1968

Socio-Political Factors Affecting the Growth of the Mormon Church in Argentina Since 1925

Michael B. Smurthwaite
Brigham Young University - Provo

SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE GROWTH OF THE MORMON CHURCH IN ARGENTINA SINCE 1925

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Michael B. Smurthwaite

August, 1968

PREFACE

Since 1925 Mormon missionaries have proselyted in Catholic Argentina. Yet the Argentine mission has grown very slowly and encountered many difficulties. Did the missionaries' North American image affect the missionary work? Did the predominance of the Catholic Church stunt the growth of the new sect? How did the impact of bitter U.S.-Argentine international relations during the Second World War, and the advent of Peron affect the reception of Mormonism in Argentina?

These questions concerning the history of the Mormon Church in Argentina since 1940 can best be understood by considering the episodes of Argentine history which bear directly on the history of the Church in that country. Hence, this thesis will offer a broader interpretation of the official history of the Argentine mission than that written by the mission secretaries and historians. Moreover, it will concentrate on the years between 1940 and 1968, which seems the most significant era since it embraces the Church's confrontation with the Second World War, Peron, and increasing membership.

The author wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance received during research by the staff of the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City. Sincere gratitude is expressed to W. E. Young, Frederick S. Williams, Samuel Boren, and especially President A. Theodore Tuttle, for their interview time. Special thanks goes to Dr. George Addy, thesis chairman, for his patience and help, and to Hermine Horman

and Mark Bench, for typing and proofreading the drafts and offering valuable assistance. Last but not least, appreciation is expressed to my wife, Heather, without whose help and support this work would not have been possible.

The author takes full responsibility for the contents and any faults are his and not those of the aforementioned individuals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd).

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MAPS

CHAPTER I

MORMON BEGINNINGS IN ARGENTINA, 1925-1935

After eight months in Buenos Aires where he had been instrumental in opening Argentina to Mormon missionary work, Melvin J. Ballard, a Mormon Apostle, told of the prospects of the mission:

> Work will go slowly for a time just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn--not shoot up in a day as does the sunflower that grows quickly and dies. But thousands will join the Church here. It will be divided into more than one mission and will be one of the strongest in the Church. The work here is the smallest it will ever be . . . . The South American Mission will be a power in the Church.[1]

A review of Argentina will afford some understanding of the ground into which the seeds of Mormonism were sown.

Argentine Review

Argentine Topography.--One major aspect of the Argentine country is its overwhelming size. Stretching to a length of 2,300 miles, Argentina lacks only 700 miles of being as long as the United States is wide. The country spreads to about 980 miles at its widest point and contains 1,084,359 square miles of land.[2]

Argentina's great expanse naturally has made communication and national unity difficult throughout much of her history. Mormon

---

[1]The Ballard Family, Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader for Righteousness (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 84.

[2]"Argentina," The World Book Encyclopedia, 1956 ed., Vol. I.

leaders encountered the same problems in administering the far-flung branches of the Church in Argentina.[1]

Population.--Besides its great size, Argentina has become increasingly urbanized. During the depression of the 1930's, Argentines from the country poured into the cities. By 1940, Buenos Aires became the most populous city in Latin America with nearly 25 per cent of the Argentine people crowded in or around the city. Three years later, during the war, this percentage jumped to 32.4 per cent. Other cities also grew so that during the Second World War nearly half, or 48.6 per cent of the people dwelt in cities with over ten thousand inhabitants.[2] The 1956 census counted over 15,893,827 inhabitants, and 45.6 per cent of them resided in or near Buenos Aires.[3]

The Mormon missionaries naturally congregated in the big cities with Buenos Aires as headquarters, and the Church grew in this increasingly urbanized and industrialized nation. The Church did not send missionaries into the sparsely settled pampa or plain where the famous gauchos herded thousands of cattle. President A. Theodore Tuttle, former president of all South American missions, explained that missionaries were sent only to cities large enough to support good working conditions for the missionaries, and which could grow into a self-sustaining unit as large as a Mormon stake. Thus communication and

---

[1]The term "the Church" normally refers to the Catholic Church, but in this paper care will be taken to distinguish between the Catholic and the Mormon Church when the term is used.

[2]Olen E. Leonard and Charles P. Loomis (eds.), Latin American Social Organizations and Institutions (Michigan: Michigan State Press, 1953), pp. 144-47.

[3]World Book Encyclopedia, op. cit.

leadership supervision could be maintained.[1]

Over 90 per cent of the urban Argentine people are Caucasian descendants from Europeans who flocked to Argentina between 1853 and 1930, encouraged by the 1853 constitution which was designed specifically to foster immigration. Over 6,300,000 immigrants entered Argentina, one-half of whom remained. Three quarters of the population are of Spanish or Italian descent, while persons of German, English, and French ancestry constitute a substantial proportion.[2] Thus Argentina was highly cosmopolitan.

The Mormon Church inherited this cosmopolitan makeup. Missionaries from North America first came to Argentina after requests from German immigrants who had joined the Church earlier, and the German colony provided the main source of converts and leaders during the first decade.

Church and State in Argentina.--Argentina is one of the few Latin American countries which still constitutionally support the Catholic Church.

> The Federal Government supports the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church . . . . To be elected President or Vice President of the nation, it is required . . . to pertain to that communion.[3]

Argentine authorities deny that the "supports clause" makes Catholicism the official religion of the state, and argue that the position of the Catholic Church in the government was inherited from

---

[1]Personal interview with President A. Theodore Tuttle, April 10, 1968.

[2]World Book Encyclopedia, op. cit.

[3]Juan Pinto, Diccionario de La Republica Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mundo Atlantico, 1950), pp. 727, 746.

the past. They contend that the early patronato real of Spanish rulers, which gave them the right to appoint church officials, was incorporated into Argentine law. Thus, the president and vice president must be Catholics simply in order to appoint high Catholic officials in Argentina.[1] They further add that religious freedom is guaranteed by Article 14 of the constitution which "has always been fully protected," and "representatives of all religious denominations are permitted to proselyte without interference." Consequently, all private persons and even government officials rest secure that their religious leanings will never be challenged.[2]

The question of Catholic influence in Argentine government seemed so settled that George Blanksten, well-known authority on the Peron era, could write:

> Prior to 1943, however, Argentina was regarded as one of the very few Latin-American states in which the Church problem was well on its way to definitive solution. Students who surveyed the Argentine religious scene in the years before Peron were generally convinced that the position of the Church was no longer a political question among the Argentines.[3]

Yet other observers differed in their opinions. J. L. Mecham wrote:

> Surely if a faith is financially supported by the State, if . . . the president must belong to that faith, if all religious ceremonies in which the State participates are

---

[1]Austin F. Macdonald, Government of the Argentine Republic (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1952), p. 130.

[2]Ibid., p. 152.

[3]Ibid., p. 139.

> conducted by that faith. . . it is certainly the State religion quite as much as the established Church of England.[1]

On the other hand, does the established Church of England wield much influence on government policies? Even Mecham would probably agree that the Catholic Church holds less real power in the Argentine government than in ages past.

Nevertheless, while Catholic influence in government has greatly declined, Catholicism remains a political and social power due to its near total predominance of the Argentine scene.[2]

The Catholic Nature of Argentine Society

While the Church's influence in government declined, the fact remained that Catholic influence in social affairs was overwhelming. Centuries of near absolute hegemony in the birth, communion, marriage, and death rituals of generations of Argentine families manifest the depth of the Catholic roots. "Its ramifications extend . . . into the tiniest village and remotest town."[3]

Eva Peron recognized Catholicism as an ingrained characteristic of Argentine society when she sought legislative ratification of the December 31, 1943 decree which created mandatory Catholic religious education in public schools:

---

[1]J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America (Raleigh, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 288.

[2]Salvadore de Madariaga, Latin America--Between the Eagle and the Bear (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 18.

[3]John J. White, The Life Story of a Nation (New York: The Viking Press, 1942), p. 266.

> In our land, I don't believe that one can speak of a home that is not a Christian home. Still fresh in our eyes are the titular crosses of the old graves of our forebears. Beneath the cross we were born. Beneath the cross we have recited the abc's, and learned to count on the abacus. . . . Anything in our customs that is outstanding is Christian and is Catholic . . . . We have spoken the truth whenever we have spoken of the traditional Catholic faith.[1] (Italics in the original).

Wide manifestations of Catholic culture do not make all Argentines devout Catholics--quite the opposite may be nearer the truth. Argentines are Catholic indeed, but are more Catholic as a matter of course than as a matter of religious devotion. While a man will be baptized and married in the Church, he will hardly again set foot inside it, but still considers himself a Catholic. To Argentines, Catholicism may be less a disciplined faith than a matter of course.[2]

There remains yet another dimension to the picture of Catholicism in Argentine society: the difference in the piety of the devotees of the interior, and those of the capital, Buenos Aires.[3] While the Catholic religion may be a kind of air one breathes, the Argentines of the interior must breathe more deeply than those of the capital, because people in the interior tend to be more pious and devout.[4] In the small interior towns and cities the Cathedral or

---

[1]Orestes D. Confalonieri, Peron Contra Peron (Buenos Aires: Editorial Antigua, 1956), pp. 254-55. The book illustrates how Peron contradicted himself on the same issues at different times during his regime. In Spanish, it is a very good collection of newspaper articles and official Peron pronouncements. (Translated by author).

[2]Madiariaga, op. cit., p. 18.

[3]"Interior" refers to the area outside a major population center.

[4]Blanksten, op. cit., p. 230.

iglesia (church) often dominates the scene, and the social structure is more closely tied to Catholic customs. The author visited some small, interior towns where, due to Catholic hegemony, no office buildings were allowed to be built higher than the main Cathedral. The northern Argentine city of Córdoba was renowned for its rigid religiosity, and some called it the "Rome of Argentina." However, in the capital city of Buenos Aires, most porteños are Catholic, but their Catholicism seems to be a different brand. Buenos Aires is Catholic in the same sense as Paris is Catholic--most people attend Church occasionally, but their religion adapts itself conveniently to modern, cosmopolitan life.[1]

During the Peron regime peronista propaganda reflected an awareness of this difference between the interior and the port. Peronista propaganda designed for interior cities and towns painted Peron as a very devout Catholic, and official pronouncements carried strong religious overtones. The people of Buenos Aires, on the other hand, heard that the regime was a porteños Catholicism, sophisticated, modern, and compatible with certain deviations from the strict religious path.[2]

Consequently, while the Argentine atmosphere may be Catholic scented and the faith of the porteños notably liberal, the Catholic nature of the Argentine society and culture constituted a mighty monolith which the Mormon missionaries and proselytes had to confront.

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 231.

Mormon Beginnings in Argentina

The German Character of the Early Period.--Facing the Catholic society were a few Mormon families who had immigrated to Argentina after World War I. These German families sent a letter to the First Presidency of the Mormon Church requesting missionaries for Argentina.[1] Opening a mission in South America had been considered for some time by Church leaders, and on September 3, 1925, they announced that three of their number would open the mission. Elder Melvin J. Ballard, an Apostle, and two members of the First Council of Seventy, President Rulon S. Wells, who spoke German, and Rey L. Pratt, who spoke Spanish, were chosen to do the initiatory work.[2] Ballard was instructed to make Buenos Aires the headquarters of the new mission.[3]

Some events of the first few months are important and deserve some attention because they reveal the original character of the mission. Many problems confronted in the early period had to be overcome in the later periods before real progress could be achieved by the Argentine mission.

On December 6, 1925, Elders Melvin J. Ballard, Rulon S. Wells,

---

[1]Original letter available at LDS Church Historians Office.

[2]A. Theodore Tuttle, "South America. . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," The Improvement Era, Vol. 66 (May, 1963), p. 355. (Parley P. Pratt, ancestor of Rey L. Pratt, failed to establish a mission of the Church in Valparaiso, Chili, in 1851).

[3]Andrew Jensen, "South American Mission History," Salt Lake City, Historians Office, Vol. I, 1925-35, Sep. 4, 1925. Jensen was Assistant Church Historian who rewrote this manuscript from early reports. Hereafter this history will be cited as LDSHO, Early S. A. History, no pages, entries by date.

and Rey L. Pratt arrived in Buenos Aires. They were met at the dock by some of the Mormon immigrants from Germany, Wilhelm Fredrichs, Emil Hoppe, their wives, and several friends who had become interested in Mormonism. At 4:00 p.m. that same afternoon they all attended a cottage meeting at the home of Ernst Biebersdorf, an investigator. Present were the three missionaries, four Church members from Germany, and their wives, and several friends of the members who had become interested in baptism by attending regular cottage meetings held by these brethren during the previous two years.[1]

Six days later, on December 12, 1925, the first converts in the South American Mission were baptized:

> The brethren, with the Saints and those that applied for baptism, assembled on the shore of the Rio de La Plata, immediately east of the Ferman Electric plant in Dock Sud.
>
> After prayer by Elder Rulon S. Wells, Elder Ballard baptized the following persons in the order named: Anna Kullick, Ernest Biebersdorf, Jacob Kullick, Maria Biebersdorf, Herta Kullick, and Elisa Plassman.[2]

The first Mormon cottage meeting in South America took place in the home of a German immigrant to Argentina. In Spanish-speaking Argentina the gospel was first preached in a foreign language, German. The first converts were aliens, and female proselytes outnumbered men two to one at the first baptismal service. The German image of the Mormon Church and the predominance of women became two constant problems with which the Church struggled in Argentina.

---

[1] Ibid., Dec. 6, 1925; and 1924.

[2] Ibid., Dec. 12, 1925.

A Bilingual Mission.--The bilingual character of the early period of Mormon church history in Argentina was innate. Each of the three Mormon leaders spoke a different foreign language. On their way to Argentina they ordered Spanish, German, and English literature from Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, to be shipped to Buenos Aires for use in the new mission. The missionaries alternated the translating chores of both languages in the early meetings.[1]

Attendance figures of the early meetings illustrated the trend toward Spanish-speaking contacts. While Ballard and Pratt proselyted in Buenos Aires, Spanish-speaking contacts outnumbered those who spoke German by over four to one. Attendance at meetings held in German remained constant, while those conducted in Spanish attracted many more hearers.[2]

Since Spanish-speaking Argentines so overwhelmingly outnumbered those who spoke German at Mormon meetings, it would appear that the missionaries should have turned their efforts towards that people, the German converts notwithstanding. Their failure to pursue the Spanish-speaking majority became the first major drawback. One mistake followed the first as the First Presidency chose Elder Reinhold Stoof, who spoke only German and English, to replace Ballard as Mission President in 1926.

In the next nine years, due to Stoof's influence, the South American Mission in Argentine and Brazil took on a German-speaking

---

[1] Ibid., November 6, 1925.

[2] Ibid., December 6, 1925 through February 26, 1926.

emphasis. President Stoof was undoubtedly a fine man, but in the author's opinion, his call to lead the Church in Spanish-speaking Argentina was a mistake rooted in prejudice against Latin peoples. Vernon J. Sharp, a Spanish-speaking missionary who accompanied Stoof and his wife to the mission in June, 1926, wrote in his journal that "Stoof did not seem to have much interest in pushing the work among the Spanish people."[1] After Stoof's arrival many German people were baptized into the Church. This perpetuated its German nature in Spanish Argentina.

Of course, Spanish people were baptized too, and half the missionaries labored with each language group, but the mission remained bilingual with an attendant train of progress-hindering problems. After three and half years there were 50 German members compared to 32 Spanish. By 1935, the total rose to 135 members in Argentina and Brazil, mostly German.[2] Although progress was slow, after ten years the Mormons compared favorably with the Methodists who numbered only 150 after 40 years of proselyting.[3]

---

[1]John Delon Peterson, "History of the Mormon Missionary Movement in South America to 1940," (Unpublished thesis presented to the University of Utah History Department, 1961), p. 53. Peterson cites George Ellsworth who noted a traditional Mormon bias against Catholic nations and Latin people. Ellsworth speculated that this bias was caused by the fact that most Mormon missionary success had occurred in Protestant countries with Anglo-Saxon people; and Tuttle, op. cit., p. 358. Tuttle relates Sharp's account of a meeting in which Stoof experienced the gift of interpretation of the Spanish tongue. This experience makes his emphasis on German even more amazing when coupled with the fact that Rulon S. Wells had returned home due to illness in January, 1926. Wells was the only missionary who spoke German.

[2]Ibid., Appendix A.

[3]LDSHO, Early S.A. History, May 22, 1926.

The Formation of the Argentine Mission.--On February 9, 1935, President Stoof was replaced and the mission ended its German emphasis period when the First Presidency divided the South American Mission into the Brazilian and Argentine missions. Elder W. Ernest Young was chosen to lead the Mormons in Argentina. Young, a former missionary to Mexico who spoke Spanish very well, changed the character of the Mormon Church in Argentina by announcing that it would be a Spanish-speaking mission because Argentina was a Spanish-speaking country. The German members remained an important part of the Church, however, and some missionaries were still assigned to learn German and work with these people. Nevertheless, the majority of the new missionaries learned Spanish and began to push the work forward with Spanish-speaking Argentines.[1]

Under the new single-language system in Argentina, the Mormon population grew much more rapidly than in the previous decade. After one year, Young reported that most missionary contacts were with Spanish-speaking people. The next year, the Argentine missionaries baptized more Argentines into the Mormon Church than in any other year in its history, 76 converts.[2] In the same year, Young published the first editions of a mission magazine in Spanish called the Mensajero Deseret,

---

[1]Peterson, op. cit., pp. 88-89 ff; Quarterly Report of the Argentine Mission to Church Leaders, Vol. II, 1936-48, Salt Lake City, LDS Church Historians Office, Feb. 9, 1935. Cited hereafter as LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, no pages, entries by date.

[2]Salt Lake City, LDS Church Historians Office, Annual Reports, 1936, 1937. Hereafter cited as LDSHO, Annual Reports, no pages, entries by date.

or Deseret Messenger. Expansion also necessitated the building of a suitable meeting place which Young began to construct in Liniers. Although small, when completed in 1938, the chapel represented a real step forward in the progress of the mission.[1]

Social Factors in Early Mormon Development

Mormons in a Catholic Society.--Given the Catholic nature of Argentine society, one wonders how the new Mormon converts were affected by their "defection" from the established body of Argentine society. What kind of people became Mormons? How did norteamericano missionaries fare?

Some of the first problems faced by the missionaries after their arrival demonstrate Argentine sentiments about the Mormon foreigners. Naturally, an adequate meeting place was a prime need for the new mission. In the first weeks meetings took place in the homes of the German members, but they sought a larger hall. Elders Ballard and Pratt walked miles and miles and searched for days without success.[1] In his diary, Ballard gave an account of the failure:

> Brother Pratt and I walked all day looking for a hall. Refused everywhere for the same reason--they wanted no interference in their dances. They laughed at us. . . . I have never seen such irreligious people.[2]

---

[1]LDSHO, Early S.A. History, Dec. 17, 1925; Jan. 5, 1926.

[2]The Ballard Family, op. cit., p. 82.

Finally, they rented a meeting place (a local) on Santa Fe Street in the heart of Buenos Aires.[1]

In January and February, 1926, the missionaries tried several times to persuade Buenos Aires newspapers to print announcements of their meetings. La Prensa, one of Argentina's leading daily newspapers, promised to print an announcement "gratis" but it failed to appear. The next week, La Prensa again promised, as did La Nacion, but neither article was printed. They asked La Critica, another newspaper, but nothing came of their request.[2]

Why would these leading newspapers of a country which proclaimed religious freedom promise and then refuse to print a mere announcement of a Mormon meeting? Did the influence of the dominant religion affect the publishing policies of these papers?

Publicity of any real value and difficulty in obtaining adequate meeting halls remained two major problems for the Mormons throughout the early period.

The Social Class of the Mormons.--The Santa Fe street hall in downtown Buenos Aires was situated in one of the better sections of town. Although the Mormon missionaries tracted the area for months, and invited many people of the area to visit the Church, during all the time that they were open for church services on Sunday night, only one individual ever crossed the threshold, and he found he had

---

[1] Williams interview.

[2] LDSHO, Early S.A. History, Jan. 16, 1925; Jan. 2, 1926; and Feb. 24, 1926.

gone to the wrong address.[1] Members of the middle and upper socio-economic classes just did not accept the Mormon missionaries.

> So they [Brothers Ballard and Pratt] decided that they would have to go out where the people were poorer. And they went out in Liniers, which was a very, very poor district. It was close to the German families that had been converted (some in Germany and some here). . . and it was there that the South American mission really began. . . . People were found there, very, very poor people, wonderful people, but very poor. And that was the trend of the mission. We worked among these people because they were the only ones who would receive us.[2]

During the first decade of the mission, the social class of the Mormons remained static. Speaking of the social status of the members during his first mission, W. Ernest Young agreed that the majority, 90 per cent, belonged to the poorer classes who lived meagerly on the wages of pick and shovel day laborers. With a few exceptions in all the branches, the social class of the Mormons remained very low throughout the thirties.[3]

Why were the Mormon missionaries accepted by the poorer classes only? Did not the poor have more to lose in their fight for "dignidad" (dignity) by union with a strange foreign sect? How were they affected socially by their membership in the Mormon Church?

Although there are no sociological surveys about these questions, Samuel Boren, an Argentine, who grew up and joined the Church

---

[1] Williams interview.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Personal interviews with W. Ernest Young on July 14, 1967, and December, 1965. Mr. Young twice served as president of the Argentine mission, 1935-38 and 1944-49. He is assistant Church Historian and has studied widely in this area.

in the early period, seemed to think the Mormons suffered ostracism:

> Socially he /~~was~~/ hurt because this was odd, something completely unusual in our society. I believe, many of our members hide their condition as a Mormon in their commercial and social life as much as possible, because they knew they would suffer if everybody knew they were Mormons.[1]

The rarity of Mormons can be appreciated by remembrance of the fact that Mormon population after the first decade was a meager 135 in both Argentina and Brazil, countries with millions of people. Indeed, in reference to the early period Boren remarked: "Before, to be a Mormon was very, very rare, and people looked at you like something from another world."[2]

Not only were Mormons themselves very rare, but Mormon religious practices differed radically from the Catholic pattern. Consequently, to abandon the religion of the status quo in favor of a maverick sect must have taken a great deal of social courage.

---

[1]Personal interview by the author with Samuel Boren, July 14, 1967, in Mesa, Arizona. Born in Argentina to a Protestant father and a Catholic mother, Samuel Boren did not soon follow his father into Mormonism. He experienced familiarity with The Church and still remained uncommitted. Baptized on September 12, 1936, he became an active Mormon, with many firsts to his credit: first native Argentine to serve a fulltime mission in Argentina; in first group of members to be chosen to preside over a branch of the church; first Argentine member to serve in Mission Presidency; called by the First Presidency to serve on the first Church Building Committee in South America in 1961, during which time he served in the Mission Presidencies of both Uruguay and Argentina. Married to an Argentine member of ~~Italian~~ Dutch and Austrian stock, Clara Lorenzi, together with his family of three immigrated to the United States in 1952, but returned to serve as head accountant in the Peronista government in 1955, even though he admitted to them he was not a peronista. W. Ernest Young rates him as a natural leader, and one of the outstanding baptisms of his "first" mission. (Young interview). Mr. Boren has some difficulty with English, and rather than correcting or littering the page with "sic's" his expressions will be left largely unchanged.

[2]Ibid.

Since Mormon congregational singing was completely unusual in a Catholic society, people had to endure the ridicule of onlookers who would witness their participation. Samuel Boren many times observed bystanders ridiculing Mormons for their rare religious activities, and added that Mormons had to be brave to remain active in the branch.[1] Moreover, the low social class and poor condition of the early members failed to stimulate or attract people of higher status. Thus, there was a cycle difficult to derail:

> . . . The first members baptized in the mission were in some ways of low conditions. They were wonderful people, but without education. They had very little to offer to others. And the society in our country says thatif you are in a higher position you won't pay any attention to an ignorant man. So I believe that was why many people didn't go to church, because of these members.[2]

Although more will be said about this later, the lack of suitable meeting places represented another major hurdle in the path of Mormon progress. For years, due to housing shortages, few members, occasional closing of branches due to lack of missionaries, and the Church merely rented available houses, perhaps knocking out a wall to make a larger meeting hall. The missionaries frequently lived in the rear of the building. Referred to as locals or apartments by the missionaries, these "chapels" certainly could not compete with the huge and elaborate iglesias or churches which adorned nearly every town. Argentine Mormons were naturally ashamed and reluctant to take friends to the humble locals.

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

I want to tell you that in my opinion the Church did not grow fast from the initial years until later on for two or three main reasons. One, the poor places where we met, just houses. Many times in my life, I felt almost ashamed to take a friend to our churches because he almost laughed at them . . . . [Furthermore], the Argentine mission suffered tremendously for lack of a good recreational place to meet in Buenos Aires. We had about seven to ten branches in Argentina, but we didn't have a decent place to go and we couldn't attract the young people which will be the base of growth in any mission.[1]

Mormons and Polygamy.--The existence of polygamy in Mormon history affected the opinion of many Argentines about the Church. The sensational character of the accusations of polygamy was a temptation to certain members of the Argentine press corps. Hence the Church suffered greatly from unfavorable publicity.

For example, in November, 1940, the El Hogar magazine printed an anti-Mormon article entitled "Brigham Young, the Man Who Had 27 Wives and 56 Children,"[2] Six months later, on April 29, 1941, La Critica, a large daily newspaper in Argentina, published a defaming article about an "anonymous complaint" to the judge of the juvenile court, Dr. Clomiro Cordero, that there was a "polygamy club" in Buenos Aires, and that the Mormons taught and openly practiced polygamy.

---

[1]Boren Interview.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Nov. 1940.

The next day President Williams visited Dr. Cordero who denied knowing anything about it. Together they wrote and signed an affidavit declaring the falsehood of the article in La Critica, saying that "such an organization was nonexistent!" President Williams asked La Razon, another large Buenos Aires newspaper, to publish the declaration, and it was not known whether it was printed. Williams then talked to the editor of La Critica.

> The editor of the La Critica said it was an error in good faith, but when asked to print a clarification of the article, he hedged saying, "Do you want us to say La Critica lies?" Later they printed a small article reporting a . . . denouncement of the article. Little good came, and they sent a reporter over who admitted the naivite' of the Argentine people about the Mormons. His article has not been printed.[1]

Four years later there was another notable case. On April 17, 1945, La Razon printed a United Press article from Salt Lake City giving the impression that the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church were polygamists. Although the article demonstrates sensational journalism, it illustrates the popular conception of the Mormons as people fit for ridicule.

Besides a picture of the three members of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles seated around a table, the article was headlined: "Aces of Polygamy: 15 Members of the Famous Mormon Sect Account for No Less Than 55 Wives and 287 Children." Beneath the headline it read:

> Fifteen polygamists that have between them 55 wives and 287 children, began prison terms of between one to five years, after 14 months of useless efforts trying to achieve an annulment of the accusations of illegal cohabitation charged against

---

[1] Ibid., June 30, 1941.

them. All belong to the Mormon sect.

The caption immediately below the picture in small print mentioned nothing of polygamy. It read: "Mormons constitute an organized church, whose leaders, the twelve apostles, are rigidly practical and fine financiers."

The rest of the article appeared in small print, and the first and last paragraphs mentioned occasional reappearances of polygamy among the Mormons, but the body of the article did not even mention the men in the picture. Instead it gave a biased but brief history of Joseph Smith. Furthermore, the article clearly stated that the practice of polygamy had disappeared among the Mormons several generations back.[1]

Upon first glance, the article, the headline, the picture, and the italicized summary gave the impression that the "15 Ace Polygamists" mentioned were the presidency and apostles in the picture. The first and last paragraphs of the small print would also lead the scanner to the same conclusion. Obviously, the La Razon took undue liberties with the United Press article in order to leave the desired impression that the Mormons were still polygamists.

President Ernest Young went to the office of the paper and had two interviews with the editors. A letter was presented with the correct information and they promised to write a new article. The new and fair article appeared a month later, but it was a small statement, situated in the inside of the paper, unaccompanied by a picture.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., April 30, 1945. [2] Ibid., June 30, 1945.

Nevertheless, the popular concept that Mormons were polygamists persisted.

Summary.--Before World War II, the Mormons in Argentina labored under many handicaps which hampered progress. For a decade the mission's bilingual nature fostered a foreign image. The dominant Catholic society limited Mormon converts to the very poor, who in turn could do little to inspire any other class of people to join. The humble locals used by the Church perpetrated the low status of Mormons. Sensational journalists capitalized on polygamy to keep Mormons in a bad public light. A small chapel had been constructed, however, which seemed to portend brighter days.

CHAPTER II

ARGENTINES LOOK AT AMERICANS

In Argentina, the fact that the Mormon missionaries were norteamericanos and that the Church was North-American-oriented involved the Church in multiple difficulties. Argentines not only share the same misgivings about the "Colossus of the North" as other Latin Americans, but their disenchantment stems from a history of national affronts by the United States which began as far back as 1833. On the other hand, Argentina has much in common with the United States, and even experienced a period of "yankee-mania" in the last century. This ambivalence in Argentines' concept of the United States was common to other Latin American countries.[1] A brief review of the checkered history of U.S.-Argentine relations will help to explain why the Church experienced difficulties in Argentina, and why individual Argentines were not prone to feel fondness for individual yanquis.[2]

The Period of Emulation, 1824-1888

The successful revolution against Britain, and the achievement of independent status by the American colonies has long been considered

---

[1]José de Onís, The United States As Seen by Spanish American Writers (Boulder, Colorado: Miners and Journal Inc., 1952), p. 193.

[2]Felix J. Weil, The Argentine Riddle (New York: John Day Company Inc., 1944), p. 20.

an example which heartened Latin revolutionaries in their revolts against the crumbling Spanish Empire in America. In 1824, Argentina became the first South American country to recognize the Monroe Doctrine, and sought to collaborate with the United States in founding its foreign policy upon that doctrine.[1] However, any hope was shattered seven years later when the Falkland Island affair (Las Malvinas to Argentines) sparked a fire which still blazes in the hearts of many patriots.

Episodes of Early Disenchantment.-- Argentina inherited the islands in 1810, but unable to develop them, they became a base for whalers and traders. For unknown reasons, the governor of the island in 1831, seized some American ships. In retaliation, an American naval captain landed troops on December 28, 1831, arrested authorities and blew up a powder depot. One year later, on January 31, 1833, a British ship took possession of the islands and the United States has recognized British sovereignty ever since. Although unable to prove U.S.-British complicity, Argentines accused them of such, and continued to claim the islands. A century later patriotic restore-Las Malvinas groups and occasional Malvinas postage stamps revived national indignation against the norteamericano "piracy" of Argentine territory.[2]

The U. S. annexation of northern Mexico after the war of 1848 caused Latins to feel the Monroe doctrine decidedly one-sided. Although the Monroe doctrine established the United States as the protector of the hemisphere, South Americans wondered, and with reason, who would

---

[1] Ibid., p. 11.

[2] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

protect them from the United States.

In the 1850's, Americans sought a short-cut to California and focused attention on the countries of the isthmus. Meddlers like William Walker intervened and controlled Nicaragua until Cornelius Vanderbilt's hired adventurers threw him out.[1] Such American activity evoked the following expression of Latin fear by Francisco Bilbao:

> Already we see the fragments of America falling into the jaws of the Saxon boa that hypnotizes its foes as it unfolds its torturous coils. First it was Texas, then it was Northern Mexico . . . . Today the skirmishers of the North are awakening the Isthmus with their shots, and we see Panama, . . . asking itself: "Shall I belong to the South or to the North?"[2]

Witnessing such intervention, Argentines must have been particularly confused about the United States in the 1850's, for in those same years Argentines composed their national constitution patterned after the U. S. model. The dichotomy of fear and emulation thus continued.

"Yankeemania".--Argentine president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, more than any other, epitomized the "yankeemania" characteristic of his countrymen until his death in 1888. After an extensive tour of the United States, he became the first to realize Argentina possessed conditions analogous to those of the United States, and that his country was destined to a future similar to that of its northern neighbor. So

---

[1]John Edwin Fagg, Latin America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 546-7.

[2]Francisco Bilboa, "The Two Americas," in Benjamin Keen, (ed.) Readings in Latin American Civilization (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1955), p. 457.

strong was his conviction that in American fashion he opened the doors of Argentina to thousands of European immigrants to fill up the land. The public school system was initiated, and railroads and canals were constructed to unite his broad country.

Thus, in spite of early misgivings, the period of emulation illustrates that U.S.-Argentine relations may well have been more neighborly. However, several events of the next period changed Argentine "yankeemania" to "yankeephobia."

The Period of Fear--1889 to 1929

As the nineteenth century closed, Latin Americans took a second look at the United States. Jose Martí expressed growing Latin fears of falling piece by piece in yankee hands. "We love the land of Lincoln, but we fear the Land of Cutting."[1]

President Grover Cleveland reopened the old wound of the Falkland Affair in 1885 when he justified the 1831 U. S. Naval destruction of and labelled the islands as a "piratical colony." He further charged that Argentina's inattention had contributed to the "derelict condition in the islands."[2] Such words by a U. S. president could hardly have been a boon to good relations.

The results of the Spanish-American War of 1898 again furrowed Latin brows. The U. S. protectorate over Cuba and the annexation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines seemed to cast ominous shadows upon

---

[1]Onis, op. cit., p. 197.

[2]White, op. cit., p. 248.

South America's future.

The following era of the Big Stick and Dollar Diplomacy furnished ample fodder for Latin oratory. Phrases like "el peligro yanqui" and "el imperialismo del dolar" were common.[1] Under the guise of the paternalistic Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe doctrine the United States intervened in the following countries ostensibly to deter European intervention: Columbia, Dominican Republic, Central America, Cuba, Nicaragua and Mexico.

Argentina was the scene of the well-remembered Caperton incident soon after the United States had entered World War I. Admiral Caperton and a squadron of cruisers, apparently on their way to the Pacific, defied both international law and the wishes of Argentina's president Irigoyen. Irigoyen had acquiesced to permit the squadron to dock at Bahia Blanca port, but Caperton's fleet sailed boldly into Buenos Aires. International law allowed a 24-hour stay for a belligerent's ship in a neutral port, but Caperton stayed a full ten days. To Argentines, the incident merely represented the bullish tactics of the United States in its blatant disregard for the rights of smaller nations.[2]

By the time Ballard and Pratt arrived in Argentina the American Monroe doctrine had been thoroughly discredited. It implied a U. S. protectorate over the hemisphere which was resented by proud Latins. Latin Americans charged the doctrine was but a camouflage for the

---

[1]Wiel, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

[2]Clarence H. Haring, South Americans Look at the United States (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), pp. 10-11.

political and economic hegemony of the United States.[1]

The inertia of fear and distrust of American motives generated in the first quarter of the twentieth century has carried on to affect all subsequent U.S.-Argentine relations.

Period of Neighborly Distrust--1929-1945

The strained U.S.-Argentine relations fostered during the period of the "Big Stick" began to ease somewhat when President Herbert Hoover announced the concept of the equality of American States, and backed up his word by the removal of U. S. troops from Caribbean countries. The trend toward improved conditions continued when President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated the "Good Neighbor Policy." President Roosevelt renounced further North American intervention in the international affairs of the southern neighbors, and declared the U. S. would not protect North American businesses in trouble with South American countries. Some observers proclaimed the decade of the 1930's the best period of U.S.-Argentine relations in history.[2]

On the other hand, other competent authorities observed that the "Good Neighbor Policy" had succeeded neither in wiping out the past nor in breaking down the traditional distrust of the United States foreign policy. Some reasons were: (1) Argentines doubted the sincerity and the longevity of the policy, arguing that another administration

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Charles O. Porter and Robert J. Alexander, The Struggle for Democracy in Latin America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), pp. 180-181.

may replace it; (2) the congress may not ratify it; (3) other high sounding pronouncements had been issued by American presidents which failed to come to fruition, and (4) why should the strongest and richest nation on earth feel bound in the future to honor an equality-of-all nations philosophy toward weak and poor neighbors?[1]

In addition to these misgivings, perhaps the major cause of Argentine incredulence in the "Good Neighbor Policy" can be traced to the commercial rivalry between Argentine and North American cattlemen. The similar geographic qualities of the two neighbors, pointed out by Sarmiento, not only signaled similar national development but also similar produce and consequently commercial rivalry.

The dispute centered around the basis of the U. S. embargo of Argentine beef. Evidently Argentines felt a strong western congressional block embargoed Argentine beef to protect western cattlemen from the competition of the cheaper and better Argentine meat. National indignation bristled when the North Americans explained that the embargo merely protected American herds from the possibility of contamination from diseased Argentine beef. All Argentina fumed at the insinuation that Argentine beef was "unclean," "diseased," or inferior in any way to North American beef.

The United States had long prohibited diseased animals from any region in the world from entering the country to protect American herds. A violent outbreak of disease in 1926 forced the Secretary of Agriculture to prevent the entry of all meats from infected regions.

---

[1]Wiel, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

However, in 1930, Congress "inadvertently" changed the law to read "country" not "region," and thus embargoed meat from disease-free regions of Argentina hundreds of miles from diseased areas.[1]

Argentines were disgusted at such legislative trickery, and considered it just another proof of discriminatory American trade practices. Aside from monetary profit, the "unclean" meat embargo really injured that renowned Argentine pride. As John Gunther reports:

> The economic boycott under a sanitary disguise enrages and humiliates the Argentines. They consider our exclusions of their beef a national affront, a stigma. The issue is bitterly, personally, wounding to every Argentine, not merely to his pocketbook, but to his patriotism and pride. . . . . .
> [Argentines have said] . . . . If you want to exclude our beef, raise the tariff to 20¢ a pound . . ., but do not hide behind the hypocrisy of the hoof-and-mouth disease.[2]

Although the Roosevelt administration called a U.S.-Argentine "Sanitary Convention" in 1935 to rectify the problem, the convention failed reportedly because of farm-block senators.[3]

Nevertheless, the next year President Roosevelt received a warm welcome from Argentina when he attended an Inter-American conference at Buenos Aires. That warm greeting represented but an "odd and fleeting moment" of friendship for at that conference Argentina opposed the strong pact of neutrality presented by the Americans, thus they incurred the undying animosity of Secretary of State, Cordell Hull.[4]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 203, 209; 14-15.

[3] Ibid.

[4] John Edwin Fagg, Latin America (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963), pp. 922-23.

A few years of the "Good Neighbor Policy" did not erase the disgust, fear, and animosity erected during the decades of the Big Stick and Dollar Diplomacy. Furthermore, Argentina signed but seven of 84 treaties at inter-American conventions between 1902 and 1942. And when Argentine diplomats opposed such treaties they often led diplomats of other nations to temper their enthusiasms for the idea or won them over completely.[1]

Observers attributed Argentine opposition to her jealousy of the growing U. S. economic and political hegemony in Latin America:

> The underlying reason for Argentina's constant opposition to the United States, . . . and its refusal to cooperate in the general Pan-American effort is the jealousy of Washington's leadership in continental affairs. . . . Argentines feel that if it were not for the United States the other countries would look to the Argentine Republic for leadership.[2]

The rivalry between the "Colossus of the North" and the potential "Colossus of the South" grew more intense after 1940 due to conditions related to the war.[3]

Argentine Pride and North Americans

Besides American blunders throughout the history of U.S-Argentine relations, and Argentina's justified indignation at the North American embargo, another factor colored the picture. Normally a virtue, Argentine pride must nevertheless definitely be labelled an

---

[1] White, op. cit., p. 262.

[2] Ibid.

[3] International relations problems related to the War, the Peron Era, and the modern period will be discussed in turn.

obstruction to improving international relations. This pride had many facets, but especially a thorough patriotism. It loved anything to do with the "patria," and subtly castigated those aliens of a Saxon or Nordic hue.

Arthur F. Whitaker, long-time resident in Argentina, pointed out Argentine pride as a national characteristic:

> For a long time past there has been general agreement among observers, both native and foreign, regarding the existence of certain Argentine traits which are so widespread that they can be called national. Foremost among these is an ebuliant patriotism, which has on the reverse side of the shield an excessive sensitivity to criticism that easily becomes resentment and xenophobia.[1]

This xenophobic tendency naturally feeds heavily upon the ample fodder found in the history of U.S.-Argentine relations. If it be natural that any nation resent a more powerful and wealthy neighbor, this tendency would be multiplied in the minds of Argentines as they pondered the North American colossus.

North Americans in Argentina

North Americans and Argentines differ in many aspects. North Americans are generally fair complectioned and tall, while latins are dark-completioned and short. They are passionate by nature, while Americans seem cool, calculated and businesslike. South America is Catholic. North America is largely Protestant. Americans are "in a hurry," while mañana promises great things in Latin America. America

---

[1]Arthur P. Whitaker, Argentina and the United States (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 14.

is rich; Latin America poor; North America powerful and South America weak. Differences could be multiplied.

These differences insinuate inferiority to Norteamericanos and "Argentines refuse to accept any truth which makes them inferior to anyone else. . . ."[1] Consequently, North Americans took the brunt of Argentine xenophobic outbursts:

> First, always latent and ready to express themselves are the rage, rancor, and anxious feelings of the Argentines toward economically powerful aliens, and especially towards those of the latter who most grossly violate with their attitudes and value orientations of the Argentine people. Thus, the anti-American and especially strong anti-British feelings of the Argentine people.[2]

The popular concept of North Americans just went against the Argentine grain. Thus the picture of a North American actually in Argentina may seem hard to envision. However, during the period of history when the Mormons constituted but a small, struggling sect, North Americans had a disproportionately large sphere of influence in Argentina than their numbers merited.

Certainly a majority of international dispatches in Argentine daily newspapers originated from United States news services.[3] Likewise, a substantial portion of the products and magazines sold in stores and used daily by Argentines were either North American made or Argentine

---

[1]Bruce James, Those Perplexing Argentines (New York: Longmans, Greer and Co., 1953), p. 7.

[2]White, op. cit., p. 249.

[3]George Pendle, Argentina (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 84. John White felt that as much as 75 per cent of the Argentine news came from American News sources. White, op. cit., p. 249.

copies of original American products.[1]

On the other hand, not all American influence was beneficial. American businessmen not only failed to mingle, but moved in cliques. Their unusually high salaries did not help to ingratiate them to Argentines. Due to the apparent hypocrisy of the Good Neighbor policy, American goodwill tours sponsored under the auspices of the policy came to be resented. People felt American overtures were motivated by self-interest rather than sincerity.[2]

Perhaps the most important representation or misrepresentation of the United States in Argentina came from Hollywood, California. The widespread impact of North American movies would be difficult to underestimate. Movies painted a varied picture of the United States. The crime, cowboys and Indians, glamour, wealth, war and frivolity of American movies presented Argentines with a rather distorted view of the American people. However, North American tourists seemed to perpetuate the image of wealth and pride. Such tourists were observed with as much curiosity and interest as the tourists themselves may have had in Argentina.

The glamour of the movies, coupled with traditional North American distrust likely produced a dichotomy in the minds of Argentines who met Americans:

- In the average Argentine citizen and even government officials, there are elements of ambivalence toward Americans.

---

[1] White, op. cit., p. 249 ff.

[2] Ibid.

> In the abstract, the Argentine mentality has a deep-rooted dislike for the United States, yet movies have contributed so much to the glamourization of the North Americans that when the individual Argentine meets one, he treats the stranger with courtesy and attentive curiosity. But the abstract anti-American tends to make officials suspicious that every visitor from the United States is really a camoflauged spy, sabateur, propagandist, or a capitalist who is trying to prevent Argentina from becoming economically free and politically sovereign.[1]

Thus, individual North Americans generally considered congenial or "simpatico," were treated in a friendly manner even though their motives may have been suspected. This friendly reception of a distrusted nation cannot be considered an unnatural phenomenon in human relations.

Argentines Look at Mormon Missionaries

The North American Mormon missionaries naturally inherited the good and questionable aspects of the North American image in Argentina. In the light of the history of U.S.-Argentine relations that the missionaries were norteamericanos can hardly be considered an asset. However, later developments in history of the Church reveal that while U. S. citizenship tended to impede missionary work, it also brought the fledgling sect its greatest publicity when the Mormon basketball team of 1939-1940 won national recognition. Mormons capitalized on their image to meet people through the formation of English classes,

---

[1]Mark W. Cannon, "The Closing and Opening of Mormon Chapels by the Police in Argentina," (Unpublished paper submitted at Columbia University, n.d.), p. 16, in Peterson, op. cit., pp. 96-97. Cannon was a former Argentine Missionary during some of the years of Peron.

quartettes which sang "North American" songs, radio programs, cultural lectures, and slide programs about North America, choirs, and Boy Scout programs. Indeed, the greatest thorn in the side of The Church, its North American orientation, became its greatest asset. It might even be argued whether or not another group of Mormon missionaries from any other country would have been better received or accepted. W. E. Young felt that even the majority of the people were their friends.[1]

Nevertheless, the unfavorable history of U.S.-Argentine relations represented an important factor which, combined with others, helped hinder Mormon progress. The fact is inescapable that "the work of the Mormon missionaries abroad has been influenced by foreigners' opinions of the United States."[2]

> Upon discovering the nationality of Mormon elders, the minds of many become clouded with thoughts not necessarily of a religious nature . . . . Mormon missionaries often are suspected of being agents of the United States intent upon disturbing their territorial integrity and political independence. The Church has been accused of being a front organization for U. S. capital seeking financial exploitation of Latin American resources. . . . How many missionaries have been denied a hearing because, . . . they appeared as Americans first, and as missionaries of the gospel second? These are difficult questions to answer. One can be sure, however, that many of the problems encountered by the Mormon missionary . . . in South America, have materialized not merely because a religion was involved, but because a nation was also implicated.[3]

---

[1] Young interview.

[2] Peterson, op. cit., p. 7.

[3] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

That the Mormon missionaries were of the undesirable North American breed was obvious by their fair appearance and un-Latin manner, and this definitely had its repercussions. The resultant plight of The Church and its missionaries became particularly acute between 1939 and 1950 due to events associated with the Second World War and the rise of the Peron regime.

CHAPTER III

THE MORMON CHURCH IN ARGENTINA DURING WORLD WAR II

War tensions and trials foment mighty stresses both between nations and within nations, be they belligerents or bystanders. In the late 1930's as war clouds darkened in Europe, Argentina's large European colonies were naturally swept up in turbulent currents of public opinion concerning the impending war. The controversy augured ill for the Mormon Church with its German heritage, Argentine membership, and North-American leadership.

Argentina, Scene of Controversy Over the War

Although his election was not unquestioned, a portly National Democrat, Roberto M. Ortiz, easily won the Presidency of Argentina in February, 1938.[1] By the time of his death in 1940, Ortiz "was considered to have been one of the greatest friends the United States ever had in this country."[2]

Ortiz permitted democracy to flourish. Releasing a pent-up Latin passion for freedom, Argentines of all persuasions began expressing their views freely: the Nazis, the Communists, Anglo-French propagandists, socialists, liberals, conservatives, etc. "From 1938 to

---

[1] Fagg, op. cit., p. 923.

[2] Weil, op. cit., p. 11.

1940, Argentina, under President Ortiz, was a gloriously free country, and this too at a time when Hitler was winning his most impressive diplomatic victories."[1]

Controversy over the impending war in Europe filled the air. Factions supporting many different attitudes and national policies injected their ideas into the milieu with verve. Both the pro-Axis and anti-Axis groups tried to persuade the government away from its traditional policy of prudent neutrality.[2]

Argentine "Neutrality".--Between 1938 and 1943, Argentina's traditional neutrality in international affairs took on two different shades. During the Ortiz period, 1938 to 1940, neutrality generally favored the allied cause; however, in the succeeding Castillo period, Argentine "neutrality" unashamedly leaned toward the Axis.

Regardless of the traditional anti-American bent of Argentina, there existed many sources of Allied support in the country. The group of British nationals in Argentina was the largest anywhere outside the British Empire. Moreover, substantial French and Belgian colonies contributed to the pro-allied side of the ledger.[3] These allied groups were supported by a vociferous group in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies led by Deputy Enrique Dickman. Between 1938 and 1940, Argentines were electrified by four speeches designed to arouse Argentines to face the Nazi menace. Dickman exposed extensive Nazi activities by

---

[1] Weil, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[2] Pendle, op. cit., p. 85.

[3] Ibid.

naming leaders and party members.[1]

President Ortiz himself led the government against the evils of Naziism, and during his administration gave more concern than comfort to Germany. Although refusing to cooperate totally with the United States and rupture relations with Germany, generally the Ortiz government acceded to the requests of the United States.[2]

Metropolitan Argentina also featured a sizable German colony. In 1939, Hitler claimed that some 1,300,000 German nationals resided in Argentina. While in reality only 43,626 of them had been born in Germany, and the majority were long-time naturalized Argentine citizens, Hitler's agents apparently succeeded in convincing the majority to sympathize with the Axis by threatening economic boycott or retaliation on German relatives.[3] The influence of pro-Nazi activities in Argentina increased with the success of Nazi armies in Europe.

The two opposing pro-Allied and pro-Nazi minority groups contended for public favor. Buffetted from both sides, the unpredictable Argentines seemed to sway undecidedly between the two positions. Traditional neutrality and anti-Americanism conflicted with a natural sympathy for victim nations. A contemporary observer reported "one week it would be hate North America week in Argentina, and the next week would be love North America week."[4]

---

[1]Weil, op. cit. [2]Fagg, op. cit., pp. 924-25.

[3]Clarence H. Haring, Argentina and The United States (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1941), p. 56.

[4]Williams Interview.

Thus a combination of the influence of the President, the newspapers, the large pro-Allied groups, the Chamber of Deputies, and perhaps a natural sympathy for victim nations, enabled pro-Allied forces to hold the upper hand during the Ortiz period.

The Mormon Church Under President Williams During the Ortiz Period

The Raid.--Within the midst of public controversy which surrounds any war, the labors of the Mormon missionaries continued undaunted. Although trying to mind its own business, the mission became involved in an embarrassing spy scandal. The Saxon appearance of the young missionaries, their light complexion, blue eyes, which contrasted visibly with most Argentines, their cameras, frequent travel, and habit of visiting with known Germans, convinced some Argentines that they were not only Germans, but German spies! When in April, 1938, the semi-annual conference of the Church brought an unusual number of missionaries to the mission home, some alert patriot reported the gathering to the police as a national meeting of Nazi spies.

Consequently, during the night the Buenos Aires police surrounded the mission home, forced the mission president at gun point to open the door and guide them around the house in search of a printing press reportedly used for reproducing Nazi propaganda. After disturbing several crowded sleepers, the police finally allowed Williams to explain that they were Mormons, not Nazis.

The investigating officer was exceedingly embarrassed and ashamed. Since he felt jeopardized by the mistake he not only apolo-

gized profusely, but discussed Mormonism with Williams and made several concessions to the Mormons. Thereafter, the Mormons were allowed to hold meetings in a foreign tongue, which privilege had recently been rescinded by presidential proclamation due to war tensions. He also told Williams he had a friend at police headquarters and that if he ever needed anything he should not hesitate to call on him. So the mistaken raid brought on by the confusion of missionaries with German spies in the mind of a pro-Allied observer, yielded fortuitious results.[1]

The raid points out the foreign image the Mormon missionaries held in the eyes of many Argentines. It also formed the background springboard of the next major episode in the mission's history which set such a successful precedent that Mormon missionaries in South America have employed similar tactics ever since.

Missionary Sportsmen Gain Fame and Favor for the Mormons.-- Given the overwhelming Catholic influence upon Argentine mentality, the widespread ignorance of the Mormons, and the negative light polygamy shed on the image of Mormons, it is not surprising that the Church would develop some kind of publicity campaign to enhance the image of the Mormon Church in the public's opinion. The comparatively free atmosphere of the Ortiz administration and the pre-occupation of the public with the war presented an opportune time for such publicity, and the Mormons moved successfully into the Argentine sports world.

---

[1] Williams Interview.

Composed almost entirely of North American missionaries, Mormon teams won the national baseball and softball championships in 1939. At year's end, Williams jubilantly reported to his superiors:

> During the past year we have become known throughout the nation. We won the Argentine baseball and softball championships and were asked by the minister of public instruction to play exhibition baseball with a team from a visiting American battleship. The ministry reported that 3,000 school boys came to see the game and had it highly publicized in all the papers.[1]

An even greater Mormon propaganda vehicle of the era was a basketball team composed of athletically inclined missionaries which toured Argentina playing the home teams of the various towns and cities. Samuel Boren, who served as a fulltime missionary and played on the team, commented on the purpose behind the endeavor:

> To my understanding the main purpose was to build the image of the Church . . . . At that time, I believe, nothing better could be done for the mission because usually people didn't know the Mormons . . . . The Argentine people are a people who like sports. At that time, around 1939-40, basketball started growing rapidly as a popular sport. . . . . It was a bright opportunity to field a good team showing good sportsmanship, and in a couple of years build a good name for the Church.[2]

In its first year the basketball team won fourth place nationally, but more important, the basketball-missionaries reaped the sought-after public attention as thousands saw them play.[3]

More significant than the number of actual witnesses were the number of articles in newspapers and magazine articles about the Mormons.

---

[1] LDSHO, Annual Report, 1939.

[2] Boren Interview.

[3] LDSHO, Annual Report, 1939.

Thousands viewed the Mormons in favorable print during these years when just a decade earlier the Mormons seemed to merit no newspaper space at all.

> Articles appeared in three sports magazines telling who we were and what we were doing. One writer recited the 13th Article of Faith, and gave us the best boost we could possibly receive.[1]

More favorable articles appeared in early 1940, which not only commented on the basketball team, but Mormonism and polygamy as well. Acting as thousands of tracts, the publications were widely read and were very favorable.[2]

"Rolf Larsen."--One of the players of the team, Elder Rolf Larsen, was chosen as a member of the Argentine National Team. Elder Larsen became a national sports figure of such dimension that 20 years later people would remember Larsen as a basketball player.[3] One of his fellow missionaries would later exclaim about Larsen's fame that if anyone knew anything at all about the Church, it was that Rolf Larsen was a Mormon.[4] Williams reported: "He is the ideal of many people and his picture appears daily in the papers throughout the country."[5] While on the national team, Larsen was heralded as

---

[1] Ibid. [2] LDSHO, Quarterly Report, Feb. 26, 1940.

[3] Boren Interview.

[4] Personal interview with Ernest Wilkins, Dec. 27, 1965. Wilkins is a former missionary in Argentina, 1938-40, who now directs the Language Mission which trains all missionaries for labor in Spanish-speaking countries.

[5] LDSHO, Annual Report, 1939.

"the key man" of the Argentine victory, and besides playing basketball, he's handing out tracts."[1]

Such activity by a nationally-known sports figure could not remain unnoticed by some Catholic oriented powers in the sports world. Elder Larsen, along with a teammate, Elder Bergeson, were chosen for the Buenos Aires all-star team which competed against all-star teams from the different departments of Argentina. On March 29, 1940, one of the most influential sports magazines, El Grafico,

> . . . published the account of the recent tournament in Santiago del Estero. During this month, the basketball association of the city of Santiago del Estero published a large bulletin defending the action that they took in the recent difficulty of the basketball tournament. It condemned the team from Buenos Aires for using two North Americans, Elders Larson and Bergeson. It was very bitter toward the two missionaries expressing that they had gone to Santiago del Estero to spread tracts about doctrine contrary to the State Religion.[2]

The controversy did not harm the Church. It was worthwhile just to raise so many eyebrows. In summary, the team achieved more favorable than unfavorable publicity, and there were subtle but real results.

Results of the Publicity.--The results of favorable publicity which bathed the successful Mormon foray into the sports world were four-fold: (1) the formation of a permanent Mormon sports club by the Church; (2) a real break in the wall of ignorance which curbed the

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Report, January 22, 1940.

[2] Ibid., April, 1940.

Church; (3) the attraction of some middle class people to the Church; (4) the establishment of similar public relations activities as an integral part of the Mormon proselyting system in Argentina and throughout South America.

While riding the crest of basketball publicity, the Church established a sports and social club called the "Club Los Mormones" (The Mormon Club). The mission historian recorded the importance of the event in the official history:

> This is quite a step in the Mission, because most of the athletic and social activities in the country are carried on by means of clubs. To provide the same for our members and friends was almost a necessity.[1]

The favorable publicity which bathed the Mormon sportsmen also made a great impact on Argentine public opinion. Widespread ignorance about the Mormons declined noticeably, and a young, vital image graced the Church, which naturally tempered the natural Catholic-fostered prejudice.

The improved social image led to the attraction of a few more cultured, intelligent class of people into the Church. While their numbers were few at first, this represented the greatest achievement of the publicity efforts of the sporting missionaries. During the regular semi-annual conference tour of the branches in January, 1941, mission leaders commented that the well-attended meetings featured a more intelligent, higher class of people than ever before, and strangely, the men nearly equalled the number of women in attendance.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., May 29, 1940.

[2] Ibid., Jan. 31, 1941.

The success achieved by the public relations and publicity activities led to their integration as a normal part of missionary work in South America. Years later other missionaries would form sports teams, quartettes, bands, scout programs, English classes and similar activities to raise the public image of the Mormons, keep the name of the Church before the public, and perhaps prick the curiosity of the observer enough that he would desire more information about the Mormons.

The Visa Problem.--In his annual report for 1939, Williams mentioned the wave of success generated by the sports teams and cited a problem which has plagued the Mormons in Argentina ever since.

> We have never had such an opportunity to preach the gospel as we now have. We are welcomed at every turn--except by the imigration authorities who are under the control of the /Catholic/ Church here.[1]

Due to the impending conflict in Europe, many Europeans anxiously sought to emigrate before the war worsened. Cosmopolitan Argentina became a prime escape route. Many unscrupulous Argentine consuls became enriched by selling visas to Argentina.

> It became such a scandal that the Argentine government wisely changed the law so that prior to granting any visa a relative /or friend/ of the individual in Argentina had to go down and secure what is called a landing permit. Then this permit was mailed to the consul, and then, and only then, could he grant a visa to the country. Thereby they paid just the regular consular fees, and weren't charged exorbitant amounts.[2]

Naturally, Mormon missionaries from North America needed landing permits like everyone else, but although Williams tried in-

---

[1]LDSHO, Annual Report, 1939.

[2]Williams Interview.

numerable times; he just could not get them. Williams blamed the Catholics. Possibly the publicity which bathed the Mormon success in the sports world had caught the attention of the Catholic hierarchy.

The Silver Dollar Landing Permits.--After the 1939 landing permit decree, President Williams visited the immigration office many times without success. No explanation was ever given. As the months passed, 30 to 40 missionaries originally called to the Argentine Mission and unable to obtain landing permits for visas, eventually were transferred to the Brazilian Mission, or the Eastern States, or other missions in the United States. Mormons simply could not enter Argentina. Consequently, by early 1940, the missionary force declined measurably.

One day, after another unsuccessful trip to the immigration office, Williams conversed informally with an immigration official who had seen him many times in the office. As Williams talked he inadvertently flipped a silver dollar in his hand. The fellow was rather intrigued with it, and Williams explained that it was an American silver dollar. Williams let him handle it, and noticing his fascination, gave it to him. They talked a few more minutes when the official remarked, "Mr. Williams, would you really like to know what your problem is?"
"I certainly would," replied the president. "It's the Catholic Church. They have enough power here that all of the solicitudes you've made are over there in a basket, and we're not allowed to process them. They're just there. The Catholic Church has that much power here." "Well, what can I do?" "Just leave it to me and I'll see what I can do." Ten days

later Williams received eight landing permits in the mail, and whenever he asked after that, he would receive permits in ten days.[1]

The visa problem again impressed upon the missionaries the realization that they were foreigners, and another problem approached which affected the other foreign element in the Church, the German members.

The Cessation of the German Language Work.--Notwithstanding the strong German heritage of the Church, circumstances occurred in 1940 while Ortiz still governed that compelled President Williams to close the German branch and cease all active missionary work among the German people.

In May, 1940, the nearness of the European war burst upon Argentine consciousness with abruptness. A damaged German battleship limped up the Rio de la Plata and was scuttled in plain sight of Montevideo. The 1,046 Graf Spee sailors were admitted to Argentina and became a great problem to the government, which charged Germany for their upkeep. The sailors happily walked the streets, and the Buenos Aires Germany colony idolized these good-looking heroes.

A few months later, 68 officers escaped, the rest were scattered throughout the republic by government decree, some taking jobs with German firms or estancias. By March, 1942, about 400 naval technicians had escaped. Of the hundreds remaining, 80 obtained a Community House in Rosario, and "lived like fraternity brothers." Evidently

---

[1] Ibid. Other Protestant missionaries were excluded, not just the Mormons. Williams' silver dollar friend, however, did help the Mormon situation.

they scattered Nazi propaganda through the district and found sweethearts among the neighborhood families.[1]

Pro-Allied power groups were understandably astir about the Graf Spee sailors, and due to excited war-consciousness, the light-complexioned, foreign speaking, camera-carrying missionaries were again mistaken for Germans. A few weeks after the sinking of the Graf Spee Williams sent instructions to the missionaries:

> President Williams felt it was necessary to instruct the missionaries not to talk politics in their visits and meetings . . . . The missionaries have been told to put away their cameras for a few months, and to speak English only when necessary and not in a loud voice. Many mistake us for Germans, /italics mine/ and the activities of the 'fifth column' are running quite high in Argentina right now.[2]

The tense feelings provoked the pro-Allied Ortiz government to establish a law prohibiting meetings in the German language. Under the circumstances Williams was forced to disorganize missionary work in the German language, and close the German branch, once the backbone of the mission.[3]

One Sunday evening in June, 1940, after returning from Montevideo with Rolf Larsen, President Williams visited Sacrament meeting at the German Branch. At the meeting's end he stood up and explained

---

[1]Sax Bradford, The Battle for Buenos Aires (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1943), pp. 66-67. One sailor reportedly became involved with a Mormon girl in Rosario. Young Interview.

The presence of nearly 1,000 sailors caused the missionaries to inquire among them to see if there were any members of the Church among the crew. "Several knew the Church in Germany, but there were no members." LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 31, 1940.

[2] Ibid., June 12, 1940.

[3]Ibid., June 19, 1940.

why the branch must be disorganized, and that the German members should attend the Spanish speaking branch in their area. He reassured them that missionaries would still visit them, but there would be no active missionary work among the German people. Missionaries had reported that it had been increasingly difficult to proselyte among them due to so much controversy about the Germans caused by the war propaganda.[1]

Although the German members themselves did not accept the closure of their branch without misgivings, it is the author's opinion that the mission benefitted. The closure eliminated the bilingual problem, and more important, it reduced another element contributing to the foreign image of the Church in nationalistic Argentina.

However, the period of official disfavor of pro-Nazi activities would soon end, to be replaced by a period of official sympathy. In July, 1940, one month after the closure of the German branch, pro-Allied president Ortiz, long a victim of diabetes, honorably turned over his office to his vice-president, pro-Nazi Ramon S. Castillo.[2] Williams, familiar with South American politics, intimated that Castillo men wined and dined the diabetic Ortiz to hasten his retirement.[3]

The Mormon Church During the Castillo Period, 1940-43

Unlike Ortiz, Castillo was convinced Hitler would win the war and openly sympathized with the Axis. Naziism became more powerful in

---

[1] Ibid., Williams Interview.

[2] Fagg, op. cit., p. 925.

[3] Williams Interview.

Castillo's Argentina, and many Germans acquired influential positions in his administration. Castillo's authorities allowed pro-Axis propaganda to rise to an unprecedented pitch, while pro-Allied propaganda was muted. The Allied world was jolted by government announcements and policies. German propaganda filled the airwaves, newspapers, movie theaters, hospitals, universities, unions, churches, and mails.[1]

Cries of consternation were heard from the pro-Allied Chamber of Deputies as Raul Damonte revealed that the German Embassy was financing and managing the entire German propaganda campaign. Castillo simply suspended part of the constitution to justify punishing anyone who disagreed with his foreign policy, and after Pearl Harbor, Castillo dismissed both houses of congress under the constitutional provision allowing rule by decree in the event of a state of siege.[2] Hence, Castillo really became a dictator, as early as 1941.

The missionaries noticed the change in the atmosphere, and three months after Castillo's rise, Williams issued another warning to the missionaries since they were again being mistaken for political agitators.

> Once again missionaries, and members, and those in our meetings were warned not to discuss politics and the war in the locals. "Many times we have visitors who have come with intentions of spying on us to try to find evidence that we missionaries are political agitators in this country. War and politics are too often the subject of conversation these days and one must be careful."[3]

---

[1] Ibid.; Blanksten, op. cit., p. 42; Bradford, p. 5 ff.

[2] Ibid.

With the change in administrations the missionaries came under renewed attack from the government. Evidently Williams' silver dollar friend at the immigration office had been removed because the missionaries again experienced difficulty entering the country. One group of eleven had to wait two months in the Eastern States Mission before receiving permission to enter. Furthermore, the ranks of the missionaries thinned and the work was handicapped due to both the visa difficulty and the lack of new missionaries entering the field.[1]

During 1941 and 1942, complaints against the missionaries resulted in their being summoned to the local police stations and questioned. The police asked, "By what authority does the Church function in Argentina?" and "Did you register in accordance with the decree of May, 1939?" A communique from mission headquarters answered all these questions favorably. It was notable, however, that most complaints against the missionaries originated from such Catholic strongholds as Rio Cuarto and Mendoza. In Rio Cuarto the missionaries were not allowed to tract or hold meetings.[2] Problems with the government or its agencies continued to harrass the Argentine mission.

The Rise of the Welfare Plan, 1940.--As the war in Europe worsened, and German U-boats wrecked havoc with the allied merchant marine, exportation of Argentine produce declined, and business and employment slackened as the cost of goods rose simultaneously. By

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, July 25, Sep. 10, 1940; Mar. 31, June 30, 1941.

[2] Ibid., June 16, December 8, 1942, and Oct. 20, 1943.

August, 1940, the mission underwent a concerted effort to establish a welfare program to help needy Church members, similar to the one established in Utah four years earlier.

> Most of our efforts are directed toward the establishment of the Welfare program in the Mission as there is a great need for it. Many members are losing their jobs, and others will follow. This country is primarily one of agriculture, and when it cannot export its own produce most of its industries are closed down; the unemployment increases. We are working very hard to start projects and give work to the members so that none will have to go hungry.[1]

Plans had begun as early as June 10th when the Relief Society presidencies met at the mission home to discuss the organization of the plan. Ideas crystallized and cultivation plans started by the end of the month. By the middle of July the members were ". . . rallying to the support of the plan."[2]

Within the next six weeks the welfare plan progressed notably. With Church permission and funds, land for a farm was acquired, and animals, chickens, eggs, potatoes and grain were gathered. The farm, located near Libertad just outside Buenos Aires, was supervised by a family with the help of a missionary. Together they "had it in good order." Further plans included a cooperative store for the members. During September, several branches of the mission held functions and fiestas for the benefit of the welfare plan where many goods were collected.

> Nearly all branches of this mission are busy preparing community gardens in behalf of the Welfare Program. If all

---

[1] Ibid., Dec. 41, 1940. A 1938 effort to establish the Welfare Plan failed because "things came too easy then." LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1940.

[2] Ibid., June 10, June 30, July 14, 1940.

> goes well a goodly supply of fresh vegetables, beans, and corn should be forthcoming. The members are becoming more and more interested in the Welfare Program as its reasons are becoming more and more apparent each day.

Subsequently, the theme of the semi-annual conference in October was, naturally, the Welfare Plan.[1]

In anticipation of a fine harvest, the members and missionaries raised funds and built a building to serve both as a store and a warehouse. Built on the corner of the land previously purchased for the Deseret Club, the store reached one full story and boasted 729 square feet of floor space. Stocked with produce from the Libertad farm, it also contained canned goods, food and clothing donated by the members. In December, the Liniers branch brought in four to five hundred pounds of tomatoes produced by its project. Some members purchased produce and goods from the store and the welfare plan appeared destined for permanence and progress.[2] The plan continued to function as long as President Williams remained in Argentina.

Mormon Expansion, 1940 and 1941.--Notwithstanding unemployment, economic decline, and a smaller missionary force, Williams sent enthusiastic reports to his superiors in Salt Lake City, that work had been started in Mendoza and Santa Rosa de La Pampa.[3] He then explained his reasons to justify the expansion. This enlightens us about motives and problems faced by Mormon leaders.

---

[1] Ibid., July 31, Aug. 27, Sep. 30, and Oct. 31, 1940.

[2] Ibid., Dec. 31, 1940, and Williams Interview.

[3] Ibid.

> It always costs good money to open up a new place for a year or so, until the members can be converted and help repay it. But missionaries were getting into each other's way in and around Buenos Aires. We feel it necessary to get started in new places, too, from which the work might be extended into small towns. They also afford new climatic conditions to which missionaries can be sent when the climate of Buenos Aires and other river cities does not agree with them.[1]

The number of missionaries rose to 76 in 1941. However, due to visa difficulties of previous years, there were insufficient experienced Elders with which to pair the new ones, so the work suffered. Nevertheless, Williams undauntedly pursued his expansion plans and opened a host of new cities.

> During 1941, the work was opened in the province of Misiones, Tucuman, San Juan, and Neuquen for the first time, as well as in the cities of provinces where we are already working: San Nicloas, Rio Cuarto, Tandil, Mercedes, Azul, Province of Mendoza.[2]

The First Local Leaders.--In January, 1941, the Argentine mission reached a historic milestone of progress. Local members took charge of some branches for the first time. Inasmuch as the Mormon Church relies almost entirely upon laymen to manage church affairs, this was a great stride forward. It meant Argentine members had developed sufficiently within the faith to take responsibility of their own branches.

The advantages of this development are many. The North American missionaries, freed from branch responsibilities, could spend more

---

[1] Ibid. How missionaries could get in each other's way in Buenos Aires seems strange since there were only 53 missionaries in Argentina.

[2] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1941.

[3] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Jan. 31, 1941.

time proselyting, and thus the convert baptismal rate would increase. The Church would become more Argentine and less Americanized. Local leadership prepares the members for total self-reliance, which renders greater strength of character--a goal of Mormonism.

The mission historian marked this highly significant step:

> During January, 1941, local brethren were placed in charge of branches for the first time in this mission. The branches of Saenz Peña, Rosario, and Liniers were organized with local brethren this month and at least two others will be put on the same basis as soon as possible to give missionaries more time for proselyting activities. . . and to give the brethren a greater opportunity for personal development. Up to date the results have been most gratifying. The brethren are working hard to fulfill their obligations and the members are cooperating very well.[1]

This new self-sufficiency would stand the Church in good stead during the test of the missionary-less years just ahead.

Catholic Reaction to Mormon Expansion.--The increase in the number of missionaries and expansion into new areas evidently excited the Catholic clergy. According to one source, the Protestants, including the Mormons, had succeeded in establishing over 700 churches in Argentina by 1942.[2] These could not go unchallenged by the Catholic hierarchy.

Writing from the scene, John J. White labeled the American-Protestant missionary as the sorest spot hindering improvement of U.S.-Argentine relations.

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Report, Jan. 31, 1941.

[2] Peterson, op. cit., p. 42.

But of all the pernicious American influences which are working permanently against a better understanding between people of the United States and those of Argentina, the worst undoubtedly is the American missionary. . . . They settle down in the large cities of Argentina or their attractive suburbs and devote themselves to trying to persuade Christian communicants to renounce the sect they already are in and join the one represented by the missionary . . . .

White then noted how Catholics were concerned:

> But there is a far more serious aspect to this question . . . and that is that these American missionaries very naturally arouse the enmity of the Catholic Church, against which they are directed, with the result that it has become the most formidable single vehicle for anti-American propaganda and for sowing suspicion and dislike for everything American.[1]

White's scathing denunciation paved the way for an official "Statement on Victory and Peace" in November, 1942 by Catholic Archbishops and Bishops in the United States. Sympathetic with Argentine hierarchy, the statement also emphasized the catholicicity of Latin American countries.

> Citizens of these countries are bound to us by bonds of religion. They are not merely our neighbors: they are our brothers professing the same faith. Every effort made to rob them of their Catholic religion or to ridicule it or to offer them a substitute for it is deeply resented by the people of these countries and by American Catholics. These efforts prove to be a disturbing factor in our international relations. The traditions, the spirit, the background, the culture of these countries is Catholic.[2]

The Catholic hierarchy was not going to sit back and allow the Protestants a free rein. However, events at Pearl Harbor would soon

---

[1]White, op. cit., p. 289 ff.

[2]Arthur P. Whitaker, (ed.), Inter-American Affairs, 1943, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 122-23.

overshadow the missionary problem.

The Mormon Church in Argentina After Pearl Harbor

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor developed into an opportunity for Castillo to employ certain constitutional emergency measures allowing rule by decree in the event of a state of siege. Williams mentioned the state of siege in his report, but felt that "if we are careful it will have no effect on our work."[1]

Officially, Argentina took a neutral position in relation to the combatant nations, but the official neutrality censored the pro-Allied press while permitting pro-Axis journals such as El Pampero to attack Judeo-Yankee-British imperialism. Castillo also ordered troops to disrupt a mass demonstration in sympathy with the Americans and other attacked nations. Diplomatically, Castillo's Argentina refused to join the Inter-American Conference scheduled in Rio in February, 1942, and thus spoiled a United States bid for a united, multilateral declaration of war against Germany. Castillo cooled the enthusiasm to diplomats who passed through Buenos Aires on their way to the Conference.[2]

Although Cordell Hull's State Department fumed at Castillo's capers, one cannot castigate Castillo too soundly for Argentina's neutrality and refusal to declare war on Germany. After all, Argentina boasted a tradition of neutrality, and it is not likely that pro-Allied

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 31, 1941.

[2]Whitaker, op. cit., p. 10; Fagg, op. cit., p. 926.

Ortiz himself would have declared war.

Argentine Public Opinion in Wartime.--Regardless of official neutrality, Argentine public opinion divided. To discover where the Mormon people stood we must first ascertain the mood of the public.

George Pendle, an English historian, stated, ". . . the majority of the Argentines were pro-Ally." Ernest Young, opined that allied support was as high as 90 per cent.[1]

On the other hand, Fagg supports the idea of a neutral position of the public.

> Argentine public opinion was unlikely to crystallize firmly in favor of one side or the other, and the people tended to support their government in whatever policy it followed. There is no reason to believe that Castillo's pro-Axis course either pleased or offended the majority of the population.[2]

How could observers vary so greatly? Is it possible that the people both favored official neutrality and sympathized with one side or the other? Such was the summation by Martin Aberg Cobo, an Argentine historian. Cobo defined three positions taken by Argentines, but concluded that inspite of favoring one side or the other the majority of the people still "sustained the official neutrality in accord with the republic's tradition."[3]

---

[1]Pendle, op. cit., p. 83; and Young Interview.

[2]Fagg, op. cit., p. 927.

[3]Martin Aberg Cobo, "La Revolución de 1943," in Cuatro Revoluciones Argentinas (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Club Nicolás Avellanada, 1960), pp. 82-83.

Most Mormons unsurprisingly held strong sympathy for the Allies and remained unconvinced by the pro-Nazi propaganda of the government. However, Williams worried about how the German Mormons would react.[1] Some German members may have harbored mixed feelings about the missionaries, realizing that those who returned to the United States would probably enter the armed services and war against their homeland.

Most German Mormons had lived in Argentina many years and were as much Argentine as German. Consequently, inspite of the discontinuance of the German branch and the pro-Nazi sentiments of the majority of their German nationals, President Young felt sure the majority of the German Mormons remained faithful to the Church and were pro-Allied in sentiment.[2]

Other German Mormons, however, were pro-German, and were seen heiling Hitler in typical German fashion.[3]

> In 1942, . . . Wilhelm Fredricks, one of the first members of the Church in Argentina, became very bitter toward the Church and the missionaries. He supposedly had a large picture of Hitler in his home and voiced freely his pro-Axis feelings.[4]

The Effect of U.S. Entry Into the War.--The outbreak of the war affected the mission in two definite ways: war news distracted the missionaries and propaganda hindered them.[5]

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, March 31, 1942.

[2] Young Interview. [3] Ibid.

[4] Peterson, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

[5] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1941.

Months later missionary preoccupation with the war had not subsided. Many were worried thatthey would all be called home to enter the military service. Fears heightened when air travel replaced boat travel as the only authorized method of transportation to the United States.[1]

As German propaganda filled the air, the public again became suspicious of the missionaries and their proselyting activities. "The missionaries find it hard to work with so much war propaganda and it holds them back considerably." President Williams explained that "people thought that young men of military age, going door-to-door, had ulterior motives. Many thought they were Germans. The propaganda affected the proselyting work greatly."[2]

In 1943, the influential Nazi propaganda organ, El Pampero, published a series of articles entitled, "Smothered by Espionage." The series concerned the spy-like activities of two Mormon missionaries in the neighborhood of Bahia Blanca. One of the missionaries, Barry Banks, was said to be the "official photographer of the mission," and that he and one Gerald McQuarrie, while "ostensibly going from door to door offering the Bible of the sect," should be watched because they were headed from Bahia Blanca to Comodoro Rivadavia, an important petroleum storage vicinity. The article further suggested

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Report, April 14, 1942.

[2] Ibid., March 31, 1942; Williams Interview.

that these two including all the "co-participants," should be jailed to stop them from contacting other "anti-nationalist groups" in the country, and to stop secret information from arriving "to the embassies of countries at war."[1]

One note of interest during this period reflects Williams' boundless optimism and positive reaction to adversity. In the midst of the swirling events in the wake of Pearl Harbor, Williams decided to enter a Mormon baseball team in the national tournament for goodwill and publicity. By February 1942, newspaper articles attested the achievement of publicity for the Church, and by that winter the Mormon baseball team achieved the National Championship of Argentina.[2]

The Mormon Church and the Wartime Draft.--As citizens of a nation at war, missionaries have always come under disrepute by those who question their patriotism or bravery. J. Reuben Clark Jr., announced the official Mormon position on the war, missionary work and the draft shortly after the outbreak of hostilities. The Mormon Church, proud of its American patriotism, felt obligated to continue proselyting work, but after March 23, 1942, would call only those older men not likely to be called for military service. Returning missionaries would be expected to enter the military and serve their country. The official statement declared in part:

---

[1]"Smothered by Espionage," published in El Pampero, April 29, 1943. Copied and cited in Ibid., June, 1943. (Young explained that Elder Banks ran a small photo lab used for copying genealogical records for the members and some service to the missionaries, and was really quite harmless. Young Interview).

[2]Ibid., Feb. 1942; June 30, 1942.

> . . . We shall not knowingly call anyone for the purpose of having him evade military service in any way, nor of putting any impediment in the way of the government. . . . . Moreover, those going on missions are amenable to selection for Army service so soon as they return. A mission exempts them from army service only for the term of the mission.[1]

This meant that some missionaries called before March 23, 1942, came to Argentina, but that if they were replaced at all, it would be by men of non-military age. As it turned out, there were no missionaries called to Argentina to supplant those who had been called before March 23, 1942. As this group returned home the missionary force dwindled rapidly to a handful. By June, 1944, the last missionary had returned.[2]

President Williams did not remain in Argentina long enough to have to direct the mission without missionaries during the war years. Early in 1941 he was replaced by President James L. Barker.

The Argentine Mission During the Presidency of James L. Barker, 1942-44.--With President Barker at the helm, the mission faced its sternest test. As the missionary population declined, the weight of leadership responsibility gradually shifted to the members. The responsibility tested both the effectiveness of the missionary work, and the strength of the faith of the converts on their own for the first time. Reared as Catholics, they were accustomed to a professional clergy and were untrained for ecclesiastical responsibilities. In

---

[1]Heber J. Grant, J. R. Clark Jr., David O. McKay, "Message of the First Presidency," Improvement Era, Vol. 45, May, 1942, p. 343.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 30, 1944.

many cases, the fulltime missionaries had simply replaced the priests in their worship habits. To their credit, most members in most branches did well, some exceedingly so. Yet, the trial was too much for others.

Barker's task loomed large considering the rather low-economic level of the members. In his first annual report Barker wrote about his problem:

> Our missionary work has in most cases been done in the poorest sections of the cities where the people have the least education and the least occupational training. . . . As a consequence, many of our members seem to be lacking in initiative. . . Others have native ability, but cannot read or write and have no vocational training. One of our tasks should be to raise the educational level and provide vocational training.[1]

President Barker concerned himself greatly with correct doctrine and sought to explain the responsibilities of membership in the Church. Those members who would not live up to their promises, and had fallen away were removed from the membership lists.

Each month a list of members who had been excommunicated appeared in the mission magazine, the Mensajero Deseret. The members nicknamed Barker "la escoba," or "the broom," as he whisked away debris from the Church. Nevertheless, the excommunications had an invigorating effect on the other members. It made them proud to be Mormons and reminded them of their covenanted responsibilities to God and to each other.[2] Also, the cleansing process may have contributed

---

[1] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1942.

[2] Personal Interview with Nestor Vogler, April 5, 1968, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Baptized in 1943, Nestor Vogler later immigrated to Uruguay, served in the district presidency of the Montevideo District, before immigrating to the United States.

to the spiritual strength of the mission, and helped the members prepare better to withstand the test of the missionary-less war years.

As a rule, there were more heroes than excommunicants, and these members carried the mission. Barker praised them:

> In a few of our branches, Elders have developed leadership in the members, and I have heard classes in Sunday School and elsewhere taught by members in a manner so fine it would excite comment at home.[1]

Barker continued the trend of switching to local leadership in the branches started by Williams. Those branches recently opened by the missionaries in the expansion year, 1941, were gradually closed. The locals, however, continued to be rented, pending the end of the war. All in all, "President Barker prepared the members. He tried to teach them a lot, to do a lot, but in his time you didn't see too many results. They came later."[2]

Formation of the First District Under Local Leadership.--In January, 1944, the mission took another giant stride forward.

> Today in the branch of Liniers, the first conference of the district of the Capital was held under the direction of Elder Robert R. McKay. . . . The most significant thing in the meeting was the presentation of the officials of the district. For the first time in the mission's history, a district has been organized completely under the direction of local members.[3]

---

[1]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1942.

[2]Boren Interview.

[3]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Jan. 23, 1944.

Hence, Argentine members not only functioned as branch leaders, but also in the directory capacity of district leaders. Argentines directed Argentines instead of being directed by North Americans. The war served as an impetus to hasten progress.

The Decline of the Welfare Plan.--Although recognized as a good program, the fire for the welfare plan built by President Williams subsided to embers during the war. Why did it decline, especially in war time, a time of apparent need?

Williams was apparently the only influential advocate of the plan, and departure of the missionaries left the interior branches without experienced personnel on which to rely.

Other Mormon leaders felt the plan was too ambitious for members who were not really prepared for such a stunning, new endeavor.[1] While the plan failed, Samuel Boren remembered that it did have the effect of bringing the members together and united them as never before.[2] Again, the unity may have benefited them and aided them during the war years.

Another factor in the decline of the welfare plan could have been the improved health of the Argentine economy. After the initial period of the war, demand for Argentine beef and other raw produce soared in Eorope on both sides. As Allied convoy defenses against the U-boat threats improved, Argentine business boomed and unemployment

---

[1]Young Interview.

[2]Boren Interview.

declined. Thus, as the strained economic conditions which prevailed in 1940 subsided, the apparent urgency for the welfare plan declined and enthusiasm waned.

After the war the plan was modified to depend less on cooperative projects and storage plans. Welfare was left up to each family and the charitable activities of the women's Relief Society.

> The welfare plan in the mission was changed to a less centralized setup. We have decided that a general storage plan will not work here as it does in dryer climates. Foods and clothing soon deteriorate and rot. We have asked that families save and store according to their needs, and that gardens be planted as much as possible. It seems impossible to do cooperative projects since the members are so scattered. We have asked that the Presidents of the districts and branches, find employment, homesto rent, etc. Thus, in the three branch organizations working together it is hoped some good may result.[1]

Little has been done with the welfare plan, once the object of vigorous attention, until fairly recent times in connection with the building program. Meanwhile, conditions in Argentina were boiling which would result in the second revolutuon in 13 years.

The Revolution of 1943.--As the war raged on, public opinion intensified against Castillo's oppressive dictatorship disguised as a state of siege. As the 1943 elections drew near, Castillo's heir apparent turned out to be an unwise choice. A pro-Allied member of the oligarchy, he was immediately unpopular with the recently urbanized masses. On June 4th, a military group under the direction of the "colonels" successfully conducted a military coup and took over the government in 48 hours. Castillo fled unmourned. A quick succession

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Sep. 30, 1945.

of generals took place with General Pedro Ramirez emerging as president.

Under Ramirez, military officers were installed in government positions and as business executives, and the military consumed one-half of the national budget the first year. The Ramirez administration mocked the Pan-American union in Castillo fashion, and appeared even more pro-Nazi than before. After a series of setbacks, a bloodless coup removed Ramirez and General Edelmiro Farrell became the front man for the G.O.U., Group of United Officials.[1]

No members of the Church participated in or were harmed in any way by the series of revolutions. Some missionaries witnessed the final scenes of the June, 1943 revolution in the Plaza de Mayo, but were not harmed.[2]

The new government sought the support of the Catholic Church, and at years' end the revolutionary government decreed religious instruction compulsory in all public schools. This decree reversed a long-standing Argentine solution to the problem of Church and State in public education. Non-Catholic school children were allowed "moral education" rather than Catholic instruction due to the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.[3] When priests refused to release one Mormon youth from class, his mother threatened to appeal directly to Peron. The priests thereafter refrained from further instruction of the

---

[1]Fagg, op. cit., pp. 928-931; Blanksten, op. cit., p. 49.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 4, 1943.

[3]Blanksten, op. cit., pp. 188-89.

young Mormon.[1]

The major significance of the mandatory religious education decree resided in the strengthening of a political alliance between the revolutionary government and the Catholic Church. Both Cardinal Copello, chief prelate in Argentina, and Pope Pius XII, praised the Argentine presidents for this decree.[2]

However, with the decline of the missionary population, the Mormon Church did not feel the adverse effects of the increased Catholic influence in the government until after the war.

A Missionary-less Mission.--After June, 1944, the local members were on their own. The only North American help remaining resided at the mission home in Buenos Aires. For the next two and one-half years the mission was to function without missionary aid. President W. Ernest Young, called for a second turn at the helm in Argentina, guided the missionary-less mission.

The Young family arrived after the Barkers had departed, and in spite of his lack of familiarity with conditions, Young carried on. Soon he developed a routine schedule of visiting the branches at least once every two months. He observed that President Barker had done well in organizing the members under local leadership, "some of them being able to assume leadership of activities."[3]

---

[1]Young Interview.

[2]Blanksten, op. cit., p. 190.

[3]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 31, 1944.

Samuel Boren recalled that the members really worked hard, took responsibility, and grew spiritually much faster.[1] A similar report was sent to Salt Lake by President Young, confirming that the mission was indeed progressing under the conditions.[2]

Although two missionaries arrived on December 31, 1944, President Young administered his duties with the attitude of a guardian who was anxious for improved conditions.

> Here in the mission we are content with holding the fort as it were. The war rages in great fury around Germany. The war in China and the Philippines is going at great force against the Japanese. The United Nations are exerting every effort to terminate the greatest struggle in history. We have about 70,000 young men of the Church in the forces. President Roosevelt was elected on the 7th of November for his fourth term. At present, the Argentine government is rather on its own regarding continental cooperation, but is now endeavoring to unite and join with the Pan-American republics for continental solidarity.[3]

1945, The War Ends.--Argentina's nationalistic individualism in continental affairs and brazen Nazi favoritism contradicted the desire of the United States for Pan-American solidarity. Hence, between 1938 and 1945, U.S.-Argentine relations grew increasingly discourteous. Buenos Aires and Washington exchanged diplomatic barbs as Secretary of State Cordell Hull tried to shame Argentina into living up to her Rio agreement to curb Nazi activities within her borders. Argentines united behind Farrell against the U. S. bullish tactics.[4]

---

[1] Boren Interview.

[2] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1944.

[3] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 31, 1944.

[4] Fagg, op. cit., p. 931.

In February 1945, Argentina did not receive an invitation to a continental conference at Chapultepec, Mexico, where Latin-American nations would plan their role in the proposed United Nations organization. However, it became more and more apparent that the Axis would soon fall, so Argentina, adjusting stance to prepare for the best position possible in an Allied world, declared a "state of tension" with Germany. The U. S. quickly sent renewed recognition to Argentina which then signed the Chapultepec agreement which provided future membership in the United Nations.[1]

In Young's mind, the Chapultepec agreement "changed the whole political situation." He reacted enthusiastically.

> Up until now we were in doubt about our rights and privileges in regard to travel, passports, and the right of religious freedom. Now with this change in the international picture we feel more freedom will be the result.[2]

Young's optimism was in vain. Just over the horizon approached a major diplomatic mistake by the United States, and in a country where anti-Americanism fed upon a long list of grievances. Japan absorbed the atomic bomb, Germany an allied invasion, and Argentina got Spruille Braden.

In the wake of the loudly heralded Good Neighbor policy, Braden broke all diplomatic rules. He threatened diplomatic blackmail by exposing documents which would reveal the heavy extent of German-Argentine dealings. He supported anti-government politican parties; he spoke openly against the government and openly advocated its over-

---

[1] Ibid. [2] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, March 31, 1945.

throw. Braden's antics failed to improve relations and brought his early recall. He hustled back to Washington to play a leading role in the production of a State Department Blue Book, an exposé or Argentine-condoned Nazi activities during the war.[1] This return to meddling in the international affairs of a Latin-American country caused many Argentines to rally to the support of their government rather than overthrow it. Skeptics could point at Braden and decry the so-called Good Neighbor policy with justification.

With the end of the war in August, 1945, hopes again rose that missionaries might be sent to the mission to help the three who worked to keep the mission intact.[2] Generally, the members of the Church were pleased with the outcome of the war, except the German members who naturally felt some letdown.[3] At the close of 1945, Young painted the picture of the mission in hopeful words:

> The Argentine Mission during the year of 1945 made progress, notwithstanding the fact that three Elders with the mission president and Sister Young had the total responsibility of supervision. The six districts and fifteen branches have been presided over by local members. The few missionaries with the President have visited and supervised the mission activities, including the office work. Living expenses have increased at least 50% during the past year. Rationing, black markets, and government decrees have created a very complex economic situation.

---

[1] Fagg, op. cit., pp. 932-937.

[2] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Sep. 30, 1945.

[3] Young Interview.

> The year 1945 closes leaving the mission of Argentina in very good condition. Financially, the mission has progressed immensely. Spiritually, the mission's moral is higher than ever. With the arrival of new missionaries great advancements are expected to take place.[1]

Thus the war years came to an end. The Mormon Church made progress when the members did not falter without missionary supervision. A new regime came to power in Argentina and with it the Catholic Church attained wider influence. U.S.-Argentine relations appeared momentarily improved, but soon slipped backward as Ambassador Braden had failed in his mission.

Nevertheless, the trial of the war years had been met, the fort held, and some progress achieved.

---

[1]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1945.

CHAPTER IV

THE MORMON CHURCH IN PERON'S ARGENTINA

The Early Years

The Rise of Peron.--Juan Domingo Peron straddled the twentieth century in the style of the traditional caudillo chieftain familiar in Argentine history. He differed in that he was politically astute enough to curry the favor of the recently urbanized workers. Swept into power by the military revolution of June, 1943, Peron was part of a ruling clique of colonels. From the posts of Under Secretary of War and Secretary of Labor, he developed military and labor supporters in the ranks loyal directly to him. Laborers soon recognized their new leader when the fraction of unionized labor rose from one-tenth to two-thirds under his direction.[1]

The brightest star of the military administration, Peron was appointed Vice-President of Argentina in 1944. Inspired by Peron's ascension, laborers formed rowdy gangs known as the descamisados (shirtless ones) who were anxious to carry out Peron's bidding. Vice President Peron occasionally granted holidays, wage hikes, and bonuses to the delight of his faithful. By war's end, confident of his popularity, Peron's attention focused on the presidency.

However, the people of the post-war period yearned restlessly for change. Democracy seemed to have won the day in the war, all

---

[1]Alexander, op. cit., p. 5; Fagg, op. cit., p. 934.

of which emphasized the misdirection of Argentina's pro-Nazi foreign policy during the past years. Inspired by Spruille Braden, opposition political parties and members of the upper classes denounced Peron as a would-be Hitler.[1] To many military officers, mass demonstrations in September and October of 1945 seemed to evidence popular dissatisfaction with Peron, and they forced him to resign on October 9th, 1945.

As his last official act, Peron cleverly decreed a wage increase and a paid holiday for October 12th. The leaders of the coup unwisely cancelled the paid holiday. Peron's faithful followers marshaled the descamisados who thereafter roamed the streets growing more unruly daily. Led by Peron's mistress, Eva Duarte, they massed in the Plaza de Mayo and loudly demanded their leader back on October 17th, 1945. Mob violence threatened. President Farrell dismissed the new government and recalled Peron who promptly appeared on the balcony of the "Pink House" and thanked his loyal descamisados.

With this popular flurry, Peron became the leading candidate for the presidency as elections were set for February, 1946. Peron then married Eva Duarte, and even though he was not heretofore known for his piety, Peron announced "My Catholic faith places me within the constitutional requirements."[2] The following presidential campaign witnessed two developments which forbode dark tidings for the Mormons.

---

[1] Fagg, op. cit., p. 935.

[2] Blanksten, op. cit., p. 236.

The diplomatic blunders of Spruille Braden, U. S. Ambassador to Argentina, shed unwanted bad light on Americans in the country. When Braden intervened in the presidential campaign trying to discredit the military regime for its pro-Nazi dealings during the war, the people united behind their government. Peron could shout to crowds, "Do you want Peron or Braden?" "Peron o Braden?"

The second development which foreshadowed an ominous future for the Mormons was the emergence of the Catholic hierarchy in support of Peron. Peron naturally capitalized on this support and an alliance between Peron and the Church formed. Of course, some of the Catholic clergy opposed the regime, but the Argentine prelate, Cardinal Copello who led the right wing, prevailed in aligning the Church with the new regime.[1] The Copello wing of the Church entered the contest on the side of Peron. A pastoral letter distributed and read in all churches urged Catholics to vote against all persons who advocated separation of Church and State, secular education, or legal divorce.[2] This alliance between Peron and the Catholic Church became even more evident as time wore on.

Peron emerged with a convincing election victory in February, and was officially inaugurated on June 4, 1946, just three years after the revolution. From his desk President Young watched all these events and wondered. Although Braden's replacement, Ambassador Messersmith had arrived, missionaries had been given visa trouble. Young hoped for better government-church relations, little realizing that the situation

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 230-31. [2] Ibid.

would get much worse instead of better.[1]

As expected, Peron restaffed the entire government with peronista faithful who would unquestioningly follow the party line. All branches of government were also peronista. These, with the support of the military, labor and the Church, combined enough strength under Peron to keep him in power for ten years. Pictures of Peron adorned much in Argentina in the personalista tradition. Even grammar books for schools echoed his name. Later Eva Peron became a "saint." Opposition was stifled by a variety of "legal" devices, and a Catholic-colored Peron reigned.

Historians differ as to the extent of the Peron-Church alliance, but all agree that an understanding existed. Some evidence of the alliance included the fact that the national budget set aside money for ecclesiastical purposes, and the Church had no contrary legislation against it. Members of the clergy regularly attended peronista rallies to bless the proceedings. Some priests were even elected to the Chamber of Deputies, and many were appointed to work in various government agencies as advisors.[2]

While the support of the Church was not nearly so vital to Peron as that of Labor and Military, and the alliance was probably definitely political in nature, the fact remains that Peron and the Church exchanged support for mutual benefit.[3] However, since the country

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarter Reports, June 30, 1946.

[2]Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 123-29; Confalonieri, op. cit., p. 251.

[3]Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 143-44; Blanksten, op. cit., p. 236.

was relatively free from Mormon missionaries at the time, the Mormon Church would not feel the impact of the new Catholic strength until months later when they started returning.

A View of the Mormons in 1946.--During much of 1946, the situation of the Church had changed little from that of the war period. The members held positions in the local branches and districts, and President Young visited as many areas as possible every two months. The missionary force remained very low, and Young had to content himself with a bystander's role regardless of his impatience for progress.

Meanwhile, the members carried on faithfully, and some probably progressed better without North American missionary supervisors.

Others faltered, some fought amongst themselves and drifted into inactivity.[1] There were stories of some local leaders who nostalgically incorporated vestiges of Catholicism into Mormon services, e.g., candles and certain prayers.

Nevertheless, President Young remained optimistic about the majority:

> There is [every] cause for optimistic outlooks, as the majority of the members, even those isolated in small towns, are living the Gospel better and the increased activity should aid them even more.[2]

As the year passed, more missionaries arrived in Argentina to Young's delight. By December 25th, missionaries had re-established

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 31, 1946.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

proselyting work in most of the same cities where branches functioned before the war. However, President Young felt "more missionaries must be received before the mission can be completely re-opened."[1]

Argentine Mormons enthusiastically welcomed the returning missionaries who resumed leadership of branches and districts. The members gladly relinquished their responsibilities to the Elders.[2]

The propriety of the replacement of Argentine leaders by the missionaries seems questionable. During the war Young had commented several times to his superiors upon the fine jobs and individual development the members made while serving without missionary overseers. Why then did Young replace Argentines with North Americans? Some branches undoubtedly needed more reorientation supervision than others, but since the purpose of Mormonism was to develop Christian character by service and responsibility, it would appear that some were over-anxious that missionaries resume branch responsibilities. Samuel Boren remarked: "Maybe we didn't realize the importance of having to direct our own branches, to be in charge."[3]

Renewed Visa Problems, 1946-47.--Mormon missionaries did not re-enter Argentina unnoticed. From their base of increased power in the regime, the Catholic hierarchy employed an old tactic to hamper them. As the number of missionaries called to Argentina increased, Young's problems at the Immigration Department increased.

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1946.

[3] Boren Interview.

After one group of missionaries had experienced a particularly difficult time securing visas, President Young obtained permission for an interview with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs on May 21st, 1946. The report of that interview revealed contempt for the Mormons, and illustrated the Catholic-tinted reasons coloring official thinking about the Mormons.

> The interview was not cordial, and after reading part of the petition for entry of the missionaries, the minister asked if they were Mormons, and then accused the Church of teaching things contrary to the precepts of his country.
>
> President Young refuted this charge and reminded him we had been in the country for twenty years, and our conduct was not contrary to his country. The minister said he had received word from the United States about the Mormons. He finally agreed to give the petition consideration and study. President Young said he welcomed an investigation.[1]

Obviously the <u>peronista</u> official considered Catholic and Argentine concepts congruent, hence Mormonism was contrary to the socio-religious concepts of his country. Little good resulted from the confrontation. The uncordial atmosphere of the interview carried over into continued visa problems for the missionaries.

By 1946, a post-war flood of missionaries began to leave Salt Lake City to reinforce missions the world-over. In late September, a large group of 29 departed for Argentina. They could not secure visas in the United States, so they pushed on to Brazil. The large number apparently frightened Argentine consular officials and again

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, May 21, 1946. In his interview, Young added these dimensions to the discussion: ". . . The Minister of Interior told me right to my face that he had received reports that our people were against their government and making trouble. I challenged him to prove it right in his office, and told him we didn't do those things, that we obeyed the laws of the land, that we wouldn't interfere in national affairs. We only wanted to proselyte and teach our religion. We had no desire to make any trouble."

visas were denied. Detained in Brazil, little did they realize they would wait a full six months before arriving in Buenos Aires.

Meanwhile, President Young, anxious as ever, made repeated appeals to the Immigration office to allow the group to enter, but his papers were always "conveniently misplaced." Almost daily for two months he hounded the immigration officials. "He spent hours in line to push the papers from one office to another" through the typically Latin legalistic maze of red tape, but without success. It took weeks to get replies for Young's petitions, and then only verbal replies as the officials refrained from putting anything in writing. He also frequently saw several Catholic priests working in the immigration office, perhaps some of the advisors connected with the Peron regime.[1]

Instructions were sent to the missionaries advising them to go to Montevideo, Uruguay, where they could learn the Spanish language. Young visited them twice in Montevideo, and although he could have let them enter Argentina as tourists, he sought official permission.[2]

President Young's futile efforts in behalf of the missionaries stretched into months. On one occasion he was dismissed by a clerk who said curtly: "You're Mormons? You can't come in!"[3]

In despair, Young petitioned Mormon leaders in Salt Lake City to seek help from Washington on the visa problem. He also instructed that missionaries should not be sent to South America without Argentine visas as some had come in the past.[4]

---

[1] Ibid., March 8, 1947

[2] Ibid.

[3] Young Interview.

[4] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1946.

Finally a breakthrough in the stalemate appeared. On one of his daily visits to the Immigration office, Young befriended an official, Dr. Peralta, who helped reach a temporary solution. Peralta admitted to Young that the Mormon visa problem stemmed directly from pressure on the Immigration office by the Catholic hierarchy who sought to restrict entry of Mormon missionaries. Dr. Peralta counseled President Young not to attempt to bring in such large numbers of missionaries at once. He promised that if Young would divide them into groups of five or six, and separate their entry dates a few days or weeks, he would see that they were allowed into the country.[1]

On March 8, 1947, after five months of waiting, five of the 29 missionaries arrived from Montevideo by boat. However, their joy tempered somewhat when their luggage was detained in Customs for weeks.[2]

A month later, on April 22, 1947, the 24 stranded Elders wired that they had received visas and were bound for Argentina. The visas were of tourist class, meaning they would have to leave and re-enter Argentina every three months, but it was deemed best that they come under this provision. Furthermore, ten other missionaries arrived the same day with the news that the New Orleans Argentine Consul had bestowed resident visas for one full year to them. Thereafter, they would have to leave and re-enter on a quarter-annual basis, but the situation still represented an improvement.[3] Thus, after years of anticipation,

---

[1] Ibid., Young Inverview.

[2] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Jan. 13 and March 8, 1947.

[3] Ibid.

and months of waiting, on April 22, 1947, the missionary force in Argentina received a real boost.

Thereafter the visa problem subsided somewhat, but the authorities next resorted to withholding the missionary passports for months at a time making identification difficult.[1]

Nevertheless, optimism abounded. President Young supervised enough missionaries to re-open certain branches, open new cities, and implement other steps long pondered.[2]

> The southern half of the territory has not been touched as yet, nor the extreme north. Many cities and towns are yet to be visited and work established in the territory from Buenos Aires westward to Mendoza near the Andes. At least nine-tenths of the nation has not been included in our missionary labors, thus the field is large for future development of the mission.[3]

Before dispersing to the field, Young counseled the young missionaries about plans for branches, expansion, tracting districts, cottage meetings, and touched upon an especially acute problem--the over-abundance of women among the members of the Church. He advised them to "leave the young ladies alone and concentrate on converting the young men."[4] The progress of the mission depended directly upon the number of capable male leaders available.

Earmarks of Progress--1947.--Among the signs of Mormon progress in Argentina were well-attended mission conferences, the success

---

[1] Ibid., July 27, 1947; also including LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1946.

[2] Ibid., April 30, 1947.

[3] Young, Deseret News Church Section, Dec. 20, 1947.

[4] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, April 29, 1947.

of the mission magazine, and character growth among the members.

Mission conferences held special interest for all Argentine Mormons, especially the youth. Conferences afforded members a chance to visit, exchange ideas, and obtain a group feeling to compensate for their sense of loneliness in the every-day Catholic world. Between five and six hundred usually journeyed to Buenos Aires and attended the conference's various meetings and activities. Mission auxiliary leaders met on Saturday concurrently with a youth convention which ended with a dance where the youth mixed with Mormons from the entire country--a rare opportunity. Themes for the conferences of 1947 illustrate Mormon awareness of the world situation. "The Latest Developments of the World" was the awesome theme for the first, and the October theme followed along the same vein with "Repentance and World Peace." Attendance at the three conference sessions on Sunday filled the Liniers chapel to overflowing, and all reportedly went away strengthened.[1]

Originally published in 1937, the Mensajero Deseret served as a unifying force in the mission. Leaders communicated with the members and instructed the various organizations. Missionaries and members wrote articles as pictures of activities spiced the magazine. When President Williams returned to preside over the Uruguayan mission, the magazine expanded to include that mission; hence the Mensajero

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 28-29, 1947, and October 19-31, 1947; Feb. 27, 1948.

Deseret became a bi-mission publication. By 1947 its quality increased as did its circulation, as it went into the homes of the members. Designed after the official Church organ, The Improvement Era, it was modified to fit the Argentine members. "It was theirs. It was personalized. They loved it."[1]

As part of the centennial celebration in Salt Lake City, the Church News section of the Deseret News featured a look at the Church in Argentina. Two young Argentines selected to write statements for the Church News late in 1947, which rendered insight into the feelings of the Argentines about Mormonism.

> Rosa Pecollo: When we consider the history of the Church from the beginning up to the centennial, we marvel to see how a just and united people arrived at the height of success in spite of the great tribulations. And, we believe that it will be the same in Argentina, if we are good imitators of our brethren in the North, with whom we shall unite in some future time . . . . We wish to express our gratitude to those who have bequeathed to us the examples and teachings of salvation; and, our most fervent desire now is to live so faithfully as to be worthy to have the great privilege to see among us, some day, the prophets and patriarchs, and then, by means of His blessings we may be blessed with temples, dedicated for the faithful.
>
> Rolf Salvioli: To me and my Argentine brethren and sisters the Church of Jesus Christ has a profound magnificence. To be members of the great church means much to us. It means a good home where the children of our Heavenly Father . . . learn to live better lives, becoming virtuous, practicing the good, progressing in truth and thus enjoying the beauty of the world. We are given to understand that happiness comes from progress, and that his progress comes from living each day in accordance with the teachings . . . . With such learning and such practices projected into our lives in the future comes an end to pessimism and fear and the preparation of a better generation, and intelligent, healthful, and humble generation, to face the battles of life.[2]

---

[1]Williams Interview.

[2]Deseret News Church Section, Dec. 20, 1947.

Responses such as these heartened both leaders and missionaries alike. These youth attested the validity of the purpose of Mormonism in Argentina, and argue strongly for its progress.

At the end of the year, Young reported: "The return of the missionaries after the war has been like repioneering the mission again. We feel that there is to be a fair number of baptisms in the near future."[1]

Perhaps the newspaper articles and Young's report caught the attention of Church leaders, for on January 3, 1948, the Church News announced that all three missions in South America would be visited by President Stephen L. Richards of the First Presidency of the Church, accompanied by his wife.[2]

President Stephen L. Richards Visits Argentina

The value of an on-the-scene visit of the Argentine Mormon Church by a member of the First Presidency cannot be under estimated. According to President Williams, the ignorance of the General Authorities of the Church of conditions and problems in South America constituted one of the greatest handicaps of Mormon progress. Thousands of miles from Utah, communication between Argentina and Salt Lake was difficult and information scanty.[3] President Richards would be the first General Authority to visit since Melvin J. Ballard--22 years before.

---

[1]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1947.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Jan. 3, 1948.

[3]Williams Interview.

The Fanfare of Richards' Arrival.--Not since the days of Rolf Larsen had a Mormon received so much publicity as when Stephen L. Richards arrived in Argentina by ship on February 3, 1948. Eight of the Buenos Aires most famous newspapers carried articles accompanied by a picture of the Mormon Apostle and his wife. The majority of the articles were favorable and carried brief resumés of Mormon doctrine.[1] In his remarks that evening, the mission historian noted a statement typical of several observers: "This night marks the beginning of a new era for the Argentine Mission."[2]

A glimpse of Argentine public opinion about the Mormons may be gleaned from an analysis of some of the newspaper articles which covered Richards' arrival. On February 3, La Critica printed an article which included a summary of salient facts about the Church and an evaluation. The summary mentioned the "angelic" background, the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, the cessation of polygamy, and the recent missionary success of the Church. It concluded that Mormons sought dignified betterment and elevation of the human mind. "Its noble goals," commented the reporter, "remind me of one faith of Mahatma Ghandi: all religions are good, because they are looking for the same God."[3]

The same day La Razon also displayed Argentine sensitivity to Mormon polygamy when the reporter commented of Richards: "He brought

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Feb. 5, 1948.

[2] Ibid.

[3] La Critica, Buenos Aires, Feb. 3, 1948 in Ibid., same date.

his wife, the only one, to visit Mormons in Argentina." The article mentioned the cessation of polygamy, commented on goodness of Mormon culture, and the healthy life achieved due to regulations on smoking and drinking. It ended with a rendition of the 13th Article of Faith.[1]

The most sensitive article appeared in La Critica the next day. The reporter had interviewed Richards and Young privately at the mission home. The headline read: "Sent from God, One of the 12 Mormon Apostles: Admires Mahatma Ghandi." The mission home impressed him because it lacked a "symbol," so common in churches in Argentina. He said the mission home looked like an office not a church. Again referring to the lack of symbols he said, "All is internal and dwells in their hearts." Of Apostle Richards he admitted expecting a "man in contact with divine powers, but Richards looks, dresses and is plainly like any other friendly North American." He commented on the cessation of polygamy indirectly by mentioning he interviewed the two leaders in their offices "with their two wives." Impressed by Mormon non-involvement in politics, he concluded by linking Richards with Ghandi.[2]

The extent of the impression these articles made upon Argentines cannot be measured, but favorable publicity could only but aid the rather dubious image of Mormons in Argentina.

President Richards' Tour.--Traveling exclusively by automobile, President Richards completed a 2,600 mile trip that took him to every district of the Argentine Mission. This extensive tour gave

---

[1] La Razon, op. cit.

[2] La Critica, Feb. 4, 1948, Ibid.

every member and every missionary an opportunity to meet and hear the Church leader. For most of the members, it meant their first chance to see and talk with one of the General Authorities of the Church.[1] Naturally, the mission president endeavored to put the mission's best foot forward for the scrutiny of the visitor. A lot depended on his favorable impression. The tour officially began on February 7, 1948.

> Apostle Richards listened to missionary reports and testimonies, gave them counsel on many phases of the work. He attended and spoke at district conferences . . . . [and] attended a reception honoring him and his wife on their 48th anniversary.[2]

The members of the Church in Buenos Aires did their best to show the Church to President Richards at a Liniers branch reception. Richards later reported the event at General Conference.

> I will say just a word about our reception at the Liniers Branch of the Argentine Mission on Buenos Aires, because this was typical of the hospitality and greeting of the Saints and is the largest of all the branches of the Church in South America and is one of the very few which owns its own place of meeting, which is a very modest one. On this occasion there were gathered about 400 members of the Church and friends. The hall was crowded. It had been decorated with flowers and streamers and presented an attractive appearance. An elaborate program had been prepared, with both amateur and professional talent, consisting of speeches, singing and folk dancing rendered in Spanish and native costume, with some interpretation for our benefit. Children participated liberally. Some of the skits and songs had been specially written, and the whole program represented the expenditure of a large amount of time and effort in preparation. As a climax, Sister Richards was presented with beautiful flowers which grow in profusion in that country. On one occasion the orchids given to her hung from her shoulder almost to her knee. . . . I was given a beautiful ornamented cake made by some of the good sisters. . . . It was in this welcoming social that we were first made really to feel the sentiment and spirit of our fellow members of the Church in those distant lands.[3]

---

[1] Deseret News Church Section, March 6, 1948. [2] Ibid.

[3] Stephen L. Richards, Conference Report, April, 1948.

The Impact of Richards' Visit.--Argentine Mormons delighted in seeing and hearing an Apostle. They gained some pride because of the extensive publicity he had received. Certainly, the 2,600 mile tour helped the general authorities learn more about the Argentine branch of the Mormon Church.

Just what did President Richards conclude? How did the mission impress him?

We can gain some insight from his interviews with the three mission presidents just before returning to Utah. They conferred on a variety of problems and decided certain plans. A summarized list of the conclusions indicated Richards' impressions:

1. Improve the Los Mormones club.

2. Improve present locals, buy land and estimate costs of new chapels.

3. Get a new mission home when possible.

4. Work toward local leadership.

5. Avoid problems with the government. Send missionaries in small groups and replace the word missionary with "representative" on passports.

6. Cultivate friends in business.[1]

In the final analysis, President Richards withheld high praise.

> President Richards does not intend to represent these people as having all the characteristics of an honest people with integrity necessary for a great advancement in the work of the Gospel. Expenditure of missionary efforts and funds should proceed with precaution. He is not

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Sep. 29, 1948.

> favorable to going all out in making big investments unless more advancement is made than demonstrated up to now.[1]

Upon his arrival in Salt Lake City, President Richards confined his remarks to the diplomatic statement that "the great hope for the southern hemisphere countries as well as for the activities of the Church is in the youth."[2]

President Richards' reserved impression may be explained by an inexplicable feeling of depression among mission personnel noted by President Williams.[3] Perhaps the oppressive atmosphere of the Peron regime dampened enthusiasm. But the author tends to agree with President Young who later attributed Richards' somewhat unfavorable impression to the general prejudice of Americans against Latin Americans, and furthermore, perhaps Richards harbored a vestige of Mormon bias against Latins due to the Anglo-Saxon hue and heritage of most Mormons.[4] The great handicap of ignorance among general authorities was definitely on the way to improvement even if prejudice remained. At least the mission got approval for a new mission home.

Procurement of a New Mission Home on Virrey Del Pino.--
Soon after President Richards' departure, President and Sister Young turned their attention to the location and purchase of a long-wanted new mission home. The headquarters of the mission served as the main office and nerve center of the mission as well as living quarters for

---

[1] Ibid. [2] Deseret News Church Section, April 17, 1948.

[3] Williams Interview.

[4] Young Interview.

the president's family and the office staff. It doubled as a reception center for important visitors, and consequently the prestige of the Church radiated from that point.

President Young and his family had labeled the first mission home "the dungeon."

> In 1935, they were living in a home, healthwise, well, I called it a dungeon because it had no ventilation on one side. There was no place for entertainment. We had the little chapel room, it was a very small affair. You couldn't call it dignified even. . . . . We were ashamed to bring people in to visit in the old mission home. It was shabby to us, but the members thought it was great.[1]

After much searching and dealing, President Young located an acceptable house on Virrey del Pino in Belgrano, one of the finer neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. It took several months to close the transaction. In June, the First Presidency sanctioned purchase of the house for $225,000 pesos if there would be no restrictions on its use.[2] A month later the final papers were signed and the Virrey del Pino house became Church-owned property, and "everyone rejoiced at the answer to so many years of hopes and prayers."[3]

> The Virrey del Pino house . . . gave us ample room; it gave us more prestige; it was more dignified. It wasn't exactly what we wanted, but it was so much better than we had ever had. The whole thing is to place the Church on a dignified standard. That's what we tried to do.[4]

---

[1]Young Interview.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 1, 1948.

[3]Ibid., July, 1948.

[4]Young Interview.

From this enhanced base, the mission could free itself to surge onward down the road of progress, hampered, however, by Catholic efforts.

Catholic Opposition Continues, 1948 Episodes.--Catholic opposition seemed to vary in proportion to Mormon success. The notoriety of Richards' visit apparently recalled the Mormon menace to the attention of the Catholic hierarchy because thereafter opposition increased noticeably.

In Rio Cuarto, Elders reported that a priest incited a group of young boys to throw rocks at them. Later, after a ninety minute public confrontation between a priest and two missionaries, the priest called them deceived and misguided youth, and threatened to have them arrested. In Mercedes, the Catholic magazine printed some anti-Mormon articles, and began a youth organization and English classes to compete directly with the missionaries. Pergamino reported Catholic opposition in the form of tracts. The Villa Maria priest openly warned the congregations against the Mormons. A house-to-house campaign by Rio Cuarto priests discouraged attendance at the Mormon primary where attendance soon fell from 140 to 14.[1]

During the same time an abortive assassination attempt on Peron was blamed on an American living in Uruguay. Missionaries consequently cancelled meetings, as feelings of uneasiness and distrust prevailed.[2]

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Report, May 12, June 30, April 29, August 10, 1948.

[2]Ibid., Sep. 24, 1948.

While these anti-Mormon moves merely harrassed the Church, they had the effect of dampening the receptivity of the people. The Catholic anti-Mormon handbills printed in several parts of the mission classed the Mormons with other Protestant groups, and described their sole purpose as trying to destroy the Catholic Church and turn Argentina over to foreign economic subjugation. The tracts described Mormonism, Protestantism, and Communism as one and the same. While people probably did not believe all the charges, the Elders reported they were noticeably cooler.[1]

Nor was this barrage of anti-Mormon literature without effect upon the Argentine Mormons. Many were concerned whether membership jeopardized their civil rights. Members reported that they were discriminated against when seeking employment in the railways, the public service, utility companies, and other large corporations.[2] In spite of these trials, Young reported good attendance at Mormon meetings, adding that the general attitude of the people was favorable.[3]

Public Relations Activities Increased.--Additional missionaries enabled President Young to continue the Mormon habit of pushing forward with public relations activities regardless of increased opposition. The number of athletic or musical public relations programs increased from 66 in 1947 to a peak of 160 in 1948, followed by 128 in

---

[1] Ibid., Sep. 30, 1948.

[2] Young Interview.

[3] Deseret News Church Section, Dec. 20, 1947.

in 1949.[1] Sensitive to their status as a minority sect with less than favorable social prestige, Mormons carefully measured the success of any activity. Note the detail of the descriptions of these success reports:

> The basketball team and mission chorus and missionary pianist performed at Club Gimnasia Y Esgrima. The team won, the chorus was well received, and the pianist encored several times, and the purpose of the missionary work was announced various times over the public address system by the announcer and director of the evening's activities . . . . . .
>
> We are happy to report great activity in our mission basketball team and Elders' Chorus. During the past two months we have entertained near 15,000 people, making friends and advertising our mutual program.[2]

After the basketball team and chorus disbanded, a missionary quartette carried on in the traveling troubadour tradition. Within a few months the quartette reportedly had performed before 7,000 people and done 45 radio programs on radio stations in Argentina.

However, the quartette felt the effects of Catholic opposition. After weekly performances on the powerful Radio del Estado, the government radio station, letters from the Catholic Action group caused the management to discontinue the missionary quartette's programs. In Cordoba, the Catholic Action group used its influence to bar use of any large hall as well as the local radio.[3]

Nevertheless, such public relations activities helped puncture

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Nov. 11, Dec. 31, 1949.

[2]Ibid., Nov., 1948.

[3]Ibid., March, 1949. Young wrote that he felt the hope of the mission was in the conversion of thousands of the British community.

the wall of superstition about the Mormons. Also, the success of the quartette in the Welsh colonies of Chubut and Tremelin led directly to the establishment of branches there. A publicity committee was also organized to coordinate public relations activities to aid proselyting, remove prejudice, and enhance the Mormon image.[1]

The splash of Mormon publicity in 1948 resulting from the Richards' visit and other public relations activities preceded one of the most difficult and critical periods for the Mormon Church since 1925. Between 1948 and 1950 the Peron government influenced by its Catholic ally, designated the mission persident as personna non grata and closed several of the branches of the Mormon Church.

The Peron Government Versus the Mormons 1948-1950

Renewed Visa Problems.--The first siege of trouble came in the old area of visa problems. When missionary visas were submitted to immigrations for extentions beyond the one year originally granted, the visas were held for months without explanation. Finally, President Young was ordered to report to the Immigration office, and there he obligingly paid legal fees, but for some reason he did not receive the visas. The American Consul could not help either, and three months later, in September, 1948, the situation had not improved.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., Jan. 22, 1949. The committee succeeded in placing the Tabernacle Choir Spoken Word on Radio Nicaragua of Mendoza for 6 weeks. Then the manager explained he had received orders from the government to stop the programs, and produced a letter stating that no non-Catholic religious organization could transmit on the air; therefore all such programs should be cancelled. The police also received instructions to halt the programs. Ibid., June 28, 1949. [2] Ibid., June 1 and Sep. 1, 1948.

The case of Elder Glen Marble revealed the extent of the problem. Mission completed, Elder Marble desired to leave the country to go home. His initial request for permission to leave was denied. Furthermore, Marble could not buy a ticket without his visa, which the department retained. The U. S. Consul intervened successfully and told Marble his passport would be taken by a guard to the airline ticket office where Marble could buy his ticket home. However, after obtaining passage, the guard kept the passport, and informed Marble he could pick up his visa once on board the plane.[1] Perhaps the Immigration Department felt Marble was just trying to get his visa back and used the trip home as an excuse, but to be sure, suspicion against the Mormons had reached new intensity.

The next day, Young's requested confrontation with the Chief of Immigration failed to materialize since the Chief reportedly had been ill for some months and no one else wanted to take the responsibility for the Mormon petitions. Meanwhile, the missionaries continued to function freely though insecurely.[2]

Later in 1948 the Peron government decreed that all ministers, churches, church buildings and property must be registered with the government. Young complied quickly and within a month was duly registered.[3] But more changes approached.

---

[1] Ibid., Sep. 28, 1948.

[2] Ibid., Sep. 29, 1948.

[3] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1948; Ibid., Jan. 5, 1949.

Mormons and the New Constitution.--Assuring his mark in history, Peron's loyal legislature rewrote the venerable constitution of 1853 along peronista lines. Private property became subject to social obligations and the State received ownership of all resources and public services with rights of expropriation or purchase as provided by law.[1]

Moreover, the Mormons were directly affected by new laws respecting foreigners. The new constitution provided that foreigners automatically became Argentine citizens after five years of residence or indeed after only two if the individual desired. It was further provided that "the law shall establish the causes, formalities, and conditions governing the granting of Argentine nationality, and the withdrawal thereof, as also the expulsion of foreigners from the country."[2]

The effect of the changes soon became evident. In January, 1949, the Immigration Department announced that all foreigners without visas were liable for deportation. President Young immediately applied for visa extensions for the department itself had withheld the missionary visas for up to 16 months in some cases. The new decree also included a provision requiring all foreigners to register with their local police station since the authority over foreigners was transferred from the Immigration Office to the Police Departments. Instead of visas, missionaries were issued control cards which had to be shown upon police request under penalty of a fine. Tickets for transportation from the

---

[1]Robert J. Alexander, The Peron Era. (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 81-82.

[2]Ibid. (Italics author's).

country could not be purchased without either the visa or the control card.[1]

The mission hired a lawyer as recommended by the U. S. Consul. He reported that the difficulties with the Mormon passports came from "high up" making it difficult to correct the situation.[2] The future darkened.

President Brown Becomes Personna Non Grata.--The next crisis in relations between the Peron government and the mission came after the change in mission presidents.

After many years of faithful and at times frustrating service in Argentina, President Young was replaced in March, 1949, by a former missionary to Mexico, President Harold Brown. The mission publicity committee sent press notices to all newspapers, and his entry was widely heralded. Even the great La Prensa printed a fine article, mentioning President Brown, reportedly the first time it had ever printed anything about the Church. La Critica told of Brown's goodwill and high regard for Argentina.[3]

However, signs of future trouble almost should have been noticed due to the encounter between Elder Marsh and Immigration officials in March. Marsh had been refused his one year visa when the

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Jan. 25, 1949.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., Mar. 22, 1949.

immigration chief refused to sign it on the grounds that the Church still believed and practiced polygamy.[1] This should have signaled Mormon leaders of trouble, especially since these same charges were later used to deny Brown himself the freedom necessary to manage the Church.[2]

On July 30, 1949, President Brown received notice from Elders in a small interior branch, that in April, 1949, soon after his arrival, the government sent a police order to all police stations in Argentina regarding President Brown. It reportedly read:

> Harold Brown, a representative of the Mormons, had arrived in Argentina in April of this year to increase the missionary activity of the Mormon Church, and that since said church 'in various ways preaches polygamy and disturbs the peace of the great Catholic Family, Harold Brown is to be deprived of the right to organize meetings and speak to conferences.'[3]

The government made four charges against the Church. First, that the Mormon Church teaches and practices polygamy. Second, the missionaries sell books for profit. Third, the missionaries enter as tourists and then work for wages, and fourth, that the Church was subsidized by a foreign power.[4] The order proved that the Catholic hierarchy were no longer content to merely harrass the Church through immigration gimmicks. Now they aimed directly at the Mormon leader and secured power to hinder his leadership.

---

[1] Ibid., Mar. 30, 1949.

[2] Ibid., July 30, 1949.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., July 30 and August 9, 1949.

An early August encounter with Córdoba police demonstrated that even though Young had submitted the request for official registration of the Church in Argentina, the request had not been accepted and the Church, therefore, lacked legal recognition. The mission learned this when Elder Williams in Córdoba could not furnish the police with the official registration number of the Church. Subsequently the Córdoba branch was denied permission to hold meetings. The Córdoba police quoted Williams the April order against Brown, and ended with a statement that officials were instructed not to give the Mormons any cooperation nor grant any of their requests.[1]

Three days later the Mormon conference scheduled for Mendoza was prohibited on the same grounds. Two weeks passed when Elder Thomas Pace called the mission home from Santa Fe with much the same story, adding that the police understood they were to either prohibit any meeting where Brown would speak or close any meeting of the Church led by Brown.[2] Days later the conference scheduled for Santa Fe was also postponed, but this time Brown himself was called to police headquarters before the meeting. After reminding him of their April order, they warned he would suffer all the consequences if the meetings were held. The conference was stopped, but Brown visited with members who arrived.[3] The little branch of Santa Fe would remain closed for over 18 months despite all legal efforts!

---

[1] Ibid., July 30, and Aug. 9, 1949.

[2] Ibid., Aug. 24, 1949.

[3] Ibid., Sep., 1949.

The Santa Fe case and others illustrate that apparently the influence of the Catholic hierarchy in the small interior town was sufficient to cajole the police into such action. The Church continued to function freely in larger towns, nonetheless.

President Brown Arrested.--A few days after the Santa Fe incident, a police investigator served President Brown a summons to appear at police headquarters in Buenos Aires. Upon his arrival, he was notified he was under arrest and would be detained. Charged with entering the country without permission, he was detained at the station all day until 7 p.m., when the American Embassy found him and had him released. The officer claimed it was all a mistake, and offered the flimsy excuse that they had him confused with a deserter from the Jamaican Army.[1] The Church, lacking official registration and recognition, found that its president was apparently personna non grata by order of the Peron government.

Brown reportedly claimed that the Catholic hierarchy was behind his problems saying,"There is one man here in this city who does not like me. That is Cardinal Copello, head of the Church."

A month passed and Brown appeared at the Ministry of Cults to clear up questions about the police order, his status, and official recognition. One Sr. Pardo claimed the ministry had not sanctioned the closure of any branches, and promised immediate attention to the recognition problem if Brown would submit a letter. However, the visa

---

[1] Ibid., Sep. 9, 1949.

problem was out of the minstry's control. Regardless of the promise of immediate attention, 18 more months passed before official recognition was granted. After this interview the intensity of the trouble with the government subsided even though the problems continued.[1]

By the end of 1949, the Santa Fe branch remained entirely closed while the branches of Rosario and Arroyito were occasionally permitted to open for various functions. The Arroyito members were discouraged and slumped into inactivity and negativism due to the closure. Hard times continued in these strong Catholic areas. President Brown recommended that the Elders cultivate influential friends in Santa Fe, but the situation remained static.[2]

The Church experienced so much difficulty with the Peron government in 1949 that Brown reported that his main objective for 1950 was to improve relations with the government.[3] However, the condition did not change in 1950. Indeed, increased efficiency in the Immigration Office caused the requirement of quarterly trips out of the country for visa renewal to be more closely observed. Trips to Uruguay and Chile continued at great expense in time and money. Again, at the end of 1950, Brown reported that the government, under pressure from the State Church, continually delayed solving the visa and recognition problems.[4]

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Oct. 25, 1949; June 18, 1951.

[2]Ibid., Dec. 31, 1949; and Mar. 31, and June 30, 1950.

[3]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1949.

[4]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, July 10 and Aug. 5, 1950.

In May 1951, the new U. S. Ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, promised his help in securing 30-month resident visas for the missionaries. However, his efforts of several months were unsuccessful, and he explained that since the missionaries entered as tourists they must retain that status.[1] However, at this time, June, 1951, after 18 long months, the Church achieved legal recognition and Santa Fe was reopened.[2]

Just as things seemed settled a new crisis reminded the missionaries of their precarious visa status. On August 5th, 1951, the mission received notice from the immigration department denying the requests for extension of tourist visas over one year. They further stipulated that all missionaries must leave the country in not more than five days! It seemed impossible for interior Elders who were stationed in remote points to meet the five-day deadline, and Ambassador Bunker interceded to obtain an extension of the five-day limit. The missionaries felt uneasy and insecure for some weeks, but they were never actually forced to leave the country.

This episode ended with some improvement in the visa situation. While the tourist status was final, Bunker succeeded in obtaining a revival of the old system which granted a one year visa for the first year. After that the missionaries must continue the quarterly exit-re-entry cycle.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., May 22, June 30, 1951. [2] Ibid., June 18, 1951.

[3] Ibid., Aug. 5-9; Sep. 10, 1951. (Fortunately, through a police friend in Mendoza, President and Sister Brown and 8 missionaries obtained legal identification cards to enable acquisition of residence visas because they entered before the Peron constitituion was ratified on July 8, 1949. Ibid., Oct. 8, 1951).

Thus, after a series of confrontations between the Mormon Church and the Peron government between 1948 and 1951, the Church emerged with the same visa status held before. Furthermore, even though the government delayed official registration acceptance, the Mormon Church even got that eventually.

The Resumption of Local Leadership, 1950-1951.--In spite of the visa problem or indeed, because of it, there was a significant shift back to emphasizing local leadership in 1950.

Early in January, President Brown began to make selected branches financially self-sustaining by having all members contribute to the normal operating expenses of the branch on a yearly budget basis.[1] Individual responsibility received real impetus, and this financial step may have marked the point at which the mission grew from adolescence.

On January 18th, the mission took another maturing step. By special authorization from the First Presidency, the first Latin American to serve in the presidency of the mission was appointed as first councilor to President Brown, Elder Samuel Boren. Argentine members acquired true representation in mission leadership. With this precedent, the emphasis towards more local leadership continued unabated. Six days later, the first fulltime local missionaries called since the days of Juan Sciorra, who served in Uruguay in October, 1947, displayed their devotion by accepting the challenge of preaching to their countrymen.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., Jan. 14, 1950. [2] Ibid., Jan 12, 18, 1950. See p. 130.

Argentines seemed eager for leadership again, as many recalled the missionary-less days of the war. Brown reported during 1951 that an unexcelled feeling of confidence and zeal pervaded the members contemplating leadership callings. However, the training of willing people to become capable leaders presented problems. To facilitate the leadership training, Brown and his staff undertook the job of translating and publishing a series of instruction manuals for all leadership levels.[1] In contrast to President Richards' statement that Argentines lacked the integrity for real advancement in the gospel programs, President Brown remarked that "there has never been a lack of willingness on their part, but a lack of experience and a lack of proper tools with which to work."[2]

In response for a need to attract more middle class people into the Church to serve as leaders, Brown called for more suitable buildings in which to meet, and for higher quality publications in order to attract and hold the more educated people in the Church. He felt that until Argentine Mormons acquired good Church literature and doctrinal commentaries in Spanish, the Church would never be properly presented before the cultured people of Argentina.[3]

The next year Brown led the mission in another step which signaled real progress. Enough trust in local leadership developed so that activities could be directed from the districts instead of the

---

[1] Ibid.; and LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1949.

[2] Ibid., 1950.

[3] Ibid.

mission home. As the mission office was decentralized, greater authority shifted to the shoulders of the district, branch, and auxiliary leaders. District presidents received full authority for their districts. While not all districts were prepared for local leadership and half remained under missionary control, Brown handed in a favorable report after 1951:

> We now have all the administrative manuals for the auxiliary organizations in the hands of the local leaders, in Spanish, and have prepared local leadership to a point where we are ready to organize three districts with their twelve branches on a local basis, leaving the missionaries free to carry on the proselyting work.[1]

The Mormon Church During the Decline of Peron

Argentina in Decline.--As Europe recuperated after the war, demands for Argentine produce decreased, the war-time boom tapered off, and Argentina's economic condition weakened. While the regime had prospered with the nation during the boom, the pinch of the recession was being felt. In 1948, U. S. Ambassador Bruce returned to Washington to get Peron a bigger cut of the Marshal Plan cake as the Argentine press cried that Argentina did not need aid from any nation.[2]

Later, in May, 1950, the peronista press greeted U. S. Assistant Secretary of State, Edward Miller, with bitter words. However, these were replaced two days later with soothing articles predicting harmony with the sister republic because Miller had granted a $125

---

[1] Ibid., 1951; and LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, March 24, 1951.

[2] Alexander, op. cit., pp. 210-11.

million dollar "loan" to Argentine banks with which to pay off debts to American exporters.[1] The weak economic condition of the country became even more apparent when Peron reversed a long-standing economic policy which prohibited foreign investment and actively sought aid from U. S. business and government when visited by Dr. Milton Eisenhower in 1953.[2]

In spite of the aid the nation sunk deeper in debt. Government graft, not uncommon in Argentina, cut deep in Peron's Argentina, as friends lived richly. Peron's welfare measures were costly. Public works projects, highway building, hospitals, schools and textbooks drained the treasury.

> The Peron's milked the country. We passed through Argentina [several times], and there were no rugs, the people weren't friendly, they didn't come up and say "Che" like in the past, . . . the country was bankrupt. People distrusted people thinking perhaps they were spies. Their personal freedom was limited. People would say, "You can't do this, you can't do that."[3]

Throughout these dark days the poor and the working class faithfully supported Peron. Peron reciprocated by employing his power to retain their favor. For example, when the annual labor day holiday fell on Sunday, depriving the workers of their annual day off, Peron declared Monday, May 2, 1949, "Saint Peron" day, and all businesses and factories were closed to the delight of his faithful.[4]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Charles O. Porter and Robert J. Alexander, The Struggle For Democracy in Latin America (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961), p. 77.

[3] Williams Interview. [4] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, May 2, 1942.

> That Peron was short-changing the country, that he was a buffoon, a scoundrel, a sybarite, a thief, these things mattered not at all to the descamisados. For them, all that mattered was that Peron and Evita had made them somebodies.[1]

Since most Mormons in Argentina were of the Peron-prone humble class, it might appear that they too, would support Peron. However, Presidents Williams, Young and Boren all agreed that the great majority of the members were inclined away from Peron. Sam Boren, who was not a peronista even though he worked for the government, remembered there were some members, especially in La Plata, who were avid Peron supporters, and remained so even a decade after Peron's fall.[2]

Regardless of the sympathy of the poor, the other pillars which had long supported Peron began to weaken in the early fifties, especially that of the Church.

The Disintegration of the Peron-Catholic Alliance.--On the surface, Peron was as closely linked with the Catholic party as ever during the early fifties. Pope Pius XII and the Bishop of Milan sent letters thanking him for his generous donation to the Cathedral of Milan. Peron declared the Virgin Mary as patron saint of the Argentine railroad, attended a mass celebrating the anniversary of the ordination of Cardinal Copello, and in public prayer declared the Virgin of Lujan as the Argentine patron saint.[3]

---

[1]Peter Nehemkis, Latin America, Myth and Reality (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1964), p. 87.

[2]Williams, Young and Boren Interviews.

[3]Confalonieri, op. cit., pp. 265-67.

Regardless of Peron's ostentatious displays of Catholicism, the relationship between Peron and the Church grew more and more strained. The Church was apprehensive about Eva Peron's powerful Social Aid Foundation which took over a field heretofore dominated by the Church. Worse still was the promulgation of the myth of Peron's infallibility in the school's government sponsored textbooks. The same texts designated Evita rather than the Archbishop of Buenos Aires as spiritual leader of Argentina.[1]

Eva Peron represented a key figure in the Peron regime. She commanded a numerous following especially among the poor. Her untimely death in July, 1952, shocked Argentines and marked an acute downward trend for the Peron government.

The passing of Eva Peron pushed the wedge between Peron and the Church even deeper when zealous peronistas sought cannonization of the Perons whose busts began replacing religious symbols in textbooks and political meetings.[2]

As Catholic displeasure grew, Peron reciprocated. He attended fewer and fewer Catholic related functions. During 1952-53, Peron supported an independent weekly newspaper which was loudly anti-Catholic.[3] Things continued to worsen until the outbreaks of late 1954.

Meanwhile, the Mormon mission seemed to benefit from the falling out between Peron and the Church.

---

[1] Joseph A. Barager, "Argentina, a Country Divided," in Martin C. Needler, (ed.), Political Systems of Latin America (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1964), p. 427.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Confalonieri, op. cit., pp. 284-85.

The Visa Problem Under the New Circumstances.--The visa problem eased during the Peron-Catholic rift. On December 2, 1952, President Lee B. Valentine, a former Argentine missionary, (1935-38), arrived with his family in Buenos Aires, and was registered with the government as the new president of the mission. After the first year, he requested an extension of residence. The denial was accompanied by an order to leave the country within 20 days. An interview with the Immigration Director failed to secure the extension, but he said he would take it up with the "Minister of Technical Affairs." Evidently the old charges of polygamy were exchanged because on December 18th, Valentine submitted his letter to the Ministry of Worship, explaining the Mormon position on polygamy, the duration of missionary residence, and their source of financial support. This letter evidently reached the proper hands, for the Valentines were granted permanent residence visas![1]

Four months later Valentine's permission for permanent residence was retracted, but officials extended the visa for another year. Also, in 1954, missionaries reported after their regular three-month renewal trip to Montevideo, they were granted full-year extensions instead of three months. For unexplained reasons, the immigration officials had become more lenient with the Mormons and their visas.[2] Less Catholic pressure meant more Mormon freedom.

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 2, Dec. 4, 1953; and Jan. 11, 1954.

[2] Ibid., April 1 and Sep. 24-25, 1954.

President David O. McKay Visits Peron's Argentina, 1954

Imagine President Valentine's mixed emotions upon learning that President David O. McKay would arrive in Buenos Aires in five weeks as part of his world tour to emphasize the global expanse of the Mormon Church. Six years had passed since President Richards' visit, and this would be the first time any President of the Mormon Church had ever traveled to South America--truly an event of unexcelled importance for the Church. President Valentine desired to display the mission at its best as he planned for the occasion. The problem of a suitable meeting place loomed large. Valentine hoped the American Embassy could arrange a personal audience with President Peron himself.[1]

President McKay's historic week in Argentina began Monday, February 1, 1954. The McKay party included his wife, and son, Robert, a former Argentine missionary during World War II (1942-44) who served as translator. Over 200 Argentine Mormons greeted President McKay and his family at the airport.[2]

The Argentine press also took great interest in the presence of the Mormon's world leader. Throughout the week articles appeared in Buenos Aires newspapers which stirred uncommon interest in President and Sister McKay. The reporters were impressed with their ages and their apparent youthful and alert personalities. The articles also mentioned

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 23, 1953, Jan. 12, 1954.

[2] Ibid., Feb. 1, 1954.

the Mormon position on polygamy, Mormon health laws, McKay's world tour and visits with world figures, and the background of the Church in Argentina. In the process, Argentine ignorance about the Mormons was substantially enlightened.[1]

Because President McKay and his party were fatigued, receptions planned at Buenos Aires branches for Tuesday were cancelled. However, President McKay did go out to speak to a group of English and American Protestants. Since the texts of McKay's talks were to come under official scrutiny and leave a lasting impression in some minds, a report follows.

President McKay's talk to the American-English group contained ideas which may have sparked consternation among some peronistas. However, the wealthy audience of this occasion undoubtedly found itself in hearty agreement. The talk could also reflect President McKay's awareness of the tense, strained relations between the government and the Mormons in past years.

> There are ideals which are common to all our Republics here. I hesitate to enter into this because I know so little about the Southern Province, but I listed some ideals to which I am sure all of may agree. . . .
>
> You cannot have prosperity by discouraging thrift; you cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong; you cannot help small men by tearing down big men; you cannot help by destroying the rich; you cannot lift the wage earner by tearing down the payer; you cannot keep out of trouble when you spend more than your income; you cannot further brotherhood of man by harboring and inciting class hatred; you cannot establish sound society on borrowed money; you cannot establish security on such a plan; you cannot build character and courage by taking away men's initiative and independence; you cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they can and

---

[1] Ibid., March 1, 1954.

should do for themselves.[1]

He quickly clarified the non-political nature of his remarks by explaining his purpose of unity: "I am not attacking any government, merely stating principles North and South Americans can unite upon."[2] Regardless of this ameliorating comment, sensitive peronistas could likely have been offended by some of the implications of President McKay's Tuesday remarks. His tone would become more acceptable to them as the week went by.

President McKay Meets Peron.--On Wednesday, February 3rd, 1954, in the company of Mr. Gilbert Chase of the American Embassy, President Valentine, and McKay's son, Robert, President McKay met Juan Domingo Peron, the Argentine dictator. In a letter to the Deseret News Church Section, Robert related some events of the meeting:

> We got into Mr. Chase's automobile and were driven to the "Casa Rosada" (Pink House), the working offices of the president and his Cabinet. The click of heels and a snappy salute from two guards gave notice that we could enter the main hall. We were then ushered to another room, a long hall, another room, around a corner, then were received and asked to have seats until the president finished his other conference. It was then 9:55. . . . Forty minutes later, however, we were told it would be just a minute longer . . . . By this time we thought that Peron was enjoying keeping us waiting, and that we could expect an arrogant, pompous fellow who would sit back in his Henry the VIII style and honor us with a look at him.
>
> Well, when the time came to go into his office, what a delightful surprise awaited us! President Peron was right at his door to greet each of us with a charming smile and a sincere hand shake. Greetings were exchanged in Spanish and English as the line went through the door, and as it came my turn Mr. Chase mentioned to President Peron that I was President McKay's son. Peron looked at me, then at father, as the latter made his way to the conference table, then said with a twinkle, "You mean he has a son as young as you?" I said,

---

[1] Ibid., Feb. 2, 1954. [2] Ibid.

"Yes, but I'm the youngest," and he twinkled again.[1]

President McKay officially thanked President Peron for the attitude of the Argentine government toward Argentine citizens who desired to become members of the Mormon Church. He also expressed appreciation for the freedom of religion enjoyed by Argentine citizens. Peron responded to the compliments and displayed considerable knowledge about the Church. He expressed admiration for members who obeyed the Mormon health standards, and even knew the number of Mormons in Argentina. (Peron's aides may have obtained such information from the newspapers of the preceding days concerning the visit of McKay to Argentina).

When Peron was informed that President McKay's address the next Sunday was scheduled for the hall of the Consejo de Mujuers (Women's Council), he indicated it was inadequate and insisted generously that the Cervantes Theater be engaged for the occasion. The beautiful, nationally famous theater seated over one thousand, and was situated in downtown Buenos Aires. President McKay declined the favor but Peron insisted and made arrangements for President Valentine to follow through with the details.[2]

After about ten minutes, Peron said, "I would offer you a drink but you don't drink, nor smoke, nor drink tea or coffee. What can I do to make you happy?"[3] President McKay arose, expressed gratitude for his courtesy and attention, and the two men gave each other the

---

[1]Robert McKay, Deseret News Church Section, Feb. 13, 1954.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Sep. 3, 1954..

[3]Ibid., Feb. 6, 1954. Pres. McKay referred to the interview in his talk to the missionaries.

typical Argentine "abrazo" (embrace) to end the interview.[1]

Unaccustomed to prestige and official favors, Argentine Mormons seemed awestruck by good fortune of Peron's bestowal of the Cervantes Theater. Some questioned his motives. Certainly Peron may have donated use of the theater out of profound and sincere respect for President McKay. Obviously, the two men were mutually impressed. Then again, the politician in Peron also may have motivated the gift, or it may have been just one of a series of similar moves which displayed Peron's resentment of and falling out with the Catholic Church. Also, Peron had sought friendship with the United States to increase aid and trade. President Williams opined that the Cervantes gift was purely an Argentine political move, evidently aimed at currying the support of the Mormons as unimportant as they were.[2] While Peron may have originally scheduled the interview for political reasons, the author believes that he donated the Cervantes out of sincere regard for President McKay.

President McKay, obviously charmed by the charismatic Argentine leader, praised him highly in a meeting with all the Argentine missionaries three days later:

> I have been in the presence of a good many leaders and prominent rulers, but I would like to say to you missionaries here in Argentine that I think the President's gestures towards us in that regard was indicative of a nature refined and considerate such as I have never seen manifest on any other occasion. It was superb![3]

---

[1]Ibid., Feb. 3, 1954.

[2]Williams Interview.

[3]Ibid., Feb. 6, 1954.

Peron's superb impression upon President McKay made its way into his speeches throughout the week. Whether he had diplomatic intentions or not, the newsmen and many Argentine Mormons "just tied Peron and McKay together."[1]

The following day the McKay itinerary took him by train to Rosario where he addressed the members and received a hearty welcome.[2]

On Saturday, February 6, in Buenos Aires, President McKay counseled the gathered missionaries to speak well of the country, and refrain from criticizing Argentine customs or practices.

> Speak well of the country. They are sensitive, particularly the Argentines. They are sensitive and rightly so. Don't look at the faults. They can find many when they come to our country.[3]

Diplomacy and courtesy were the watchwords of the day.

The next morning in the Cervantes Theater, President McKay would again reveal his sensitivity to the government's listening ears and speak as the leader of an oppressed minority group diplomatically seeking official favor. His words were carefully chosen, courteously delivered, and sincerely grateful.

Before the Mormon throng in the Cervantes Theater on that bright Sunday morning of February 7th, 1954, President McKay prefaced his religious remarks reiterating his appreciation to and favorable impression of Peron. President Valentine translated.

---

[1]Boren Interview.

[2]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Sep. 4, 1954.

[3]Ibid., Feb. 6, 1954.

I'm grateful this morning for the opportunity of meeting you here in this lovely theater. I am grateful for the privilege of having met the President of this great Republic. Through his graciousness, . . . we have the privilege of meeting here in worship this morning. Your President is a great leader, a genial host, a true gentleman. I take this opportunity publicly of expressing the gratitude of the First Presidency of the Church for his favorable attitude toward our Church. We advise our missionaries not to enter into the politics of any country in which our Church is established; but, I wish to say that I am in hearty accord with the fundamental principles of this government and should like, particularly, to mention one phase it believes--that prosperity cannot be founded upon borrowed money.[1] (Italics the author's).

The "hearty accord" clause found a responsive chord in the minds of peronista Mormons. Little did it matter that President McKay's remarks earlier that week to the British-American group clarified his meaning and would sound definitely anti-peronista. Nor did it matter that the economic independence policy lauded by McKay had been reversed in practice by Peron within the previous year. Many Mormons mistook President McKay's courtesy and gratitude to mean complete approbation of the Argentine dictator. Even a decade later some Mormons would point to McKay's remarks in support of their peronista leanings.[2]

Lest his address appear entirely political or diplomatic, it should be understood that after the introduction, President McKay turned to typically religious topics. Among other things, he admonished the members to remain true to the mission of the Church, and summarized the purpose of Mormonism in these benevolent terms: "This is to make men happier and better no matter where they may be living.

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, February 7, 1954. Perhaps Ambassador Chase discussed Peron's Argentina with McKay while waiting for the Peron interview, hence his familiarity with Peron's policy of economic independence.

[2]Boren Interview. (Williams said McKay later admitted having been somewhat carried away that day with Peron, Williams Interview).

There is no other reason for the existence of the Church than to make men better and happier."[1]

That Sunday evening, excerpts from President McKay's talk including his praise of Peron, were broadcast over the Radio del Estado, the State radio station, and accompanied by two numbers by the Tabernacle Choir. Also, two days later, the police called and asked President Valentine for a copy of the full text of President McKay's Cervantes talk.[2] The government had been listening and was well aware of the Mormon leader's words.

President Peron also must have been impressed with President McKay. He remembered the Mormons favorably several years later when several missionaries reported visiting Peron while in exile in Paraguay. When Peron's aides were about to deny permission for an interview, Peron called out from the next room, "Are they Mormons? Then let them come in. The Mormons are my friends."[3] Perhaps this friendship struck up by President McKay, was partially responsible for the improved visa situation of 1954 already discussed. In any case, the newly acquired official leniency was short-lived, as things began simmering in 1954 which boiled over into Peron's overthrow in mid-1955.

The Catholics and the Fall of Peron

In but a year and a half after President McKay's visit, the Peron regime collapsed. Peron went into exile and Argentina began

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Report, Feb. 7, 1954.

[2] Ibid., Feb. 7, 9, 1954. [3] Williams Interview.

recuperating from the effects of the New Argentina. The Mormon Church progressed steadily during the time with only temporary visa problems during the tense last days of the Peron regime. As the regime collapsed, the Catholic Church emerged strong as ever.

The Battle.--The once firm political alliance between Peron and the Catholic hierarchy had steadily deteriorated during the early fifties. By the end of 1954, every vestige of harmony had disappeared and the Church and regime were in open conflict. As bitterness and distrust increased on each side, Peron's puppet congress began reversing or repealing earlier pro-Catholic legislation. The Church met each move with louder protests. Congress first legalized the property and political rights of illegitimate children. The measure provoked immediate disapproval by the clergy as they openly joined anti-peronista groups. The next month, October, 1954, Peron accused, arrested, and released 20 priests of Cordoba, Santa Fe and other towns, for plotting against the State.[1] Peron's press declared the international Catholic Syndicate a source of infiltration.[2]

Cardinal Copello, former confidante of the regime, issued a letter expressing astonishment at Peron's actions against the priests. He said, "A priest must defend the eternal values and fight against Communism, atheism, divorce, and lay schools." Feelings intensified, and by late November, the cry of "Christ or Peron" reverberated around

---

[1]Frank Owen, Peron, His Rise and Fall (London: Cresset Press, 1957), p. 221.

[2]Confalonieri, op. cit.

Catholic meeting halls. Peronistas countered with "Peron, Yes! Priests, No! We want divorce and no more religious training."[1]

When a Catholic political party formed in opposition to the peronistas, sympathy for the regime manifested itself in the form of spontaneous, mass demonstrations. Heartened by the support, the peronista congress steadily repealed much pro-Catholic legislation. In December, 1954, the congress abolished mandatory religious education, and legalized divorce and remarriage. Although Peron sent a cable to the Vatican wishing Pope Pius XII better health, the Pope labeled the regime oppressive to the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Peron maintained he always observed the laws of God and of the iglesia (church).[2]

Mormon observers revealed their hopes as they reported the following reaction:

> . . . A decree was published which gave all religious organizations the same rights as the Catholic Church in administering to their members in institutions such as mental hospitals, prisons, and other public institutions of the sort. There appears to be a very definite attitude on the part of the government to establish complete equality of religions. If carried through, it would mean eventual separation of Church and State. If this can be accomplished without violence and bloodshed, it will be a great blessing to the Argentine Nation.[3]

The battle continued into 1955. The regime next removed, perhaps unwisely, religious festivals from the list of public holidays.[4]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid. Owen, op. cit.; and LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 31, 1954.

[3] Ibid., Dec. 31, 1954.

[4] Owen, op. cit.

May 5th, ten legislative deputies called for a constitutional convention to modify all parts of the constitution pertaining to the Church-State relationship. They declared popular sentiment expressed that the State cannot have its own spirit or dogma.[1] Finally the crisis came. On June 15th, 1955, Peron was officially excommunicated for ordering the deportation of two of the native-born members of the Catholic hierarchy. The excommunication also blanketed anyone who had anything to do with crimes against the Church. [2]

The Revolution of 1955 and the Fall of Peron.--Peron's excommunication apparently heartened his opponents because the following day, June 16th, the airforce rose against the regime and plunged the nation into a state of semi-civil war. The army, loyal to Peron, blocked all roads leading in or out of the capital of Buenos Aires while the airforce planes dropped bombs which killed several citizens.

During the turmoil, President Valentine experienced a harrowing episode which was recorded by the mission secretary:

> When the revolt broke out, President Valentine was out in the town of San Juste. . . . As he returned to the city he found a road blocked by a stalled bus. Thinking it was a strike, he rode around until he found a little dirt road, unblocked, leading to the city. He was able to enter the city just before another bus came and blocked that road. Later he found that it was to cut off attempts by the troops in the province to attack the city. While driving home, President Valentine was stopped by a policeman, who ordered

---

[1] Confalerioni, op. cit., p. 343.

[2] Ibid., p. 356; Owen, op. cit., p. 221 ff.; Needler, op. cit., pp. 403-51.

> him to drive him to his station. Several times they found the roads blocked and had to circle around. President Valentine crossed the city at high speed, with the horn honking, and the policeman urging him on. Finally the officer reached his destination, and President Valentine was able to go home . . . . /Furthermore/ all missionaries and members avoided harm or danger.[1]

The June 16th revolt failed and Peron maintained control, but it was short-lived. Twelve weeks later another revolt succeeded in forcing his abdication. President Valentine reported that none of the members had taken active part in the revolution of September either. The missionaries remained inside during the revolt. Most branches postponed meetings to avoid trouble or misunderstandings, but in others meetings were held as usual. Elders from Córdoba, an area which played a key role in Peron's ouster, reported all were safe even though they witnessed some shooting and fighting which took place very close to the branch.[2]

A month after the revolution, General Eduardo Leonardi, a devout Catholic from Córdoba, took the official oath as provisional president. The day of the ceremonies, Leonardi flew the Papal flag with the Argentine flag as planes flew overhead in the formation of a cross. One of the first acts of the very pro-Catholic government was to repeal the divorce law.[3] Catholic reinstatement in government appeared imminent, and Mormon hopes to the contrary seemed in vain.

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 16 and 17, 1955.

[2] Ibid., Sep. 16-19, 1955.

[3] Pendle, op. cit., p. 160.

As with his rise, the power and influence of the Catholic Church played a major role in Peron's fall.

> It was neither the discontented labor nor the disgruntled Army which broke the thundercloud over Juan Peron's head. It was the disillusioned Church. The opposition of the Church helped unleash a wave of anti-Peronism which ultimately led to his downfall.[1]

During the Peron era the Mormon Church survived many struggles. It grew from infancy to adolescence. Many missionaries were freed from branch leadership responsibilities and convert baptisms increased much more rapidly. The members progressed willingly and well under local leaders. Although the visa problem remained, the government strangle-hold lessened and the visa burden had become more bearable. With the fall of Peron the Mormons hoped for a new order free from such Catholic dominance. Maybe it was coming and maybe it was not. At any rate, the Mormons were ready to move into the modern age in post-Peron Argentina.

---

[1]Elizabeth Babcock, "Peronismo in Thought and Practice," (Unpublished Thesis presented to the University of Utah, Department of Political Science in May, 1959), p. 59.

CHAPTER V

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS -- URUGUAY

Freer Atmosphere.--East of the famous Rio de la Plata from Argentina lies the little country of Uruguay, or Republica Oriental del Uruguay. About the size of North Dakota, Uruguay acts as a buffer state between Brazil and Argentina. One third of its three million inhabitants live in or around the capital city of Montevideo.

Except for size, Uruguay resembles Argentine in many ways. The basic stock is Spanish, Italians rank second, and Indians are extinct. Like Argentina, the language is Spanish, and the great proportion of the land area is used raising cattle in the gaucho tradition. So numerous are the similarities that differences may seem minor. Yet there exist profound differences which help explain the great contrast between the history of the Mormon Church in Uruguay as compared to Argentina.

First, Uruguayans harbor an uncommon passion for freedom and total democracy. While people of most nations are anxious about freedom of thought, speech, and action, Uruguayans seem unusually attentive to freedom.

> The Uruguans have had a remarkable record of freedom from dogma. No dogmatic racial notions, religious notions, or nationalistic notions.[1]

---

[1]Carlton Beals, (et. al). What the South Americans Think of the United States (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1945), p. 167.

Indeed, between 1943 and 1955, Uruguayan freedom beckoned literally thousands of liberal Argentines to cross the Plata to enjoy the freer air of Uruguay, much to Peron's disgust.[1]

A second important contrast between Uruguay and Argentina lies in less Catholic influence in society and government. Early in the 20th century, Uruguay constitutionally separated the Catholic Church from the State to insure religious toleration. True, the majority of the citizens belong to the Roman Catholic faith, but a full third were classified as Protestants or liberals.[2] José Batlle y Ordoñez, one of the most progressive and revered Uruguayan statesmen of the century, led his country to sever ties between Church and State. Although denounced by the Catholic Church, Batlle y Ordoñez declared his atheism with such persuasion that Mormon missionaries later heard many people politely refuse them by saying: "No thanks, we're atheists, . . . thank God."[3]

Uruguay experienced the same phenomenon as Argentina, in that Montevideo Catholics were less devout than Catholics of small interior towns. Nevertheless, while Catholics did predominate, Protestants or liberals made up a substantial portion making religious tolerance the rule rather than the exception.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 173.

[2] Alfred L. Zobell Jr., "Uruguay. . . New Mission Field," The Improvement Era, Vol. , 1946, pp. 71-2; Encyclopedia Americana, 1965 ed., "Uruguay."

[3] Williams Interview.

Fredrick S. Williams is best able to explain the differences between Argentina and Uruguay as they affected the Mormon Church, since he served as mission president in both Argentina and in Uruguay. In between his two missions, during the war years, Williams was employed by the U. S. Government in the International Health Field in the Institute of Inter-American Affairs. He lived in Montevideo and worked directly with the President of Uruguay and his cabinet. Williams reported that Uruguayan leaders were determined to have a democratic country which was in no way subjugated to religion. Ever since Battle y Ordoñez, the official policy of the government has been much opposed to Catholicism.[1] Inasmuch as the Catholic Church predominated it was singled out for specific mention.

Uruguay, Friend of the United States.--In sharp contrast with Argentina, Uruguay favored the United States. Indeed, John Gunther felt Uruguay was probably the best friend the United States had in the Americas.[2]

Early in Uruguay's history the United States recognized José Artigas, a national founder and liberator, against the claims and desires of Argentina and Brazil. Furthermore, Uruguay's master statesman, José Batlle y Ordoñez, admired the United States and was among the founders of Pan-Americanism. Uruguay, as opposed to Argentina, freely opened her harbors to U. S. warships in World War I. Unlike Argentina,

---

[1]Williams Interview.

[2]John Gunther, Inside Latin America (New York: Harper Brothers Co., 1941), p. 335.

Uruguay held strong anti-Nazi sentiments and denied sanctuary to the Graf Spee sailors after they scuttled their ship within sight of Montevideo. Although not without much debate, the U. S. was granted the right to build military bases in Uruguay at the beginning of World War II for mutual, continental defense. Uruguay also broke diplomatic relations with the Axis early in 1942, and even declared war in February, 1945, something Argentina was unwilling to do.[1]

> The Uruguayans, generally speaking, have been more warmly inclined toward the United States and Americans than the people of any other country in Latin America except Brazil.[2]

With much less Catholic influence in the government and the society, and even a favorable attitude toward the United States, Mormon leaders noticed the difference immediately. President Young of the Argentine Mission occasionally crossed to Uruguay during his tenure. His remarks about Uruguay reflected unreserved priase and amazement. "How different the atmosphere is where there is freedom of religious and political thought."[3] The advantages of the favorable Uruguayan atmosphere fostered the easy foundation and rapid growth of the Uruguayan Mission.

The Foundation of the Mormon Church in Uruguay

The first Mormon contact with Uruguay was none other than Rolf Larsen, the basketball missionary of real fame in Argentina.

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 347-49; and Encyclopedia Americana, op. cit.; Haring, op. cit., pp. 51-66.

[2] Beals, op. cit., pp. 166-67.

[3] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Feb. 11, 1949.

He received much attention in Uruguayan newspapers, and a friendly attitude toward the Latter-day Saints was created.[1] In 1943, a former Argentine missionary was employed by the U. S. Embassy. He was joined later that year by the family of former Argentine Mission President, Fredrick S. Williams. In June of 1944, President Young of Argentina organized the Montevideo Branch of the Argentine Mission under Williams' leadership. There were 12 North American members in 1944 who regularly attended all church meetings. They even held a branch conference in March, 1945. In government work, Williams naturally met high Uruguayan government officials, a circumstance which later became very important in beginning the Mormon Mission there. In June of that year the Williams family returned to the United States, and by May, 1946, there remained but one Mormon family in Uruguay, and they were from Argentina.[2]

Thus Mormon contact in Uruguay began with a definite Argentine flavor which foreshadowed the close relationship the two missions were yet to enjoy.

In August, 1947, little more than two years after Williams' departure from Uruguay, he found himself in South America again, this time serving as the newly designated Uruguayan Mission President. He at once conferred with President Young of the Argentine Mission. They discussed Mission literature, publications, the future trip of Argentine Missionary basketball team to Uruguay, and agreed upon very close cooperation between the two missions. Returning with President Williams

---

[1]Salt Lake City, H.O., Quarterly Reports of the Uruguayan Mission, Vol. I, 1947-1958, Unpublished reports sent to Church leaders, no single author, no page numbers. Hereafter cited, LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, entries by date only.

[2]Ibid.

to Montevideo were two missionaries, one a North American transferred from the Argentine Mission, the other an Argentine members from the Haedo Branch, Juan Sciorra.[1] There would be no language problem in initiating the work in Uruguay as there had been in the first decade of the Argentine Mission.

Things happened fast in 1947. Fortunately, satisfied with the first house they saw on Calle Brito del Pino 1525, the new missionaries rented a new mission home the first day they arrived. President Williams later discovered the house had been placed up for rent only the day before, and they had been the first people to see it.[2] Located in one of the finer neighborhoods, this large mission home lent permanence and some prestige to the new organization. As President Williams said:

> The kind of mission home you have is tremendously important. The public impression is right there. The building answers whether the group is serious or not. Not a millionaire mansion, but still a presentable place.[3]

In the first week the benefit of Williams' influential government friends became apparent. The passage of goods through the Customs was facilitated. Other officials co-signed rental guarantee papers. A lawyer registered the mission without charge.[4]

By Christmas of 1947 the new mission promised success. Twenty-

---

[1]LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, 1947. Juan Schorra was mentioned on p. 105.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Williams Interview.

[4]Ibid.

four missionaries had arrived and these succeeded in attracting 47 investigators to the mission home Christmas party. Much more significant than the party was the fact that the missionaries had arrived in groups of eight to ten without trouble.[1] Apparently one of the major Argentine Mission stumbling blocks was absent in Uruguay, no visa problem.

Missionary work began in earnest by January, 1948. On the 17th, President Young and the Argentine missionary basketball team and chorus arrived in Montevideo. The team defeated a prominent Montevideo team in overtime to the praise of many newspapers. The next morning, Sunday, the Mormon services were attended by 250 people in Club Ateneo.[2] Thus, in 1948, the Mormon Church in Uruguay began its first full year with a flare of publicity.

Before Uruguayans had time to forget, the newspapers again called their attention to the Mormons. This time a Mormon Apostle, Stephen L. Richards, who was touring all Church missions in South America, caused the stir. While President Richards had been delayed nearly $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours passing through Argentine Customs, he was favorably surprised when President Williams accompanied him through Uruguayan Customs in only a few minutes. The Montevideo press described Richards in several favorable articles as an apostle, an attorney, and a banker. The YMCA volunteered their auditorium where President Richards spoke to a middle class audience of over 200 about the practical aspects of Mormonism.[3]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Salt Lake City, H.O., Q.R.U.M., Jan. 1948.

[3] Ibid., March 30, 1948.

[4] Williams Interview.

President Richards left Uruguay with a favorable impression. He had visited the mission during a problem-free period. There were no members yet, and as 48 missionaries eagerly studied Spanish the future looked bright. There were no visits scheduled, and Richards could rest pleasantly and do as he pleased.

> He [President Richards] praised our situation in Uruguay. And anything we needed after that, we asked for it, and we got it because he knew what the conditions were in Latin America.[1]

Within a few months Williams had established branches of the church in several interior towns. All reported good attendance at opening functions, especially Mercedes with 75, and Melo with 169. On May 18th, a national holiday, 175 Uruguayans attended a Mormon-sponsored party in Monteveideo. Optimism soared.[2]

Contrasts Between Argentina and Uruguay

Uruguay's freer air, with its relative absence of prevailing Catholic influence, coupled with its love of democracy and favorable attitude towards the United States, definitely made a difference in the pace of the Mormon march. Uruguay's favorable circumstances can be contrasted to the situations in Argentina in three areas: official favor and friendship, greater social acceptance, and more liberal attitudes.

---

[1] Williams Interview.

[2] LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, June 1948.

Official Favor.--President Williams' government friends, whom he had acquired while previously employed in Uruguay, greatly aided the work of the foundation of the mission. After returning as a Mormon leader, Williams called on all old contacts. He had been a personal friend of the former President of Uruguay, Tomás Berreta, but Beretta died just as Williams arrived. While he had not known the new president, he did meet him through Vice President Brumm. (Only President Williams ever achieved a presidential interview in Uruguay. No one else has before or since). Missionaries later baptized two of Brumm's nieces in the Commerical Branch. Conversion of people of such social altitude could never have occurred in Argentina in such a brief time.

For official reasons Brumm desired further information about Mormon activity in Uruguay, so he invited Williams and the missionaries to his private ranch. They enjoyed a rodeo, asado (barbecue) and other events hosted by the Vice President. Brumm took word to the Uruguayan President who later personally told Williams:

> We want you to know that you're welcome in Uruguay. We've studied you and your organization, and we're particularly interested and pleased with your youth organization, /which, of course, was the MIA/. We want you to know that you have just as much official standing as any other church in this country. We're completely divorced from any religion, and personally I'd like to tell you this: we like you much better than we do the Catholic Church. And if you ever have any problems, we want you to know you have friends in high places, and don't hesitate to come and see us.[1]

Such a favorable official attitude toward the Mormon Church in a Latin America country was unprecedented.

---

[1]Williams Interview.

Official favor also shone brightly in the Customs Office. On one occasion President Williams accompanied a chorus of young people to Argentina to attend a conference. When they arrived, Argentine Customs officials emptied and searched all baggage in the five-hour procedure. Two Catholic priests on the same boat walked right on by as the Customs clerks waved a welcome. In Uruguay, the situation reversed itself. The choir walked on by the Customs officers who sported a welcome grin for "Presidente Williams y los suyos." Some Catholic priests in the same group were halted, briefcases emptied and inspected.[1]

Liberal Attitude.--The first missionaries to Uruguay came from Argentina, one, an American, Elder Janson who was transferred from the Argentine Mission, and the other an Argentine member, Juan Sciorra. The history recorded Elder Janson's reaction to the contrast between Uruguay and Argentina after tracting door to door near the mission home in late 1947:

> . . . Elder Janson was surprised after tracting in Buenos Aires. The people were more friendly and readily invited them into their homes to discuss religion. There is a much more friendly spirit manifested; freedom of religion exists and people are interested in new ideas.[2]

An experience in the interior Branch of Treinta Y Tres, the future location of the second full-sized Mormon chapel in South America, illustrates both increased strength of Catholicism in interior towns,

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, 1947.

and the contrast between radio station managers in Uruguay and Argentina:

> Radio Station Trienta Y Tres began broadcasting the MIA opening social at the 33 branch for June 5th. The Catholic Church had circulated rumors that the missionaries were communist and many people would not listen to them. They went to the radio station and explained their difficulty. The owner, angry at what he had heard, broadcast the following for the next five days: "Two young North Americans came to see me stating that some people were circulating the rumor that they were communists. This is not true. These young men are here on a religious mission teaching religious truths. Both defended the freedom of the world in the last war. Each Uruguayan should go and hear what they have to say. Next Saturday they are having the opening social for their Mutual Organization. You fathers and mothers should let your young people attend this meeting. Better still, go and take them with you."[1]

Compare this with the Mendoza experience forbidding any non-Catholic use of radio in Argentina.[2] Williams reported later that they had enjoyed three Mormon-oriented radio programs with definite hopes of securing a 15-minute program on a regular weekly basis.[3] Indeed, the liberal attitude in Uruguay contributed to Mormon success there.

Greater Social Freedom.--While Catholicism dominated the social atmosphere of Uruguay, the large minority (one-third) of the people who were liberals, protestants, or atheists, did a great deal to break down Catholic social power. Samuel Boren sensed this difference. An Argentine Mormon, Boren was accustomed to social ostracism and disfavor. He remarked:

---

[1] Ibid., June 30, 1948.

[2] Loc. cit., Chapter IV, pp. 95-96.

[3] Williams, LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, 1948.

> Especially one thing I found out going to Uruguay, that over there if you mention you're a Mormon they look at you like it's a normal thing. It's wonderful! . . . You cannot do that in Argentina in those years. You go in a store and say you're a Mormon, they would look at you like something really peculiar or curious.[1]

This more favorable social atmosphere contributed immensely to the Mormon success in Uruguay. It allowed for the conversion of a higher class of people than in the early period of the Argentine Mission. Ballard and Pratt had tried to initiate work among the higher classes in Argentina, but when they failed they moved out into the less influential districts where they were accepted. In Uruguay, the first mission home was located in a more respectable neighborhood, and the local-chapels seem to have been of higher quality. Attraction of better educated people meant a good source of capable local leaders which contributed to more rapid progress.

President Stephen L. Richards recommended proselyting the educated people.

> We can always get the poor people, but let's try for the others and the poor will come with them . . . not that we want to deny them the opportunities.[2]

If there was a mistake in the string of successes which accompanied the opening of the Uruguayan mission it was the premature expansion to interior towns. Catholic influence in the smaller interior towns of Uruguay approached the same dominant level of the smaller cities of Argentina. While festivities surrounding the opening of the interior

---

[1]Boren Interview.

[2]Williams Interview.

branches of Uruguay were well attended, their development followed the slow Argentine pattern. The poor and less-educated came to characterize the membership of interior branches. The cities were so small that missionaries could contact each home several times a year. Furthermore, the ruling social hierarchy of the small towns allowed much less social fluidity than in metropolitan Montevideo.

Mormon leaders perhaps should have concentrated on cosmopolitan Montevideo where Mormon strength and notoriety were centered. Montevideans were obviously more receptive and open-minded, as well as more numerous. They were also better educated. Mormons could have developed a strong nucleus in the capital before expanding carefully to the interior. Some years later, President Arthur Jensen, (1957-60), would wish he could transfer all missionaries to Montevideo since the proselyting of better-educated people was so much more successful there.

Rapid Mormon Progress in Uruguay.--On November 4, 1948, over a year after the opening of the mission, the first three Uruguayans joined the Church. Avelina Juan Rodríguez and his wife, Maria Esther Rizzo de Rodríguez, were baptized by President Williams, and Elder Preston J. Bushman was honored to baptize Diber Alba Preciozzi. A month later, 28 more persons from the Capital District were baptized in a service witnessed by over 200 at the famous Carrasco Beach. By year's end, the 66 missionaries had baptized 49 members in 14 newly established branches, six branches in Montevideo and others in Paysandu, Rocha, Mercedes, Salto, Duranzo, Florida, Melo, Treinta Y Tres, Rocha and

Maldonaldo.[1]

Progress had just begun. Twelve months passed and the new mission counted 207 Uruguayan Mormons and had added eight more branches. Attendance grew and auxiliaries functioned in all areas. Typically, Williams kept favorable public attention through a traveling quartette of missionaries. Mission population more than doubled in 1950 to 466. By 1951, three years after the mission began, small Uruguay boasted 551 members, about half as many members as Argentina had acquired in nearly 25 years.[2]

President Lyman S. Shreeve, a former Argentine missionary who replaced Williams in 1950, had enough members to warrant local leadership training programs similar to President Brown's efforts in Argentina.

> The elders and sisters are spending much of their time working with the members to train them and stabilize them in the Gospel. . . . We have stressed training the members for local leadersip, preparing them to take over the responsible positions of the branches and districts. This will also release regular missionaries for increased proselyting activities. . . . Three branches in the Capital District (are) ready for local branch presidencies.[3]

Chapels and Mormon Progress.--If one step represents the Uruguayan success story as contrasted with Argentina, it was Shreeve's good fortune in receiving First Presidency permission to construct a full-sized chapel and recreation hall. The first in South America, it would crown the phenominal Mormon rise in Uruguay. He called upon

---

[1] LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, Dec. 31, 1949, Dec. 31, 1950, and LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1951.

[2] Ibid. See Appendix B.

[3] Ibid.

all his reasoning power to persuade Mormon leaders in far-off Salt Lake City.

> Our greatest need for the future is a large assembly hall. We could get 300 people together at almost any time if we had a place large enough for them. . . . We also need a large recreational place for our members and investigators where they can dance and play. This country has gone all out for sports and to get young men we must compete with other churches and clubs. . . . . .
>
> More investigators are attending our meetings than the number of members, so you will see that if we are to invite more people out, we must have room for them. Our locals are full each Sunday in most branches. . . . Our needs for the coming year are mostly of a housing nature. We need a large district hall in Montevideo where we can all get together.[1]

In 1950, Williams finally was granted permission to purchase land for construction of a chapel. Land in a respectable neighborhood near the intersection of Joaquín Suárez and Boulevard Artigas was chosen on the basis of easy accessibility by metropolitan bus transportation.[2] The land was purchased, but construction waited.

President Shreeve succeeded in securing permission to break the ground for the chapel in 1953. President McKay himself arrived in Uruguay on his world tour by early 1954, in time to lay the corner-stone. Upon inspection of one of the new local-chapels in Montevideo, President McKay shook his head disapprovingly and remarked optimistically, "It's too small."[3] With approval, President Shreeve subsequently purchased five building lots in the country and began construction of

---

[1] Ibid., 1948, 1949.

[2] Williams Interview.

[3] Shreeve, Lyman S., in a talk to the Returned Uruguayan Missionary Ché Club, April, 1965.

one chapel in Treinta y Tres.[1] Shreeve earned the title "The Constructor" from the Uruguayan members.[2]

1954 made a deep mark on the history of the Uruguayan Mission. Besides President McKay's visit, Apostle Mark E. Peterson visited Uruguay. This was the first time that two general authorities had ever visited Latin America missions in the same year. The year's progress was doubly impressive since the Deseret Chapel was completed in time to be dedicated by Apostle Peterson. The Chapel at Deseret became the first full-sized Mormon chapel in South America, with a recreation hall and complete outdoor basketball court.[3]

In keeping with tradition, basketball teams, missionary choruses, radio programs and newspaper publicity continued to characterize the rising mission. In 1955, the Mormon softball team won the national championship, and the basketball team won their league, accompanied by favorable publicity.[4] The same year witnessed a nation-wide Mormon Youth Conference attended by over 500 young people. The Youth Conference also featured dancing, sports tournaments, and speech and quartette festivals. The success of the activity program and the building program placed the Church in an even higher standard of respectability in the country.[5]

---

[1]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1954.

[2]LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, Jan. 20, 1954.

[3]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1954.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

Cause of the Contrast.--The Argentine Mission had 1,841 members after 30 years of existence in 1956, while a few miles away, Uruguay reached 1,800 members in 1957--after a single decade! Why? Samuel Boren answers the question in this manner:

> That ambiente (atmosphere) in Uruguay helps a lot. Missionaries were open to any house to preach. People weren't afraid to go to the branch to find out what was happening there. In Argentina it was another situation. . . . You could almost feel a spirit of freedom and liberty in Uruguay which you did not feel in Argentina.[1]

Even President McKay sensed this freedom in his short stay. In his prayer at the occasion of laying the cornerstone for the Deseret Chapel he said:

> . . . We are especially grateful for the Uruguayan Republic; for the separation of Church and State; for freedom to worship; for freedom to speak; for freedom to work and choose one's life so long as that same freedom is granted to every other member and citizen of this republic.[2]

Indeed, other factors were involved. Williams included these explanations to the Uruguayan Mormon rise:

> . . . The Church was more charitable, should I say, toward the Uruguayan Mission than they were toward the Argentine Mission in the early days. They knew more about it, and I think the Church was more financially able to help and send more money to get the mission started on a better keel.[3]

Also, Argentina was a giant country compared to Uruguay. All of Uruguay could nearly fit into the province of Buenos Aires alone.

---

[1] Boren Interview.

[2] LDSHO, Uruguayan Reports, Jan. 30, 1954.

[3] Williams Interview.

The Uruguayans experienced less trouble communicating with the interior members who could then feel more united, unlike those in far-flung branches of Argentina.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere of liberty, the freer air, a receptivity to new ideas, less Catholic dominance (except in the interior), the favorable image of the United States, higher social class of members, the first full-sized chapel, all contributed to lift the Mormon name from obscurity in Uruguay to a nationally recognized institution. This contrast between Uruguay and Argentina emphasizes the slow growth experienced by the Argentine Mission since 1926.

CHAPTER VI

THE MORMON CHURCH MOVES INTO THE MODERN ERA

Argentine Scene, 1955-1960.--After Peron, Argentina trod the long road of recuperation under the watchful eyes of the generals of the military establishment who were determined to block another Peron-like disaster. Although the Catholic hierarchy apparently emerged with renewed strength in government when pro-Catholic General Leonardi from Cordoba became provisional president shortly after the revolution, Catholic cheers were short-lived as Leonardi himself was overthrown on November 13, 1955. The power struggle produced General Pedro Aramburu as president. He sought to de-Peronize the country, thus checking the renewed Catholic power.[1] While Aramburu hoped the country would concentrate on recovery from Peron, the exiled leader still enjoyed the faithful support of a wide segment of the Argentine electorate and thus figured prominently in national politics long after his overthrow.

Seeking to restore their nation's economy, post-Peron leaders reopened Argentina's doors to foreign investors. Under President Frondizi, elected February 28, 1958, with peronista support, Argentina accepted a U. S. loan of $328 million dollars to stabilize the exchange, regroup industry, agriculture, and transportation. In 1959, another

---

[1]Pendle, op. cit., p. 160.

$200 million U. S. dollars were advanced to the Frondizi government.[1] Other such examples of U. S. aid definitely enhanced the battered image of the United States in Argentina. More significantly, improved U.S.-Argentine relations also improved the position of the Mormon Church in Argentina.

Beginning the Modern Era

During the first years after Peron's fall when the power of the Catholic hierarchy was checked somewhat by Aramburu, and U.S.-Argentine relations warmed, Argentina settled carefully back to normalcy. Argentines evidently returned their attention to religious matters because the Mormon Church, less inhibited, advanced rapidly along four main fronts: more numerous general authority visits, beginning of the building plan, division of the mission, and a convert baptism boom.

General Authorities Become More Aware of Argentina.--For three decades, Argentina's great distance from the Mormon capital and the poor communication had caused general authorities to be relatively unaware of the Argentine mission and its problems.[2] The personal visit of President McKay marked a complete change in regard to this problem.

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 77, 89-90.

[2] Williams Interview.

While only one general authority had preceded McKay to Argentina since the mission's founding, six others would visit the mission during the following six years.

The first general authority from Salt Lake to follow McKay to visit the mission arrived just ten months after McKay, on December 22nd, 1954. Apostle Mark E. Peterson's arrival was noted by the newspapers in typical fashion. Christmas morning, near the very spot Elders Ballard, Pratt, and Wells had dedicated the South American mission some 29 years previous, Elder Peterson presided at a commemoration service in the Parque Tres de Febrero (Park February Third). Peterson also toured the branches of the mission talking a great deal about the apostasy to Catholic and ex-Catholic audiences.[1]

Due to the political unrest associated with the overthrow of Peron, no general authority visited the mission during 1955. Furthermore, the revolution caused postponement of plans for opening a branch of the Church in Santiago, Chile. Relative peace secured by January, 1956, President Valentine again notified the First Presidency of the mission's readiness to expand into Chile. Approval was accompanied by a visit by Apostle Henry D. Moyle.

Arriving May 16, 1956, with his wife, Apostle Moyle presided at a missionary conference on the 17th, which was followed by a series of conferences at many of the branches of the mission. Like Apostle Peterson, Elder Moyle referred somewhat derogatorily to the dominant

---

[1] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Dec. 22-31, 1954. To the Mormons, the Apostasy explains the fall of the Church of Christ built upon the Apostles.

Church in several of his speeches. At all conferences, choirs and flowers adorned the branches, the members presented gifts to the Moyles, and Elder Moyle delighted the members by attempting to speak in Spanish at the beginning of several of his addresses.[1]

On July 5, 1956, the Valentines and the Moyles flew to Santiago, Chile, where a new branch of the Argentine mission was formed under Moyle's guidance. An American member became Nunoa Branch President, and during the meeting Moyle made the optimistic prediction that the Chilean people would accept the Gospel readily, and that soon there would be a mission in Chile with at least ten branches.[2]

Shortly thereafter, Elder Lorin N. Pace, another former Argentine missionary who had been a lawyer and had worked as Vice-Consul for the U. S. Embassy in Honduras, arrived to assume the duties of mission president. After a few days of orientation, President Valentine and his family departed and Pace toured the mission.[3]

Throughout 1956 and 1957, the uneventful mission history was marked by a series of progress reports as the Mormon Church quietly matured.

---

[1]Ibid., May 16 to 27th, 1956.

[2]Ibid., July 5th ff., 1956. Fredrick Williams, employed in Lima, Peru, requested that Lima be incorporated into the mission. Moyle made him the first branch president in Peru on July 8, 1956. Later Peru was assigned to the Uruguayan Mission. Tuttle, op. cit., p. 366.

[3]Ibid., Aug. 28th, and Sep. 2, 1956.

More missionaries were sent to Chile, branches were opened in both Argentina and Chile, and more people were baptized. Larger locals were rented, and President Pace spent a major part of his time in 1957 finding and purchasing suitable building lots for future Mormon chapels.

During the years between general authority visits, the Mormon Church matured and sunk its roots deeper into Argentina. Progress in these years was evidenced by simple statements such as "Pergamino is progressing very well," or "All branches cooperated fully and the fiesta was a great success." From Córdoba a report: "All is well. The organizations are progressing well. The spirit among members and missionaries of the branch is very good." More and more the mission records were concerned with listing the local members called to various positions of responsibility as Argentines took greater responsibility for Church affairs upon themselves.[1] As the mission grew, semi-annual mission-wide conferences were replaced by semi-annual district conferences. However, deserving of note, was a four-day, mission-wide Youth Conference in La Plata patterned after earlier such youth gatherings. The first all-Mormon Boy Scout encampment illustrated increasing Mormon success on several levels.[2]

When Apostle Spencer W. Kimball visited Argentina in February, 1959, he noted changes in the Church Situation in the modern era. Kimball's three-week visit followed the previous pattern of branch conferences except that for the first time the visiting authority flew to the far-flung branches of the mission instead of traveling by car

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Report, 1957. [2]Ibid., 1958.

or train. Also for the first time, the mission history made no record of the full texts of the addresses of a visiting authority, which may indicate the mission had grown more accustomed to such visits.[1]

Insight into Kimball's impressions of the Church in 1959 can be gleaned from the summarized conclusions of his post-tour conference with the respective mission presidents. Apostle Kimball laid greater stress on proselyting work, and cautioned against the great cost of mission-wide conferences. He further emphasized local leadership by directing that quarterly district conferences deal more with leadership training and organizational work than preaching.[2]

Upon his return to Utah, Kimball commented upon the improved condition and image of the Church in South America.

> There is a general spiritual awakening. . . and also the Church is becoming better known. . . . Only a few years ago nearly all articles published /about the Church/ were mean. Now that has changed. People have seen that we are just plain people, not some strange types. We live ordinary lives, but have high ideals.

He further reported that the missions had acquired several building sites, and that a building plan would soon be implemented in South America. The strength of local leaders and the favorable publicity he received were also noted.[3]

Scarcely had Kimball's favorable report been savored when

---

[1]Ibid., Feb. 1959.

[2]Ibid., Mar. 31, 1959.

[3]Kimball, "South American Report," Deseret News Church Section, April 9, 1959.

the visa problem again stirred the mission. Between June, 1959 and September, 1962, a new immigration ruling caused several missionaries problems, as the government reverted to the pre-war practice of requiring entry permits before Argentine consuls could grant visas. Quarterly trips by the missionaries were also more strictly enforced.

As a further consequence of the ruling, missionaries assigned to Argentina could not immediately obtain visas in New York or New Orleans, and some were reassigned to Mexico, California, or Texas. In 1961, one group of missionaries waited over six months in the Uruguayan mission before permission was granted for their entry. It was discovered that in order to obtain a visa, a request from Salt Lake City for each missionary had to be cleared through the Ministry of Cults and the Immigrations Office, translated, and returned to the New York Argentine Consul who became the only Consul to allow Mormon visas. The process took about three months from the time the missionary was called until he received permission for entry and his visa.[1]

Since Mexican missionaries were experiencing much the same difficulty with their visas, Church leaders thought it best to engage the missionaries assigned to these two missions in learning the Spanish language, and the Language Training Mission was born. During the three month wait, missionaries lived at a special school on the Brigham Young University Campus in Provo, Utah, and through extensive study, learned to teach the Gospel in Spanish. Established in 1962,

---

[1]Personal Interview with C. Laird Snelgrove, former Argentine Mission President (1960-1964), Salt Lake City, Utah, June 27, 1968.

the Language Training Mission increased missionary efficiency and may be partially responsible for the great increase in convert baptisms in Argentina. It also decreased the length of a mission from 30 to 27 months.[1]

The visa problem, however, was resolved in mid-1962 when former Argentine missionary, Ronald V. Stone, was assigned to preside over the new North Argentine Mission. President Snelgrove, after much discussion, was able to secure Stone a permanent visa! Furthermore, the missionaries received the best visa status in history, three year visas![2] Why the change in immigration policy which had endured for decades? Perhaps the post-Frondizi leaders held more liberal attitude toward religions or they sought better relations with the United States. Nevertheless, the success of the Language Mission insured its retention in the program, and the Mormon emerged with a better visa status than ever to spur growth in the modern era.

Meanwhile, another Apostle had visited the mission in 1959. Apostle Harold B. Lee's arrival was heralded by six leading newspapers demonstrating continual improvement in press relations. Lee was accompanied on his tour by Vernon J. Sharp, who had been one of the first missionaries to Argentine in 1926. Sharp became the first president of the new Andes Mission, composed of branches in Chile and Peru. After breaking the ground for the Caseros Chapel construction,

---

[1]Ibid., LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, June 4, 1959; Tuttle Interview.

[2]Snelgrove Interview.

Lee and Sharp flew to Chile where Lee witnessed 45 Chileans baptized, undoubtedly one of the largest single baptismal services in the history of the Church in South America up to that time.[1] Speaking in Lima, Peru, after completing his tour, Apostle Lee said, "In my judgment there are no missions in the world which hold so much promise as the missions in South America."[2]

The following year, 1960, President Pace was replaced by C. Laird Snelgrove, a Salt Lake businessman, as mission president. Simultaneously, the mission received permission to build a new mission home and office designed specifically to meet future needs. Also that year, Apostle Ezra Taft Benson visited the mission in his capacity as U. S. Secretary of Agriculture. And a healthy sign, the mission reproduced 1,000 of the Mormon Scout manuals by request of the Argentine Scout Department.[3]

At year's end, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith and President A. Theodore Tuttle, visited the mission together--another unprecedented event. Their tour featured the first meeting in the unfinished Caseros Chapel. Excellent news coverage was highlighted by the absence of comments about polygamy, and only one reporter felt it necessary to mention that polygamy was no longer practiced.[4]

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Oct., 1959.

[2]Tuttle, op. cit., Era, p. 367.

[3]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, May 3, 30; Oct. 27-28, 1960. Benson met with President Frondizi on U. S. trade restrictions on Argentine beef. Although highly publicized, only one article mentioned he was a Mormon Apostle.

[4]Ibid., Nov. 26, 1960.

The major impact of the Smith-Tuttle tour revolved around the announcement that the semi-annual tour of general authorities was to be postponed, and President Tuttle appointed to reside in South America as president of all South American missions. The resident authority plan seemed destined to increase the pace of the Mormon march, and eliminate any residual general authority ignorance about Church conditions in South America.

The decade of the fifties began with Peron in full control of Argentina, and the Mormon Church very restricted and oppressed. By 1960, Peron was gone, Catholic power abated somewhat, Argentina climbed toward stability, and the Mormon Church seemed destined for previously unimagined progress. Chief among the catalysts of progress was the chapel-building program of the Church.

The Impact of Mormon Chapels in Argentina

The Need for Buildings.--Absence of adequate chapels constituted a constant drawback on Mormon progress in Argentina. Local-houses were the best available, but were sub-standard. Locals lacked permanency and the associated prestige permanency afforded.[1] While the Liniers chapel claimed the honor of the first Mormon chapel in South America, it was small and inadequate.

During the war, both Presidents Barton and Young complained about poor building facilities.[2] In fact, Young felt that chapels were

---

[1]Williams Interview.

[2]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1942; Young Interview.

the key to Mormon progress as early as 1946:

> We feel that some financial outlays must be invested here in the building of chapels; and even the purchasing of lands before any marked interest and growth may be expected. Such would attract the better elements of society.[1]

The members also desired adequate chapels. As early as January, 1949, members of the branch of Caseros turned in the sum of $350 pesos for the building fund for a future chapel. They also planned annual fund-raising projects toward the goal, and through the years did donate various amounts to the fund.[2] Quilmes branch held a $50 pesos per plate dinner, and over one thousand American dollars were raised for the Villa Sarmiento chapel in 1959.[3]

With the 1953 construction of the Deseret Chapel in Uruguay, Mormon officials also granted permission to construct a chapel at the Rivadavia plot.[4] The chapel construction was delayed, however, perhaps due to the Korean War. During his 1956 visit, Apostle Moyle referred to the fact that it took the European Saints more than 100 years to get ready for the Swiss Temple, and he promised the Argentine Mormons that they would get a temple just as soon as they were ready for it.[5]

In 1957, President Pace not only purchased lots for chapels, but enthused the people about construction plans. The following year, Neff Taylor of the Church Architectural and Engineering Department

---

[1] Ibid., 1946.

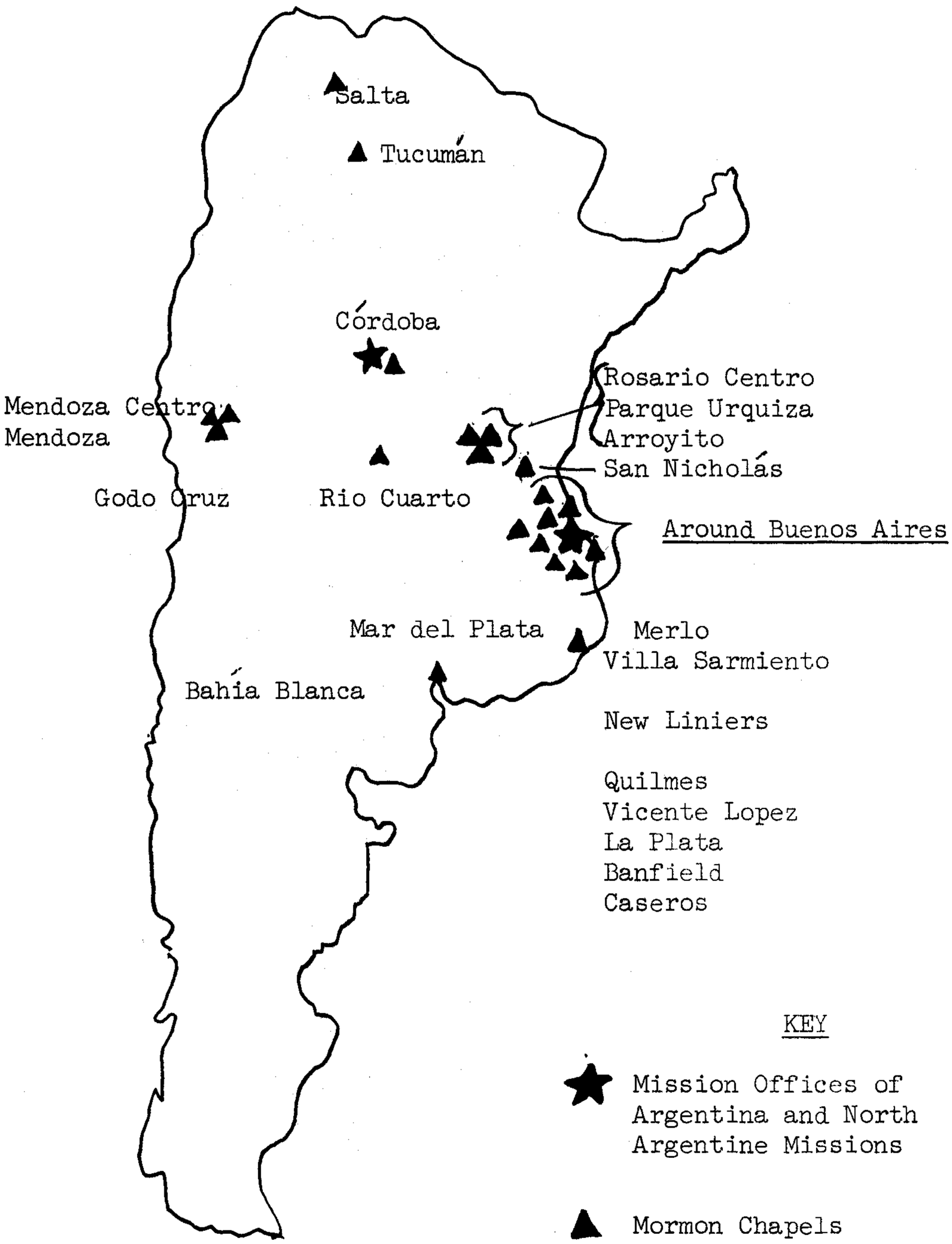
[2] LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Jan. 23, 1949.

[3] Ibid., May 3, 1958; Aug. 9, 1959.

[4] Ibid., Oct. 26, 1953.

[5] A. T. Tuttle, "The Argentine Mission," Improvement Era, Vol. 66, May 1963, p. 360.

MORMON CHAPELS IN ARGENTINA



visited Argentina, analyzed Argentine construction methods, and told the people they would have chapels as soon as possible.[1]

The Building Plan in Argentina.--Having succeeded in building many chapels in the South Sea Islands, by the early 1960's, Church leaders planned to expand the building program to South America. Experienced Mormon contractors, architects, and businessmen, were called to direct the plan's operation. This small group established headquarters in Montevideo, Uruguay. Other Mormon contractors were called to bring their families to Argentina and reside in a designated branch of the Church to supervise construction of a Mormon chapel. These supervisors were aided by the Building Committee, but the workmen were Argentine youths who accepted the assignments as Work-Missionaries. These Work-Missionaries labored fulltime for two years constructing Mormon chapels. They learned a valuable trade under the supervision of experienced North American contractors. By 1964, several chapels were under construction in Argentina under the work-missionary building plan, including chapels at Quilmes, Villa Sarmiento, Mar del Plata, San Nicolás, and others.[2]

When completed, the inauguration featured a week of activities designed to spark publicity. For example, the Caseros chapel inauguration was marked by a banquet attended by government dignitaries. Missionaries guided visitors on tours through the building. Dances, programs, and publicity made many friends for the Church.[3]

---

[1]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, March 3-9, 1958.

[2]Snelgrove Interview. The Caseros Branch was built by contract, not by the work-missionary system.

[3]LDSHO, July 23, 30, 1961.

Mormon chapels would change the whole picture of Mormonism in Argentina.

The Impact of Chapels in Argentina.--For decades the humble Mormon locals were simply no match for the imposing Catholic churches which loomed large in nearly every city or town. More educated and cultured people were reluctant to visit the small, community locals. While there were a few members of the more cultured class in each branch, the major change in the makeup of the membership of the Church occurred when the chapels began appearing in the country. Young admitted that they wanted chapels in order to attract a better class of people.[1]

Samuel Boren, a member of the Church Building Committee in South America between 1961 and 1964, discussed the impact of chapels on the socio-religious atmosphere in Argentina, his native land:

> I believe the chapel showed that we [the Church] are permanently there and able to support ourselves as an organization, and that we had something to offer to everyone. It made the members feel happier and proud. People outside also admired the building, and social acceptance is important to the progress of the Church, especially in Latin America.
>
> Up until the time Mormons began to build chapels, many Argentines could not even think that any other church but the Catholic could have a chapel.
>
> People would sympathize with the idea of a basketball court by the chapel. . . and with the idea that the Mormons had cultural activities.
>
> There is no doubt that the chapels attract a higher class individual.[2]

President Tuttle also noticed the entrance of more educated people into the Church during the early 1960's. However, this rise

---

[1]Young Interview.

[2]Boren Interview. (Italics author's).

in the social class of Church membership did not signify that the Catholic influence had subsided nor that it had ceased deterring people from joining the Mormons. On the contrary, Catholic social predominance remained very strong. One socially prominent family who became Mormons explained how their friends not only criticized them but also ostracized them. Later, some of their friends apologized individually when they realized that they were determined to remain in the Church.

During his 1960 tour, President Tuttle noticed and worried about the over-abundance of women in the Church. As resident authority he instituted programs aimed at converting capable men and whole families, and by 1965, he noted a marked change in the make-up of congregations.[2] More men meant more leadership material for expanding Mormon organizations.

The chapels not only affected the social status of the Church, but missionary proselyting also benefited. In the modern era, since the building of chapels, membership in the Mormon Church in Argentina rose from 4,221 in 1960, to over 17,000 in 1968.[3] President Williams considered the ratio between chapels and missionaries was one chapel equals fifty missionaries in any mission.[4] President Tuttle also thought

---

[1]Tuttle Interview.

[2]Ibid. See Appendix A. Male ratio increased in 1960's.

[3]LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1960; and Deseret News, March 10, 1968.

[4]Williams Interview.

there was a direct relationship between chapels and progress, because the chapel relieved the members from meeting in cramped quarters, offered a cultural hall adequate to the needs of the Church programs, and opened up to the people the full program of the Church, which could not be appreciated in rented halls or locals.[1]

TABLE 1

ARGENTINE MEMBERSHIP IN THE MODERN ERA

Year	Argentine Mission	North Argentine Mission	Total
1955	1,612	-	1,612
1957	2,265	-	2,265
1958	3,098	-	3,098
1960	4,221	-	4,221
1961	5,078	-	5,078
1962	4,564	1,559	6,223
1963	6,183	2,345	8,528
1964	7,203	3,708	11,011
1965	7,951	4,931	12,882
1966	9,206	5,904	15,110
1968	(Estimate).		17,000

The rapid growth caused President Tuttle to divide the mission in 1962 to form the North Argentine Mission.

Divisions of the Argentine Mission.--Originally, the first mission in Argentina bore the title of the South American Mission, but its headquarters were located in Buenos Aires. When Church leaders divided the South American Mission in 1935, the twin missions of Argentina and Brazil were born. Twelve years later, in 1947, the Uruguayan Mission split off the Argentine Mission. Both these missions expanded

[1] Tuttle Interview.

to include west coast nations, as Chili became part of the Argentine Mission, and Peru, became part of the Uruguayan Mission. In 1959, after another dozen years, Chili and Peru were chosen to form the new Andes Mission. The rapid growth of the Andes Mission prompted its division to form the Chilean Mission with headquarters in Santiago, and the Andean Mission headquarters was moved to Lima, Peru. Meanwhile, the baptizing boom in Argentina sparked the formation of still another mission, the North Argentine Mission, with headquarters in Córdoba, Argentina. Also the Brazilian Mission had been divided, making a total of seven missions in Latin America.[1]

The division of the South American Mission fulfilled Ballard's 1926 prediction that while the Church in South America would grow slowly, it would eventually be divided into many missions.[2]

The enormous size of Argentina had long plagued Mormon leaders and official visitors. Traveling between branches up to 2,000 miles apart fatigued visitors, lengthened communications, and hindered Church unity. When President Tuttle's recommendation was accepted, on September 16, 1962, the Northern Argentine Mission came into existence. It was composed of missionaries and branches located north of Rosario. Again, dipping into the ranks of former Argentine missionaries, Church leaders called Elder Ronald V. Stone as president.[3]

---

[1]Tuttle, op. cit., Era, Vol. 66, May, 1963. (As this thesis was being written, two other missions were formed in South America: the South Andeas Mission in 1966, and one in Brazil). Deseret News, May & June, 1968.

[2]Ibid. Joseph I. Bentley was chosen 2nd counselor by Stone.

[3]LDSHO, Quarterly Reports, Sep. 16, 1962.

Córdoba was chosen as headquarters of the new mission for its central location and its fine transportation connections with all other areas of the mission. The fact that Córdoba was popularly called the "Rome of Argentine," or the fabrica de curas was not considered overly important.[1] The new mission soon exhibited growth and independence, and played a key role in lifting the Church to importance in Argentina in the modern era.

Picture of the Mormon Church in the Modern Era

Several factors played an important part in improving the image of the Mormons in Argentina. Among these are modern proselyting methods, greater social acceptance, the harvest of the second generation, capable leadership training methods and plans.

Modern Proselyting Methods.--Perhaps the baptizing boom could be partially explained by increased efficiency in the missionary work. Modern Argentine missionaries not only carry on established publicity and contacting methods, but these expanded to include television, slide projectors, tape recorders, and regular radio broadcasts. Thorough missionary organizations kept the missionaries operating at full capacity, as counselors and supervisors spurred them on. Furthermore, President Tuttle initiated another position on mission staffs, the public relations officer, who sent out weekly press releases and press information portfolios. He also called press conferences when opportune.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., Sep. 3, 1955; Williams Interview.

[2] Tuttle, op. cit., Era, pp. 362, 388.

Greater Social Acceptance.--Successful public relations efforts helped reduce prejudice, increase familiarity and confidence with precedes improvement in the socio-religious image of the Church. President Tuttle credited much of the improved image of the Church to successful missionary public relations programs.[1] In agreeing, Samuel Boren indicated that not only had the TV and radio programs changed the image of the Church, but some Argentines also learned that Mormons were not peculiar, just normal, and even enviable in some ways.[2]

Mormon Programs Develop Argentine Leaders.--The Mormon Church cannot really function without dependable and capable male leaders. While the trend toward local Argentine leaders had been pursued since the early 1950's, the early 1960's witnessed a rapid increase in the rate at which more and more Argentines assumed leadership duties.

TABLE 2

LOCAL LEADERS PRESIDING OVER BRANCHES [3]

Year	No. of Branches	No. Local Presidents
1935	3	0
1945	16	15
1951	33	12
1958	34	-
1961	47	19
1962	31 (22)*	25 (5)*
1965	44	34

*In 1962 the mission divided. Parentheses include North Argentine branch statistics, 1962 only.

[1] Ibid.

[2] Boren Interview

[3] LDSHO, Annual Reports, 1961.

By 1963, the mission developed enough to merit a program designed to systematically lead the districts to the top level Mormon organization called a stake. The Six Steps to Stakehood plan required capable local leaders, and was designed to build them a step at a time. Employing the principle that individual responsibility fosters personal growth, the mission leaders no longer treated the Argentines as apprentice leaders, but as though they were actually the ward leaders needed.[1] By gradually taking the timed and planned steps, each branch and district would evolve into a stake prototype. Once the prototype was achieved, the leaders matured and the organizations solidified.[2] After following the plan for two years, Buenos Aires jubilantly became the second stake of the Mormon Church in South America in 1965.

The Harvest of Second Generation Mormons.--Also in the modern era, the mission reaped the further benefits of the generation of Mormons who had been born and raised in the Church. This second generation was free from the vestiges of Catholicism which their convert parents naturally carried into Mormonism with them. For example, the Catholic habit of permitting only the professional clergy to lead in all religious services made it difficult for Mormon converts to adapt, since Mormonism relies on lay leadership in religious services. In many cases, the full-time Mormon missionaries merely replaced the professional Catholic clergy as religious advisors.

---

[1] J. Thomas Fyans, Former President of the Uruguayan Mission, "Steps to a Stake," (Montevideo, Uruguay: an unpublished report submitted to President A. Theodore Tuttle, President of the South American Missions, 1964), pp. i, ii. Also, Tuttle's personal file.

[2] Williams Interview.

However, the second generation of Mormons grew up accustomed to leadership positions and a full schedule of weekly meetings. Antonio John Feliche, for example, was the first Bishop of the Liniers Ward after the stake was formed in Buenos Aires. When a young boy of six in 1926, he brought Elders Ballard and Pratt to his home and his family was converted. Later he was part of the first Primary formed in the Church. Two other children converted during the first one or two years of the mission became members of the first Stake Presidency of the Buenos Aires Stake formed in 1965.[1] Perhaps President Richards was right when he mentioned that the future hope of the mission lay in the youth.[2]

The Goal of Mormonism and the Destiny of the Church in Argentina.--For over 40 years since its foundation, the Mormon Church in Argentina struggled to enhance its image, to convert more Argentines, to establish branches and districts under local leaders, to print sufficient literature of quality in Spanish, to fight prejudice, to foster independence among members, to progress to a place in the Mormon sun.

But why? What did all these programs seek? When could one say progress was finally achieved and Mormon goals attained?

In his Cervantes talk, President McKay stated the Mormon goal was simply to make men and women better. President Williams concluded that the only true evidence that the Church has really progressed lies in whether or not individual Latin Americans developed more Christian

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Richards, loc. cit., Deseret News, 1965.

characters.[1] Samuel Boren considered the main measure of progress to be the character growth of the people. To him, such growth in the Gospel was vastly more important than chapels, programs, or even record number of baptisms.[2]

In agreeing with these, President Tuttle would add that the Church has really progressed when it has been more securely established, when the organizations function efficiently enough to affect the lives of the members with the Gospel.[3]

Certainly enough progress has been achieved to permit optimistic forecasts for the destiny of the Church in Argentina. The Argentine Church needs more chapels, stronger organizations, more capable male leaders, and even a better social image, but to help meet these needs are more numerous second generation members, better educated Mormon youth and members, and apparently more religious freedom in Argentina. With a broad foundation laid during forty years by faithful and patient leaders, the roots of Mormonism have deepened in Argentina as the tender shoot struggled through stiff opposition to maturity and then to blossom in the 1960's. This survey of the Mormon Church in Argentina concludes in support of Apostle Ballard's original prediction that although the Church in Argentina would grow slowly, it would eventually mature like the majestic oak into a mighty power in the Church.

---

[1]Williams Interview.

[2]Boren Interview.

[3]Tuttle Interview.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has traced the development of the Mormon Church in Argentina since 1925, endeavoring to understand the factors which inhibited or accelerated its growth. The approach also considered Church History in light of its relationship to the over-all political and social conditions of Argentina, as two concentric circles, the larger Argentine circle encompassing the smaller Mormon Church.

The initial chapter considered certain drawbacks the Church encountered in the early period, 1925-1935, which formed much of the Church's character for the next three decades. Chapter II dealt with the problem of the North-American image of Mormon missionaries in Argentina, a nation with a severe case of "yankeephobia." The hurdles confronting the Mormon Church during the tense period prior to and during World War II, and the rise and reign of Peron, were discussed in Chapters III and IV. Chapter V contrasted the Church's slow progress in Argentina with the comparatively rapid growth of the Mormon Church in Uruguay, only a few miles distant. The final section analyzed the changes in the situation of the Mormon Church which led to unexcelled growth in the modern, post-Peron era since 1955.

Drawbacks of the Early Period, 1925-35.--Appreciating Argentina's size, cosmopolitan heritage, but Latin-Catholic predominance, certain drawbacks to rapid Mormon growth were innate from the time

of the establishment of the Mission in December, 1925. The first members were foreigners, and the first group of missionaries, composed of Apostle Ballard and Presidents Pratt and Wells, spoke several different languages. The first mission president, a German, refused to recognize that the path to future growth of the Mormon Church in Argentina lay in the direction of converting the Spanish-speaking Latin people who vastly outnumbered the Anglo-Saxons. There seems to be some evidence that some of these pro-Anglo, anti-Latin sentiments were mere bias, which of course, could only hamper significant growth.

Perhaps a more permanent impediment to Mormon progress existed in the overwhelming predominance of the Catholic heritage permeating Argentine society. The government not only constitutionally supports the Catholic Church, but both the president and vice-president must be Catholics, and any religious ceremonies in which the State participates must be Catholic. True, most Argentines are Catholic more as a matter of course than of strict religious observance, but centuries of near-total Catholic predominance in customary family rituals ingrained Catholicism into Argentine society to an almost impregnable degree.

For months and even years, the early missionaries pinpricked the established Latin-Catholic monolith. Newspapers somehow failed to print announcements of Mormon meetings, and the missionaries were simply unable to interest any member of the more educated, cultured classes in their gospel. Thus the early missionaries moved into the poorer suburbs of Buenos Aires where they were accepted, and there the seeds of Mormonism in South America were planted. Hence the Church acquired a low social image along with its foreign, Anglo-Saxon image. This

hampered the attainment of social prestige which is vital to acceptability, especially in Latin society.

Sam Boren, a native Argentine, and Frederick S. Williams, one of the first missionaries in Argentina, 1927-29, recalled other social factors which came to characterize the Mormons, hamper their expansion, and forestall serious growth. First, compared to elegant Catholic churches so prevalent in Argentina, the common houses used as Mormon chapels lacked both permanence and prestige. Secondly, Mormon religious practices like singing hymns, lay membership and symbol-free services, were peculiar and rare in Argentina, and were the subject of ridicule and scorn. Third, the fact that norteamericanos directed and supervised Argentines in most situations, went contrary to Argentine character. Consequently, by 1935, there were only 135 Mormons (mostly German), in Argentina and Brazil.

Argentines and North Americans.--There is evidence that the North American derivation of most of the missionaries hindered their proselyting indirectly. Although Argentines experienced a period of yankeemania in the 19th Century, they, along with other Latin-Americans, watched American activities in South America with growing apprehension. Fears started with American seizure of Argentine-claimed territory, the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands, and grew with the conquest of Northern Mexico, the Spanish American War, and the Panama seizure, only to reach newer intensity during the period of the Big Stick and Dollar Diplomacy.

During the decade following 1928, when Mormon missionaries tried to establish a Mormon foothold, the U. S. embargo of Argentine beef,

ostensibly to protect American cattle from hoof and mouth disease contamination, sparked national indignation against the Americans and wounded the famous Argentine pride. Not even Roosevelt's high-sounding Good Neighbor Policy could lessen Argentine disgust nor overcome the anti-yankee posture.

U.S.-Argentine relations worsened when Argentina maintained traditional neutrality and refused American wishes to break diplomatic relations with Germany. The misdirected, interventionist antics of U.S. Ambassador Spruille Braden only united Argentines against the Collossus of the North, and Peron's rather anti-American statements and policies reflected Argentine anti-American animosity.

The extent to which the North American nature and orientation of the Church inhibited the missionary work cannot be accurately measured, but it is safe to say that between 1925 and 1955, the fact that missionaries were North Americans probably hindered Argentine acceptance of the Gospel more than it helped. Not until after Peron could the North American nature of the Church safely be considered an asset.

The Church During the Period of World War II, 1935-45.--

After the South American Mission was divided to form missions in both Argentina and Brazil, President W. Ernest Young ceased the bilingual habit and made Spanish the official language of the mission since Argentina was a Spanish-speaking country. Missionaries thereafter concentrated more and more on converting Spanish-speaking people, and in 1937 baptized a record number, 76. Endeavoring to enhance the quality

of Mormon locals, Young succeeded in obtaining funds from the General Authorities in distant Salt Lake City, to build the Liniers Chapel, the first Mormon chapel on the South American Continent.

During the tense years between 1938 and 1941, when pro-Allied President Ortiz governed, public controversy over the impending war in Europe tended to favor the Allies. The light-complexioned missionaries habitually traveled in pairs, spoke a foreign language, and associated with known Germans. They were not only mistaken for Germans, but for German spies. On one occasion during the night, the mission headquarters were surrounded by the police, and President Williams was ordered at gunpoint to guide them in a search for a Nazi printing press.

Thereafter, capitalizing on the freedom of expression permitted during the Ortiz period, missionaries sought to raise the public image of the Church by gaining fame through efforts in the sports world. Composed almost entirely of missionaries, Mormon teams won the national amateur baseball championships in 1939 and 1942, and one member of the touring Mormon basketball team, Rolf Larson, became a nationally known sports hero. Consequently, the Church received much favorable publicity. A clean, healthy image graced the Church, thousands learned of the cessation of the practice of polygamy, and a more educated class of people began to enter the Church.

However hopeful things appeared, in 1939 the government decree limiting visas only to those with landing permits had the effect of excluding Mormon missionaries from the country for many months, and the missionary force declined. In 1940, Williams acquired a friend

in the Immigration Office, who temporarily solved the problem.

Meanwhile, public indignation against the Nazis was increased by the Graf Spee incident, and an Ortiz government decree banned meetings in the German language. Williams not only closed the long-established German Branch, but also terminated active proselyting of the German people. Thus, he reduced another factor which had contributed to the foreign image of the Church.

When Argentina suffered an economic recession in 1940, due to the inability to export her products, the Mormons attempted to establish the Welfare Plan which flourished for a time. But later, when Williams left the mission and Argentina experienced an economic boom in sale of produce to warring nations, the Welfare Program subsided and later disappeared.

In 1941, the first appointment of local Argentine members to replace North American missionaries as branch leaders carried much significance. Besides freeing the missionaries for proselyting, the step strengthened local members in preparation for the war-years just ahead.

Under normal conditions, the rise of pro-Nazi president Ramon Castillo to the Argentine presidency would probably have fomented greater trouble than it did. While missionaries were mistaken for spies in some instances, the fact that their numbers soon decreased eliminated the cause for any real trouble with Argentina's strong, pro-Nazi government under Castillo.

Because the missionary population declined due to the official Mormon position on the draft during the war, President James Barker

sought to train the members in their duties to each other in leading the Church. Finally, by 1944, all missionaries had departed, but Barker reported that most of the members still progressed very well.

Arriving in September of 1944 to replace Barker, President W. Ernest Young returned for a second term as president of the mission. With only two missionaries for most of the next two years, Young developed a system of visiting every one of the 15 branches presided over by local members, at least once every two months. In these conditions, Young played the role of a guardian who waited impatiently for better times to allow resumption of the Mormon march.

The Mormon Church During the Reign of Peron.--The major impact of the 1943 revolution and the rise of Juan Domingo Peron to power in Argentina lay in the simultaneous increase of Catholic influence in government as the hierarchy and the regime reciprocated support for mutual benefit.

During the war the increased Catholic influence in government did not affect the Church, but as missionaries began returning to Argentina in late 1946, they met with visa problems based on the old charges of polygamy, and desires to disrupt the harmony of the Catholic family. Missionaries were only allowed tourist visas which necessitated quarter-annual trips out of Argentina in order to renew their visas for another three months.

Visa problems notwithstanding, Young and his new missionary force pushed on undaunted. Optimistic reports for 1947 evidently caught the attention of Church Authorities because Stephen L. Richards

came to Argentina for a firsthand look in February, 1948.

The Richards visit was highlighted by wide, national publicity as numerous articles reacted favorably to him and his "only" wife. Traveling by car, Richards visited most of the widespread branches of the mission, and members thrilled at the opportunity to see an actual Apostle of the Church for the first time.

In spite of his extensive tour, Richards left with a rather reserved impression of the Argentine Mission, desiring greater character growth than demonstrated. Other than recommending the purchase of a new mission home, he withheld recommendation for building of chapels and other expenditures.

Perhaps the publicity of the Richards visit reminded Catholic officials of the Mormom menace because between 1948 and 1950, the Church experienced all types of visa problems, and a general nationwide Catholic effort to discredit them which cooled the receptiveness of the people. Mission public relations activities moved ahead in this period of persecution, nonetheless.

The Catholic anti-Mormon campaign reached a peak in 1949, when the new mission president, Harold Brown, was arrested for illegally entering the country, and the police closed several branches of the Church in small interior towns where Catholic influence was stronger. Brown considered the Peron government, influenced by Cardinal Copello, to be the mission's most pressing problem between 1949 and 1951, when the Church finally acquired official recognition and the few branches re-opened.

The latter years of the Peron regime were characterized by

increasing disenchantment between Peron and the Catholic hierarchy. As a result, in 1952-53, under President Valentine, Mormons received better visa status than previously, and there were less problems with the government during these years.

The paramount event of this period was the visit of President David O. McKay to Argentina. On a world tour, during which he met with many heads of state, President McKay arrived in Buenos Aires accustomed to diplomatic protocol and courtesies. In a rare meeting with Peron, McKay and Peron reciprocated high regard for each other, and although some questioned his motives, Peron bestowed the use of the famous Cervantes Theater for the Mormon Conference. Thereafter, McKay praised Peron highly throughout the week of his tour in Argentina. Some Mormons apparently mistook McKay's courtesy and appreciation for Peron's generosity as support for the dictator, and years later pointed to McKay in support of their peronista leanings.

Any advantage the Mormons may have hoped to gain by the favorable impression McKay left on Peron would not have lasted long, for 18 months later Peron failed to survive a revolution and he turned the country over to a military junta. While the disgruntled armed forces may have actually fought the revolution, they did not strike until Catholic disfavor with Peron had assured them of Church support. The revolutionaries carried the battle forth from strong Catholic cities to the interior like Córdoba, and their success seemed to portend a return of strong Catholic influence in government, as indicated by their repeal of recent anti-Catholic peronista legislation. Nevertheless, President Pedro Aramburu somewhat checked the renewed rise of

power, thus freeing the way for more rapid Mormon progress in the modern era.

Evidence of the Benefits of Less Catholic Influence--the Uruguyan Case.--The rapid rise of the Mormon Church in little Uruguay just miles from Argentina, illustrates the benefits that accrued to the Church when freed from much of the restrictive influence of Catholic society. Featuring the definite and guarded separation of Church and State, a noticeably free and independent atmosphere characterized Uruguay. While the Catholic Church still dominated Uruguayan society, there were strong minorities of liberals, Protestants, and atheists, and the people generally were more open and receptive to new ideas.

The Mormon Mission progressed much more rapidly than in Argentina, and the founders of the mission side-stepped many of the hurdles which had long hampered the Argentine Mission. At the outset, in 1947 and 1948, President Fredrick S. Williams had many influential friends in the government, which helped in the establishment of the mission. The first mission home on Brito del Pino and the local chapels were of a more acceptable quality in Uruguay, and some of the first members represented the more cultured, higher classes of people. Uruguay's compact size also aided the Mormons. Furthermore, Stephen L. Richards enjoyed his stay and was more sympathetic to Uruguay's problems, and the Church was more financially able to grant the mission requests. Consequently, the first full-sized Mormon chapel was located in Uruguay, and after only ten years the number of Uruguyan Mormons compared very favorably with the total membership of the Argen-

tine Mission which had existed for three decades.

Unexcelled Growth in the Modern Era.--Although Uruguay had progressed rapidly, in the late 1950's under President Lorin Pace, the Argentine mission reached the threshhold of phenomenal growth. Tight Catholic domination in Argentina loosened somewhat after Peron, and the long years of Mormon cultivation began to bear fruit.

Several factors combined to help the mission flourish in the modern era. First, general authorities' regular and semi-annual visits to Argentina increased their appreciation of the mission's conditions and sparked the missionaries to greater productivity. In 1961, President A. Theodore Tuttle established residence in Montevideo as president of all South American Missions, and under his guidance the missions expanded even more rapidly.

Then too, enhanced by the language training mission, systematic missionary teaching programs, and mission staff public relations specialists increased proselyting efficiency, and missionaries capitalized on all modern communication techniques such as television, slide programs, records, and tape recordings. Also, local leaders began taking over leadership responsibilities in more and more branches and districts as the number of local branch presidents more than doubled in the decade after Peron. This freed missionaries for even more proselyting, and lessened the psychological issues of North American supervisors. Furthermore, the modern era harvested the benefits of the second generation Mormons who matured in the Church free from the Catholic vestiges of most converts. These Argentines were accus-

tomed to lay leadership programs characteristic of the Church.

Perhaps chief among the catalysts of Mormon progress in the modern era was the building program. Constructed by supervisors and work missionaries, Mormon chapels slowly began to rival Catholic hegemony. The Church reaped the prestige that permanence affords, and Argentines were forced to reckon with the Mormon advance.

Except for the visa problem encountered between 1959 and 1962, the mission did not experience major governmental hindrances. In 1962, for unknown reasons, the visa problem was eliminated, and missionaries were granted three year residence visas, and enjoyed the best visa situation ever.

The growth of the modern era prompted Mormon leaders to divide the Argentine Mission. In 1959, Chile and Peru formed the new Andes Mission with former Argentine missionary, Vernon Sharp, as president. This was followed by the formation of the North Argentine Mission in September, 1962, with another ex-Argentine missionary, Ronald Stone, as president. With both missions functioning in Argentina, the Mormon population, a mere 1,800 in 1956, multiplied almost ten times to 17,000 by March, 1968! This growth was crowned in 1965 with the formation of the second Mormon stake in South America in Buenos Aires and two second-generation Mormons were called to the first stake presidency.

The devotion and character strength of the second generation attests to both the value and success of the Mormon efforts in Argentina. While Catholic influence in Argentina society remains strong,

and prejudice still hampers missionary work, the present conditions of the Argentine Mormon Church certainly afford more reason for optimism than ever before. Indeed, Apostle Ballard's 1926 prediction came true, that although the mission would grow slowly in Argentina, it would eventually mature into a stronghold of the Mormon Church in the Western Hemisphere.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ARGENTINE MISSION GROWTH

Year	North American Missionaries	Number Converts	Converts Male	Converts Female	Total
1930					88
1935	-	48	-	-	135
1936	-	76	-	-	-
1940	53	60	15	43	597
1941	76	66	26	40	642
1942	54	92	-	-	729
1943	21	76	28	48	775
1944	1	25	13	17	801*
1945	3	23	-	-	801*
1946	25	24	-	-	828
1947	93	31	11	20	856
1948	99	71	25	46	922
1949	59	89	-	-	1,031
1950	59	83	-	-	1,135
1951	84	71	-	-	1,286
1952	64	88	-	-	1,360
1953	61	81	25	56	1,449
1954	87	76	-	-	1,443*
1955	105	92	-	-	1,612
1956	103	209	49	160	1,814
1957	113	382	-	-	2,265
1958	127	651	228	423	3,098
1959	117	557	205	352	4,070
1960	152	564	-	-	4,221
1961	150	892	310	582	5,078
1962**	120	803	260	513	4,564
1963	114	1,159	484	675	6,183
1964	144	878	380	498	7,205
1965	-	645	266	379	7,951

* Many Mormons migrated to other countries during these years after the 1943 Revolution.

**The figures decrease after the division of the Mission in 1962. For examination of the very rapid growth of the North Argentine Mission See Appendix B. In March, 1968, there were an estimated 17,000 members in both missions.

APPENDIX B

NORTH ARGENTINE MISSION GROWTH

Year	North American Mission-aries	Number Converts	Converts Male	Converts Female	Total Mission Membership
1962	76	428	161	267	1,559
1963	97	484	277	399	2,345
1964	183	1,296	566	730	3,708
1965	-	1,021	435	591	4,931

APPENDIX C

URUGUAYAN MISSION GROWTH

Year	Number Missionaries	Number Converts	Converts Male	Converts Female	Number Branches	Total Mission Membership
1947	24	0	0	0	0	2
1948	66	49	-	15	0	54
1949	93	257	-	-	21	257
1950	84	210	-	-	23	466
1951	75	76	-	-	23	551
1952	63	84	-	-	24	637
1953	57	93	-	-	23	719
1954	71	89	-	-	23	831
1955	105	80	-	-	27	936
1956	129	267	69	198	30	1,294
1957	129	490	-	-	31	1,800
1958	137	506	-	-	33	2,315
1959	157	575	194	381	35	3,036
1960	151	753	276	477	31	3,545
1961	172	975	387	588	37	4,637
1962	181	1,467	670	797	36	6,369
1963	147	2,278	1,014	1,264	35	8,104
1964	172	2,403	1,053	1,329	39	10,107
1965	170	1,067	390	677	-	11,968

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Books

Alexander, Robert J. The Peron Era. New York: The Columbia University Press, 1951.

The Ballard Family. Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader For Righteousness. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966.

Beals, Carlton, et al. What the South Americans Think of the United States. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1945.

Bilboa, Francisco. "The Two Americas," in Keen, Benjamin (ed.). Readings in Latin American Civilization. Cambridge: Mass.: Riverside Press, 1955.

Blanksten, George. The Peron Era. New York: Harcourt, Bruce and Co., 1943.

Bradford, Sax. The Battle for Buenos Aires. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1943.

Cobo, Martin Aberg. "La Revolucion de 1943," in Cuatro Revoluciones Argentinas. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Club Nicolás Avellanada, 1960.

Confalonieri, Orestes D. Peron Contra Peron. Buenos Aires: Editorial Antigua, 1956.

Encyclopedia Americana, 1965 ed.

Fagg, John Edwin. Latin America. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963.

Gunther, John. Inside Latin America. New York: Harper Brothers Co., 1941.

Haring, Clarence H. South Americans Look at the United States. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929.

James, Bruce. Those Perplexing Argentines. New York: Longmans, Greer and Co., 1953.

Leonard, Olen E. and Loomis, Charles P. (eds.). Latin American Social Organizations and Institutions. Michigan: Michigan State Press, 1953.

Macdonald, Austin F. Government of the Argentine Republic. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1952.

Madariaga, Salvadore de. Latin America--Between the Eagle and the Bear. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962.

Mecham, J. Lloyd. Church and State in Latin America. Raleigh. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1934.

Needler, Martin. (ed.). Political Systems of Latin America. Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1964, in article by Joseph A. Barager, "Argentina, a Country Divided."

Nehemkis, Peter. Latin America, Myth and Reality. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964.

Onis, José de. The United States as Seen by Spanish American Writers. Boulder, Colorado: Miners and Journal Inc., 1952.

Owen, Frank. Peron, His Rise and Fall. London: Cresset Press, 1957.

Pendle, George. Argentina. London: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1963.

Pinto, Juan. Diccionario de La República Argentina. Buenos Aires: Editorial Mundo Atlantico, 1950.

Porter, Charles O. and Alexander, Robert J. The Struggle for Democracy in Latin America. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961.

Weil, Felix J. The Argentine Riddle. New York: John Day Company, Inc., 1944.

Whitaker, Arthur P. (ed.). Inter-American Affairs, 1943. New York: Columbian University Press, 1944.

_____. The United States and Argentina. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954.

White, John J. The Life Story of a Nation. New York: The Viking Press, 1942.

World Book Encyclopedia. Vol. I, 1956 ed.

B. Articles and Periodicals

Deseret News. 1947-1959.

Grant, Heber J., J. R. Clark, and David O. McKay, "Message of the First Presidency," in the Improvement Era, Vol. 45, May, 1942.

Richards, Stephen L. Conference Report, April, 1948.

Tuttle, A. Theodore, "South America. . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," in the Improvement Era, Vol. 66, May, 1963.

C. Unpublished Material

Babcock, Elizabeth. "Peronismo in Thought and Practice." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Utah, 1959.

Fyans, J. Thomas. "Steps to a Stake." Montevideo: Uruguay. Unpublished report by President Fyans, Uruguayan Mission President, to A. Theodore Tuttle, President of the South American Missions, 1964. Obtained from President Tuttle's personal file.

Jensen, Andrew. "South American Mission History." Unpublished manuscript of the early history of the mission written by Jensen, Assistant Historian of the Church. Salt Lake City, Utah, LDS Church Historians Office. Vol. I, 1925-35.

"Mission Annual Reports, Financial and Statistical." Salt Lake City, Utah. LDS Church Historians Office, for years of 1935-1966. Unpublished reports of Argentine mission presidents to Church leaders about all facets of the mission. No pages, entries by date.

Peterson, John Delon. "History of the Mormon Missionary Movement in South Americanto 1940." Unpublished Thesis presented to the Department of History, University of Utah, 1961.

"Quarterly Reports of the Argentine Mission." Salt Lake City, Utah. LDS Church Historians Office. Unpublished quarterly reports of the daily events of the mission history. Authors varied from mission secretaries and historians to the presidents of the mission. No pages, entries by date.

"Quarterly Reports of the Uruguayan Mission." Salt Lake City, Utah. LDS Church Historians Office. Unpublished daily chronicle of the events of the mission. Authors varied from mission secretaries and historians to the presidents of the mission. No pages, entries by date.

"Transcript Records of Members in Missions." Salt Lake City, Utah. LDS Church Historians Office. Annual volumes. Copies of the reports of all branches of the mission sent annually to Salt Lake City. Statistical in nature.

D. Other Sources

Personal Interview with Samuel Boren, former leader in the Argentine Mission. Mesa, Arizona, July 14, 1967.

Personal Interview with C. Laird Snelgrove, former Argentine Mission President, 1960-64, Salt Lake City, Utah, June 27, 1968.

Personal Interview with Lyman S. Shreeve, former Argentine missionary and Uruguayan Mission President, at Returned Uruguayan meeting, April, 1965, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Personal letter and Interview with President A. Theodore Tuttle, former President of the South American Mission, April 10, 1968, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Personal Interview with Nestor Vogler, former church leader in Uruguayan Mission before his emigration to the United States, April 5, 1968, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Personal Interview with Ernest Wilkins, former Argentine missionary and president of the Language Training Mission, December 27, 1965, Provo, Utah.

Personal Interview with Fredrick S. Williams, former Argentine and Uruguayan Mission President, in Downey, California, July 16, 1967.

Personal Interviews with W. Ernest Young, between December, 1965 and May, 1968. Young twice served as Argentine Mission President; also Assistant Church Historian, in his office in Salt Lake City, Utah.

SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE GROWTH OF THE MORMON CHURCH IN ARGENTINA SINCE 1925

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Michael B. Smurthwaite

August, 1968

ABSTRACT

In the last twelve years the Mormon Church in Argentina has expanded from a mere 1,800 members without chapels, to nearly 18,000 members with 21 fine chapels--a 1,000 per cent increase. However, during the three decades preceding 1956, the Argentine Mormon Church grew at a snail's pace. This thesis evaluates the factors which affected and influenced Church growth since 1925.

The key factors forestalling Mormon expansion were inherent in Argentine society, and Mormons were powerless to influence them. Until there were basic shifts in society the Church could only struggle along as missionaries pinpricked the status quo for many years.

From the outset the Mormons possessed a foreign, Anglo-Saxon image which violated Argentine norms. The North American nationality of the missionaries fostered the foreign image and probably decreased proselyting effectiveness since Argentine had a backlog of grievances which sparked national indignation against norteamericanos.

In addition to the foreign image, the traditional predominance of the Catholic Church ingrained Catholic customs into Argentine thought and society, and the Catholic monolith formed the greatest deterrent to Mormon growth. Catholic influence in the Immigrations Office caused many difficulties which hampered missionary work.

Mormon religious practices and the custom of holding meetings in dwelling houses ran contrary to the Catholic religious pattern.

The deviant customs helped erect a high social barrier around the Mormons that served to discourage most people from joining the strange and ridiculed group. Consequently, the missionaries proselyted members of the more receptive poorer classes who were less sensitive to social pressure. In turn, the proletarian nature of the church tended to further impede the entry of members of the more cultured classes.

Missionaries tried to raise the image of the church through sports and publicity activities with some notable successes, but any gains were tempered during World War II and the Peron era when Catholic-sponsored opposition reached its peak.

The revolutions which swept Peron both in and out of power produced profound changes and breaks in the Argentine social fabric which permitted the Mormon Church to expand in the contemporary era.

After Peron's fall, the power of the Catholic Church was checked. United States-Argentine relations improved, and the entry of U. S. missionaries was facilitated. Mormon general authorities visited the Argentine Mission and became more sympathetic with its problems and conditions. Argentine men took charge of the leadership of more and more branches and districts, freeing missionaries for proselyting. Efficient mission organizations spurred the work, and missionaries capitalized on all forms of modern communications under the guidance of a public relations director. The building program combined work-missionaries under expert American contractors, and full-size Mormon chapels began to dot Argentina and rival the established church. The mission divided to form the North Argentine Mission, more

missionaries arrived, and soon thousands joined the Church annually. Indeed, the seeds of Mormonism, long cultivated, began to bear fruit as the Argentine branch of the Mormon Church grew to prominence in the rising Mormon sun.

APPROVED:

Department Chairman

Committee Member

Committee Member