

## Echoes of Antisemitism in Colombia (1939-1948)

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With Adolf Hitler's promotion and the National Socialism under the German power in 1933 - and until 1945 -, European Jews went through a process of exclusion, rejection, expulsion and destruction into the German society. Colombia, on this hand, received only about 6,000 Jewish travelers, which constituted the largest wave of immigrants of Jewish origin in the country, given that it has not been - since its formation - a state of immigrants. This article serves as purpose to show evidence of some actions developed in Colombia, during the period from 1939 to 1948, against the Jewish communities that were settled in the country, and were victims of the emergence of an anti-Semitism local. The exaltation of their voices is a constant purpose, as a way of "doing justice" to these victims of the Shoah, in which Colombia made a small, but still significant, contribution.

*Keywords:* antisemitism, jewish migration to Colombia, Second World War.

### Introduction

With Adolf Hitler's promotion and the National Socialism under the German power in 1933 - and until 1945 -, European Jews went through a process of exclusion, rejection, expulsion and destruction into the German society. America played a fundamental role, according to researcher Avraham Milgram: "The role of Latin American countries was secondary in regards to the European conflict of the 30s and 40s, instead it was of great importance in terms of salvation of Jews."<sup>1</sup> In the American continent, the United States was the busiest destination: between 165,000 and 212,000 immigrants. Then: Argentina, 45 thousand; Brazil and Chile, 25 and 15 thousand, respectively; Uruguay, Cuba, and Bolivia, Ecuador and Mexico, two to seven thousand<sup>2</sup>.

Colombia, on this hand, received only about 6,000 Jewish travelers<sup>3</sup>, which constituted the largest wave of immigrants of Jewish origin in the country, given that it has not been - since its formation - a state of immigrants. The entry of these migrants went through great complications because after a strong debate of intellectuals - initiated in the 1920s -, politicians and merchants, measures were generated (beyond migratory policies) to reduce the arrival<sup>4</sup> and stay of Jewish immigrants in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Milgram, Avraham. Entre la aceptaci3n y el rechazo. Am3rica Latina y los refugiados del nazismo (Jerusalem: Ediciones Yad Vashem, 2003), p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Blancpain, Jean Pierre. 'Am3rica latina y el nazismo. Desde la inmigraci3n judía hasta el mito del IV Reich (1933-45)' Cuadernos de Historia 12, (1992, December), p.123.

<sup>3</sup> Neumann, Gerhardt. 'German jews in Colombia', Jewish Social Studies, 3: 4 (1941, October), p.386.

<sup>4</sup> Véase: Leal, Lina. Colombia frente al antisemitismo y la inmigraci3n de jud3s polacos y alemanes 1933-1948, (Bogot3 Academia Colombiana de Historia, 2015).

emergence of an anti-Semitism<sup>5</sup> local. In this case, it is possible to use this notion (even if an eliminatory process is not set up as in the German case) due to the immigrant group is of Jewish origin.

Because of that, a process of reconstruction of archives was developed in the press from 1939 to 1948, (primary and secondary) bibliography and official sources regarding the stay of Jews in the country in the years of the war and post-war. Following the initial paradigm of Carlo Ginzburg<sup>6</sup>, 'signs' were trying to be found; traces, hints or symptoms that would reflect 'anti-Semitism' (beyond speech, to action). For this, the (Colombian and Jewish) positions, complaints, confrontations, boycotts, sabotages or discredits against this immigrant population were followed. The purpose is to identify some echoes of anti-Semitism in the country.

### Colombia Facing the War

On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland because they refused to surrender the territory of Danzig, which had been annexed years ago. From this event, the war broke out -which would extend until 1945-; on one side Germany (gradually with Japan and Italy); and on the other, England and France. The Soviet Union first joined Germany and then the allied countries<sup>7</sup>.

Colombia, as a Latin American country, responded to the influence of the United States which used commercial links with neighbor countries from center and south to interfere in internal<sup>8</sup> affairs like the position on the war. Before joining the conflict, USA influenced the perspective of the Latin American countries in favor of the allies (England, France and Russia); On the other hand, the countries of the Axis (Germany, Japan and Italy) were constantly defamed. Both Eduardo Santos (1938-42)<sup>9</sup> and Alfonso López Pumarejo (1942-45) accepted the American demands in relation to the international conflict. President Santos did not want to declare himself against Germany, he stayed neutral, although his policies were certainly pro-American. In a speech given on May 12, 1940, he declared his position since the beginning of the war: "We can be neutral within the lines of international law, but we can not, we do not want, we should not be indifferent, nor is possible to keep silence in the face of what repudiates our conscience as a free nation"<sup>10</sup>. The country remained neutral, in words, but in fact it supported the position of Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic party. This position was supported by most of the Colombian public opinion<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The pamphleteer Wilhelm Marr in 1879 used the term to differentiate Jews from a racial perspective. The concept 'race' began to be used as a pseudo-scientific category, by assigning certain characteristics to the different 'racial' groups. According to the researcher Max S. Hering, this racist delimitation is really a 'social construction', in which "depending on the time and region where it originates, it adapts to different conceptions of truth and morals, as well as to the conditions, realities and prevailing social interests and, from this, it recreates new captious realities linked to the different conceptions of power, theology and science". These new captious realities are not mere social constructions, but become social practices, so they constitute valuable discursive entities. See: Hering Torres, Max. 'Raza: variables históricas' en *Revista de Estudios Sociales Magazine*, 26 (April 2007), p.25.

<sup>6</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo. 'Indicios: Raíces de un paradigma de inferencias indiciales' in *Mitos, emblemas e indicios*, (1989) Morfología e historia, Barcelona, Gedisa., Spain.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, David. *Historia Mundial de 1914 a 1968* (Mexico: Editorial Fondo de Cultura Económico, 2003), p.103.

<sup>8</sup> Vitale, Luis. 'Latinoamérica y Colombia (1930-1960)', *Nueva historia de Colombia*, 3: 6, Pp.338-339.

<sup>9</sup> During the government of Eduardo Santos, ties with the United States were substantially reduced, with restructurings such as the elevation of the US legation to the embassy and military and economic cooperation agreements. See: Bushnell, David. *Eduardo Santos y la Política del Buen Vecino*, (Bogotá: Ancora Editores, 1984), pp.21-26.

<sup>10</sup> Durán, Jaime. *Desarrollo histórico de la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, (Bogotá: Editorial Nelly, 1977), p.43.

<sup>11</sup> According to the American researcher David Bushnell, Colombians of all kinds (liberals, conservatives, socialists, etc.) demonstrated in favor of neutrality. See: Bushnell, *Eduardo Santos y la Política del Buen Vecino*, (Bogotá: Ancora Editores, 1984), p. 28. Nevertheless, the expressions of support for both the allies and the axis constituted the day to day of the war, especially during the first years. With the advent of the Allied victory, support for the allies was increased, while a task of distrust and harassment of the supporters of the axis began.

On June 23, 1942, Colombia saw the war closely. The 35-ton national schooner, *Resolute*, was going to the northern island of Providencia at 9:30 a.m., when it was attacked by a German submarine with machine guns and grenades. Doris Fox, a passenger, threw a lifeboat into the water, which she held with five survivors who did not want to board the boat for fear of being shot. An hour later a no identified plane appeared scaring off the attackers. And the survivors paddled until they reached San Andrés at 6:30 p.m.<sup>12</sup> With this attack, six people died and five were injured<sup>13</sup>. Despite the alleged offensive, Colombia did not declare war on Germany<sup>14</sup> until the collapse of the third schooner: *Ruby*, on November 17, 1943, in which four people died and seven were injured, so the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carlos Lozano, said:

It is the third time that we are attacked for no reason (...). The German government has executed against the Colombian nation a series of aggressions that have the character of acts of war, thus placing themselves in a condition of belligerence with respect to the Republic of Colombia. (...) is in the obligation to take the necessary measures to defend the Colombian people<sup>15</sup>.

The Colombian government requested explanations from the authorities of the Third Reich for sunken<sup>16</sup>, but received no response<sup>17</sup>. Immediately afterwards, President Alfonso López declared the "State of Belligerence" that was equivalent to the defensive war on November 27, 1943<sup>18</sup>. This position was maintained until the end of the contest, with the allied victory in May 1945 over Germans and in August, over the Japanese.

Meanwhile the United States promoted all kinds of measures to 'avoid the Nazi avalanche' in the hemisphere; by the imposition of blacklists, 'pro-Nazis' were persecuted with FBI help, the confinement of some 'spies' of the Axis and the expropriation of goods to foreigners from Germany, Italy and Japan. Certainly, the war generated distrust against European foreigners (and Asians, although in a lower scale) and, as a paradox, it further damaged the arrival and stay of Jews (enemies of the Third Reich, but not therefore welcome in allied countries), which stoked their voices of help.

<sup>12</sup> Galvis, Silvia, y Donadio, Alberto. Colombia Nazi, (Bogota: Editorial Hombre Nuevos Editores, 2002) p.198.

<sup>13</sup> The Newspaper El tiempo did a campaign to help the survivors of the Resolute and the Hebrew colony established in the country contributed \$ 1,241.00 of \$3,522.00 that was collected in total (8 of October of 1942, p.13).

<sup>14</sup> Historia extensa de Colombia, 17, Historia Diplomática, p.163.

<sup>15</sup> According to what Cesar Pizarro, El tiempo newspaper reporter, says: at the beginning of 2002, relatives of the castaways of the attacks on the three national schooners sued the German government for the purpose of obtaining compensation. The demand is in progress. Likewise, the historian who developed the investigation, Peterson Bent, revealed that there was a fourth case: the schooner Los Tres Amigos, in which other two people died ("San Andrés le declara la guerra a Adolf Hitler" (San Andrés declares the war to Adolfo Hitler), El tiempo, January 20 of 2002).

<sup>16</sup> After this attack, representatives of the Jewish community in Colombia expressed their solidarity with the incident in an epistle sent to the Colombian authorities: "On behalf of the Hebrew Committee for help for the victory we make the Government of the Republic and through its worthy conduit to the People Colombian, our deep expression of sorrow and our sincere protest for the new and cowardly aggression to which the country has been victimized by the Nazi savagery. We know that by giving the Government and the noble Colombian people our unrestricted support in this crucial hour of their destinies, we interpret the last sentiment of all the Jews residing in Colombia, who feel as their cause the country where they have found safe refuge and friendly homeland. (...) The Hebrews, who in our own flesh have suffered the Hitlerist infamy, feel better than anyone the pain that the proud Colombian country is experiencing right now ". Miguel Adler and Solomon Brainsky sign (El diario popular, December 1st of 1943, p.4).

<sup>17</sup> As noted by César Pizarro, editor of El tiempo, principles de 2002, relatives of the shipwrecked of the attacks on the three national goals of the demand of data for the German government with the purpose of obtaining compensation. The demand is in progress. Likewise, the story that was lost in the investigation, Peterson Bent, the moment in which a fourth case occurred: the schooner Los tres amigos (The Three Friends), in which two other people died ("Saint Andrew declares war on Adolf Hitler", The time, January 20) of 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Galvis et al, Colombia Nazi, p.217.

### Jews settled in Colombia

After the war, Colombia experienced a strong wave of Jewish immigration that came to feed the existing communities. Previously two migratory flows had been recognized: one *sephardic* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (with the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 who had settled in the Antilles), and the other was the *ashkenazi* (constituted by Jews of Eastern Europe that immigrated in the late 1920s and early 1930s in search of better economic opportunities). The wave of the 1930s and 1940s enriched the former *ashkenazi* community, with the Polish Jews who suffered Nazi persecution. But it also formed a new community, called *Montefiore* with German travelers. As stated by the Immigration Office for 1939, the population of Jews settled in the country filled the 5,000 souls, although it is known that the figure exceeded 6,000 in 1941<sup>19</sup>. Subsequently, reports related to the statistical population of Jews in the country are unknown.

German Jews, possibles Nazi spies?

"Nazi agents are making an effort to collect the names and addresses of immigrants, including Jews, in South America and Cuba. The purpose of this behavior is to traffic them to the United States, where they will become members of the 'Fifth Column'.<sup>20</sup>

A year after the war began (1940), the United States was alerted to the possibility of an emerging plan in Colombia since the sympathies towards Germany and Italy seemed growing and the spaces were avid for promotion and trade<sup>21</sup>. So that, the geostrategic situation with Panama made it attractive for any side.<sup>22</sup> That's why this year, under US pressure, National Government's paranoia regarding the possible interference of the Third Reich in Colombia was delayed and controls were initiated (output, input and displacement) on German foreign, Italian and the Japanese by part of the Foreigners section of the National<sup>23</sup> Police, with the FBI agents help.

The Immigration Office registered 2,038 Germans (including Jewish immigrants of this nationality, which according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs calculated 404<sup>24</sup> although other versions suggest that they constituted 2/3 of the total<sup>25</sup>) in Colombian territory for July 1940, those who were suspected as potential Nazi spies. According to the researcher Max Paul Friedman, the spies - who according to the US included the Jews -

<sup>19</sup> Neumann, Gerhardt. 'German jews in Colombia', *Jewish Social Studies*, 3:4, (New York, October of 1941), p. 387.

<sup>20</sup> Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMRE). Actividades nazis, (July-September 1942), oficio 46.

<sup>21</sup> In Latin America, there were also concrete manifestations of anti-Semitism. According to Eduardo Wiefeld, "the anti-Semitism proper, that is, the hatred of the Jews and their persecution for being Jews, did not exist in any American country before 1933". Since then the researcher suggests that groups sympathetic to the Nazis were dedicated to take political advantage of the anti-Jewish agitation. In Mexico, there is an almost unanimous tendency in anti-Semitic propaganda, with articles, books, posters, etc., and even through the action of the Camisa Doradas group. In Brazil, the purpose of nationalizing the country led to the closure of foreign schools and the prohibition of foreign languages, which contributed to the suspension of communal, cultural and Zionist activities of Brazilian Jews. In Argentina, an organized anti-Semitism constituted groupings, restrictions on the Yiddish press, prohibition of hoisting the Zionist flag, anti-Jewish propaganda, and acts of violence against the communities. In Bolivia, an anti-Jewish and anti-refugee rally was organized after a debate in the Chamber of Deputies that generated restrictions on immigration, including transit. In Chile there were protest rallies against the immigration of Jews who competed against merchants and industrialists. Wiefeld, Eduardo. 'Antisemitism in Latin America', *Encyclopedia Judaica Castellana*, 1, (Mexico: Edition Or, 1948), pp. 344-348.

<sup>22</sup> Friedman, Max Paul. *Nazis and Good Neighbors. The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 78.

<sup>23</sup> AMRE. Propaganda actividades nazis, 1937-1940, diplomatic and consular, box 23, folder 184, record

<sup>24</sup> Colombian Republic, Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, (Bogota: national printing house, 1938) p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Max Paul Friedman, throughout e-mail, November 5 of 2009.

<sup>24</sup> República de Colombia, Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, (Bogotá imprenta nacional, 1938) p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Entrevista con Max Paul Friedman, mediante correo electrónico, noviembre 5 de 2009.

would have been very few and would have failed due to the excessive estimation of intelligence, the low confidence of the informants, the reports of the tabloid press and the disinformation campaigns of the British, who generated inefficient and ineffective acts by these group of people<sup>26</sup>.



This meeting has taken place in Baranquilla (Colombia).<sup>27</sup>

The authorities initiated investigations into the activities of these foreigners with the help of Colombian spies established in the different cities of the country. According to the reports of the spies within the groups, there was great sympathy for Nazism among officers of the Colombian army, especially among the lower grades.<sup>28</sup> Silvia Galvis in her work "Peripecias de los criollos nazis"<sup>29</sup>, says that part of the Colombian military in the early 1940s forged attempts to overthrow the liberal governments to establish totalitarian regimes, influenced by fascist and National Socialist groups. However, the actions of the Police and the FBI managed to stop the fight.

It is paradoxical that the Jews, many of them established in Colombia because of Nazi-German persecution, were then considered as possible agents of the same government that terrorized and denatured them. In the reports of Nazi activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several cases of espionage towards German Jewish immigrants are reported. About S. Schuschny it is said: "He is a Jewish refugee [...] and people worthy of faith say [...] that he is an agent paid by Nazism, which, in our opinion, would not be odd taking into account the absolute lack of morality that characterizes this individual."<sup>30</sup> Likewise, regarding S. Romberg, owner of the Olympia store, was affirmed that: "He is an active agent and also very enthusiastic about the cause of Hitler in this city. In previous years he had a lot to do with Jewish emigration, which made him the most dangerous person."<sup>31</sup> "About Jacobi Hans, the spy suggests: "Jewish immigrant, married to a woman of the same race, who now works as a nurse. The reputation of both is reported as not very good."<sup>32</sup> " Also, it is: "Alfredo Alpern: His profession is an Israeli religious and merchant. This man is a convinced Nazi, but not very active, since most of

<sup>26</sup> Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> AMRE, *Nazi Archive 1942*, of 12.

<sup>28</sup> AMRE *Actividades Nazis Agosto-Septiembre 1940*, of 183

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.banrepcultural.org/biblioteca-virtual/credencial-historia/numero-67/peripecias-de-los-nazis-criollos>

<sup>30</sup> AMRE, *Actividades nazis*, enero 1942, oficio 1.

<sup>31</sup> AMRE, *Actividades nazis*, enero 1942, oficio 82

<sup>32</sup> AMRE, *Propaganda actividades nazis*, noviembre-diciembre de 1940, diplomática y consular, transferencia 8, caja 22, carpeta 172, oficio 4.

his time is dedicated to his business. It would be advisable to set bail to allow him to reside in Barranquilla<sup>33</sup>"; Luis Salomon: "a very well-known Jew of bad reputation"<sup>34</sup> or Heinz Bartenstein: Doctor "German Jew, of very bad reputation too, who is said to be an employee of the German police"<sup>35</sup>.

Like the previous ones, some other German Jews were victims of Colombian espionage because of the suspicion that their nationality caused, even when they were denatured by Nazi Germany. However, according to the investigations of the National Police, the opposite happened: non-Jewish Germans pretended to be Jews for not to be suspicious, so that the Colombian authorities kept their eyes fixed on any foreign coming from Central Europe.<sup>36</sup>

With everything, few Jewish refugees formed the famous Black Lists, which the US government ordered its "good neighbors". The Black Lists determined the allies or sympathizers of the countries of the axis in the American territory. From the Germans,, the members of the GESTAPO were included, relatives who were members of the organization in the Third Reich, employees of these companies, or parents who sent the children to study in Germany<sup>37</sup>. The US banned all negotiations with the companies or people that were on this list (in 1942, it even included 6,000), with the purpose of blocking the return of money to Germany and stop the dissemination of Nazi advertising. Undoubtedly, it was an intervention on economy subject of the Americans in Latin American territory, and of course, Colombian one.

In the country, Jewish immigrants such as Alfredo Alpern and Jacobo Akierman were part of the list, because of that this last one was expelled from the Hebrew Relief Society of the city of Cali<sup>38</sup>. According to the archives of the AJC (American Jewish Comitte) of the United States, in the freezing of foreigners goods ordered by the National Government of Colombia in 1944, refugee Jews also fell, even though they were recognized as pariahs because they did not have any nationality<sup>39</sup>.

The issue of German Jews considered as possible Nazi spies was another materialization of anti-Semitism. Note that after the American warning about the possible plot in which people of Jewish origin would be inserted, they are included in all the measures of suspicion against foreigners coming from the axis countries, without their own quality of 'despatriados' or 'refugees' was enough to exonerate them. It is paradoxical that the National Government has invested resources in the investigation of these Jewish immigrants, as possible assistants to a government that had persecuted and / or expelled them. But it is also understandable that the freezing of foreign goods, ordered by the National Government in 1944, covered as many foreigners as were 'susceptible' to mistrust.

### **Solutions in the Hands of the Jews**

The members of the Israelite Center of Bogotá<sup>40</sup> wanted to register the German Jews to demonstrate that they did not perform espionage tasks and to avoid being sent to the confinement camps of Fusagasugá and

<sup>33</sup> AMRE. Actividades nazis, 1943-1945, diplomática y consular, transferencia 8, caja 23, carpeta 182, oficio 20.

<sup>34</sup> AMRE. Propaganda actividades nazis, 1940, oficio 345.

<sup>35</sup> AMRE. Actividades nazis, July-December 1941, consular and diplomatic, transference 8, box 22, folder 174, notice 97.

<sup>36</sup> In case of Paul Rode, who introduced himself as austrian jewish but according to the Colombian aythorities investigations, he accomplished intelligence duties. (El diario popular newspaper, August 16 of 1943, p.1).

<sup>37</sup> Friedman, Nazis and Good Neighbors, pp. 88-93.

<sup>38</sup> La Voz, March 15 of 1943, p.7.

<sup>39</sup> 'Foreign Countries: Latin America (1944-1945)', *American Jewish Year Book*, 46 (1944-1945), p.297.

<sup>40</sup> The Israeli Bogotá Center, one of the three jewish communities founded in thr capital of the country, it was composed by immigrants coming from Oriental Europe and a few germans. The comunity offered cultural and religious servicies to its members.

Cachipay<sup>41</sup>. Being Jewish' and wearing the Star of David was a way to safeguard against national controls and suspicions, while in Germany the same star was a public target of brutal Nazi attacks. Relatives Jonels Neiger Paneth and Edgar Israel Neiger Paneth, who came to Colombia in 1938 from Germany, declared themselves Jews, but the groups revealed their conversion processes. Colombian agents affirmed:

It could (not) be proven that they were expelled from Germany but by their own will (...). It is fully established that they have not been expelled from their country and that everything is a lie. If they are Jewish or not, they could not prove it either. [...] The president of the Jewish Committee [...] informed [...] the Neiger lords are not Jews because they do not belong to their committee, because they profess the Catholic religion and not the Hebrew as it is de rigueur among the Jews.

Another of the solutions of the time was to convert to Catholicism. According to the statistics of the Archbishop Curia of Foreigners in Colombia, the priest of foreigners of the Catholic Church baptized 31 Jews after offering them a cognitive course of the Catholic precepts<sup>42</sup>. In fact, as Joaquín Quijano Mantilla suggests, some Jews changed their name to obtain a Christian identity. This is the case of the Wolves, who would have changed to Lobo, its equivalent in Spanish<sup>43</sup>, so that many Jews wanted to cover themselves up in society by quitting Judaism.

On the other hand, there were Jews who requested international help (paradoxically to countries like the US, which had been the precursor of the initiative that the Jews could be Nazi spies). Merry Rosenberg, a couple of one of the suspected spies, wrote a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the American president, in which she explained: "We emigrated to Colombia where we lived 6 years ago. My husband, who is an expert in locomotive manufacturing, had no difficulty getting a job in this area immediately. But now he was taken for German and was fired, even though he is a German Jewish refugee"<sup>44</sup>.

And then he asks for help: "I beg (unreadable) to do what I can because the great influence of your democratic government does not allow these injustices. My husband has been employed by the National Railroads for 6 years and since his resignation was not possible, he was fired; like him, another thousand refugees will suffer the same fate. " And it ends: "It would be a terrible tragedy if we, the first victims of Hitler, irreconcilable enemies of the axis, treat us like Nazis."

Jewish Nazis? It seems contradictory; however, there is a case that is particularly interesting. Erich Rath was a German immigrant Jew who, during the war, formed the ANFB (Antinazist Liberation Movement)<sup>45</sup> in 1941, through which he collaborated with the Americans in espionage works to certain National Socialist personages. The US government welcomed the work of Rath as: "He pressured other Jews to make complaints even when they insisted they had no information to give"<sup>46</sup>. This German Jew was, certainly, important in the process of inclusion and exclusion of the Black Lists<sup>47</sup>.

Nevertheless, Rath gradually became an object of suspicion for US and Colombian investigators who warned that he was Jewish (origin given because his parents, family and culture were of this origin) but anti-

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Mario Gurevich, in Bogota, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> La ruta, June of 1941, p.103.

<sup>43</sup> Galvis, Nazi Colombia, p. 223.

<sup>44</sup> Galvis, Nazi Colombia, (Letter from January 27 of 1942, 821.4016/2 RG 59. NA).

<sup>45</sup> Also the Priest Struve, Carlos Mautner, Ernesto Herrnstadt, Humberto Zimmerlann, Heinz Clein, Paul Epple y Paul Binkert participated.

<sup>46</sup> Friedman, Nazis and Good Neighbors, p.71.

<sup>47</sup> AMRE. Nazis Activities, July-September 1942, notice 6.

Semitic in the service of the Gestapo. The arguments of the officials are: 1. He denied belonging to any religion during their entry into the country and only with the breakdown of relations with Germany he clarified its origins; 2. Despite being Jewish, in 1936 he obtained the recommendation and permission of a German official entity at a time of the most acute racial and political persecution to come to work in the country; 3. At age 18, in 1929, he participated in anti-Semitic demonstrations in Frankfurt but later joined an association of Israeli students; 4. He refused to contribute to the relief funds of the Jewish organizations through anti-Semitic arguments, but at the same time he is incorporated into Jewish intellectual circles<sup>48</sup>; 5. The lack of democratic measures in the functioning of the ANFB, which on the contrary systematically resembles the Nazi Party; 6. Knowledge of his acts of blackmail and extortion towards certain investigated, and 7. The number of Nazi German friends in Colombian territory. As a result of the investigation, the National Government banned the ANFB and Rath moved to Ecuador, where he was arrested and transferred to Camp Kennedy, a confinement camp for single 'axis subjects' in the United States.<sup>49</sup> Would it be a case of Jewish anti-Semitism? or A serious error by US and Colombian researchers?

### **Nazis and Colombian Creoles; United by Anti- Semitism**

In Colombia a particular antisemitism different from the European one was configured as a xenophobic phenomenon, not massive or eliminatory. It is possible to reveal some symptoms of anti-Semitism that emerged in few factions of the country during the war, especially among some German National Socialists and sympathetic Colombians.

### **Nazis, Leading Anti- Semitism**

Nazis, of course, championed anti-Semitism as a fundamental bulwark of their ideology<sup>50</sup>. In their bi-weekly

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<sup>48</sup> AMRE. Nazi Activities, July-September 1942, pp. 20-21.

<sup>49</sup> Friedman, Nazis and Good Neighbors, p. 116. Besides Rath, there were other two Jewish immigrants who, once got out from Colombia, they were arrested and moved to the US trasladados to the confinement camps. It is about Ernest Blumenthal and Friedrich Karl Kaul.

<sup>50</sup> During the 1930s, small groups of NSDAP promoters emerged in various parts of the world, including Latin America with 8,000 members. On the continent, there were about 130 associations in Ijuí (Brazil), 48 in Valdivia (Chile) and 160 in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Chile, Colombia and Guatemala were the countries with the largest number of members. In addition to reading, discussing and promoting Nazi propaganda, national groups could hold demonstrations, festivities and special celebrations once the foreign service was 'nazified'; that is to say that it had personalities of the German Government, because the participation of diplomats gave the events an official character and the association with German national holidays attracted the eyes of the non-participants. That is to say that the parties of the National Socialist groups acquired a national seal that attracted the Germans abroad in general. But, as the war approached, the NSDAP groups began to be reserved in Latin America. That is why, gradually, the Nazi party in Latin America began to be watched and persecuted. Between 1937 and 1939, these pro-Nazi associations began to be banned in Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Guatemala. The leaders decided then to renounce the symbols of the NSDAP and not to issue more propaganda in Spanish, in order to keep their meetings secret, in which they generally spoke more about economic or cultural issues than political ones. With the beginning of the war, both symbols and meetings and discussions were clandestine.

In the Colombian case, in 1933, the German Juergen Slubach initiated in Bogotá the formation of the first National Socialist group and, even when in principle there were resistances, he obtained the German support resident in the country after the issuance of an order of the Berlin Legation in the one that requested support to the German colony and helps with resources. As of this moment, a national structure anchored to the AO was gradually created. By 1942, the structure of the NSDAP was headed by a national group, which was followed in hierarchical order by local groups, support points and, finally, cells. The heads of these NSDAP groups, as activists of the German National Socialist Party, followed the purposes of the AO to the letter. Through cables, couriers (coming from New York, Washington, San Francisco, Japan or Siberia) and diplomatic bags, they received news of Germany and political propaganda that they used publicly to train the members of the party and obtain more followers in other spaces. Both types of publications were the documents that were read within the National Socialist groups in Colombia. It is also noteworthy that in the meetings, news broadcasts transmitted from Berlin were heard, the events of the party were commented on and the triumphs were celebrated (AMRE, Nazi, diplomatic and consular activities, transfer 8, 1937-1945).

publication *Karibischer Beobachter*<sup>51</sup>, the Colombian Nazis published anti-Semitic licity entirely sent from Berlin. It is to highlight that, although the magazine contains a particular section for activities and opinions of the German communities in Bogotá and Barranquilla, any articles related to Judaism were found in Colombia<sup>52</sup>. Thus, the editors, certainly pro-Nazis, were only dedicated to reproduce cables from Germany for the purpose of echoing anti-Semitism, but they did not dedicate their pages with an accent to this aspect. However, they published information related to the request not to assign Jewish names to German children or the frequent defense against the supposed worldwide conspiracy of the Jews. In an article, titled "And the white Jews", they applaud the exit of Jews from German territory after selling their goods at reduced prices, just as they would have arrived in Germany years ago -generally from the East-. According to the editors, it is an act of justice to free Germany from the Jewish population, which they accuse of thieving and cunning<sup>53</sup>. The editors position is approving, as an act of justice, the departure of the Jews - seen as outsiders - from the Third Reich, while selling their belongings at superfluous prices to non-Jews. In another note, entitled "Mirror of England", the editors denounce that the English press has portrayed as 'barbaric' the changes made to the Jews in the Third Reich and explain that the actions of the German population in relation to European Jews would be still very far from the persecutions of the Jews during the Middle Ages. The note culminates with the statement that German actions are not aimed at Judaism, but their heritage<sup>54</sup>. In the journalistic piece several elements are visible: the defense of the actions carried out in Germany against the Jews, the cataloging of said actions as 'German', the accusation that the English have also carried out anti-Semitic actions, for example, during the Middle Ages , and that his denunciations are exaggerations, and finally the explanation that the object of persecution has not been the Jews, but their patrimony. In summary, in both notes there is a defense of the anti-Semitic actions exercised with respect to Jewish properties in Germany, as an act of nationalism and justice that has been strongly attacked by the British. In this sense, considering that the emigration of Jews from the Third Reich was initially (from 1933 to 1941) well regarded by the Germans as a means of 'solving' the Jewish problem in Europe, Jewish immigration to Colombia was not within of the affairs of the Nazis even located in the country so it could explain their lack of criticism about Judaism in Colombian territory. All his activities and propaganda were focused on the German power in the old continent.

However, gradually, the most convinced Nazis exercised anti-Semitic actions in Colombian territory. Juergen Schlubach, founder of the Nazi Party in Colombia, called 'dirty Jewish' to S. Sack, a Jewish immigrant who worked as a furrier in Colombia, who also refused to pay him a check. The scene is a clear example of the staunch anti-Semitism advocated by this NSDAP leader in the country. Also, in establishments belonging to National Socialists, such as the German Club, the entry of Jews was not allowed. In fact, in the same German consulate, which according to the Colombian authorities was absolutely pro-Nazi<sup>55</sup>: "they have the control system

<sup>51</sup> The Caribbean observer. Members of the party in Barranquilla created the publication *Karibischer Beobachter*, published in the Mogollón workshops and fortnightly circulation. The magazine was written in German and circulated exclusively among German members of the country's Nazi party. With this publication it was possible to carry out a propaganda campaign in the national territory (AMRE, Nazi, diplomatic and consular activities, transfer 8, 1937-1945).

<sup>52</sup> The review covered five volumes of 1938 and 1939.

<sup>53</sup> *Karibischer beobachter*, 2, 1939, p.4.

<sup>54</sup> *Karibischer beobachter*, 1, 1939, p.21.

<sup>55</sup> The racism of the Germans is not exclusive towards the Jews. As reported in the magazine *The route*: A German who had to leave the country by order of the Colombian government, then asked for reasons of poverty the tickets for himself and his Colombian wife and Mr. Boennecke, a German school teacher, admitted here hospitably in this country to exercise an educational task and in charge of these matters of repatriation, he replied to the said German, according to witnesses: 'For you, if there is passage, but for his wife and their children, who are of mixed blood , there is no place or money in Germany "(*The route*, March-April 1942, p.351)

with respect to Germans, to know who are Jews and who are Aryans. Every German who is in Colombia has to sign three copies of this declaration, in which he states his generalities, place of birth in Germany, profession, religion, age and if he is Jewish or Aryan or to say better legitimate German".

In another case, the Consulate of Colombia in Berlin was located in the home of a German Jew: R. Rosenthal, whom in 1939, the *Arbeitsfront*<sup>56</sup> took his assets from him. Rosenthal, was exiled in England after being a prisoner in a concentration camp, he issued a serie of petitions to the Colombian government to continue the payment of the rent for the house, but the government refused and affirmed that the German: "was no longer the owner of that farm [...] and his claim was unjustifiable from any point of view "<sup>57</sup> (because as a Jew he lost the rights to his property). The government resolved to ignore Rosenthal's requests and establish the consulate offices in another space.

Another of the alleged Nazi activities in Colombia against the Jews is published in series of reports by the journalist Orlando Perdomo in the magazine *Estampa* in July and August 1939, under the title 'Brown terror in Colombia'. The journalist warned the public opinion by stating that in Medellín Jewish immigrants (and Aryans not sympathetic to the National Socialist cause) were victims of acts of sabotage and persecution that, as exemplified in two cases, led to despair and even suicide. It's about the stories of Paul Roer and Adolf Gotthelf<sup>58</sup>.



Paul Roer was a Jewish German dedicated to selling sausages, in competition with a Nazi factory, in the same sector. Gradually, the factory took her customers and sent the hygiene office to close the establishment, so Roer was left in misery, in addition to his visa expired. According to Perdomo, the woman tried to commit suicide in the bathroom of her house, but she did not achieve her goal and, on the contrary, she suffered serious injuries to her body. Roer asked the Colombian government to revalidate her passport, but this refused.

<sup>56</sup> Official Entity in charge of administrating the the jewish properties.

<sup>57</sup> AMRE, Colombian Legate in Germany-Berlín, 1939-1940, notice 119.

<sup>58</sup> Estampa, July 29 of 1939, pp.12 y 13.



Adolph Gotthelf, a German Jew based in Medellin, was the victim of an "inhuman" persecution by Nazi agents, who dedicated themselves to damaging Gotthelf's commercial activities - actions he does not explain - until driving him to despair. The German Jewish immigrant would have committed suicide by jumping off the National Palace in Medellin<sup>59</sup>. According to the Antioqueno journalist, his sources feared to speak with the authorities because of possible reprisals against his relatives living in Germany. Also, the reporter assured that a large part of the NDSAP funds was destined to promulgate anti-Jewish propaganda.

Perdomo wrote two additional articles, but in the last one he had to retract certain information (not precisely the stories of Paul Roer and Adolff Gotthelf, which generates greater credibility) due to pressure from representatives of the German community. With a high tone of sarcasm, the Antioqueno said that the only way to obtain proof of his claims would be to travel to the group's headquarters, Germany, regarding what he said: "This system could be dangerous for my personal integrity and I do not aspire to know the concentration camps of the führer, nor do I intend to enjoy the delights of his dictatorial regime, I have chosen to resign myself to suffer this disavowal in a Christian way, accepting without further discussion the words of my opponents"<sup>60</sup>.

*Estampa* supported the journalist, through a note dated on September 10 of 1939, in which he maintained that the media and authorities had verified the "sensational revelations" of the journalist.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, Perdomo did not write again about the subject and two years later, he died in a fight with another journalist in a cafe in Medellín<sup>62</sup>.

### **Colombians who Commanded Anti- Semitism Suffer**

On August 1, 1940, the national government denied legal status to several Jewish associations: the Hebrew Association of Bogotá the Adju Israel center of that city and the Hebrew Society of Socorros de Cali with the

<sup>59</sup> *Estampa*, July 19 of 1939, p.12.

<sup>60</sup> *Estampa*, August 19 of 1939, p.3.

<sup>61</sup> *Estampa*, September 10 de 1939, p.3.

<sup>62</sup> *El tiempo* newspaper, August 22 of 1941, p.5

argument that: "once the European immigrants were received in our homeland, they should try to assimilate it by mixing their blood, their economy and their cultural yearnings to those that are common to the Colombian people, to avoid ethnic islets or other minorities that could suffer or make their fellow citizens feel useless pain in the future"<sup>63</sup>.

This refusal was pointed out by the AJC (American Jewish Comitee) of the United States as a regulatory discrimination against Jews established in Colombia<sup>64</sup>. The attitude of the Colombian authorities is a symptom of anti-Semitism in the country, considering the Jewish associations as a potential 'ethnic island' capable of causing suffering to Colombians.

The same happened in August 1943 when the Government of Cundinamarca denied legal status to the third community of immigrant Jews: the Asociación Israelita Montefiore -composed by the German immigrants who arrived to the country as victims of the Nazi persecution- under the pretext of that the Jewish religion was opposed to Christian morality. In the response to the Jewish communities, published and criticized by *El Tiempo* newspaper, the government of Cundinamarca maintained that: "Judaism makes a differentiation among men. The ones, who belong to the people of Israel, are the elect. The others are Gentiles, idolaters or pagans. The delegates of God can not be found outside their own race, and in them only authority is concentrated "<sup>65</sup>. They warn: "Its ultimate goal is to strengthen the bonds of union among the Jews to dominate the world, since such a religion considers that if Jews are scattered throughout the earth, all belong to them."

They also point out that Judaism differentiates between men because of their 'race' and belittles those who do not have the same origin or practice their own religion, so these principles would be contrary to Christian morality. However, at the end of the answer it is found that the refusal does not mean that they can not perform their oratory acts but that they should perform them in the privacy of their homes. And it adds: "What our fundamental law does not allow is that the anti-Christian cults be propagated by making use of the freedom of trust and association for the organization of a hierarchy and a religious government and for the possession of goods for the benefit of such beliefs. "

It is important to highlight that the authors of this denial are two liberal politicians: Bernardo Forero Benavides and Agustín Aljure<sup>66</sup>, responsible for granting legal entities in the Government of Cundinamarca. The arguments used appeal to the declaration of the people of Israel as the chosen one, and to their "segregation" regarding non-Jews.

Maitre, a newspaper columnist *El espectador*, He strongly criticized the measure of Benavidez and Aljure and maintained that: "it makes feel a fear that Colombia is approaching days that in other towns has been of pain and tears," in clear reference to the situation of anti-Semitism in Europe. The columnist affirmed that the Jewish community has always been considered as good, healthy, virtuous and sensitive people who have contributed universities, libraries, hospitals and artistic centers all over the world. And it culminated with: "I am sure that if an educated Catholic priest (...) is asked if a Jew can be saved, he immediately answers it affirmative and the answer would be difficult, if every Jew, by the fact of being Jewish, was daily in the sin of being an active enemy

<sup>63</sup> El tiempo newspaper, August 1 of 1940, p.3

<sup>64</sup> American Jewish Year Book. Vol. 43 (1941-1942). Review of the Year: Foreign Countries (1941-1942), p. 305.

<sup>65</sup> El tiempo, August 10 of 1943, p.13.

<sup>66</sup> According to Silvia Galvis, the decision made would have answered more to the Aljure initiative, from Arabic origin, contrary to the Jewish cause (Galvis et al, Colombia Nazi, p.230).

of Christian morality. This secular theory seems too strong for me. " To this editorial *El tiempo* was adhered, although without a note of their own<sup>67</sup>.

Like the previous text, there were pamphlets written and distributed by Colombians. One of them is "The fifth Column in Colombia"<sup>68</sup>, of three pages, published by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement. In the text, the Jews were a "band of trafficking" (people dedicated to defrauding the customs rent, through the illegal introduction of elements), "usurers" (person who lends with excessive interest), "blackmailers" (takers of something from someone by threatening), "bribe-takers" (bribers, corrupt someone with gifts to get something from that person), "only usufructuaries of democratic regimes" (who own and enjoy democracy). This movement distributed flyers on the streets of Bucaramanga, where immigrant Jews were accused of "vampires sucking the blood of the Bumango people", for their sales in installments with fees and not for buying goods from Colombians. In another of the pamphlets of the movement, entitled "Stand up and defend your interests", Joaquín Posada -of the Central Typography- asks the authorities: "Do not let those foreign vampires suck the blood of the people"<sup>69</sup>. More information is unknown regarding the Creole anti-Semitic movement.

Another national anti-Semitic movement was the *Legión Colombiana*, which foundations were the Catholic religion, morality, nationalism, the struggle against the political corruption of the parties, the resurgence of Greater Colombia and anti-Semitism<sup>70</sup>. Even though their attempts to overthrow the government of Alfonso López Pumarejo (1942-45), instigated in 1943, did not work; it is noteworthy that among their targets of attack were the Jews living in the country. According to FBI investigators: "Jews of Colombian, German, French, Syrian, and Polish nationality will be treated equally. (...) Doctor Max Groegl<sup>71</sup> (who would advise the Colombians at the head of Armando Zabarain, and according to the Americans of Laureano Gómez) will decide who is a Jew and who is not. It is also likely that, in order to gain popular support, the crowd will be urged to break and loot Jewish stores"<sup>72</sup>. The plans of this group<sup>73</sup> (determined to defeat the liberal government of Alfonso Lopez Pumarejo) were discovered and defeated in time, so the boycott against Jews based in Colombia did not take place during the war.

### **The Jewish Difficulties in the Postwar Period (1945-48)**

The bombs that the United States launched on the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 and 9) forced Japan to surrender to the allies, which marked the end of the bloody Second World War, in 1945<sup>74</sup>. The Jewish problematic in the postwar period (1945-48) The war took the lives of around 55 million people, of which

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<sup>67</sup> The Israeli Association Montefiore obtained the personer á jur flica el 13 de octubre de 1943 legal personality on October 13, 1943 under executive resolution 111 (Republic of Colombia, Executive Resolution 111 of 1943, Official Gazette 25378 of October 21, 1943).

<sup>68</sup> AMRE Nazi activities, January-July 1940, diplomatic and consular, transfer 8, box 21, folder 169, offices 166 and 167.

<sup>69</sup> AMRE. Nazi activities, January-July 1940, diplomatic and consular, transfer 8, box 21, folder 169, offices 166 and 167.

<sup>69</sup> AMRE. Nazi activities, January-July 1940, diplomatic and consular, transfer 8, box 21, folder 169, offices 166 and 167.

<sup>70</sup> "Legión Colombiana" (March 6, 1944), Box 4289, CDF 1940-44 821.00 / 1747, RG 59, National Archives of United States of America, Washington, p.5.

<sup>71</sup> Max Groegl was a German dentist married to a Colombian and nationalized in the country (AMRE, Nazi activities, July-December 1941, diplomatic and consular, transfer 8, box 22, folder 174, office 246).

<sup>72</sup> "Legión Colombiana" Colombian Legion, p.17.

<sup>73</sup> According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germans and Colombians formed other groups with National Socialist tendencies such as: the National Action, the German Women's Organization, the German Youth Organization, the German Youth Organization, the German Labor Front, the Organization of the Force for the Alegría, Italian Workers Organization, Falange. There is no record of anti-Semitic movements by these associations.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, *Historia Mundial de 1914 a 1968*, pp.214-215.

5,993,900 were of Jewish origin, so that a sense of solidarity emerged in the world against the devastated people<sup>75</sup>. According to the researcher Paul Johnson, the *Shoah* "caused a qualitative change in the way in which the international society reacted to the violence inflicted on the Jews. It was universally agreed that both punishment and reparation were necessary, and to a certain extent both goals were achieved"<sup>76</sup>. Immediately afterwards, the world initiated economic and moral reparations for the victims of the *Shoah* nazi, and anti-Semitism was observed with disregard.

In Colombia, between 1945 and 1948, major factions of Colombians expressed solidarity with the tragedy of European Jewry -which initially did not host more open immigration policies-, but others maintained their rejection, and even worsened the materialization of their anti-Semitism. During this period, anti-Semitic propaganda deliveries are carried out in Colombian streets and a boycott of the Jewish commerce in Bogotá is carried out.

The anti-Semitic urban campaign, according to *El diario popular* newspaper.

*El diario popular* newspaper, which disappeared in 1946 possibly because it was an agent of socialist interests<sup>77</sup>, it remained as a denouncer of anti-Semitic actions in the country. In March, April and May 1945, the publication expressed its dissatisfaction with an urban campaign against the Jews, from conspirators (according to what is said it seems to be the same pro-Nazis who attempted against the government since 1943), who distributed flyers or leaflets with anti-Semitic messages, which had no printing company or authors. The name of a publication was *Frente Único*, in which "the most brazen pseudo-nationalist agitation against the Jews"<sup>78</sup> was made; using the National Socialist arguments of Adolf Hitler. And they add: "The most authentic notion of true Colombianism induces every decent person to reject as false and dangerous the Nazi farce of anti-Semitism."

As the editors argued, latent anti-Semitism was a 'cavernary and undemocratic' way of putting the blame for the evils of the crisis generated by the world war on a special group<sup>79</sup>; And they add that: "The outbreaks of anti-Semitism in our country have had some results so far. There is already a certain propensity against the Jews that inhabit our territory, accusing them of agiotists and usurers, when in reality the truth is that this attitude is not exclusive property to that group but is an intrinsic condition of trade in general within the capitalist system". It is striking that for these socialists, the accusation of 'agiotistas and usureros' should not fall only on the Jews but on all the merchants. The struggle for them is against the capitalist system and not against Judaism.

In the same way, columnist Alfonso Durán thinks, who maintained that in times when fascism was down in Europe, in Colombia "we are flooded by a wave of sensitive, hypocritical and cantankerous literature against the Jewish race."<sup>80</sup> The wave argues that the Jews are undesirable traders, speculators, term sellers but, above all, that the exploitation of the Colombian working class is the responsibility of these immigrants, with what - in the words of the writer - the great masses are disoriented. And it keeps going as: "It would be foolish to deny that they exist among Jews living in Colombia, merchants, usurers and term sellers. However such activities correspond exclusively to the Jews? Absolutely not". For the columnist, not all Jews are merchants, since they fulfill multiple tasks and diverse professions, and not all merchants are Jews. Consequently, Durán maintains that

<sup>75</sup> Johnson, Paul. *La historia de los judíos*, (Madrid: Zeta publishing House, 2006) p.731.

<sup>76</sup> Johnson, *La historia de los judíos*, p.755.

<sup>77</sup> The world began a process of reconstruction in the midst of the emergence of a frigid struggle between the United States (champion of democracy) and the Soviet Union (Communist), so that the official opponent in the Western Hemisphere no longer had a swastika tattooed but a Red Star.

<sup>78</sup> The popular newspaper, April 21, 1945, p.1.

<sup>79</sup> *El diario popular* newspaper, March 7 of 1945, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> *El diario popular* newspaper, March 7 of 1945, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> *El diario popular*, May 1 of 1945, pp.1-2.

the standard bearers of anti-Judaism would be competitive merchants because "for every Jewish speculator who acts in the country, there are a hundred large and small Colombian speculators"<sup>81</sup>.

On April 12, 1945, they published a statement from the CTC (Workers' Conference of Colombia, as its abbreviation in Spanish *Conferencia de Trabajadores de Colombia*), in which they called on the democratic press not to contribute to anti-Semitism, not even with its silence - no pronouncement has been found Regarding the supposed anti-Semitic campaign of this period in other media, taking into account that "in Colombia there is no problem with Jews or with other sectors of immigration, except with the Nazi Germans and the Spanish Falangists, pernicious foreigners interested in the anti-Semitic campaign and that they do represent a serious danger"<sup>82</sup>. They affirmed that their voice warned against the racist campaign that, followers of the Nazism, tried to initiate in Colombia. And on June 14, 1945, they were even more vocal in arguing that they would be creating organizations with recognized pro-Nazi constituencies that fostered anti-Semitism and instigated the death of Jews<sup>83</sup>. The editors ask for jail for the conspirators. Days later, on June 22, according to the Socialists, drunken people in the center of Bogotá launched "Thumbs down the Jews" and Thumbs Up the Falange!<sup>84</sup>

Even though *The Popular* newspaper is altered by this anti-Semitic wave of the *Frente Único* conspirators, it has not been possible to find fragments that support this revelation. Neither the bibliography nor the periodicals of the moment support the denunciation of *The Popular* newspaper, although this does not mean that some actions -like the distribution of leaflets- have not taken place. However, this possible campaign, in adherence to the debate on Jewish immigration already presented, would have paved the way for the only boycott against Jewish commerce that has been registered in Colombia.

### **The Boycott of the Jewish Commerce in Bogotá<sup>85</sup>**

On Wednesday, May 8, 1946, after 6:30 in the afternoon, Jacobo Fisboim-a 21-year-old Polish Jew based in Bogotá-was walking through the *Seventh Avenue* between streets 17 and 18, when he met Alfonso Pardo Ruiz -a young Colombian Catholic 20 years old- with whom he started a fight that would unleash the lack of control in the center of the city. Some versions suggest that the origin of the fight was a woman (cousin of Pardo Ruiz, whom Fisboim would have courted without the consent of their relatives), while others maintain that it was an extra shot of the Colombian (who the night before had already been arrested for a similar situation)<sup>86</sup>.

While the fight was appeased by the police, the angry Pardo Ruiz would have called the attention of passers-by with phrases like: "Die Poles and Jews!!"<sup>87</sup>; so that Fisboim, scared, took refuge in the drugstore on 18th Street with Carrera 7, followed by the Colombian and the authorities. A car of the armed body transported the opponents to the police station.

Then, other citizens<sup>88</sup> joined the clamor of Pardo Ruiz (more than a thousand, according to the newspaper *La Razón*, while there was a rumor that the foreigner had murdered a villager "in a villan way") who vociferated

<sup>81</sup> El diario popular, May 17 of 1945, p.4.

<sup>82</sup> El diario popular, April 12 of 1945, p.1.

<sup>83</sup> El diario popular, June 14 of 1945, pp. 1 y 4.

<sup>84</sup> El diario popular, June 23 of 1945, p. 1

<sup>85</sup> The reconstruction of this episode is based on El diario popular, El tiempo, El siglo, El espectador y La razón (May 9 of 1946).

<sup>86</sup> The version from El siglo newspaper is that Fisboim charged Pardo a fee and Pardo was upset because of the way the foreigner asked for it.

<sup>87</sup> El diario popular, May 9 of 1946, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> Among the attackers, the diaries of Jaime de la Espriella, José Rafael Pardo, José Manuel Salas, Max Veles and Pedro Flórez.

<sup>87</sup> El diario popular, May 9 of 1946, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> Among the attackers, the diaries of Jaime de la Espriella, José Rafael Pardo, José Manuel Salas, Max Veles and Pedro Flórez.

revenge with "Die to these foreigners "and" Hurrahs to the colombians!" the group stoned one by one the commercial establishments of the Seventh Avenue from 18th Street to Plaza de Bolívar, whose names were foreign. About 44 stores were destroyed<sup>89</sup> and, according to the AJC (American Jewish Committee), some Jews were beaten<sup>90</sup>.

The attackers also pounced on the Israelite Center, located on 24th Street in front of the National Library *Biblioteca Nacional* , where they broke doors and windows. Others followed the 30th street synagogue between 13 and 14 avenues. The precise knowledge of these religious spaces of the Jewish communities, which physically did not stand out in the city because they were habitual houses without any distinctive sign, was an argument of Oscar González Izquierdo -redactor of *El diario popular* newspaper- to suggest that the attack was studied and premeditated in order to remember that a year ago, on May 8, 1945, the German forces surrendered, but their purpose was to remain valid through anti-Semitism, and affirmed that: "the infamous mutiny was led by fascist technicians"<sup>91</sup>.

The merchants chose to demonstrate their nationalism. Some non-Jewish Colombians displayed posters that read: "We are Colombians", while some merchants of Hebrew origin hoisted the tricolor flag (the yellow, blue and red Colombian one) or they sang the national anthem. After evidencing that their actions did not yield results, the merchants of the Seventh Avenue closed the doors of their establishments (some of them stayed inside), what prevented the increase of robberies and major infrastructure destructions. However, the losses according to different versions ranged between seventeen thousand and thirty thousand Colombian pesos.

Towards 7 o'clock at night, police squadrons with tear gas dispersed the attackers and quieted the passers-by. Also, traders who remained locked out of the establishments to their homes with the protection of the authorities. Pardo Ruiz was released and a three-day disability due to scratches and injuries, while Fisboim commuted the 72-hour arrest sentence and was also released. In his statement to the authorities, Pardo Ruiz explained that he had incited the crowd to put an end to those elements that he considered "undesirable" for all Colombians.

The next day, the Jewish-owned warehouses did not open their doors. According to The *Espectador* newspaper, the Jewish victims of the attacks met at the Israelite Center and said they would keep their facilities closed until the Colombian authorities gave them full protection and prevented an episode like the one reported from being repeated<sup>92</sup>. The authorities complied with the requests.

The boycott against Jewish commerce in Bogotá was almost unanimously repudiated. In the words of *El Tiempo* newspaper: "The events of last night have been the object of general indignation and protest, because they tend to create racial hatred, the same one because of the abolition the democratic nations have just fought the most atrocious wars and those who detest the traditional freedom that has always existed in Colombia"<sup>93</sup>. In this same frame, the socialists of *El Popular* newspaper explained: "The democratic socialist party protests

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<sup>89</sup> According to the journal *El Tiempo*, the following stores stand out: Great Drugstore, Siberian Fur Shop, Paris Jewelry, The Messenger, The Comfortable, Berta Warehouse, Universal Gallery, French Leatherwork, Hollywood Warehouse, Aura Warehouse, Royal Gallery, European News, The Dalia , Lafayette Gallery, Granada Warehouse, Glottman J and company (three showcases), Riga Leather Shop, Feniz Warehouse, Milan Warehouse, A El Encanto, Selecle Leatherwork, Canada Leatherwork, Orgenal Footwear, A. Washington, A. Cecilia, Saad Brothers, House Austria; A. Squire, A Extasis and Nena (from non-Jewish Colombians, the last three).

<sup>90</sup> American Jewish Year Book. Vol. 48 (1946-1947), Foreign Countries: Latin America (1946-1947), p.251.

<sup>91</sup> *El Popular* newspaper, May 11 of 1946, p.4.

<sup>92</sup> *El espectador*, May 9 of 1946, p.1.

<sup>93</sup> *El tiempo*, May 9 of 1946, p.1.

against the infamous attack to the centers and warehouses of the Hebrews in the city"<sup>94</sup>. And they affirmed that these attacks constituted an outbreak of barbarism -product of the myth of racial antagonisms promoted by Hitler- which was incompatible with the principles of freedom, fraternity and justice that the political constitution presides over.

Hernando Tellez rejected the attack by describing it as an "unequivocal racist accent simply monstrous", but by means of anti-Semitic arguments: "The Jews, those people say, are undesirable by hoarders, by exploiters, by greedy people. (...) Jewish violence resolves nothing, has never resolved anything"<sup>95</sup>, and concludes that the solution is a restrictive immigration policy. Even *El Siglo* newspaper also rejected the boycott, although it did not give that more importance. In the last pages, it described that as "a shameful act" caused by people without job looking for any opportunity to make scandals<sup>96</sup>.

The newly elected President of the Republic, Mariano Ospina Pérez, gave his opinion: "As a convinced democrat I condemn violence, riot or any revolutionary outbreak against any race, belief or feeling. Is not possible to break rights in any way. Only a legal regime can preside over the life of a civilized and devoted population. Its denial would be barbarism."<sup>97</sup>. In this way, the Colombian leader expressed his support to the Jewish communities established in the country.

The AJC highlights in its archive that during the conservative government of Mariano Ospina Pérez, the authorities did not maintain their efforts to stop sporadic attacks against members of the Jewish community, its buildings and businesses.<sup>98</sup> However, an episode like that on May 8, 1946, was not repeated. Two years later, when the so-called 'Bogotazo' broke out, 58 Jewish businesses burned down and 82 were looted<sup>99</sup>; however, this event did not target Jewish communities.

#### Exodus Ship: 1947

On July 16, 1947, four thousand five hundred Jews, in their desire to escape from the memories of the gas chambers and the Nazi crematoriums, they arrived by lorry to the French port of Sete and they embarked on the Exodus, a fluvial vapor of 2500 tons<sup>100</sup>. Although their real purpose was to travel to Palestine, they said sailing to Colombia.

When the ship approached Palestine, the British Navy approached to capture it. The passengers put up resistance and as a result one of them died, 120 were injured and 5 dying. The travelers broke the visas, before they could be verified. The Foreign Office confiscated the ship and wanted to send the 4,600 Jews to Colombia, taking into account that the French authorities allowed the embarkation because they saw the consular visas of this country.<sup>101</sup>.

4500 Jews? It was an exorbitant amount for the national authorities. The Colombian embassy announced in Paris that it would investigate the case. Carlos Holguín Holguín, secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hastened to declare to the newspaper *El Siglo* that: "Personally, I have the function of authorizing the consuls to issue visas and has not gone through my office any collective visa, let alone people who could be trade professionals."<sup>102</sup>.

<sup>94</sup> El diario popular, May 10 of 1946, p.1

<sup>95</sup> El tiempo, May 6 of 1946, p.4.

<sup>96</sup> El siglo, May 9 of 1946, p.12.

<sup>97</sup> El diario popular, May 12 of 1946, p.1.

<sup>98</sup> American Jewish Year Book Vol. 49 (1947-1948). Foreign Countries: Latin America (1947-1948), 1947, pp.272-273.

<sup>99</sup> American Jewish Year Book. Vol. 50 (1948-1949). Foreign Countries: Latin America (1948-1949), p.271.

<sup>100</sup> El tiempo, July 19 of 1947, p. 9.

<sup>101</sup> Semana, 26 of July, 1947, p.18.

<sup>102</sup> El Siglo, 23rd of July, 1947, p.1.

Days later Jos é Solano, the same general consul of Colombia in Marseilles, explained to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had only granted 112 visas: (...) those visas have not been granted by this consulate and if they exist they are false. (...) Actually it is a problem more or less serious between the French and British governments but, as it could happen that the false news spread, had the purpose of endorsing the 4,500 passengers of "Exodus" using the principles of humanity (...)<sup>103</sup>.

And he concludes: "I consider that the Colombian Government shouldn't accept any of those immigrants".

The traffic of falsified visas was the argument of the Colombian authorities to refuse to grant entry permits to these travelers. Additionally, Solano argued that to avoid further inconvenience the consulate suspended all Israeli visa issuance, until the issue of *1947 Exodus* was clarified.

Ambassador Londo ño and Londo ño also warned that he has only authorized individual visas, after studying each case and if it is about close relatives, as parents, children or spouses of residents of Colombia, or people who have useful professions for the country, such as those of industrial or agricultural technicians.<sup>104</sup>

While the French insisted that the English send the crew of *Exodus* 1947 to the place of destination of the passport, the Jews denied the visas and affirmed: "We swear that we will never disembark in France. Blood will flow but we do not surrender (...). We address a call to the conscience of all free towns and we express our confidence in the world, and especially in the democratic France."<sup>105</sup>

The Jews did not want to return to France or go to Colombia, but to reach their "promised land." Therefore, when a British ship took them back to Europe, only two fifty-year-old ones wanted to do it<sup>106</sup>; nevertheless, the British authorities forced all passengers to disembark in the midst of worldwide public indignation. Finally, the crossing of the ship *Exodus* 1947 became a symbol -reinforced in films and books<sup>107</sup>— about the will of the Jews to stay in holy ground without restrictions. Months after this event the so-called State of Israel was established<sup>108</sup>, which generated a strong Exodus of Jews around the world to their promised land<sup>109</sup>. From Colombia, a diaspora process was also initiated and ended with the decrease of Jewish communities in the country. And with all this, Colombia lost the opportunity to enrich its cultural diversity with the reception and maintenance of a larger community composed of Jewish immigrants.

<sup>103</sup> AMRE. Consulado de Colombia en Francia-Marsella, 1947-1948, diplomatic and consular, transference 8, box 499, orden 330, notice 54.

<sup>104</sup> El tiempo, 23rd of July, 1947, p.1

<sup>105</sup> El tiempo, 23rd of July, 1947, p.1.

<sup>106</sup> El tiempo, 30th of July of 1947, p.13.

<sup>107</sup> See *Exodus 1947* (1960) and Uris, Leon. *Exodus* (1958).

<sup>108</sup> At the end of 1947, the English put the dilemma of the confrontation between Jews and Arabs in the Palestine region to the study of the United Nations. And on November 29, the General Assembly of the UN (United Nations Organization) accepted the recommendations of an international committee for the establishment of two states in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish people. *Una historia ilustrada, An illustrated history*, (Jerusalem: Keter Books Jerusalem, 1973), p.29). The British obeyed and announced their withdrawal from Palestine by May 15, 1948. And even though the Arabs declared their absolute resistance, the Jews occupied since 1 May the area assigned to them according to the partition plan. On the 14th, at a special meeting of the Provisional Council, David Ben Gurion officially established the State of Israel (El Tiempo, May 15, 1948, p.1). Since then, the blue and white flag, with the star of David in the center, flamed in the streets of the promised land. "The diaspora of the 'Jewish people' was finally coming to an end.

<sup>109</sup> Colombia abstained from voting at the United Nations meeting in 1947 to approve the creation of this country for Jews. In June 1948, the wives and mothers of the Arab Committee asked the President of the Republic not to recognize the State of Israel, because it "undermines (great) greatness Palestine, the redeeming cradle of the world whose religion we profess and profess our children" (AMRE Embassy of Israel in Colombia, 1947-1960, diplomatic and consular, transfer 8, box 591, folder 2, trade 23). However, the pro-Palestinian Committee, signed by San í Cano, maintained that: "a country be given a home to the Jews as an elementary measure of justice, of historical reparation and of safeguarding world peace" (AMRE, Embassy of Israel) in Colombia, 1947-1960, official letter 24). However, Colombia recognized the State of Israel on February 2, 1949.

### Conclusions

The period from 1939 to 1948 harbors the materialization of the anti-Semitic speech, which reaches actions such as the 1942 expulsion attempt, the initial denial of granting legal status to its associations in 1940 and 1943, the urban propaganda of 1945, the 1944 plot and the 1947 boycott; as well as small segregation operations that intimidated some Jews in the country for having tattooed the Star of David, even though the seed of this rejection was miles away.

In relation to these anti-Semitic actions, great gaps remain -as some were briefly described and even generate research questions- that were not filled due to: the aura of taboo acquired by anti-Semitism during the war makes the anti-Semites do not express themselves so openly; the difficult access to US archives that contain information regarding Nazi or anti-Semitic activities in Colombia (such as the FBI reports on Latin America that are located in the *National Archives of Washington*), and the lack of documentary sources of local Jewish communities (whose archives of the period have disappeared) as well as those of the government in relation to anti-Semitic activities in the matter. Consequently, many of these ephemeral materializations of anti-Semitism are liable to investigation.

Despite the ephemerality of anti-Semitic discourse and actions, Colombia lost the opportunity to enrich its cultural diversity with the reception of Jewish immigrants of Polish and German origin, but also many Jewish applicants (more than 15,000, according to figures from the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores -Colombian Ministry of Foreign Relations) had to stay in Europe and some of them died at the hands of the anti-Semitic government of Adolf Hitler. The exaltation of their voices is a constant purpose, as a way of "doing justice" to these victims of the *Shoah*, in which Colombia made a small, but still significant, contribution.