

Interviewee: Miguel Kandin

May 13, 1986

Interviewer: Lic. Zadoff

Interviewer: Margalit Bejarano

August 14, 1988

**(Translator's note: Mr. Miguel Kandin was interviewed by two people, on different dates. Since much of the data overlapped, the interviews have been summarized together.)**

Miguel Kandin was born in 1922, on a ship that was sailing from Russia to Palestine. The family lived in Tel Aviv until shortly after the Arab-Jewish disturbances of 1929. Then, the parents decided to join their 4 children who had already emigrated to Argentina. The family arrived in Argentina on October 5, 1930.

The father went back to Palestine in 1939 to claim part of the property his father had left him. He did not succeed but, the WWII intervened, and was forced to stay there until his death in 1948. His wife, Miguel's mother, passed away suddenly in 1947, in Argentina.

Miguel's father was born in Bukhara (Persia) Father's original name was Kandinoff. Miguel's mother's family, originally from Spain (the Alkalay family) was Israeli. Miguel's parents, who met and married in Palestine, went to live in Moscow, Russia. They had 8 boys and 2 girls. (Miguel and his twin brother were the sixth among the children.) They stayed there until the tsar was deposed and the family's assets were taken away. (Miguel's father's family came from a very rich family) They escaped Russia with their lives but nothing else.

The commercial activities of the Jews coming from Aleppo and Damascus. The cost of living was very low then, and it was easy to support a family with a very small sum. The industrialists among them: Teubal, Mizrahi, Massri, Casabe, Saban, Salmud, Tarrad,

Hambra, Habiad, Levy, Harari, Dayan, and Antebi among many others. They all began with textile plants moving later to manufacturing. By the time of these interviews, the luck of the big Jewish industrialists had changed. Miguel says because the descendants did not work as hard as the founders. But, also the economic situation in Argentina declined. Now, the community was in dire need of assistance, with tuition for their Jewish schools and for daily expenses. A committee of charity (through the organization AISA, which is the Sephardic counterpart to the AMIA.) lent assistance to nursing homes, public kitchens, and to the old and indigent. 40% of the philanthropy though, went to education and the many educational institutions: yeshivas, secondary schools, the Institute for Girls, etc. Since not many congregations have their own schools, all of the members came to the Iesod Hadat institution.

Kashruth in Argentina was stricter than in Israel. (The different authorities bestowing kashrut certificates.)

In the interview with Margalit Bejarano there is an extensive paragraph on the relationship between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, and within the different Sephardic sects. Also, Miguel talked much (and with disappointment) about the secularization and relaxation of cult of the Jews. He also mentioned though a resurgence in the youth attendance to certain synagogues. The opening of the Sephardic cemeteries, and the purchase of land for them.

The unity of the two groups, Sephardim and Ashkenazi, during WWII. The elation at the creation of the State of Israel. Begin's visit. The envoys coming from Israel, among others Baruch Duvdevani.

Miguel's theory on assimilation and relaxation of the religious precepts.

Neighbors of Miguel in Buenos Aires were the Kabeli and Alazin families. They had the synagogue Tikva, on Pasteur Street, which first moved to 464 Larrea St, and finally to 2153 Tucuman Street. They were all families from Jerusalem originally. Miguel's brothers frequented that temple.

Miguel's own education had begun in Palestine, in a government, non-religious school. Arriving in Buenos Aires, where they settled, at the age of 8, Miguel was sent to the school run by the Aleppo Jewish community. Benzion Daniel was the head of the "gurji" community that ran the school. In 1932, there started a new movement within the community, led by the rabbi Yakov Siteron (?) (Citron?) Rabbi Shaul Sutton Daba was

already deceased and replaced by Miguel's future father-in-law, the "khakham" David Sutton Daba.

The controversy of teaching either "Hebrew in Hebrew", or Hebrew with Arabic translation, and the personalities involved. ( Benzion Danieli, Shaul Setton, Jacobo Sutton, Shaul Sutton Daba, the secular Nissim Teubal, Khakham Menorem Zaiad) During the next generation, the translations of the sacred were done in "broken" Spanish, rather than Arabic. The feud among certain families, including the Inis.

The fear of turning education into secular rather than religious. Apparently, the influence of the Alliance Francaise and the Bnai Brit in Damascus and Aleppo, had turned the religious institutions into more modern ones, and the rabbis in Buenos Aires did not want that to happen there.

Miguel's teacher was the khakham Yaacov Abadi, a tailor by profession, but a very educated man and a scholar. The study subjects. Other teachers who joined Abadi were laacov Abatias, Ezra Rabi, khakham Tfuli, khakham Nissim Cohen (from Tzfat), khakham Eliahu Freue.

Jacobo Setton: his activities, his preoccupation with the community, his fight to authorize the religious students to miss the state schools on Saturday, fight that lasted until 1952.

The "Hatikvah" school, where one of Miguel's sisters (Sonia) taught. Sonia also wrote Biblical based skits for the holidays. The Iesod Hadat School.

Teachers and activists in "Hatikvah" were: Basrawi, Rafael Cohen (gabai), the Jose Levy and Elias Levy families,

The changing attitudes in the community depending on the political party of its leaders. Mentioned were: Rabbi David Sutton, Don Jacques Mizrahi (secular), and Rabbi Blum, appointed by Nissim Teubal. Rabbi Blum befriended Peron but had to leave the country when Peron was deposed in 1955. The controversy of allowing photographers to take pictures on a Shabbat in a synagogue.

The religious school became a day school, where all subjects, secular and religious, were taught.

Iesod Hadat techers: Menakhem Zaiad (taught 57 years!), Sara Mizrahi, Pilosoff, Fargun.

The classrooms for boys and girls were separated. Male teachers taught the boys and female teachers taught the girls. In the early years, girls only learned songs; after 1948, the curriculum for girls included all the subjects, including Hebrew.

The reason for the opening of the Day School.

The roles of Miguel Kandin in the congregation as a member of the Executive committee. Other members were: Jose M. Tawil, Mr. Vigio Rafael, Jack Mizrahi, Gabriel Chama and Mr. Chaio. The arrival of a new rabbi, Shejbar, from Aleppo, after Rabbi Blum "defected" to officiate in an Ashkenazic congregation. It was 1953.

The temple on Libertad Street. The controversy of the people to be honored with name plaques on the walls. The cemeteries of the different sects: from Aleppo, from Damascus, from Turkey etc.

Financing the Hebrew school, from the "sale" of Torah honors and the income of the kosher butcher. The school reached an enrollment of 1,000 students. Then, a competitive school opened up: an ultra-orthodox one whose members came from Aleppo and Damascus. Miguel's one-man fight not to come to school on Shabbat.

The lack of contact with the Jewish Board of Education, as the Sephardim did not want to accept its guidelines.

The lack of contact with the Ashkenazi community and its reasons. Prejudices among the Sephardim according to the different places of origin. The contact between the Jews from Aleppo and the ones from Damascus: Josef Cohen, Rabbi Cameron, Jamiliau Zuli (a Chasid) Other communities, like the Syrian Jews and those coming from Smyrna. Relationships between Jews and Arabs were cordial Arabs lived in the provinces of Chaco, Santa Fe, Cordoba, Tucuman, Salta and Jujuy. They would come to Buenos Aires to buy from the Jews, and their exchanges were always excellent.

Miguel went to work after finishing the public school in 1936. He worked in textiles, together with a brother-in-law. Marriage and the birth of 4 sons.

The process of opening an elementary and high school integrated school. The dealings with the National Secretary of Education, the leadership from the Jewish community, the cost, the tuition, the curriculum, the effect of the founding of the State of Israel.

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