Movement,” in *The World of Women’s Trade Unionism. Comparative Historical Essays*, ed. Norbert C. Soldon (Westport, 1985), 167–186; Estela dos Santos, *Las mujeres peronistas* (Buenos Aires, 1983); Susana Bianchi and Norma Sanchis, *El Partido Peronista Femenino. Primera parte (1949/1955)* (Buenos Aires, 1988); Mirta Zaida Lobato, “Mujeres obreras, protesta y acción gremial en la Argentina: los casos de la industria frigorífica y textil de Berisso,” in *Historia y género*, ed. Dora Barrancos (Buenos Aires, 1993), 65–97.
16. Literat-Golombek, *Moisés Ville*, 44.
  17. On the activities of these groups, see Rosa Gabis archive, Archivo IWO, Buenos Aires; Furman de Bendersky, interview.
  18. Libro de Actas, Sociedad de Damas Auxiliares al Hospital Clara, acta 3 Jan. 24, 1928, SSJ 1 Hospital, Museo Las Colonias, Villa Domínguez; Libro de Actas, Sociedad de Damas de Beneficencia, actas 44 (Aug. 24, 1926), 48 (Sept. 2, 1926), 50 (Sept. 5, 1926), Archivo de la Asociación Israelita de Basavilbaso. Also see Celia Gladys López de Borche, *Cooperativismo y cultura: historia de Villa Domínguez 1890–1940*, 2nd ed. (Concepción de Uruguay, 1985), 77.
  19. Libro de Actas, Sociedad de Damas, actas 4 (Nov. 18, 1923), 6 (Dec. 29, 1923), 27 (Dec. 14, 1925), 29 (Jan. 13, 1926), 30 (Jan. 28, 1926), 32 (Feb. 7, 1926), 34 (Mar. 4, 1926); *Mundo Israelita* (Buenos Aires), 16 Mar. 1935, 3.
  20. One exception is López de Borche, *Cooperativismo*.
  21. OSFA, “Informe de la Organización Sionista Femenina W. I. Z. O., años 1929–1931,” n.d., Box 149, Archivo IWO, Buenos Aires.
  22. *Revista WIZO*, nos. 34–35 (Nov.–Dec. 1938), 5.
  23. *Vivencias*, no. 24 (Nov. 1996), 5.
  24. *Revista WIZO*, nos. 49 (June 1941), 3, and 63 (Apr. 1945), 1.
  25. *Ibid.*, no. 31 (July 1938), 17–18.
  26. Amalia de Polak, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 7 Aug. 1997.
  27. The reasons for the lack of involvement are explored in *La Luz* (Buenos Aires), 13 March 1931, 3; Victor A. Mirelman, “Early Zionist Activities Among Sephardim in Argentina,” *American Jewish Archives* 34, no. 2 (Nov. 1982), 190–205.
  28. *Israel*, 8 Nov. 1946, 10; Alberto G. Kohn Loncarica, Norma Isabel Sánchez, Abel Luís Agüero, “La contribución de las primeras médicas argentinas a la enseñanza universitaria,” *Anales de la Sociedad Científica Argentina* 228, no. 2 (1998).
  29. The Ashkenazic women’s group initially arose in 1892, faded into obscurity, and revived in 1908. On its origins see Lázaro Schallman, “Las primeras agrupaciones de mujeres judías en la Argentina,” *Revista OSFA*, no. 306 (Dec. 1972), 37; *Mundo Israelita*, 29 May 1923, 4.
  30. *Israel*, 23 and 30 Sept. 1927, n.p.
  31. *Ibid.*, Mar. 1918, 280.
  32. *Ibid.*, 286.
  33. *Ibid.*, 19 and 26 April 1928, 48.
  34. *La Luz*, 28 May 1937, 220–221.
  35. Julieta Camji, phone interview with author, May 27, 2001.

36. *Israel*, 16 June 1944, 20, and 25 Oct. 1946, 9; *La Luz*, 25 Nov. 1955, 333; Grinberg to Levy, 21 July 1955, WIZO collection, F49/19, Central Zionist Archive (CZA), Jerusalem; *Revista OSFA*, no. 155 (May 1954), 11.
37. Bruria Elnecavé, *Crisol de vivencias judías* (Buenos Aires, 1994), 66–68, 97–98; *Revista OSFA*, no. 106 (Dec. 1949–Jan. 1950), n.p.
38. Judith Cohen de Isaharoff, interview, no. 182, Archivo de la Palabra, Centro Marc Turkoff, AMIA, Buenos Aires, 6–8, 10; *La Luz*, 22 Mar. 1940, 142; *Israel*, 16 Aug. 1946, 15; 13 Dec. 1946, 4; 7 Feb. 1947, 18.
39. Nissensohn to Hauser Zeissler, 24 Sept. 1952, F49/12, and Hauser Zeissler to Consejo, 31 Dec. 1952, F49/12, CZA; Chola Tawil de Ini, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 28 July 1998; *Israel*, 31 May 1948, 6–7, 21; 25 June 1948, 18; 5 Nov. 1948, 13; 17 June 1949, 18; 30 Sept. 1951, 31; 2 May 1952, 9.
40. *Israel*, 11 Feb. 1944, 13; 28 April 1944, 12–13, quote on 12; 25 May 1945, 11.
41. This is reminiscent of the manner in which other immigrant groups, both in Argentina and elsewhere, began to identify with their former homeland, rather than their region of origin, only when they settled in a new country. See Arnd Schneider, “Organizing Ethnicity: Three Episodes in the Politics of Italian Associations in Argentina, 1947–1989,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 25, no. 50 (2000), 199.
42. Leike Kogan, “Achievements and Future of Jewish Women in Argentina” (in Yiddish), *Revista ICUF*, nos. 101–102 (Oct.–Nov. 1951), 50–54; Gregorio Lerner, interview, 1986, no. 41, Archivo de la Palabra; *Di Idische Froi*, nos. 20–21 (Mar.–June 1956), 1, and 25 (June–Aug. 1957), 1–2, 10.
43. *La Internacional* (Buenos Aires), 9–10 Jan. 1922, 3–4, 3 Feb. 1924, 4, 17 Jan. 1925, 5; Fanny Edelman, *Banderas. Pasiones. Camaradas* (Buenos Aires, 1996), 98; Mina Ruetter, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 17 Aug. 2000, Buenos Aires; Organización Popular Contra el Antisemitismo, *Estatutos*, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires, 1938), lists a female officer; Berta Baumkoler, *La lucha es vida* (Buenos Aires, 2000), 27, 52, 60; James Cane, communication; Navarro, “Hidden.”
44. *Derechos del hombre*, 2nd period, 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1945), 2, 8; Baumkoler, *La lucha*, 20; Ruetter, interview; *La voz argentina contra la barbarie* (Buenos Aires, 1942), 12.
45. On the lack of research on the Communist party see Jorge Cernadas, Roberto Pittaluga, and Horacio Tarcus, “La historiografía sobre el Partido Comunista de la Argentina. Un estado de la cuestión,” *El Rodaballo* 4, no. 8 (Fall/Winter 1998), 31–40. Exceptions to this rule are Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, “El Partido Comunista en la Argentina ante Moscú: deberes y realidades, 1930–1941,” *E.I.A.L.* 10 (1999), 91–107; “Los judíos comunistas de Argentina de grupo idiomático a la emigración a Biribidian (1920–1937), en los archivos de Moscú,” paper presented at the Latin American Jewish Studies Association meeting, Princeton, Mar. 1999. Scholars have also begun to work on leftist cultural circles in the 1930s and 1940s, in which Communists participated. See James Cane, “Unity for the Defense of Culture: The AIAPE and the Cultural Politics of Argentine Antifascism, 1935–1943,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (Aug. 1997), 443–482; Sylvia Saïtta, “Entre la cultura y la política: los escritores de izquierda,” in *Nueva historia argentina, 7: Crisis económica, avance del estado e incertidumbre política (1930–1943)*, ed., Alejandro Cat-

- taruzza (Buenos Aires, 2001), 383–428; María Cristina Mateu, “La integración de los grupos idiomáticos en la cultura obrera argentina, a través de la política del Partido Comunista en la década del ’20,” paper presented at the Congreso de las Colectividades, IDES, Buenos Aires, Oct. 2000.
46. For examples of these views see Juan José Hernández Arregui, *La formación de la conciencia nacional (1930–1960)* (Buenos Aires, 1960); Jorge Abelardo Ramos, *Breve historia de las izquierdas en la Argentina*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires, 1960), and *Historia del stalinismo en la Argentina*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires, 1969).
  47. As does Cane, “Unity.”
  48. Andrés Bisso, “La apelación antifascista y su recepción en la práctica política de la Unión Democrática,” *Políticas de la Memoria*, no. 3 (Oct. 2000), 22–23; *Mujeres en la Ayuda* (Buenos Aires, 1942), 50.
  49. Ester and Salo Koval, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 28 June 1998; Edelman, *Banderas*, 42–49, 52–76; *Ayuda al pueblo español*, 21 June 1941, 7; Mika Etchebéhère, *Mi guerra de España* (Barcelona, 1976). Also see Dora Schwartzstein, *Entre Franco y Perón: Memoria e identidad del exilio republicano español en Argentina* (Barcelona, 2001); Mónica Quijada, *Aires de república, aires de cruzada: La guerra civil española en Argentina* (Barcelona, 1991).
  50. *La Hora* (Buenos Aires), 22 Aug. 1941, 4; María Rosa Oliver, *Mi fe es el hombre* (Buenos Aires, 1981), 41–45; María Rosa Oliver, interview, 13 May 1971, 53, Proyecto de Historia Oral del Instituto Torcuato di Tella, Buenos Aires; Lily Sosa de Newton, *Diccionario biográfico de mujeres argentinas*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires, 1980), 433.
  51. *Mujeres en la Ayuda*, 11–13, 47–48, 62–64; Kogan, “Achievements,” 50–54.
  52. Ana Monín, interview with author, San Isidro, 29 June 1997.
  53. On this last task, see *La Hora*, 15 April 1942, 5.
  54. Junta de la Victoria, *Estatutos* (Buenos Aires, n.d.), 3.
  55. *Mujeres en la Ayuda*, 8.
  56. *La Hora*, 5 May 1943, 5.
  57. Ana Rosa Schlieper de Martínez Guerrero to President Pedro P. Ramírez, 30 June 1943, Junta de la Victoria file, Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en la Argentina, Buenos Aires.
  58. Quoted in *La Hora*, 15 April 1942, 1.
  59. *Crisol* (Buenos Aires), 16 Dec. 1941, 3.
  60. *La Hora*, 24 April 1942, 8; 6 Dec. 1942, 6; 10 Dec. 1942, 6; 31 Dec. 1942, 5; 11 Feb. 1943, 5; 21 Mar. 1943, 6.
  61. *Mujeres argentinas* (Buenos Aires), 7 Aug. 1946, 7.
  62. *La Hora*, 5 Dec. 1942, 5, 27 Dec. 1942, 5; Edelman, *Banderas*, 89; Berta Singerman, *Mis dos vidas* (Buenos Aires, 1981), 112–114. Other groups could not celebrate the liberation of Paris, either. See Arnd Schneider, *Futures Lost. Nostalgia and Identity among Italian Immigrants in Argentina* (Bern, 2000), 141.
  63. Raanan Rein, *The Franco-Perón Alliance: Relations Between Spain and Argentina 1946–1955*, trans. Martha Grenzeback (Pittsburgh, 1993), 150, 152, 286 n. 39; Berta Perelstein de Braslavsky, interview with author, Buenos Aires, 28 Sept. 2000; *Mujeres argentinas*, 9 Aug. 1946, 7; *La Hora*, 15 Nov. 1945, 6, 22

- Nov. 1945, 1, 12 Dec. 1945, 6, 16 Dec. 1945, 3, 19 Dec. 1945, 3, 20 Dec. 1945, 1, 4 Apr. 1946, 6.
64. See, for example, Ramos, *Breve historia*, 2, 136; Hernández Arregui, *La formación*, 139–141.
65. Exceptions are Andrés Bisso, “La apelación;” “Recepción y usos del antifascismo como eje articulador de la práctica política de la Unión Democrática” (thesis, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2001); “La recepción de la tradición liberal por parte del antifascismo argentino,” *E.I.A.L.* 12, no. 2 (July–Dec. 2001), 85–113; and Cane, “Unity.”