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Latin America and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

REGINA SHARIF*

It has been a commonplace in political analysis of Latin American affairs to suggest that since most of the Latin American countries have no large political stake in the outcome of the Arab-Israeli conflict, they tend to keep aloof from the controversial issues pertaining to it.¹ Although this perspective may well have been valid prior to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the period since then has witnessed interesting changes in Latin American attitudes towards the Middle East conflict. Confronted with the various economic and financial repercussions of the Arab oil embargo and the rise of the Palestine problem as a central issue in many international forums since 1974, the Latin American countries have for the first time been forced to replace a non-committal approach by one involving serious decision-making. It is the purpose of this article to examine the impact of the new situation on Latin American policy to the Middle East, as reflected in relations with Israel and the Arab states, as well as in voting behaviour on resolutions relating to the Palestine problem in the United Nations.

1. ISRAEL AND LATIN AMERICA

Israel has always had a substantial stake in its relations with the Latin American subcontinent on three levels: the political/diplomatic, the economic and the demographic (as a source of Jewish immigration). During the early years of Israel's existence, the twenty Central and South American states were of particular importance to the Jewish state on the first of these levels. From the beginning, the factor that tilted the balance in establishing

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¹ See, for example, Victor Alba, "Latin American Relations with the Middle East: The Contributing Factors," *Middle East Information Series*, No. 2, 1973, p. 17; Joel Barromi, "Latin America and Israel," *Middle East Review*, Vols. 3-4, 1975, pp. 38-41.

Israel's existence as an internationally recognized independent state was the overwhelming Latin American support it received; the support of the twenty Latin American countries comprising one third of the then sixty-member UN General Assembly was crucial in either providing votes to assure the passage of UN resolutions in favour of Israel or in blocking the passage of hostile resolutions. In 1947, the United Nations vote partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state was 33 in favour and 13 against with 10 abstentions. Of these votes Latin America had voted 13 in favour, and 1 against with 6 abstentions.² Resolution No. 273 (III) of May 11, 1949, admitting Israel to membership in the United Nations, was passed with 37 in favour, 12 against and 9 abstentions, with 18 Latin American states supporting the resolution, none voting against and only two abstaining.³ During the 1950's all Latin American countries with the exception of Cuba consistently supported the Israeli position in international forums, and Israeli-Latin American relations were conducted on the most cordial and friendly terms. The pro-Israeli attitudes reflected both the existing cohesion among OAS (Organization of American States) members — and especially the United States' preponderant influence in this alliance — and Israel's own propaganda efforts projecting the image of itself as a developing country with development problems similar to those of the Latin American countries.⁴

Towards the end of the 1960's, however, fundamental changes occurred within the international system. At the UN a change of the balance of power began with the admission of numerous new independent African and Asian countries, leaving the twenty Latin American states with less than 16 percent of the total vote. The United States, increasingly entangled in a war in Southeast Asia, lost much of its former grip on Latin America and its influence subsided in the area. Individual countries started to align themselves in accordance with their own political interests, even though at

² Those Latin American states voting for Resolution No. 181 were: Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela. Cuba voted against the resolution and those abstaining were: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico. See George J. Tomeh, ed., *United Nations Resolutions on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1974* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1975), pp. 4-14.

³ All Latin American countries, with the exception of Brazil and El Salvador, voted in favour of Resolution 273 admitting Israel as a member state into the UN. See *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of Latin American policy vis-à-vis the Middle East during the early years of 1945-1952, see Edward B. Glick, *Latin America and the Palestine Problem* (New York: Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1958).

first this was not reflected in their Middle East policies. For some time Israel's diplomatic extension into Latin America culminated in various scientific exchange agreements, joint development projects and technical assistance agreements.⁵ Thus at a time when most of the African and Asian countries had broken off or severed their relations with the Jewish state, Latin America's steadfast insistence on its relations with Israel enabled the latter to avoid complete diplomatic isolation in the Third World. In 1972, Israel was even granted the status of Permanent Observer to the OAS, an honour to a non-western hemisphere country only otherwise accorded to Spain.⁶ Former aid to Africa was now redirected to Latin America, whose countries became the major recipient of Israeli development aid in 1974.

On the second level, that of economics, the Latin American subcontinent continues to represent a useful outlet for Israeli industrial exports. Statistics indicate that Israeli exports to the respective areas have been rising steadily from \$23,685,000 in 1973 to \$48,656,000 in 1974, reaching \$51,139,000 in 1975.⁷ This excludes military hardware, of which Latin America has recently become a major recipient.⁸ According to reports from Santiago, the Israelis are developing an important role as supplier of arms to the Chilean military government. "The Israelis are understood to be supplying General Pinochet with antitank weapons and Israeli technicians have gone to Chile to train the Chilean forces in their use."⁹ So far Israel's Arava military transport plane has been sold to Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Ecuador, Bolivia and Mexico.¹⁰ So competitive has Israeli arms merchandise become that Israel's drive to sell its own version of the American-engined Kfir fighter to Ecuador was stalled by the US government, ostensibly for fear of worsening the military tension already existing between Peru, Chile and Ecuador, but clearly also to protect the US share of the market. For Israel the sale of arms to Latin America has two major advantages: it constitutes, first, a valuable part of its drive to keep its friends in the area, particularly among the right-wing military regimes;

⁵ See Leopold Laufer, *Israel and the Developing Countries* (New York: Twentieth Century Foundation, 1967).

⁶ Barry Rubin, "Latin America and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *The Wiener Library Bulletin*, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 37-38, 1976, p. 31.

⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 1976*, No. 27, p. 200. See also Central Bureau of Statistics, *Israel's Foreign Trade, General Summary, 1974*, Special Series No. 498, Table V, p. 28.

⁸ *Washington Post*, September 30, 1973.

⁹ *Aurora* (Tel Aviv, Israeli government publication), October 7, 1976.

¹⁰ *Aurora*, April 13, 1976.

TABLE 1
ISRAELI EXPORTS AND IMPORTS TO LATIN AMERICA (per \$1000)*

<i>Israeli Exports to:</i>				<i>Israeli Imports from:</i>		
1973	1974	1975	COUNTRY	1973	1974	1975
4,169	7,411	3,846	MEXICO	939	1,655	724
			<i>CENTRAL AMERICA</i>			
162	309	1,041	GUATEMALA	102	60	20
2,225	6,270	2,924	PANAMA	29	49	133
328	139	162	COSTA RICA	—	—	1
1,983	6,950	5,566	OTHER COUNTRIES	144	35	69
4,698	13,668	9,693	<i>Central America Total</i>	275	144	223
<i>SOUTH AMERICA</i>						
362	753	59	URUGUAY	7,277	9,310	9,569
1,257	3,507	4,353	ARGENTINA	42,722	19,014	13,611
8,229	14,888	12,207	BRAZIL	22,458	7,873	39,963
1,770	4,297	12,340	VENEZUELA	983	855	56
1,074	787	2,498	PERU	74	190	91
219	485	107	COLOMBIA	610	799	417
1,907	2,860	6,036	OTHER COUNTRIES	4,054	115	270
14,818	27,577	37,600	<i>South America Total</i>	78,178	38,156	63,977
23,685	48,656	51,139	L A T I N A M E R I C A	79,392	39,955	64,924
T O T A L						

* Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 1976*, p. 200.

secondly, it represents a valuable source of foreign currency badly needed to help the ever-increasing Israeli balance of payments deficit.

A less obvious reason for Israel's interest in Latin America is demographic, since the Jewish communities there provide a relatively untapped source of immigration. Latin American immigrants are highly desirable for Israel because they are already western-oriented and skilled in their professions, and can easily be absorbed by the Israeli economy, spending very little time in the so-called absorption centres and thus requiring less financial assistance from the Israeli government than, say, the Russian Jewish immigrants.¹¹ Additionally, Latin American Jews, unlike Russians, are able to bring their savings to invest in Israel. According to the late Pinhas Sapir after a visit to

¹¹ "Alia de America Latina," *Aurora*, September 12, 1974.

Latin American Jewish communities during 1974, Israel should be able to attract 20,000 Latin American immigrants yearly. It is therefore most disturbing for the Israelis that immigration to Israel from Latin America has been on a steady decline since 1973, from 4,500 in 1973 to 3,000 in 1974, and only 1,500 in 1975.¹² Rafael Seroussi, chairman of the Association of Immigrants from Latin America explained the reason for the decline as the economic and security situation in Israel, although other observers point to the quite successful assimilation process among Latin American Jewry.¹³

On the political-diplomatic level, Israel's staunchest supporters — those that support the Israeli position in international forums, whatever it is — are traditionally found among the Latin American states. The voting records in the UN General Assembly of those states on the issues pertaining to the Middle East conflict indicate that there has been no change whatsoever in the positions of such countries as Costa Rica, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador or the Dominican Republic. All have in the past customarily aligned themselves with the Israeli cause, and even the oil embargo was unable to break their support for Israel.¹⁴ The above states never vote against Israel on any resolution pertaining to the Middle East.

This same behaviour, however, does not hold true for the other Latin American countries, where a definite erosion of the Israeli position has occurred since the 1973 war. This loss of support, it should be noted, is less drastic than that suffered by Israel in the Afro-Asian bloc, and has been concentrated in international forums, like the United Nations, rather than having a serious effect on Israeli-Latin American bilateral relations. Until 1976 only two Latin American countries, Cuba and Guyana, had broken off diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.¹⁵ The remaining countries continued their normal course of relations with Israel while at the same time intensifying their efforts to improve their relations with the Arab world.

2. LATIN AMERICA VIS-A-VIS THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT IN THE UNITED NATIONS

In any analysis of Latin American policies towards the Middle East, it is useful to take into consideration the trends that can be detected in United

¹² *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, December 19, 1975.

¹³ Latest census figures of Latin America's Jewish populations reveal that approximately 750,000 Jews live in the various Latin American countries, with 475,000 of them in Argentina, 160,000 in Brazil, 50,000 in Uruguay and 30,000 in Chile.

¹⁴ *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), December 19, 1973.

¹⁵ Cuba had broken its diplomatic ties to Israel during the Algiers Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in September 1973. Guyana followed suit in March 1974.

Nations voting patterns on the relevant issues. One must be careful not to overemphasize the importance of such voting figures; positions taken in international forums, in particular the United Nations, are often symbolic and rhetorical, and thus cannot be employed as the sole or the best indicator of real bilateral relations. Nevertheless, a comparative study of recent UN records can at least point to latent policy changes among several countries whose voting patterns have shifted.

Middle East issues in the United Nations General Assembly generally fall into four categories, with a possible fifth beginning in 1975. They are as follows:

1. Resolutions dealing with the activities and the financing of such UN operations as UNRWA, UNEF or UNDOF.
2. Resolutions dealing with the violation of human rights by Israel in the Arab territories occupied since 1967.
3. Resolutions dealing with ways and means of obtaining a Middle East settlement, i. e., an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.
4. Resolutions specifically dealing with the role and the rights of the Palestinian people.
5. Resolutions since 1975 undermining the international and moral acceptability of Zionism, equating Zionism with racism.

For our purposes a comparison of voting trends on resolutions of the last four categories will be sufficient, since those of the first category are of a rather technical nature.

A. *Violations of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.*

A comparative study of resolutions of this category adopted since 1972 indicates no major fluctuations or changes in the Latin American vote. The staunchest supporters of Israel were Barbados, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Nicaragua. Bolivia, however, changed from voting with Israel on the 1972-74 resolutions to abstaining in 1975 and 1976. Brazil, on the other hand, switched from abstentions in the earlier years to voting against Israel during 1975 and 1976. The high preponderance of right-wing dictatorships must be noted among these countries; to vote against Israel on human rights issues might backfire against their own anti-human rights policies at home (See Table 2). Some Latin American countries with more democratic forms of government (and less extensive violations of human rights to record at home) consistently also condemned Israeli violations of human rights, as did a number of others: Mexico, Panama, Peru,

TABLE 2: ISRAELI VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Y = Pro-Arab, N = Pro-Israeli A = Abstention

	1972 no. 3005 (XXVII) (1)	1973 no. 3092B (XXVIII) (2)	1974 no. 3240A (XXIX) (3)	1975 no. 3525A (XXX) (4)	1976 no. 31/106C (5)	
Argentina	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Bahamas	—	A	—	—	A	
Barbados	N	N	A	N	A	
Bolivia	N	N	N	A	A	
Brazil	A	A	A	Y	Y	
Chile	—	—	A	—	—	
Colombia	—	A	A	A	A	
Costa Rica	N	N	A	N	N	
Cuba	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Dom. Republic	N	N	—	—	A	
Ecuador	—	Y	Y	Y	Y	
El Salvador	A	A	A	A	A	
Grenada	—	—	Y	—	Y	
Guatemala	A	A	A	—	—	
Guyana	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Haiti	A	—	Y	N	N	
Honduras	Y	Y	A	Y	—	
Jamaica	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Mexico	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Nicaragua	N	N	N	N	N	
Panama	A	—	Y	Y	Y	
Paraguay	A	—	A	A	A	
Peru	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Trinidad and Tobago	A	Y	Y	—	Y	
Uruguay	N	A	A	A	A	
Venezuela	A	A	A	A	A	
Total	Y N A	4 6 11	9 5 7	11 2 11	10 4 6	11 3 9

(1) Of December 15, 1972 strongly calling upon Israel to rescind and desist from all policies violating the human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied territories and requesting the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices to continue its work.

(2) Of December 7, 1973, expressing grave concern at the violation by Israel of the Geneva Conventions.

(3) Of November 29, 1974, deploring Israel's violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories and her destruction of the city of Qunaitra.

(4) Of December 15, 1975, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the occupied territories.

(5) Of December 16, 1976, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices...

TABLE 3
RESOLUTIONS OUTLINING A SETTLEMENT
TO THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Y=Pro Arab, N=Pro-Israeli, A=Abstention

	1972 no. 2949 (XXVII) (1)	1973 no. 3089C (XXVIII) (2)	1974 no. 3331D (XXIX) (3)	1975 no. 3414 (XXX) (4)	1976 no. 31/61 (5)	
Argentina	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	
Bahamas	—	A	A	—	A	
Barbados	A	N	N	N	A	
Bolivia	N	A	N	A	A	
Brazil	A	A	Y	Y	A	
Chile	Y	Y	A	A	A	
Colombia	N	Y	Y	A	A	
Costa Rica	N	N	N	N	N	
Cuba	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Dom. Republic	N	A	A	N	A	
Ecuador	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
El Salvador	A	A	A	A	A	
Grenada	—	—	—	A	Y	
Guatemala	A	Y	A	—	—	
Guyana	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Haiti	A	—	—	N	—	
Honduras	Y	Y	Y	—	—	
Jamaica	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Mexico	Y	Y	Y	A	A	
Nicaragua	N	N	N	N	N	
Panama	A	—	A	A	Y	
Paraguay	A	—	A	A	A	
Peru	Y	—	Y	Y	Y	
Trinidad and Tobago	Y	Y	—	Y	Y	
Uruguay	—	Y	A	A	A	
Venezuela	A	A	Y	A	A	
Total	Y N A	10 5 8	12 3 6	11 4 8	7 5 11	9 2 12

(1) Of December 8, 1972, expressing grave concern at the continuation of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and calling upon all States not to recognize changes carried out by Israel in the occupied Arab territories and to avoid actions, including aid, that could constitute recognition of that occupation.

(2) Of December 7, 1973, reaffirming the right of the displaced inhabitants to return to their homes.

(3) Of December 17, 1974, reaffirming the right of all displaced inhabitants to return to their homes and deploring the Israeli refusal to take steps for their return.

(4) Of December 5, 1975, on the Situation of the Middle East. Condemning Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories.

(5) Of December 9, 1976, on the Situation in the Middle East. Condemning Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories.

TABLE 4

RESOLUTIONS ON THE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Y = Pro-Arab, N = Pro-Israeli, A = Abstention

		1974 no. 3237 (1)	1975 no. 3375 (2)	1975 no. 3376 (3)	1976 no. 31/20 (4)
Argentina		—	Y	Y	—
Bahamas		A	A	A	A
Barbados		Y	A	A	A
Bolivia		N	A	A	A
Brazil		Y	—	—	—
Chile		N	Y	A	A
Colombia		A	Y	A	Y
Costa Rica		N	N	N	N
Cuba		Y	Y	Y	Y
Dom. Republic		—	A	A	A
Ecuador		—	Y	A	A
El Salvador		—	A	N	A
Grenada		Y	Y	Y	A
Guatemala		—	A	A	N
Guyana		Y	Y	Y	Y
Haiti		A	A	—	N
Honduras		A	N	—	—
Jamaica		A	Y	Y	A
Mexico		Y	Y	Y	A
Nicaragua		N	N	N	N
Panama		A	Y	Y	Y
Paraguay		A	A	A	A
Peru		Y	Y	Y	Y
Trinidad and Tobago		Y	Y	Y	Y
Uruguay		A	A	A	A
Venezuela		Y	Y	Y	Y
	Y	9	13	10	7
	N	4	3	3	4
Total	A	8	9	10	12

(1) Of November 22, 1974, granting observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

(2) Of November 10, 1975, inviting the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the Middle East peace efforts.

(3) Of November 10, 1975, on the Question of Palestine.

(4) Of November 24, 1976, on the Question of Palestine.

TABLE 5

RESOLUTIONS ON ZIONISM

Y = Pro-Arab, N = Pro-Israeli, A = Abstention

	Zionism = Racism, Resolution 3379	Resolution 3519 (Overall Resolution)	Separate Vote on anti-Zionist clauses nos. 24 and 26	Resolution 31/6E South Africa/Israel	
Argentina	A	Y	Y	A	
Bahamas	N	A	A	A	
Barbados	N	A	N	Y	
Bolivia	A	A	A	A	
Brazil	Y	Y	Y	A	
Chile	A	N	N	A	
Colombia	A	Y	A	A	
Costa Rica	N	A	N	A	
Cuba	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Dom. Rep.	N	—	A	A	
Ecuador	A	Y	Y	A	
El Salvador	N	Y	A	A	
Grenada	Y	Y	Y	A	
Guatemala	A	—	—	N	
Guyana	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Haiti	N	N	N	A	
Honduras	N	A	N	N	
Jamaica	A	Y	Y	Y	
Mexico	Y	Y	Y	A	
Nicaragua	N	N	N	N	
Panama	N	Y	Y	Y	
Paraguay	A	A	N	—	
Peru	A	Y	Y	Y	
Trinidad and Tobago	A	Y	Y	Y	
Uruguay	N	A	A	A	
Venezuela	A	Y	Y	A	
Total	Y N A	5 10 11	14 3 7	12 7 6	7 3 15

Ecuador, Jamaica, Cuba and Honduras were the seven most consistent supporters of resolutions condemning Israel.

B. *A Middle East Settlement*

On resolutions defining a Middle East settlement (see Table 3) most Latin American states had already shifted against the Israeli position by the end of 1974. The majority of Latin American countries agree on the following principles as a possible basis for peace in the Middle East region: (1) Acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible and (2) Respect for the rights of the Palestinians is indispensable to the establishment of a permanent peace in the area.

Israel's only hard-core support on resolutions of this category came from Costa Rica, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. It should be pointed out here that the 1975 and 1976 formulations of the resolutions on the situation in the Middle East were tougher and more precise in condemning for the first time "Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and repeated United Nations resolutions."¹⁶ This outright and open condemnation of Israel partly explains the abstention votes in 1975 and 1976 of Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela. All four had voted in favour of a 1974 resolution similar in content yet less tough in its condemnation of Israel.

C. *The Rights of the Palestinian People*

The most interesting changes occurred in this category. During 1975 the Palestine Liberation Organization achieved recognition as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people from a relatively large number of Latin American states. On November 10, 1975 the Latin American countries voted 13-3 with 9 abstentions to invite the PLO to participate in the peace efforts in the Middle East.¹⁷ The comparative vote on a similar 1974 resolution had only been 9-4 with 8 abstentions (see Table 4).

Chile in 1975 completely reversed its earlier position of 1974 when it had voted against granting the PLO observer status at the United Nations. General Augusto Pinochet thus reverted to President Salvadore Allende's earlier pro-Arab policy.¹⁸ The Chilean Minister for Foreign Affairs, Patricio Carvajal, affirmed that his country had to re-evaluate its Middle Eastern policy

¹⁶ General Assembly, Resolution no. 3414 (XXX) of December 5, 1975.

¹⁷ General Assembly, Resolution no. 3375 (XXX) of November 10, 1975.

¹⁸ "Situation in Chile," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 8, 1975.

in the light of new political realities. Additionally, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Panama and Argentina in their 1975 votes on resolution 3375 came to accept the PLO as legitimate participants in UN forums and debates.

D. *Resolutions on Zionism*

Latin America rejected General Assembly Resolution 3379 defining Zionism as a form of racism by 10-5 with 10 abstentions. Among those voting in favour of the resolution, however, were Brazil and Mexico, the two major Latin American states who represent more than half of Latin America's population. The others voting for the resolution were Cuba, Guyana and Grenada (see Table 5). Chile had voted for the resolution in the earlier committee vote, but when the vote came before the General Assembly on November 10, it decided to abstain.¹⁹ The Chilean daily, *El Mercurio*, on October 29 reported that President Pinochet had informed his Foreign Minister Patricio Carvajal to "rectify" the Chilean stand on the resolution, and not to vote for the resolution when it came for a final vote in the General Assembly. Yet, Chile, instead of voting against the resolution as predicted by Israel, decided to abstain.²⁰

The Brazilian and Mexican vote, on the other hand, caused quite a shock for the Israeli authorities, and the Israeli news media²¹ voiced outrage in reaction. Israel charged Brazil with wooing the Arabs for oil money to be invested in Brazil, while the Mexican President Luis Echeverria was accused of courting Arab support in his quest for the position of UN Secretary General, for which he was said to hope to oust Kurt Waldheim.²²

The Zionist lobby in Latin America was actively engaged in trying to influence the respective Latin American governments to vote against the resolution. In Brazil, this led the government to denounce the Zionist lobby as "unpatriotic." Foreign Minister Antonio da Silveira went as far as accusing the Brazilian Jewish community of allegedly placing Israeli above Brazilian interests. In an interview published, he stated that the Jewish reaction to Brazil's vote on the resolution while the resolution was still at committee stage was unpatriotic. "Brazil cannot accept that some Brazilians feel more tied to their racial origins than to Brazil proper. Brazilians are

¹⁹ The Third Committee voted on October 10 to send the resolution to the General Assembly. For the Chilean reverse in its vote see *ibid.*, October 30, 1975.

²⁰ *El Mercurio* (Santiago), October 29, 1975.

²¹ *Aurora*, November 13, 1975, and November 20.

²² *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 28, 1975.

placing themselves against Brazil and in favour of their racial origins.”²³

That Israel had asked the US to exert pressure on Brazil was revealed by a Foreign Ministry spokesman, who affirmed that Brazil would never change its attitude, even “under US pressure.”²⁴ But President Ernesto Geisel assured representatives of Brazil’s Jewish community that no restrictions would be made regarding Zionist activities in Brazil, following and as a result of Brazil’s vote in the UN for the anti-Zionist resolutions.²⁵

Yet, if Israel was shocked by the Brazilian position, it was even more enraged by the Mexican vote. The *New York Times* reported a number of Zionist sanctions against Mexico after its anti-Zionist vote, such as an organized boycott of Mexico by American Jews, who cancelled their already booked vacation trips to Mexico.²⁶ World-wide Zionist pressure even caused President Echeverria to send his Foreign Minister, Emilio Rabasa, to Israel to explain the Mexican vote and position and to pledge that it would not change anything in Mexico’s policy towards Israel and Israeli-Mexican bilateral relations. Yet, in spite of this apparent retreat, Mexico voted on December 15, 1975 in favour of the blanket resolution of the June 1975 International Women’s Year Conference containing two paragraphs condemning Zionism along with racism, colonialism and apartheid as movements to be eliminated.²⁷ The vote, which caused obvious displeasure to Israel, surprised observers, especially in view of President Echeverria’s remarks to American Jewish leaders in Mexico that his Foreign Minister, Emilio Rabasa, “is now at the United Nations to ensure that the future votes by Mexico cannot be misunderstood as equating Zionism with racism or opposing the national aspirations of the Jewish people.”²⁸

To the outside observer of Latin American affairs and Latin American policy vis-à-vis the Middle East, the Brazilian and Mexican anti-Zionist vote in the United Nations was significant in two respects: (1) It demonstrated the limits imposed upon the Zionist lobby in Latin America and the erosion of US influence there, although Chile was finally succumbing to both and had abstained;²⁹ and (2) It reflected the increasing tendency in Latin America to

²³ Interview in *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, as quoted in the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 3, 1975.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Also *ibid.*, November 28, 1975.

²⁵ *O Globo* (Rio de Janeiro), December 3, 1975.

²⁶ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, December 8, 1975. *New York Times*, December 5, 1975.

²⁷ General Assembly Resolution 3519 (XXX) of December 15, 1975.

²⁸ As quoted in *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, December 17, 1975.

²⁹ For US pressure on Chile to change on the anti-Zionist resolution see *Washington Post*, November 1, 1975.

identify with the countries of the Third World and to bring Latin American foreign policy more into line with that of the non-aligned bloc. This aspect of Latin American political behaviour was particularly pronounced in the vote on Resolution 3519 (XXX) of December 15, the same resolution as that sponsored by the developing countries during the 1975 International Women's Conference in Mexico City (which for the first time had mentioned Zionism in connection with racism and racial discrimination without, however, explicitly equating Zionism and racism). The earlier vote on Resolution 3379 for Latin America had been 5-10, with 11 abstentions, but the vote on the overall Resolution 3519 was 14-3 with 7 abstentions. A separate vote taken on the anti-Zionist clauses — paragraphs 24 and 26 — was 12-7 with 6 abstentions (see Table 5).

3. BILATERAL RELATIONS: LATIN AMERICA, ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD

At an earlier stage, it has been suggested that Latin America's pro-Arab or anti-Israel votes in the United Nations and other international forums do not necessarily imply a pro-Arab or anti-Israel policy on the real, bilateral level of relations. Despite their rhetorical and symbolic nature, however, they do suggest at least latent trends. Votes in the General Assembly do not explain policy and policy changes, but policy does give us some explanation as to why the votes were cast. In the following analysis I have chosen to examine the bilateral relations of some major Latin American countries with Israel and the Arab world in order to detect some major changes in such political relations since the 1973 war.

A. *Mexico*

Mexico's Middle Eastern policy moved into the limelight during 1975, when the Mexican President Luis Echeverria set out on a tour of various Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt (August 5-7), Israel (August 7-10) and Jordan (August 10-13). There was some speculation that Echeverria was making an attempt to follow in Kissinger's footsteps of shuttle diplomacy — which had suffered a temporary setback in March — by trying to act as mediator between Israel and the Arab states. The *Jerusalem Post* suggested that the Mexican President was trying to promote a face-to-face Egyptian-Israeli meeting.³⁰ The basis of its report was the sudden dispatch of the Mexican Foreign Minister, Emilio Rabasa, from Tel Aviv to Cairo. Echeverria himself

³⁰ *Jerusalem Post*, August 11, 1975.

stated during a press conference that he had sent his Foreign Minister to Cairo “in an effort to take a step forward... in negotiations that are possible between Israel and Egypt.”³¹

While in Egypt, Echeverria personally met in Alexandria with the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, using the occasion to announce Mexico’s recognition of the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the people of Palestine.”³² During the fourth day of his official visit to Egypt Echeverria stressed the need for Israel’s complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, and defended the right of the Palestinian people to have a homeland of their own. A joint Egyptian-Mexican communiqué issued at the end of the visit condemned Israel’s method of gaining territory by force, and called for an early Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and the restoration of the “rights of the Palestinian people.”³³

While in Israel the Mexican President voiced the same themes, calling upon the Israeli leaders and people to “consider the moral aspect of the Palestinian problem,”³⁴ at the same time asking the Arab leaders to show pragmatism in their approach to Israel and their search for a settlement.

Echeverria is known for his dynamic approach to international relations as well as his preference for Mexico to be more actively involved in international affairs; many observers have suggested that he was seeking a leadership role for Mexico on the world scene. He was highly critical of Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy and by-passing of the United Nations to advance a US solution for the Middle East conflict. Echeverria’s own solution envisaged a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict solidly based on United Nations resolutions, in which the UN Secretary General would be the mediator between the conflicting parties.

Within Israel Echeverria and his delegation were received warmly, in spite of his overtures towards the PLO while in Egypt. Indeed, Echeverria could perhaps afford his independent and frank attitude, for a deep traditional friendship binds the two nations. Upon his arrival, Echeverria stated immediately that: “Our countries enjoy an excellent relationship extending beyond diplomatic exchanges. We have taught each other new techniques of making the deserts bloom and more efficient use of water.”³⁵

31 Press conference in Jerusalem, August 10, 1975. Text supplied by the Mexican embassy in Beirut.

32 *Jerusalem Post*, August 7, 1975.

33 *Ibid.*, August 8, 1975.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Jerusalem Post*, August 8, 1975.

Echeverria was referring to the various scientific exchange agreements that were signed and carried out between Mexico and Israel. On May 29, 1975, for instance, Mexico and Israel renewed for another period of 18 months a joint scientific cooperation agreement covering various common projects.³⁶ Following that, a new agreement on scientific and technical cooperation was signed in June 1975 covering such projects as agricultural cooperation, irrigation, crop improvement projects, cooperation in molecular and solid state physics, etc.³⁷ This latest agreement was to make 110 technicians (60 Israelis and 50 Mexicans) available for the various projects involved. Israeli instructors of the Haifa Technical Institute were to teach in Mexico, as well as participate in common symposiums on agricultural problems. When Mexico voted for General Assembly resolution 3379 condemning Zionism as a form of racism, Israel found itself unable to do anything except to launch a protest, upon which the Mexican President sent his Foreign Minister to Tel Aviv (December 7-10) to state that Zionism "is not racialist"³⁸ — despite which, Mexico voted one week later in favour of another resolution linking Zionism with racism and colonialism.³⁹

Israeli pressure and the US Zionist lobby were thus unable to shift Mexico from its new Middle Eastern policy (similar to that of the non-aligned bloc). The subsequent election of Jose Lopez Portillo as the successor of Echeverria, whose term expired in July 1976, changed nothing in this regard. Mexico's daily newspaper *Excelsior* even suggested that the PLO would open offices in Mexico sometime during 1977.⁴⁰

B. *Brazil*

Since the Brazilian government started to work for an economic boom in the early 1970's, President Ernesto Geisel's neutral Middle Eastern policy has increasingly tilted towards the Arab side. Brazil's economic prosperity is mostly dependent on the import of oil, and Arab oil power has had its effect. By January 1975, Brazil's foreign debt was 22 billion dollars.⁴¹ While in 1973 its oil import bill was only 800 million dollars, in 1975 it exceeded 3.8 billion dollars, a more than fourfold increase. A balance of payments deficit of 22 billion dollars is quite serious for Brazil, whose economy is dependent on export

³⁶ *Aurora*, May 29, 1975.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 5, 1975.

³⁸ *Jerusalem Post*, December 8, 1975.

³⁹ General Assembly Resolution 3519 (XXX) of December 15, 1975.

⁴⁰ *Excelsior* (Mexico City), December 29, 1976.

⁴¹ *Latin America* (London), January 17, 1975.

earnings. Petrobras, Brazil's national oil company, abandoned domestic prospecting for oil in the early 1970's in favour of international exploration. "A good relationship with the Arabs can not only prevent disaster but can give Brazil positive advantages."⁴² Thus, Petrobras has been able to maintain concessions from the Iraqi and Egyptian state oil companies, while Algeria's national oil company has agreed to allow Brazil to be its agent in Latin America.

In March 1975, three Kuwaiti investment companies joined in setting up a \$38 million Arab-Brazilian development company with the national Brazilian Banco do Brasil. The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah, visited Brazil between March 21-25 and signed the agreement on March 25.⁴³ This newly created Arab-Brazilian investment company (ABICO) was to invest in the following projects in Brazil: petrochemical industries, fertilizers, mining, refining, and the processing of minerals, etc. On the same day, Kuwait and Brazil issued a joint declaration calling for complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the recognition of Palestinian rights.⁴⁴ It was also announced that the Brazilian Foreign Minister, Antonio da Silveira, was to visit Kuwait in the near future.

Another indication of Brazilian economic penetration into the Arab world was the Iraqi government request in May 1975 to Volkswagen of Brazil to proceed with the construction of a car assembly plant in Iraq, following the lines of their economic cooperation agreement signed between Brazil and Iraq in July 1974.⁴⁵

The evolution of the Brazilian pro-Arab stand is thus very much economically conditioned. The benefits Brazil hopes to gain are twofold: preferential oil imports, and Arab trade and investment. The diplomatic price to pay for these benefits did not seem very high when compared to the returns of the new policy. Thus Brazil, the most successful of Latin American states in building economic ties with the Arab world, in 1975 voted to condemn Israel and support the Palestinian cause in the UN in all resolutions passed during the thirtieth UN session of 1975.

Correa da Costa, Brazil's permanent representative to the UN, has repeatedly stated: "The Brazilian government recognizes the legitimate and

⁴² *Middle East Economic Digest* (Beirut), Vol. 19, No. 14, April 4, 1975, p. 18, henceforth referred to as *MEED*.

⁴³ *MEED*, Vol. 19, No. 14, April 4, 1975, p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Washington Post*, September 18, 1975.

⁴⁵ *MEED*, Vol. 19, No. 21, May 23, 1975, p. 14.

inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty. We consider the exercise of those rights by the Palestinian people as an essential condition for the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the region. Any other solution would be illusory and would only serve to aggravate matters even further."⁴⁶

When the pro-Zionist Brazilian press openly criticized the official policy of President Geisel after Brazil's anti-Zionist vote, he publicly defended his government's policy by rejecting any notion of Brazilian anti-Semitism.⁴⁷ This was a common accusation against Antonio da Silveira, the Foreign Minister, who suffered the brunt of most press criticism. Yet anti-Semitism has never been as much of a problem in Brazil as in some other Latin American countries (for example, Argentina). Rabbi Henry I. Sobel of Sao Paulo, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, indicated that the problem of Jewish survival in Brazil does not stem from anti-Semitism but from the well-being of the Jewish community there.⁴⁸ He stressed that "anti-Semitism is not part of the Brazilian tradition" and pointed out that Brazil's vote equating Zionism with racism was "exclusively a pragmatic concern."⁴⁹

Yet, although Brazil has declared its backing for the Palestinian cause very frequently since 1974, it has so far refused to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. Its only contact with the PLO has been in the United Nations. When Said Absair of the PLO visited Brazil in May 1975, a request of his to be received by the Foreign Ministry was ignored.

C. *Argentina*

Argentina, one of the major Latin American powers, is presently engaged in an economic and political struggle against Brazil for regional leadership. While far less dependent on the import of foreign oil than Brazil, Argentina is interested in obtaining a re-exportable surplus, allowing it to gain influence in neighbouring Paraguay and Uruguay. Libya has been the main supplier of Argentina's oil.

⁴⁶ UN General Assembly, *Verbatim Record*, Document A/PV 2399, p. 31.

⁴⁷ *Aurora*, November 13, 1975. The *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio De Janeiro) had described the Brazilian government's vote as a racist vote, while the *O Globo* (Rio De Janeiro) and *Jornal da Tarde* (Sao Paulo) had condemned it as a vote stimulating terrorism.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Daily News Bulletin*, November 26, 1975. The Jewish community in Sao Paulo is Brazil's largest, with over 80,000 Jews living there, about half of Brazil's total Jewish population.

During Juan Peron's rule (1973-July 1974) Argentina sought to strengthen its Arab connections. At the end of 1973, Faysal Noufouri, an Argentinian political scientist in Buenos Aires, after meeting with Peron, declared:

We are going to strengthen the traditional links of blood and friendship which exist between Arab countries and South America in general, and with Argentina in particular, in order to complete the formation of the Third World and conclude mutual collaboration for defence against common enemies.⁵⁰

Yet, domestic Argentinian politics have often complicated the country's pro-Arab policy and continued to do so during 1975-76. In January 1975, President Isabel Martinez de Peron gave wide-ranging powers to her personal secretary Lopez Rega, a known member of the extreme right-wing terrorist organization AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina) and an anti-Semite. The Foreign Minister until August 11, 1975 was Alberto Vignes, who was strongly under the influence of Lopez Rega.⁵¹

Argentina's Jewish community, which contains nearly two thirds of the 750,000 Jews in Latin America, was openly hostile to Lopez' rule, and in particular his dismissal of Jose Bar Gelbard, a Jew and former Argentine Economic Minister. When Dr. Angel Robledo was appointed Foreign Minister after Lopez's departure from the Argentine political scene, the Jewish community praised his sympathetic stand towards Israel, and Israel itself hoped for a more neutral Middle East policy by Argentina.⁵²

Yet, in spite of the Perons' need and hope for Arab aid, Argentine support for the Arab cause has not been as openly and freely forthcoming as that, for example, of Brazil. In March 1975, for example, Argentina severed its relations with UNESCO as a result of its anti-Israel resolution. The journal *El Litoral* published a leading article criticizing UNESCO and its policy vis-à-vis Israel.⁵³ Moreover, Argentina was not willing to support Arab attempts to expel Israel from the United Nations and at the 1975 Lima Conference of the non-aligned nations of which Argentina is a full member, it helped to water down most anti-Israel resolutions, although the PLO was admitted as a member of the non-aligned bloc at that time.

On the economic level, Israeli-Argentine relations were also still intact. Israeli imports from Argentina were down considerably from \$ 19,014,000 in

⁵⁰ Morton Rosenthal, "Economics: The New Arab Weapon," *ADL Bulletin*, June 1973, p. 7.

⁵¹ Dr. Alberto Vignes was also Foreign Minister during 1973 when he represented Argentina at the Algiers summit conference of the non-aligned bloc, at that time recognizing the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

⁵² *Jewish Journal*, August 29, 1975.

⁵³ *El Litoral* (Buenos Aires) as quoted in *Aurora*, March 20, 1975.

1974 to \$ 13,611,000 in 1975 (See Table 1). When compared with the trade figures of 1973, Israel was only importing one third of its 1973 imports, which had at that time reached \$ 42,722,000. This drastic decline in imports from Argentina was, however, principally the result of Argentina's chaotic domestic economic situation which was characterized by continuous strikes, labour unrest and skyrocketing inflation of 900 percent. Israeli exports to Argentina, on the other hand, expanded over the same years, reaching \$ 4,353,000 in 1975 as compared with \$ 1,257,000 in 1973 and \$ 3,507,000 in 1974.

A final factor determining Argentina's position on the Middle East conflict has been its own domestic problems with leftist and terrorist organizations. Any open and public endorsement of the PLO is apt to lay the Argentine government open to criticisms by its own extreme right, as well as Israel and the US.

D. *Chile*

Chile's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict has varied drastically in recent years. Salvador Allende identified himself closely on taking office with the pro-Arab position of the socialist bloc. Yet his successor, Augusto Pinochet, immediately reversed his predecessor's Middle East policy, keeping his policy in close alliance with the United States. This change was itself dramatically reversed in 1975, when Pinochet shifted to a pro-Arab policy. Badly in need of economic transfusion, Pinochet came, like many others in the Third World, to regard Arab petrol money as his only saviour, especially after American aid had not been as freely and as generously forthcoming as initially expected.⁵⁴ In August 1975, the Chilean Foreign Minister held a banquet in the honour of the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian ambassadors accredited to Chile and on that occasion toasted Chilean-Arab relations, which he described as "very tight and solid." He also maintained that Chile could not remain neutral in the Middle East conflict, should Israel persist in its obstinate occupation of Arab lands.⁵⁵ On August 11, the Chilean Ministry of Economics announced a mission of a high-ranking group of government officials, headed by the Economics Minister himself, Jorge Cauas, to visit the Middle East in October 1975.⁵⁶ Cauas described this as the culmination of a "continued

⁵⁴ Bill Goodfellow, "Chile's Chronic Economic Crisis: 1976 and Beyond." *International Policy Report*, Center for International Policy, Washington, D.C., September 1976. See also *New York Times*, November 19, 1975.

⁵⁵ Barry Rubin, "Latin America and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁵⁶ *Jerusalem Post*, August 11, 1975.

process in the improvement of friendly relations and cooperation between our country and the Arab world.”⁵⁷ He was to be accompanied by Pablo Baraow, the President of the Central Bank, and other officials of the Foreign Ministry. Some results of the new Chilean policy were soon forthcoming. At the end of August, the Mining Ministry announced the financing of a \$300 million ammonia-urea plant in Chile by a Swiss petro-dollar backed bank. At about the same time, the Arab League announced that it would open its main Latin American office in the Chilean capital of Santiago.⁵⁸

In return for such Arab overtures, Chile voted in the United Nations Third Committee in favour of the resolution equating Zionism with racism, although, according to US sources, US pressure forced Chile to abstain in the final vote on this very same resolution when it came before the plenary assembly later.⁵⁹ Pinochet has, in fact, not abandoned his links with the Israeli government. The Israelis are understood to be supplying Chile with antitank weapons and Israeli technicians have reportedly gone to Chile to train the Chilean forces in using their Israeli-made weaponry.⁶⁰

E. *Venezuela*

Among the Latin American countries Venezuela is the least dependent on Arab oil or oil money. It has one major interest in common with the Arab states: the continuation of high oil prices. As a member of OPEC Venezuela certainly does not wish to offend its partners on the political level if it wants to secure their cooperation and support on the economic level. Yet the Venezuelan President, Andres Perez, has so far managed to keep business and economics separated from politics, and has been reluctant to allow his country's oil interests to exert excessive influence on its foreign policy. The Venezuelan ambassador to Israel, Napoleon Gimenez, in an interview with *Aurora*, pointed to the flourishing trade relationship between Israel and his country.⁶¹ Official trade figures also show that Venezuela provides the biggest Latin American market for Israeli industrial exports, mainly communications material, petrochemical products, manufactured goods and plastics amounting to a value of \$12,340,000 in 1975 (See Table I). Venezuela, on the other hand, exported to Israel only \$56,000 worth of diamonds during 1975, leaving Israel with a balance of trade surplus of over \$12 million. The Israeli Minister

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Latin America*, August 29, 1975, p. 272.

⁵⁹ *Washington Post*, November 1, 1975.

⁶⁰ *The Observer* (London), April 3, 1977.

⁶¹ *Aurora*, July 3, 1975.

without Portfolio, Gideon Hausner, visited Venezuela in June 1975 to insure the continuation of Venezuelan friendship and support,⁶² and received President Perez' assurance that Venezuela's cooperation with the Arab states would remain confined to the economic level.⁶³

Venezuela's Middle East policy can best be described as neutral, but leaning, nevertheless, towards the Arabs. On no occasion did Venezuela vote in favour of the Israeli position during 1975. Even on the resolution on Zionism it merely abstained, and did not vote against it, as was expected in Israel. Its Foreign Minister, Ramon Escobar Salom, has stated publicly that Venezuela's Middle Eastern policy is decided by pragmatism and Venezuela's national interest, thereby rejecting any influence of the Zionist lobby in the country.⁶⁴

F. *Bolivia*

Until the end of 1974 the right-wing regime of Colonel Hugo Banzer in Bolivia was considered a very staunch supporter of Israel in South America (See Tables 2-5). The Bolivian newspaper *Presencia* reflected the traditional government view in a leading article on the Palestine issue early in 1975, denouncing the PLO as a "terrorist organization" and calling upon the twenty Arab states to integrate the Palestinians, thereby solving the so-called Palestine problem.⁶⁵ When the Bolivian Health Minister Dr. Jorge Torres Navarro visited Israel at the end of May 1975, immediately following the World Health Organization General Assembly meeting in Geneva, he promised the Israeli President Ephraim Katzir that his country would never abandon Israel and the Jewish cause.⁶⁶

Bolivian-Israeli cooperation covers the economic as well as military sector. Agreements concerning technical cooperation and assistance were signed in 1973 and 1975, with a new agreement in May 1975 covering agricultural development of the Santa Cruz zone with Israeli know-how. The Israeli-Bolivian military connection is equally deep founded. Bolivia buys Israeli Arava planes, teleguided Gabriel missiles and various telecommunications

⁶² *Aurora*, June 12, 1975.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *El Nacional* (Caracas), November 12, 1975.

⁶⁵ *Presencia* (La Paz) as quoted in *Aurora*, January 23, 1975.

⁶⁶ During the World Health Organization's General Assembly meeting, Bolivia and four others were the only countries voting against a WHO resolution condemning Israel. See *Aurora*, May 29, 1975.

equipment and electronics. Official figures are, however, kept secret and no details are given by either of the two countries.⁶⁷

It is interesting that, despite this significant relationship, during 1975 Bolivia began to abstain on all UN General Assembly resolutions dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, instead of actively supporting Israel, as it had done in the past.

G. *Peru*

Peru's Middle Eastern policy is formulated along the lines of that of the other members of the non-aligned bloc. As host to the 1975 Fifth Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, which met in Lima on August 25-30, 1975, Peru exerted great influence on the formulation of the "Lima Programme of Mutual Solidarity and Aid," reaffirming among other points, the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes and to exercise their right to self-determination. It further reaffirmed "the legality of the struggle of the Palestinian people for the restoration of their full national rights, and asserts that restitution of these rights is an essential condition for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East."⁶⁸

Peru is one of the few oil-producing countries in Latin America (together with Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia) and thus is under no economic pressure to support the Arab cause. It is not a member of OPEC, and its support for the Palestine cause follows from ideological convictions which portray Israel as the lackey of Western, particularly US imperialism. The Israeli Minister without Portfolio, Gideon Hausner, visited Lima shortly before the Non-Aligned Conference and pleaded with the Peruvian President Alverado to reject any anti-Israel resolutions at the coming conference.⁶⁹ Peru explained its position along the lines of revolutionary ideology, pointing to Israel's intransigence on the Palestinian issue as the source of the conflict. The Peruvian press and news media fully supports the government's position and commends it, quite contrary to the press of other Latin American countries.⁷⁰

H. *Central America*

Central America is interesting in that some of its countries constitute the bulwark of the Israeli position in Latin America — Nicaragua, Costa Rica,

⁶⁷ *Aurora*, January 2, 1975.

⁶⁸ Published on September 5, 1975, as UN Document A/10217, Annex I, pp. 17-20.

⁶⁹ *Aurora*, June 12, 1975.

⁷⁰ Barry Rubin, "Latin America and the Arab-Israel Conflict," *op. cit.*, p. 38.

Barbados, Haiti, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. All are in dire need of petroleum as well as development aid, yet neither the oil embargo nor the availability of petrol money investment were able to bring them away from their traditional course of alignment with Israel.⁷¹ In return, much of Israel's development aid has been channelled to Central America, particularly after the refusal by the Afro-Asian bloc to engage in association and cooperation with the Israeli government.

In June 1975, Arturo Molina, President of El Salvador, personally thanked Israel for its aid in the agricultural and technical fields, calling at the same time for increased contacts and closer cooperation between his country and Israel.⁷²

The Costa Rican representative at the United Nations, Father Nunez, a former ambassador to Israel, often makes it his task to defend the Israeli position during General Assembly debates. In his speech before the Thirtieth Session he even accused the Arabs of misrepresenting "the historic truth."⁷³ Suffice it here to quote a few excerpts of this speech:

The Arab refugees were a consequence of the blindness of the Arab leaders. . . . Knowing both peoples as I do, and aware as I am of the statements of the spokesmen of Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and of other Arab leaders, who say that the Jews should be cast into the sea, I must state that I am firmly convinced that if there were Arab refugees it was because the people of Israel, which is its own army, is a people and a state with profound and deep-rooted moral principles. That is why there were Arab refugees. If — God forbid — the Arabs had conquered in any of those wars there would have been no Jewish refugees, because no single Jew would have been left alive. . . . Let us say once and for all, quite frankly, that the Palestine Liberation Organization does not represent the Palestinian Arabs.⁷⁴

The Barbadian Foreign Minister, George Moe, summed up the general Central American attitude towards a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict: "The pursuit of peace in the Middle East should include a solution which neither ignores the elemental interest of the Palestinian people, nor the right of the Israeli nation to survival."⁷⁵

The precise formulation of this official statement, according to which Israel has "national" rights while the Palestinians merely have certain "interests" is

⁷¹ *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), December 19, 1973.

⁷² *Aurora*, June 19, 1975.

⁷³ United Nations General Assembly, Thirtieth Session A/PV 2396, November 6, 1975, pp. 43-45.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 50.

⁷⁵ *UN Monthly Chronicle*, XII, No. 10 (November 1975), p. 37.

to be noted. Following the same line of political reasoning and thought, most Central American states reject the concept of a Palestinian people, and generally are only willing to accept "the Arab refugees" as a party to the Middle East conflict. All call for direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, following Security Council Resolution 242.⁷⁶

The underlying reasons for such one-sided attitudes on behalf of these Central American states (Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Haiti, El Salvador, Honduras, Barbados and the Dominican Republic) towards the Middle East conflict are twofold: (1) Israel's generosity in aiding these otherwise neglected countries in their development projects. This aid is not simply economic; Israeli-made weapons are increasingly finding their way to Central American States like Nicaragua, El Salvador or the Dominican Republic.⁷⁷ (2) The Zionist public relations apparatus operates effectively to maintain the image of Israel as a democratic developing country whose very existence is threatened by its hostile neighbours. A partisan image can be communicated all the more effectively because of the general lack of information on the Middle East in these tiny states, which have little experience in international affairs.

On the whole, however, it can be said that the increasing power of the Arab world as a source of oil and capital, and the greater trend towards non-alignment by Latin American states, is likely to make itself increasingly felt in the future policies towards the Middle East of Latin America as a whole.

⁷⁶ UN Documents A/PV 2372, p. 92 (October 7, 1975) and A/PV 2424, (December 2, 1975), p. 56.

⁷⁷ Elcanca Galli, Head of the Foreign Relations Department of IAI (Israeli Aeronautic Industries) has classified the Central American countries as his company's best current and prospective clients. See *Aurora*, January 2, 1975.