The Unusual History of the Cemetery of the Jewish Community of Cuba

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Jewish Funerary Art / ART 8506y
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Seek out - less often sought than found -
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then Look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

from *On My Thirty-sixth Year* [1824],[1]
George Noël Gordon, Lord Byron

Although the value of the Bible as a historical work is an issue which has been hotly debated for well over two hundred years,[2] in its pages we find the first recorded acquisition of land.[3] In the twenty-third chapter of the Book of Genesis we see this land purchase when Abraham buys a cave to be used as a burial place for his wife, and later for himself.[4] This passage is perhaps the first one in the Bible which records an actual event, that was witnessed and described through a long oral tradition which preserved authentic details.[5] But for our purposes, this Genesis passage is so very important because it describes one of the Jews' most ancient and dearest traditions: the dignified burial of the dead.[6]

Perhaps the ancient Israelites borrowed the tradition of the burial of the dead from the ancient Egyptians or the Mesopotamians, both whom had great reverence for their deceased, and built for them magnificent monuments as their tombs. From ancient Israelites, and then to the Jews, the establishment of a cemetery has traditionally been a sign of Jewish stability in a specific area. In other words, when Jewish communities throughout the world usually established their cemeteries, they did so with a feeling of permanent in a specific place. Unfortunately, and as we all know, Jews were often forced to flee from those places they believed were their permanent abodes, and their cemeteries remained behind as silent testaments to their past. For instance, today in Mainz-am-Rhein, where a great Jewish community once flourished, all that remains of a Jewish significant presence there is a small, ill-kept cemeteries full with fragmenting tombstones.

Yet rarely - if ever - did the existence of a Jewish cemetery precede the creation of a viable

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Jewish community where none had existed before. Furthermore, probably never did the existence of Jewish cemetery - founded by gentiles as a result of a war - play a decisive role in facilitating the establishment of a Jewish community. But this did occur at the turn of the century in an island just ninety miles from the shores of the United States.

Before getting into details of how Cuba's major Jewish cemetery - the one which is located just outside Havana - developed, and the role that it has played in Cuban Jewish society as whole, let us take an look at the role that Jews have played throughout Cuba's almost four hundred years of post-Columbian history. This survey is necessary, for it allows one not only to see how much Jews contributed to the formation of a Cuban nation, which generally recognizes their contributions, but what kind of a country the Jews who constituted a Jewish community on the island had emigrated to. Also, let us take a brief look at the history of cemeteries in Cuba; a history, which although quite short, has produced several artistic and architectural gems. Thus we will be able to better understand the significance of the Cemetery of the Jewish Colony of Cuba, as Havana's Jewish cemetery is officially known.

The first Jew known to have stepped foot in Cuba was Luis de Torres, Columbus' interpreter on all his voyages to the New World.[7] A very cosmopolitan Jew, Torres was fluent in Spanish. Latin, Arabic and Hebrew.[8] Since educated Spaniards at the time believed that all languages were related to one of these, it was natural that Torres would be the perfect interpreter to go off with Columbus to the unknown lands of the Orient.[9] Unfortunately for Torres, the only way he could go with the Great Admiral was if he converted to Christianity, since the Alhambra Decree expelling all non-converted Jews from Spanish domains within four months of its promulgation, had been put into effect just a few months earlier.[10] Therefore, Torres had to convert to Christianity in order to embark on the famous voyage.[11]

Upon arrival in Cuba on 28 October 1492, and according to Columbus' own travel logs, it was Torres who was fascinated by the Indians' smoking of tobacco.[12] According to the Great Admiral, Torres convinced him to take Indians back to Spain from Cuba in order to show the Crown how this strange herb was smoked.[13] Therefore, it can honestly be said that Torres was responsible for the introduction of smoking tobacco into Europe, and from there, into Western Civilization.[14]

Torres accompanied Columbus on his next two voyages to the New World. But after Columbus' third voyage, the Great Admiral's luck began to run-out, and for various reasons, he

fell out of grace in the eyes of the Spanish Crown. Since Torres was so tied to Columbus, he himself began to arouse suspicion in the eyes of Spanish authorities, especially since it was well-known that he was a New Christian. Little is known of what exactly happened to Torres, but what we do know is that the Holy Inquisition began to investigate him, and in order to escape eventual persecution, it is known that Torres fled to Cuba in 1521.

After the establishment of the colony of Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola, Cuba was basically ignored by the Spanish, since Spain geared all of its attention on conquering the mainland, where great deposits of minerals - such as gold and silver - could be found and exploited.[15] Therefore, Cuba was just used as a launching ground for Spanish expeditions to what is now Florida, and to Mexico.[16] Because of this, Torres could live on the island in relative calm.[17] What we do know about this Jew is that he settled somewhere in the center of Cuba, and there he established a tobacco farm worked by Indian slaves.[18] Otherwise, no more was recorded about Torres,[19] but this converted Jew did go down in Cuban history as being the first white man to permanently settle in Cuba, and the first white man to establish a farm there.[20] Furthermore, the site of Torres' family's graves - whose exact location are unknown[21] - can be considered to be Cuba's first "Jewish" cemetery.

For the next nearly three hundred years or so, Cuba basically remained an ignored and underpopulated Spanish colony, whose principle mainstay was farming and producing goods which supplied ships that stopped at strategically-located Havana on the way back and forth from the Spanish American mainland to Spain.[22] Throughout the sixteenth century, Spain's greatest preoccupation in Cuba had been to subdue the approximately 100,000 Indians[23] who had risen-up against the Spaniards over and over again[24] Although the Indians would not give-in, they were virtually obliterated by war, over-work, and disease by the beginning of the seventeenth century.[25]

Nevertheless, the "primitive" Indians who lived in Cuba did practice specific burial rituals. Archeological digs which took place in the 1940s in the region near where the United States Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay is located, uncovered caves where the Indians would place their fully-clothed deceased in fetal positions, surrounded by jugs and amulets.[26] The Indians must have had to use the caves since throughout most of Cuba there are many subterranean rivers,[27] and the island also has a very high water table; in several spots, only three feet below the surface.[28] Because of this, the Spanish had a very hard time at burying their dead,[29] so they resort-

ed to a technique that they had used in Christian Spain for centuries.

During that nearly seven hundred year long crusade against Muslim Spain, commonly known as *La Reconquista*, time and time again, the Christians would conquer a town or a city, only to lose it again to the Moors.[30] Often when a Christian-held municipality fell to the Spanish Muslims, the Christians' cemeteries were destroyed, as a symbol of Islamic victory.[31] Due to their fear that the territory they had won would again fall in the hands of the Muslims, the Christian Spaniards began to bury their dead in their churches or in annexes attached to the same.[32] They did this, because knowing that the Muslims considered the Christians "People of the Book" (or "ahl al-ketab"), the Islamic forces would in most cases not defile churches, and therefore, their dead could be assured a peaceful rest.[33]

This tradition of burying at least notables in churches continued for quite a while in Spain after the Fall of Granada.[34] For instance, an example of this is the reason behind the edification of the world-famous Palacio de San Lorenzo del Escorial, better known as El Escorial. This magnificent edifice built in the sixteenth century on a mountain range outside Madrid by the world's them most powerful - and probably most eccentric - monarch, Felipe II, is many things, but most importantly, it is a mausoleum.[35] El Escorial is horribly macabre just by looking at its design. It was built in the form of a huge grill in honor of Saint Lawrence, whose martyrdom supposedly took place as he was cooked alive.[36] Not that Felipe II was a devoté of Saint Lawrence, but he wanted El Escorial to stand as a monument to all the Spanish soldiers who had fallen at the Battle of San Quentín against the French, and that happened to have taken place on Saint Lawrence's Day.[37] Since Felipe II could not transfer the bodies of all those who died in the battle to this palace, he had others reëntombed there, including most Spanish royalty and nobility.[38] Granted, El Escorial is a complex which also includes a spectacular library, an impressive monastery and a huge church,[39] but its main purpose was that it be used as a huge mausoleum.[40] That is why so many of those who visit the place say that it wreaks of death. Nevertheless, after El Escorial was built, it became the model for countless church/mausoleum complexes which Spain built in its territory and throughout its empire, including Cuba.[41]

But the Spanish tradition of building monumental church/mausolea did not end with Felipe II's extravagance. Francisco Franco, after his Falangist victory over the Second Spanish Republic, ordered the building of a gigantic church/mausoleum which would stand as a symbol of peace and reconciliation among Spaniards after their very bloody civil war.[42] Of course, it is

difficult to understand how this monument could stand for reconciliation when it was built with the slave labor of Republican prisoners.[43] Nevertheless, this gigantic church/mausoleum, which is known as The Valley of the Fallen (*El Valle de los Caídos*), and which stands on the site of the great battle for Madrid, and on the same mountain range where El Escorial is located, follows the pattern set-forth by Felipe II.[44] It consists of a huge 350 feet granite cross overlooking a cliff, and below the cliff, is the entrance to the world's largest.per-square-foot basilica, which itself holds the bodies of over 10,000 of those fallen in the civil war.[45] Among the notables buried there are virtually the whole directorate of the Spanish Republic (many of whom were atheists), and on the altar, Franco himself, since there is where he wished to be buried.[46] The examples of El Escorial and The Valley of the Fallen are pertinent to our topic since they - and everything which came in between as far as the proper burial of the dead are concerned - influence Cuba greatly. Cuba did not consider itself a colony of Spain as did the rest of Spanish America, but because of geography and ethnicity, Cuba considered herself to be an overseas province of the Motherland,[47] which had to be emulated in every way possible, including the funeral arts.

As far as the Jews are concerned in this era of the colonial period, we have no record of them in Cuba until early in the eighteenth century, except for two very important exceptions. In 1530, one of the earliest correspondence between Cuba and Spain we have is that of the Bishop of Santiago de Cuba (then Cuba's capital and most populated settlement)[48] to the Spanish Crown.[49] In his letters, the Bishop was complaining that virtually every woman disembarking at Santiago as a Spanish colonizer was a New Christian.[50] Now, the interesting fact about this is that the Bishop complained about women, not men. It is a well-known fact that New Christians were not officially allowed to emigrate from either Spain or Portugal up to the third generation, since the Iberian powers were terrified and paranoid about the possibility of having whole populations of anti-Spaniards and anti-Catholics spreading-out throughout their domains and conspiring against Spanish Catholic hegemony.[51] Perhaps it was easier for New Christian women to arrange a *Limpieza de Sangre*[52] or *Blood Cleansing*, the official document which "proved" that one was a pure Christian without any Jewish background, and thus allowed one to leave for the New World.[53] Still, if it is true that so many New Christians made their way to Cuba during Spain's program to colonize the island with Spaniards in order to make it a Spanish overseas province, than there must be some truth to what many have said: that a great number of Cubans who have roots in the island going back four hundred years descend directly from New Christians, if

not from outright marranos.[34] As a matter of fact, there have been studies which have tried to prove this. One of them attempted to show that among Cuban peasants - and among Cuban aristocratic families as well - New Christian surnames prevail, such as Santa María, Cristiani, Señor, Trinidad, Sacramento, Machado, Marchena, Porta, Lobo and Toledano.[35] Some have gone as so far as to say that the influence of New Christians in the formation of a Cuban nation led to the Cubans' traditional lack of any real religious devotion or zeal, like the kind one might find in several other Latin American countries.[36]

The next time we hear of a Jew having any influence in Cuba was in 1590, and this was in the person of Pedro Teixeira. Teixeira - a great example of a late medieval/early modern Jewish explorer and traveler - descended from a line of marranos whose ancestors had been converted by force to Catholicism in 1497 Portugal.[37] Among Teixeira's many feats were that he is believed to have been the first Jew to have circumvented the globe by ship,[38] and that he developed Spain's prosperous China trade through its colonial outpost in Manila (the Philippines).[39] As far as Cuba was concerned, he was instrumental in convincing the Spanish authorities to refound the city of Havana were it is located today.[60] Originally, the city was founded in 1525 on the Caribbean coast of the island, diagonally across from where it is located today,[61] but in 1586, it was completely destroyed by a hurricane.[62] Because Teixeira had been so successful in bringing wealth to the Spanish Crown (would should remember that Portugal and Spain were a united kingdom at the time), he was able to convince Spain that Havana should be refounded on the bay known then known as Puerto de Carenas,[63] since according to Teixeira, its harbor was "...splendid and...so large and deep, that it could hold all of the world's fleets."[64] Also, Teixeira argued that a Havana located on the northern coast of Cuba would be excellent for existing trade and for establishing new trade routes, since it would lie directly on the Gulf Stream.[65] Spain bought Teixeira's arguments, and Havana was refounded in its present location in 1590.[66] From then on, Havana would overshadow Santiago de Cuba, it would become the heartbeat of the island, and would, in a short time, become one of the wealthiest and most cosmopolitan cities in the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately for Teixeira, from Cuba, he returned to Lisbon, where the Holy Inquisition began to question him about his supposed marrano activities.[67] Knowing that it would not be long before he would meet a bitter end, Teixeira fled to the Netherlands, where he lived the rest of his life (until approximately 1650) openly as a Jew.[68]

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Cuba's greatest colonial treasures were built, and

most of them happened to church/mausoleum complexes. The Cathedral of Santiago de Cuba was not only begun to be built in 1519 to house the Catholic Primacy of the island, but was also to enshrine the earthly remains of the great Conquistador Diego Velázquez.[69] Since the water table is very high in Santiago, the Cathedral was built on a huge solid granite hill overlooking the city.[70] That way, there would be no problem burying people underneath its edifice[71] (in the photograph of the façade of this cathedral included in the addenda, one can see the lower level below the structure, which now contains shops). It should be noted here that only people who possessed a Blood Cleansing could be buried underneath Santiago's cathedral, or any other for that matter.[72] Nevertheless, in rare exceptions, favorite black slaves were allowed to entombed in these precincts, since their owners were to prominent to refuse their petitions for these burials.[73] Otherwise, slaves and others who did not possess the required documents, were buried wherever it could be done; and this was the case everywhere on the island during almost the whole colonial period.[74] Santiago's cathedral remained the main focus for burial in that city until the end of the last century.[75] As a matter of fact, as more and more wealthy and influential people were buried in the Cathedral's precincts and its attached mausolea, the more ornate its interior became, since the families of those buried there donated money for ornamentation[76] (in the addenda, there is a picture showing the interior of the Cathedral). Among the notable families of Santiago which contributed greatly to the ornamentation and the rebuilding of the Cathedral, and whose families are buried within it, is the Bacardí family, of rum fame, and the Arnaz family, of "I Love Lucy" fame.[77]

In Havana, the Cathedral was built primarily as a mausoleum to house the remains of Diego Colón, Columbus' oldest son, who played a major role in early colonial Cuban history[78] (in the addenda there is a picture of his mausoleum, along with that of the Cathedral itself). The location for the Cathedral was chosen because on that site, a massacre of a Spanish garrison took place at the hands of rebelling Indians.[79] Therefore, it also stood as a monument to those who died there. In 1954, laborers working underneath the Cathedral, uncovered a mass grave containing over 5,000 human remains, believed to be those of both Spaniards and Indians.[80] A huge and imposing baroque structure, Havana Cathedral took over two hundred years to complete, and was finally inaugurated in 1786.[81]

Finally, the most impressive example of Spanish mausoleum construction in Cuba is the Iznaga Tower, located outside the colonial city of Trinidad in south central Cuba. This tower,

along with Trinidad, have been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list (as is Old Havana and its Cathedral).[82] Trinidad was founded by the Conquistador Velázquez in 1512, and became very rich with the conquest of Mexico and the slave trade, although the city was to practically die-off in the next century with the rise of Havana.[83] Nevertheless, Velázquez's brother-in-law - Agustín Iznaga - became the city's governor.[84] In order to have a secure and honorable mausoleum for his prestigious family, Iznaga had built in 1525 - with Indian slave-labor - this impressive multi-faceted structure[85] (a picture of which is also included in the addenda). At the bottom of the tower, are located the Iznaga family tombs and a chapel adorned with gold leaf, and at the very top, a bell-tower, from which to call the slaves to work.[86] On each level of this structure, overseers were stationed so that they could watch over the slaves as they worked. Yet at the very top of the tower, there are several observation windows, so that especially-trained watchers could keep guard over any incursion of pirates which could be coming to the coast.[87] When it was built, the Iznaga tower was the tallest structure in the hemisphere, towering over 150 feet.[88]

Meanwhile, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, what we know of Jews in Cuba is very little. They were officially banned from stepping foot on Spanish territory,[89] and since Cuba was a Spanish colony, for a Jew to enter Cuba was punishable by death. Nevertheless, we know that many of the Sephardic Curaçao Jews (originally fleeing Brazil) who made their way to New Amsterdam, did so by way of shipping routes that went through Havana in 1654.[90] Also, Jewish traders working for Dutch concerns often stopped in Havana.[91] Obviously, if the Spanish knew that these individuals were Jews, they must have looked the other way, since they were bringing them money. Also, they were no threat to the islands Spanish Catholic hegemony, since they did not intend on establishing themselves in Cuba for good.

Nevertheless, the information concerning "Jews" in Cuba that we do have during this period is through the activity of the Holy Inquisition. Although not as severe as in Peru or Mexico, there was an Inquisition in Cuba, which took the lives of several hundred people accused of judaizing,[92] including that of the mayor of Havana - Antonio Rodríguez Mejía - and of his wife in 1734.[93] Granted, some have said that since most of those who perished in the Inquisition in Cuba were wealthy and powerful, they were targeted not because of the religious practices, but because of envy or a desire to take their goods from them.[94] This might be true, but if the cor-

respondence we earlier saw from the Bishop of Santiago de Cuba was any indication of reality, it might very well be true that at least some of those who fell victim to the Inquisition in Cuba were Secret Jews.

In 1762, the British invaded Cuba and governed Havana and its surrounding areas for nearly two years.[95] Because of this event, Cuba was to change forever. Not only did the British break the monopoly that Spanish companies - such a those which dealt with tobacco - had on the island, but Havana was opened to traders from all backgrounds.[96] Among those who came with the British were Dutch Jewish Traders, who came with the intention of establishing a stock exchange.[97] As a matter of fact, it was a New York Jew by the name of Jacob Franks who went to Havana in charge of supplying the British troops stationed there.[98] Once Spain came to an agreement with London over which party held the legitimate claim over Florida[99] (the original reason which the British invoked in order to substantiate their take-over of Havana),[100] Britain retreated from Cuba. The Spanish agreed to allow from then on all traders to come and deal their goods in Havana, but Spain reserved the right to ban whoever they wished from settling in Cuba.[101] Therefore, all Jews who came with the British had to leave Cuba, since Spanish law still barred them.[102] But more importantly, the short-lived British presence in Havana economically and commercially tied Cuba with the British North American colonies, most of which were soon thereafter to become the United States of America.[103] As a matter of fact, the most valued currency unit that Spain circulated at that time - the *täler* - spread throughout British North America from Havana, and there became known as the *dollar*.[104] Not only would the British presence in Havana tie Cuba to the United States, it forged ties that would give way to a vehicle by which arms and monies were smuggled to the American rebels.[105] Many among the most prestigious families in Cuba - and especially the women - donated their funds and even their jewels to the American cause for independence.[106] This is noteworthy, since some of these families - such as the Marchenas and Toledanos[107] - are believed to have descended from New Christians,[108] and some of their family members had actually suffered at the hands of the Inquisition in Cuba.[109] Cuba's ties to the United States were sealed; the same ties which would be the main reason why a Jewish community would develop on the island.

The massive and successful slave rebellion on Hispaniola - which became known as the Haitian Revolution - destroyed Saint-Domingue's status as the richest colony in the world, and its position as the world's greatest sugar producer.[110] Taking advantage of the situation, Cuba's

then governor-general, Francisco Arango y Parreño, decided to convert Cuba into a sugar-producing island in order to fill this void caused by the success of the Haitian slaves.[111] From then on and until very recently, Cuba would be the world's largest producer of sugar and sugar cane by-products.[112] Yet the sugar industry would have a very negative side to it. In this period - the beginning of the nineteenth century - Cuba was a very underpopulated island, with no more than 200,000 people in a land area of 110,922 square kilometers.[113] In order to increase the labor force for sugar production, the mass importation of slaves was begun.[114] Although the slave trade was officially banned by Spain in 1824,[115] over 200,000 black slaves slaves were illegally exported to Cuba from Africa between the beginning of the century until 1850.[116] Therefore, by the mid-nineteenth century, the mulatto and black population of Cuba surpassed the island's white population.[117] Because of this and the lack of a zealous religious organization on the island,[118] the black slaves were only partially Christianized,[119] and thus they were able to efficiently syncretized their African religions with Catholicism.[120] This is how the Afro-Cuban religions were born.[121]

At the time of the Haitian Revolution, something else occurred which had a great impact, at least as far as our topic is concerned. In 1802, a Spanish bishop by the name of Juan José Díaz de Espada y Landa was made Bishop of Havana.[122] A very educated man who had studied medicine at Spain's prestigious University of Salamanca, Bishop Espada was appalled when he arrived in Havana, not only by the poor hygienic conditions prevalent in parts of the city, but by the amount of smallpox which had spread throughout the area.[123] Not only was the Bishop troubled by the lack of public hygiene and the spread of smallpox,[124] he was horrified to see that no real cemeteries had been built anywhere near the capital, and that church mausolea were overflowing.[125] As part of his general campaign for improved hygiene and the eradication of smallpox in Havana, Espada took it upon himself to force the Spanish authorities to declare that all church mausolea were too full to receive any more bodies, and that they had to be closed, since Espada was terrified that some sort of epidemic would break-out as a consequence of this situation.[126]

The Spanish authorities were willing to comply with Espada's demands, on the condition that he find the money elsewhere for establishing a cemetery.[127] Being that no one could understand the urgency that Espada felt, he acted alone, and set-out to establish Cuba's first real cemeteries. Espada took episcopal land which was reserved for his leisure and which was located just out-

side the city's walls, and there, with his own money, established in 1804 the *Cementerio de María Purísima* (Cemetery of the Most Pure Virgin Mary).[128] The area of the cemetery was a rectangular space comprising of approximately one thousand square feet, and with the personal funds which Espada contributed to this effort, a traditional wall was erected around the perimeter of this necropolis.[129] Although officially one needed to poses a Blood Cleansing in order to be buried in any Cuban cemetery, Espada allowed for blacks, mulattos, and even Freemasons to be buried there.[130] The Bishop's project was so well received by the Spanish authorities, that very soon thereafter, Santiago's impressive Santa Efigenia Cemetery was established, and as were others in every major municipality on the island.[131] Not surprisingly, Bishop Espada asked to be buried in the first cemetery which he founded, and that is why today it carries his name: *Cementerio Espada*,[132] Espada Cemetery.

It is very important to note here that the Spanish allowed these cemeteries to be founded if they met several conditions. First of all - as in Spain - Cuban cemeteries had to be built outside the city walls or at the municipal parameters of a town.[133] The Spanish traditionally have had a very high respect for the dead, probably more out of superstitious fear than out of respect, and that is why they put their dead as far as possible from where people live.[134] As a matter of fact, people were prohibited from living within one hundred feet of a cemetery.[135] Some say that this was due to Spaniards' respect for the dead, but others say that it was due to their fear of disease which could come from decaying corpses.[136] Of course, these prohibitions never worked very well, since cities tended to grow around cemeteries, in both Cuba and Spain.[137] Also, the Spanish allowed for cemeteries to be built in Cuba if a high stone wall was placed around its parameter, as is the Spanish tradition of enclosing cemeteries.[138] Finally, and specifically in the case of Cuba, the Spanish allowed mass underground burial only if the bodies were buried two meters (six and a half feet) below ground, and the burial hole had to be lined with either stone or some other impermeable material, since the Spanish knew that Cuba's water table was very high, and they were afraid that corpses could contaminate this precious water supply.[139] Because of this, later on when a Jewish community develops in Cuba, even the most traditional Jews among them had to accept this type of burial where the coffin did not come into direct contact with the soil around it, since until very recently, these traditional rules for burial were strictly enforced by Cuban authorities.[140]

The Holy Inquisition in Cuba was abolished during the Napoleonic conquest of Spain,[141] and

its abolition was ratified after the Restoration of the Bourbon Dynasty in Madrid and Cuba's full integration into Spain as an overseas province (such as were the Canary Islands).[142] Nevertheless, the laws which banned Jews from living in Spanish territory still applied.[143] Because of this, no Jewish community developed on the island in the eighteenth century, although it is known that individual Jews - such as single male German pioneering and adventurous Jews - did make their way to Cuba from the United States and settled there, but completely assimilated, although their surnames have lingered on.[144] Yet although the Holy Inquisition was banned, the "Blood Cleansing" was maintained as the main document which would insure an individual of being able to climb the social and economic ladder. As a matter of fact, to have this most sought after document continued to be the main prerequisite for being allowed to enter the University of Havana, as it had been since the school's founding in 1526.[145]

It should be mentioned here that although throughout the first half of the nineteenth century Cuba might have still been a political colony of Spain, its main commercial partner was the United States. For instance, from 1825 onward, second to Liverpool, England, the foreign port with which New York Harbor (already the United States' major commercial port) had the most trade was Havana.[146] Therefore, the future of a Cuba tied to the United States was sealed.

Cuba's first real patriot was a native-born - or *criollo* (creole) - priest named Félix Varela, who began his eighteenth century revolutionary career promoting his belief that Cubans were not overseas Spaniards, but that they were distinctly Cuban[147] His liberal and humanistic writings were systematically smuggled into Cuba, where they had a great impact among future revolutionaries;[148] especially his tracts on the sin of religious intolerance, and the false belief that one religion or another had the monopoly over the truth.[149] Varela was assassinated by Spanish agents in Saint Augustine, Florida,[150] but his liberal view of the world would change Cuba for ever.[151]

Although independence-minded rebellions had taken place in Cuba since the late eighteenth century,[152] the first major challenge to Spanish rule over the island took place in 1850, when a group Cuban exiles based in the United States landed in Cuba in 1850.[153] Accompanying these Cubans (some of whom were in favor of independence, some who were in favor of just Cuban autonomy from Spain, and others who were annexationists, and wished to see Cuba become another American slave state)[154] was the American Jew August Bondi, who was renown in the United States for his Abolitionist activities.[155] Also accompanying Bondi and the Cubans was

Louis Schlessinger: an American Jewish adventurer who had previously served as a colonel in the personal army of William Walker, the American filibuster who had earlier on taken-over Nicaragua, and declared himself president of that Central American country.[156] Both Bondi and Schlessinger survived the invasion, and they were deported from Cuba to their country of origin one year later, for the Spanish feared angering American authorities by having them executed.[157] Unfortunately for the Cubans, their lives were not spared by the island's Spanish authorities.[158] Yet thanks to Schlessinger, we were left with a detailed account of those tragic events, since upon his return to the United States, he recorded his impressions of what had occurred for the American publication *Democratic Review*.[159]

But it was not until 1868 that a full-scale war for Cuban independence would begin. A very bloody and destructive conflict, it ended ten years later with Cuba's defeat and the death of its leader, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.[160] Although officially over, the desire for war on the part of the Cubans was not completely extinguished, and it flared-up several times again.[161]

But a by-product of this very bloody war was the model by which all major Cuban cemeteries were soon to be patterned. In 1870, and in the midst of popular upheaval, seven freshman medical students in Havana were publicly executed by firing squad after a speedy trial which found them guilt of having desecrated a statue of the Spanish monarch, King Amadeo I.[162] Although they were the Cuban-born sons of prominent Spaniards, these seven medical students were not allowed to be buried in a church mausoleum, church crypt, or the Espada cemetery.[163] The Spanish authorities finally allowed these students to be buried in a private farm which belonged to one of their parents, located about ten miles west of old Havana's gates, since they wanted to make it difficult for Cubans to go to their graves in patriotic protest pilgrimages.[164] By this time, the Espada cemetery was overflowing, and had to be closed to any further burials.[165] With this, a Cuban-born architect of Catalonian parents decided to take advantage of the situation, and thus was born Havana's premier Colón - or Columbus - Cemetery.

This architect - Jacinto María Martínez Saenz - had studied in Barcelona under the renown socialist architect Hildefus Shelar; the same man who had designed Barcelona's new sector, knowned by its Catalonian name *El Eixample*, or *The Extension*.[166] Shelar had also designed Barcelona's new cemetery of Montjuich, located where the ancient Jewish sector of the city used to be, hence its name, which literally means "Mount Jew."[167] Influenced by his mentor's teachings, Martínez Saenz approached the Spanish authorities and convinced them that a new ceme-

tery should be built where the students had been buried, since it was an unpopulated area, which was far away enough from Havana to be in accordance with the rules of how far a cemetery should be located from a city, and yet close enough to be accessible.[168] Furthermore, it would be more ideal as a location for a new cemetery, since all the land in the vicinity around where the students were buried had been confiscated by by the Crown shortly after their infamous burial, since the property's owners were also tried and convicted for treason against the Spanish throne.[169]

Now, why would the Spanish accept establishing a cemetery where they knew that Cuban nationalist heroes were buried while the war was still going on? Well, first of all, the Spanish monarchy had been overthrown earlier that year, and the short-lived First Spanish Republic tried to establish a more "benevolent policy" towards Cuba.[170] Furthermore, the Cubans were losing the war badly, and there was no chance that the United States was going to intervene in the conflict on the side of the Cubans since it was too preoccupied with Reconstruction after the Civil War.[171] Therefore, a new cemetery in the location where the medical students were buried was not going to be a threat to Spanish hegemony over the island. Thus, the Spanish acceded to Martínez Saenz's plans to establish this new cemetery.[172]

As did Hildefus in his plans for Barcelona's El Eixample and the Montjuich Cemetery, Martínez Saenz's new cemetery was was going to be very "egalitarian."[173] All its plots were not going to be larger than four square meters, and all were to be separated by a one meter distance from one another, so that way the cemetery would not quickly begin to look cluttered.[174] Funding from the project came partially from the Spanish Republic and partially from the wealthiest members of Barcelona's stock exchange - known as *La Lonja* - most of whom had made their fortunes in Cuba or in dealing Cuban goods.[175] Martínez Saenz wanted the cemetery to be egalitarian, but not poorly egalitarian, but instead that it should reflect an elite view of the world.[176] He wanted for the tombs to be built of marble, which in Cuba was not an expensive material, since Cuba's Isle of Pines is plentiful in it.[177] Martínez Saenz also had a perpetual fund set-up so that those who could not afford to build tombs that were up to the standard of the cemetery could have them subsidized; a fund which existed until very recently.[178]

This new necropolis was to be huge, since the war for independence was costing many lives on both sides, and Martínez Saenz knew that cemetery space was desperately in need. Therefore, not only was the original space of the property where the students were buried used

for the cemetery, but the surrounding ones as well. Therefore, when Martínez Saenz designed the main entrance gate and the perimeter wall of the cemetery, it went around a huge area of three thousand square meters; almost two square miles.[159] As a matter of fact, this cemetery was built on such a large scale, that a cynical joke developed among Cubans which said that the only thing that the Spanish knew how to build well were churches to save one's soul, prisons to punish them went they went astray, and cemeteries, for when they were lucky enough to leave this world.[160] Finally, Martínez Saenz designed the monumental gateway to the cemetery, which became the model for other Cuban cemetery gates, including that of the Jewish cemetery. As a symbol of respect for the designer of the cemetery, Martínez Saenz was given a family plot right at the entrance to this necropolis.[161] Finally, after the gate and the walls of the cemetery were completed, the whole elaborate complex was inaugurated in 1873,and thus was established one of Havana's major tourist sites.[162]

Now, we cannot leave this without mentioning why it was named Columbus Cemetery. The Spanish wanted the complex to be named after a major Spanish figure. Needless to say, Spain was not very popular among the Cubans at the time, so Martínez Saenz came up with the name "Colón" or "Columbus," since he believed that it was the Great Admiral who had started the whole mess that Cuba was in. So, the cemetery's architect had the cemetery facetiously named, while the Spanish thought that it was sincerely named in honor of one of their greatest heroes.[163]

Eventually, this cemetery's tombs became so elaborate - created in styles such as Greek, Romanesque, Neo-Classical, Art Nouveau, Byzantine and Gothic - that other cemeteries began to copy the Columbus' Cemetery's tomb designs,[164] including the Jewish cemetery of Havana. As Cubans in this century began to look more at the United States and less at Europe for models, the cemetery began to acquire tombs done in Art Déco style, and in the forties and fifties, even some made of steel and glass;[165] an influence under which the Jewish cemetery was not going to escape from either. Also, the location of the Columbus Cemetery in where the water table is very low, so one could bury very deeply.[166] Since not everyone could afford a mausoleum, Martínez Saenz designed special in-ground tombs which Cubans call *bóvedas* (an example of which one can see in the addenda). These structures are sometimes over ten meters in depth, and are lined by concrete, marble, or some other very hard and durable material. After the first coffin is laid on the bottom, a slab of marble or concrete is placed over it and held by special steel bars protruding from the sides, somewhat like a huge underground bookshelf. Thus,

the next coffin could go over the previous one without crushing it, etcetera. Because of this, in some circumstances, as many as fifteen people can be buried in one bóveda, as is the case in this author's maternal family bóveda in Havana's Jewish Cemetery. On the very top of a bóveda, are where elaborate works commemorating all the deceased entombed therein are typically located. With this scheme, Martínez Saenz's major cemetery would not overflow as quickly as did the old Espada one, and even more importantly, this fashion of burial would be very economical, for its real expense would be undertaken (no pun intended!) only once, and could be paid by all those who planned to be buried therein.[187] Although not exactly customary to Jews, this method of burial - as we shall soon see - was also employed by the Jews in Havana. Also, it should not be forgotten here that another major cemetery in the hemisphere - namely Buenos Aires' La Recoleta - was patterned after Havana's Columbus' Cemetery, and it also adapted the concept of the bóveda.[188] These two cemeteries, along with Milan's Santa Croce, are considered by many to have some of the best examples of tombstone art in the world.[189]

It would not do justice to the wonderful architectural plan behind Columbus Cemetery if we ignored Martínez Saenz's design for its extensive ossuaries. Apart from the use of mausolea and bóvedas, Martínez Saenz included in his design several public ossuaries, and had lots set aside for ossuaries which would be built privately.[190] The way these ossuaries (or *osarios* in Spanish) were to be used was that about four of five years after a cadaver was buried, it would be disinterred, and the remains would be placed in an ossuary.[191] With Cuba's tropical heat and its plentiful rains, a body buried there quickly decomposes, therefore, in a relatively short period of time, usually all that would remain of a buried body would be bones.[192] Because of this, if a family could not afford a complex bóveda or mausoleum, a whole family could own one, two or three plots, which would be used and reused over and over again.[193] In other words, plots could be used to act as slow-motion crematories, and then the remains could be disposed elsewhere. Thanks to this systematic burial practice, it was believed that it would take centuries before Columbus Cemetery would overflow, and those who believed this, were apparently correct.[194] This process was never adopted by the Jews in Cuba - even the Reform - for obvious reasons.[195] Nevertheless, the Ashkenazic community in the city of Santa Clara in central Cuba had a rather heated debate over the issue of ossuaries in 1951,[196] since many in the community thought that their small cemetery (founded in 1935)[197] might become full to capacity in a relatively short period of time.[198] Although Jewish voices were raised in support of a Jewish ossuary in that city,

nothing ever came of it, since the voices of tradition drown the others out.

One might think that the use of crematories and columbaria would be a better option than burying the dead, unearthing them, and then placing their remains in ossuaries. But we must remember that Columbus Cemetery was built in a Catholic country, by a Catholic power, with Catholic money. Until very recently, cremation was strictly prohibited by the Catholic Church, and this tradition has been maintained among virtually all Cubans, including those living in Cuba under Castro's regime. As a matter of fact, the lack of cremation facilities in Cuba was the main reason behind the establishment of Havana's Chinese Cemetery, build adjacently to the Columbus Cemetery in 1917, since the island's large Chinese ethnic minority demanded that they be allowed to have their own crematory and columbarium complex, in order that they might be able to follow the procedures behind their traditional way of disposing of their dead.[199] As far as this author knows, no Cuban, except those who were ethnically Chinese, was ever cremated on the island. Cremation as a form of disposing of the dead, has really only caught on among some Cubans - both Jew and gentile - who live in exile in the United States, and usually this is done at the behest of the deceased, who wished that his or her ashes be spread near the coasts of the island.

Although one officially still needed a "Blood Cleansing" to be buried in Columbus Cemetery, more often than not that, this requirement was overlooked.[200] For instance, the first person to be buried in its precincts was a black house slave named Manuela Balido.[201] Nevertheless, Cuba's then numerous population of Freemasons and excommunicants were still absolutely barred from being buried in Columbus Cemetery until the island's independence from Spain.[202] Finally, Havana's Columbus Cemetery was seen around the world due to a Hollywood-produced film which was shot there on location in the 1940s starring John Garfield and Jennifer Jones, entitled "We Were Strangers." This movie dealt with an actual plot which had existed to murder Cuba's dictator Machado in the cemetery in the 1930s as he was to go there to bury a colleague, and therefore, a major part of the film takes place inside the cemetery.[203] Ironically, originally designed to be quite distant from Havana, for the last sixty years, the city has grown around Columbus Cemetery,[204] and today is located only blocks from the Havana Hilton Hotel.

Spain's fear of Cuba's large black population - which was on the path of becoming emancipated in 1888[205] - and the potential of a Haiti-like rebellion, coupled with Cuban creole yearning for independence, led Spain to embark in 1880 on a campaign of forced colonization of Cuba by

loyal Spaniards from the regions of Spanish Galicia, Asturias and the Canary Islands.[206] Also, over 50,000 Chinese workers - both men and women - were imported by Spain to Cuba in this period so that they could build the British-designed extensive railroad system which was to connect Cuba's already numerous sugar mills and plantations with ports, major towns and cities.[207] Therefore, by 1895, Cuba's population of nearly one million was composed of sixty percent whites, and the rest of blacks, mulattos and Chinese, or a mixture of all of these;[208] a racial diversity which Spain believed could not permit the Cubans to unite themselves, in order to be rid of Spanish domination. Also, to stop Cuban independence-minded "troublemakers," over 100,000 Cubans were systematically forced into exile by Spain.[209] As far as Jews and Cuba in this period are concerned, in 1869 a famous Cuban opera singer by the name of Dolores de Dios Porta, who had been touring Europe for over a year, became ill with tuberculosis in Paris. Knowing that she was going die, she told those who accompanied her that she wanted a Jewish funeral, since she and her family had always practiced Judaism secretly.[210] Although she could have been suffering from a severe case of delusion, the case of Dolores de Dios Porta does give more credence to those who believe that marranism did survive in Cuba.

From about 1880 on, the undisputed leader of the struggle for Cuban independence became José Martí, a creole Cuban of Spanish parents.[211] Martí - who lived longer in exile than in Cuba[212] - was a prolific writer and philosopher, and he is credited with having invented the literary genre of Spanish Modernism.[213] Furthermore, Martí was fluent in several languages,[214] and is known to have studied Hebrew as a classical tongue.[215] While in exile in New York, Martí befriended the influential Jewish lawyer Horacio Rubens, who was crucial in the Cuban leader's quest to recruit funds for his cause.[216] Also in New York, Martí met a Russian Jewish adventurer and mercenary by the name of Akiva Roloff.[217] Martí was able to fanaticize Roloff - who took the Spanish name of Carlos[218] - with the Cuban cause of independence. Carlos Roloff traveled with Martí as he visited communities of Cuban exiles in Philadelphia, Tampa, Key West and New Orleans, so that he could recruit men, weapons and funds for the final war against the Spanish.[219] In February of 1995, Martí, Roloff and others left for Cuba, and thus the final Cuban war for independence began.[220] Martí was killed three months later by the Spanish,[221] but Roloff survived. He was given the title of General, fought alongside the Cubans for the duration of the war, and lived to see Cuba become independent.[222] Roloff was finally honored with a national hero's funeral when he died in Havana in 1910, and was buried in the city's Jewish cemetery.[223]

Although Roloff was the most prominent Jew (or at least the most important one who was conscious of his Jewishness) to participate in Cuba's endless struggle for independence, and would be remembered by future generations of Cubans as a national hero, other Jews played important and crucial roles in the struggle. Among the most important of these was Nathan Kaminsky, a former peddler from northern Florida, who helped smuggle arms into Cuba, and later entered Cuba in 1896 - with the title of Captain of the Army of Liberation - to fight alongside the Cubans in their war. We do not know exactly were he was killed, but we know that he did not survive to see the end of the war, and his body was never recuperated.[224] Several monuments to his memory later established by the independent Cuban government, including one in 1925 in the capital's Jewish cemetery.[225] Another prominent Jew who was involved in Cuba's effort for independence was Frederick Schwartz. Schwartz - originally from Louisiana- had fought as a soldier for the Confederacy.[226] After the end of the American Civil War, he returned to his dry goods business in New Orleans, where he befriended Cuban exiles who had settled in that city.[227] One of his closest friends became Calixto García, a Cuban rebel general who would often slip in and out of the island in order to buy weapons in the United States in order help set the stage for another insurrection.[228] Eventually, Schwartz became General García's right-hand-man, and when the final war of 1895 broke-out, left for Cuba to serve as the General's aide-de-camp. Schwartz survived the war,[229] and later served after independence served in Havana's municipal government and was instrumental in establishing a Reform congregation in Cuba.[230] He died in 1915, and was buried in Havana's Jewish cemetery with all the full honors accorded a veteran of the struggle for independence.[231]

In February 1898, as the final Cuban war of independence was raging, the United States sent one of its premier battleships - the USS Maine - to anchor off the shore of Havana, so that it could protect American financial interests and Americans living in Havana if the war reached the capital.[232] Mysteriously, a few days after its arrival in Cuban waters, the Maine exploded, killing almost its whole crew.[233] This tragedy caused an uproar in the United States, where the press fueled the flames by reporting that the Spanish had purposely blown-up the ship.[234] In response to these accusations, the United States declared war on Spain, and thus began the Spanish-American War.[235]

Within three months, the United States had easily vanquished Spain.[236] In December, at the Treaty of Paris, Spain was forced to relinquish control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and

Guam to the United States.[237] Cuba would eventually gain its independence, but at the high cost of having had the glory of final victory taken away from it by the United States; something which many Cubans would never forgive or forget. But it was this same war which would give birth to a modern Jewish community in Cuba, and it all would begin with the establishment of a cemetery.

The first rabbi whom we know that publicly celebrated a Jewish service in Cuba, was the Reform Rabbi Adolph Spiegel, who served as US Army Chaplain in Cuba, and who led Rosh Hashanah services in Santiago de Cuba for Jewish Troops who fought under Theodore Roosevelt at the Battles of San Juan Hill and Santiago Bay.[238] Many Eastern European Jews - especially Rumanians - could be found among the troops who fought for the United States in Cuba during the Spanish American War.[239] The best estimates we have is that nearly 200 Jews in the United States Armed Forces died in battle in Cuba,[240] and most of them had no relatives in the United States,[241] and if they did, not many claimed their bodies for burial.[242] Since most of the fighting took place in eastern Cuba, most of the American soldiers were to be buried there in rustic graves.[243]

Yet Rabbi Spiegel had developed a very good personal relationship with General Leonard Wood,[244] the man who led all Department of War operations in Cuba, and who was to become military governor of the island once Spain officially handed Cuba over to the United States as of 01 January 1899.[245] Since he could be heard in the halls of power, Rabbi Spiegel insisted that these Jewish troops - and other Jews who had died for Cuba's freedom - had to be given a proper Jewish burial, and General Wood finally agreed.[246] In February 1899, General Wood's military government bought a former farm in the town of Guanabacoa (then some thirty kilometers southeast of Havana, but now on the border of the capital city, and pronounced "Gwah-nah-bah-KOH-ah")[247] called *La Jota*, and had it turned into a cemetery for Jewish American troops;[248] a location where the water table is quite low.[249] One hundred eighty-three bodies were transferred there, and given "Jewish" burial, although many were never positively identified. [250] Finally, a collective monument to them was placed by direct order of General Wood near the entrance of this new cemetery in December 1901,[251] although a surrounding wall which traditionally marks the limits of a Jewish cemetery was not put in place until a few years later.[252] Unfortunately, the statue memorializing these American Jewish soldiers and the American flag (a picture of both which can be found in the addenda) that accompanied it, were destroyed on direct orders

of the Cuban regime in 1962, since they were considered symbols of "American imperialism."[253] Still, the existence of this cemetery would be a factor in facilitating the development of a Cuban Jewish community; a unique situation, since the establishment of this Jewish cemetery preceded the establishment of a Jewish community.

Finally, it should be noted here that in the year 1900, a British journalist by the name of Richard Davey visited Cuba for over six months, and one year later published a book in London expressing what he saw on the island and what he thought would be its future as an independent country.[254] Among his very interesting observations, he noted that "...there are about five hundred Jews in Cuba, descendants of Spaniards, who are dedicated to commercial endeavors...Five or six Cuban Jewish families are believed to be very opulent and are very respected, although they keep entirely to themselves."[255] Davey's statistics on the Jewish presence in Cuba may be exaggerated. Nevertheless, the examples of marranos in Cuba which we saw earlier - an especially that of the famed opera singer Dolores de Dios Porta - points to the fact that indeed there must be some veracity in Davey's statement. Although these "Jews" did not constitute a community in Cuba, there existence would give future Cubans a sense of respect for them, and they would become part of Cuban national folklore.

On 20 May 1902, United States troops pulled-out of Cuba, and the independence of the country was officially proclaimed.[256] Cuba's first elected president[257] - a Quaker[258] - set-out to rebuild a war-torn country which had a little more than one million inhabitants.[259] Cuba's constitution was quite liberal, especially if one looked at in from a Latin American stand-point. The Church and state were strictly separated,[260] the "Blood Cleansing" was abolished,[261] divorce for both men an women was legalized, and women were allowed to vote in local elections and for representatives,[262] although not in presidential elections.[263] Unfortunately, the United States enforced a clause in the Cuban Constitution called the Platt Amendment (named after its author, Senator Charles C. Platt of Connecticut),[264] which stipulated that the United States held the right to intervene militarily in Cuba's internal affairs whenever it deemed necessary to do so.[265] This amendment - coupled with what was perceived by Cubans as the United State's interloping in their war of independence - left a bitter taste in many Cubans mouths for several generations to come.[266] Nevertheless, the Platt Amendment served as a security blanket which would allow Cuban democracy to more or less work for almost the next thirty years.[267] In turn, this stability offered by the Platt Amendment allowed for immigrants to arrive in Cuba and feel a certain de-

gree of American-guaranteed political security,[268] something which was - and is - often rare in Latin America.

The fact that the Cuba's first president was a Quaker who had lived most of his life exiled in the United States,[269] that American missionaries had made many inroads in the population during the three years of American intervention,[270] and that the Catholic Church had been an arm of hated Spanish domination,[271] severely weakened the Church, its institutions and its hegemony over Cuban society;[272] so much so, that in a census which was taken fifty years later, over thirty percent of the island's population considered themselves to be Protestant.[273] The fact that Cuba's first president lived in the United States so long also allowed him to import American political values into the Cuban scene;[274] values which again are not native to a traditional Spanish culture. Finally, and most importantly for our reasons, this president - Tomás Estrada Palma - knew the value that immigration had in nation building for the United States.[275] Therefore, he decided to swing Cuba's doors wide open to white, European immigration, since the island was still very underpopulated.[276] Thanks to this policy, over one million immigrants would arrive to settle in Cuba within the next twenty-five years.[277]

Obviously, not all the Jews who fought on the side of the United States during the Spanish-American War died, or returned home. Some chose to stay in Cuba, and the most notable of these were Sargent Frank Steinhart and Sargent Joseph Steinberg.[278] These two men settled in Havana, and within two years of Cuban independence, established the country's electric company and the streetcar system for Havana and four other Cuban cities.[279] Also, these two Jews were instrumental for developing an area of marshland west of Havana which was to be used for the Cuban government for Chinese immigrant families which were to be settled there;[280] therefore, these two Jews were directly responsible for the development of Havana's huge and sprawling Chinatown or *Barrio Chino*, located behind the city's Columbus Cemetery.

As far as Cubans Jews were concerned, in 1904 both Steinhart and Steinberg - along with other Jewish associates which had settled in Cuba - founded the Reform United Hebrew Congregation of Cuba.[281] That same year, these Jews began to conduct regular services in rented locations in several Havana Hotels under the direction of an American Reform rabbi who had come to Cuba at their request.[282] A few years later, these Jews established their own permanent synagogue and their own branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association.[283]

Under Spanish rule, all cemeteries in Cuba had been property of the Church.[284] Once Cuba

was freed, all cemeteries became property of the state, even the Jewish one which the American military commanders had established in Guanabacoa, for those located on privately-held lands or farms.[285] Although official state property, the Cuban government allowed religious institutions to be responsible for their respective cemeteries.[286] Therefore, in 1905, the Cuban government passed the responsibility for the administration of the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa to the United Hebrew Congregation of Cuba, with the stipulation that all Jews who died in Cuba would have the right to be buried there, even if they did not belong to their congregation.[287] From then on, this necropolis was officially known as the Cemetery of the Hebrew Community of Cuba, and it would serve all the Jews of Havana.[288] Yet it would not be the only Jewish cemetery for long, since others would be established later in other parts of the island, as more Jews settled in Cuba and spread-out.[289] Therefore, Steinhart and Steinberg's efforts had resulted in the official establishment of a Jewish community in Cuba, but necessarily not a Cuban one. For many years, this Jewish establishment was a domain of American Jews who had settled in Cuba or did extensive business there, and would more often than not have more links with other American organizations in Cuba than with Jewish or Cuban ones.[290] It would not be until the 1950s when many of these Reform Jews would begin to consider themselves to be Cuban.[291]

The first Sephardi Jews to arrive in Cuba came from what are now Syria and Lebanon in 1904.[292] They came along with a wave of Levantine Christian immigration which had begun to arrive in Cuba in 1903,[293] and which eventually developed into the very large Cuban Syrian-Lebanese community.[294] In 1906, Jews from Turkish Thrace - and especially from the region of Edirne - began to arrive in Cuba.[295] Most of them continued on to other countries of the Americas, since Cuba was only a stop on a long ocean-going voyage. But many of them decided to stay on the island, since a good number of these Jews were going on to Mexico, where a bloody revolution which began there in 1910 discouraged many from going there.[296] Therefore, by 1914, about 2,000 Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews had permanently settled in Cuba,[297] and in that year, they established their own synagogue and school in an old building in Old Havana, by the name of *Shevet Ajim*,[298] and whose name would later be changed to *Centro Israelita de Cuba* (*Israelite Center of Cuba*).[299] Thus the first truly Cuban Jewish organization was born.

Due to their economic success, Steinhart and Steinberg brought European Jews into the Cuban scene. By 1907, the Jewish European financial giants such as the Rothschilds, Kaffenburgs, Davidoffs, and others were investing heavily in Cuban tobacco, sugar and mining.[300] Along with

these financial houses, came others young Jewish males,[301] many of whom assimilated by marrying gentiles,[302] others who joined the ranks of the American Reform Jews in Cuba, and others who would much later on join the larger immigration of the Ashkenazim.

The upheavals caused by the Mexican Revolution brought about a refugee problem.[303] Among those fleeingwas a Galician Jew who had settled in Mexico at the turn-of-the-century by the name of David Blis. Blis - as many did[304] - fled to Cuba in 1910.[305] In Mexico, Blis had been pivotal in the development of a modern Ashkenazic community,[306] but in Cuba, he would come to be known as the "Father of Cuban Jewry."[307]

Upon arriving in Cuba a few days before Rosh Hashanah,[308] Blis and others who accompanied him to the island from Mexico learned of the existence of a Jewish organization in the Cuban capital.[309] Therefore, they tried to attend a High Holiday service with the United Hebrew Congregation (since they were being held that year in Havana's then fashionable Hotel Inglaterra), but were turned away by their American Jewish counterparts because of their embarrassing Yiddish tongue and their "Jewish appearance."[310] Infuriated, Blis and his associates set-out to establish their own Orthodox Ashkenazic community, and with little resources, but with direct help from the Jewish agencies in the United States, Blis founded in 1912 the *Colonia Hebrea de Cuba* (*Hebrew Colony of Cuba*), with a small synagogue established inside an old house in Old Havana named *Adas Yisroel*.[311] Blis - by way of the Yiddish-language publications he later founded and his extensive articles in the island's Spanish-language press - was so influential that he is credited with single-handedly encouraging the Cuban Senate in 1920 to issue a proclamation detailing Cuba's full support for the Balfour Declaration and to support the concept of a Jewish State in Palestine should the issue arise at the League of Nations (which Cuba was a founding member of, although the United States chose not to join).[312] Cuba's President Menocal signed this legislative proclamation one year later, thus making it an official part of the island's foreign policy[313].

Thus, the Cuban Jewry - both Sephardic and Ashkenazic, which exists today in both Cuba and in the United States - was born. Within the next decade, as more and more immigrants entered Cuba, the Jewish establishments founded on the island in the first twenty years of this century would grow and fragment due to political ideology and degree of religious observance. Still, the efforts of these pioneering Jews in Cuba led to the development of a highly sophisticated a network of Jewish schools, welfare agencies and cultural institutions which would help stem the

tide of assimilation for Jews in Cuba.

During the First World War, Cuba's economy grew by leaps and bounds. As a mater of fact, from this period and up until the late 1920s is known in Cuban history as "La Danza de los Millones" ("The Dance of the Millions"),[314] or "La Época de las Vacas Gordas" ("The Period of the Fat Cows");[315] a direct allusion to one of Joseph's dreams which he recounts to Pharaoh. Cuba's economy grew so quickly, that the British historian Hugh Thomas has said that, in the all-around category, both Cuba and Argentina were then better off than most of the European states at that time.[316] But for both of these countries, immigration was pivotal for economic growth, since they were both very underpopulated, not to mention that immigration would "whiten" their populations; something which they greatly desired.[317]

Cuba actively sought immigration, especially from Spain.[318] As said earlier, an estimated one million immigrants settled in Cuba in the first thirty years after it independence, and most of these came from select regions of Spain, including the Canary Islands.[319] Apart from Spaniards (most of whom were illiterate and desperately poor),[320] Cuba also absorbed substantial numbers of Italians, Lebanese, Syrians, Greeks, Chinese, Jamaicans, Haitians, Mexicans, and even Americans, who settled throughout the island.[321] Other immigrants arrived in Cuba, but with no intention of staying there.[322] Since Havana was a important port-of-call for nearly all major European passenger liners, those Europeans who wished to enter the United States (or other countries of the Americas) but who did not possess all the legal prerequisites, first stopped in Cuba, waited there for an indefinite period, and then left for the United States (or to the country which they originally intended to go to), once they had all the necessary documents which allowed them to do this.[323] It is interesting to note here that it is estimated that nearly another million immigrants passed through Cuba in this fashion in the first fifty years of this century.[324] This is what happened to a great number of Jews who eventually settled in Cuba, especially the Ashkenazim.[325]

From about 1914 until about 1925, Eastern European Yiddish-speaking Jews who arrive on the island often called Cuba "Hotel Cuba"[326] ("Akhsanie Kuba"),[327] for they were just transients there,[328] since this is the period when the United States began to tighten the screws on opened immigration.[329] As a matter of fact, many young Jewish men (and sometimes women) who would arrive in Cuba during this period, would then contact Jews in the United States, have them send a Jewish women (usually a relative or close friend) who possessed American citizen-

ship to Havana, marry them there, and then emigrate north.[330] Once in the United States, most would divorce.[331] Of course, this was usually done for a "nominal" fee.[332] But what of those Jews who did not have contacts in the United States, who did not have money to pay for an American "bride-for-a-day" (as they were called), or who just got used to life in Cuba? These were the Eastern European Jews who got "stuck" in Cuba.

As we have already seen, from before the First World War, many young Eastern European Jewish men had come to Cuba to work. They worked at virtually anything, from cutting sugar cane during the harvest, to working in sugar mills, to working in bauxite and nickel mines.[333] Nevertheless, most began to work as peddlers, and became famous for selling Popsicles, Eskimo Pies and neck ties.[334] As a matter of fact, the Spanish term "vendo corbata barata," which literally means "I sell ties cheaply," became a folkloristic adage for Ashkenazic Jews in Cuba,[335] most of who were just called "polacos," or "Poles." (*"Polaken"*)[336] This expression was so well-known to so many Cubans, that among most Cubans today it jokingly is used when saying that one will be willing to sell anything at any price, or that one is an excellent salesperson[337] Also, Jewish peddlers would go to the countryside, and sell to peasants at lower prices than anyone else would, and at credit.[338] This was so well known among Cubans, that this type of peddling was called "el ñampito polaco," or "Polish 'lay-away.'"[339] But many of these peddlers were not shtetl, poor, uneducated Jews.[340] Many came from major cities and town of what we call today Poland, and had received at least some gymnasium education.[341] Because of this, many of them had some knowledge of Latin,[342] which is an excellent tool for anyone who wishes to learn Spanish, thus allowing these Jews to acculturate much faster. Thus, from among these ranks, were to come the Jews who very quickly would acculturate to the Cuban scene.

Now, back to the topic of the Jewish Cemetery. When the Cuban government took possession of the cemetery of Guanabacoa, its official name was changed to Cemetery of the Jewish Colony of Cuba (*Cementerio de la Colonia Hebrea de Cuba*), although there was no real Jewish community in Cuba to speak of. As we have already seen, it was under the direct control of the Cuban government, but administered by American Reform Jews living in Cuba. But the first "Cuban" Jew to be buried there was not to be of American extraction, but rather a North African.

In January of 1909, an observant Algerian Jew named Moisés Jadidá, who had made his was to Cuba five years earlier as a trader by way of the Canary Islands,[343] died in Havana.[344] He had joined the ranks of the Sephardic Jews who had already begun to settle in Cuba,[345] and in a short

time, had become rather prosperous in his clothes-selling business.[346] Upon his death, he was attended to by the Burial Society recently established by the Sephardim.[347] His body was ritual cleansed, and he was placed in a plain wooden coffin.[348] Several people contacted the American Jewish establishment in Cuba, and he was then allowed to be buried in the cemetery of Guanabacoa,[349] since as we have already have seen, their administration of the same was permitted by the authorities under the stipulation that all Jews be allowed burial there, regardless of whether or not they were members of the same congregation. As had been the case with the American soldiers before him, Jadidá was buried in the ground,[350] in cemetery which did not have a wall marking off its limits, and which did not even have an entrance way.

In that same year of 1909, the Cuban government began to pay attention to the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa.[351] First of all, it knew that Cuba's Jewish population was growing, and that the American Jews living on the island were really not paying much attention to it.[352] Furthermore, the cemetery had fallen into a very poor state after the United States had pulled-out of Cuba in 1902.[353] Also, some believe that because it was well known that Generalissimo Carlos Roloff was very ill and close to death, he should be buried in a place worthy of a man with such historical stature.[354] Therefore, Martínez Saenz came out of semiretirement, since he was asked to redesign the Jewish cemetery in Guanabacoa, as well as several other cemeteries on the island which were damaged during the final war for Cuban independence.[355]

Martínez Saenz took the plans for the gate of the Columbus Cemetery, and used them for its Jewish counterpart.[356] He marked-off five hundred square meters from the original land area of La Jota farm that had been originally confiscated by the American military authorities for use as a Jewish cemetery for American Jewish troops whom had fallen as casualties in the Spanish-American War.[357] Around this area, a three meter high wall built of stone was built, as was a Romanesque-styled entrance gate patterned on the one built earlier at the Columbus Cemetery.[358] Granted, it was smaller than the one at the famous Havana cemetery (fifty meters high and one hundred fifty meters wide for the Guanabacoa cemetery,[359] while the Columbus Cemetery's grand gate is approximately twice that size),[360] but the Jewish cemetery's entrance was nevertheless grand. At the very top of the gate, was place a carving of the Cuban coat-of-arms, and underneath was carved the words *Cementerio de la Colonia Hebrea de Cuba* (Cemetery of the Jewish Colony of Cuba). It should be noted here that the reason why a Cuban national coat-of-arms was placed over the entrance to the Cemetery is that this was how the

Cuban government traditionally demonstrated state property, and this cemetery was exactly that. As a matter of fact, the Columbus Cemetery entrance arch was originally only topped-off by a sculpture depicting the Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, but after the Cemetery became state property in 1902 and thus secularized, a carving of the Cuban national coat-of-arms was paced alongside the Crucifixion scene.[361] Now, the reason why a coat-of-arms is used instead of a flag in order to show that what one is entering is state property is because Cubans have traditionally considered it a bit tacky to be placing flags in cemeteries. As a matter of fact, not one Cuban patriot has a flag flying over his or her tomb; only José Martí has a flag flying at his mausoleum (a picture of which is to be found in the addenda), since he asked that he be buried that way in one of his most famous poems. The reason why the American flag was left to fly in the Jewish cemetery was out of respect for the American soldiers buried there. Since that standard was placed there by the United States as a tribute to its fallen troops, the Cubans did not consider it appropriate to have it removed,[362] until as we have already seen, much later on. In addition, the reason why the Jewish Cemetery in Guanabacoa was called *Cementerio Hebreo* (*Hebrew Cemetery*) and not *Cementerio Judío* (*Jewish Cemetery*) related directly to traditional Spanish anti-Semitism. In most Spanish speaking countries - and until recently in Spain itself - the word *judío* or *Jew* had a very negative connotation. It was usually used as a derogatory adjective for anyone who was considered miserly, treacherous, dirty, a liar, or a heretic. As a matter of fact, a type of boiled beans which are usually fed to pigs are still called *judías* or "Jewish Women." Because of this, the Cemetery was not about to be called "Jewish." Nevertheless, the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa became known to everyone as *el cementerio judío*, or *The Jewish Cemetery*. As has been said earlier, anti-Semitism has really never been a problem in Cuba, and as a matter of fact, this author never even knew what that really was until leaving Cuba, although countless stories of anti-Semitism in Europe had been told to me by older relatives. As a matter of fact, by the early 1920s, most Jewish organizations in Cuba which were originally called "Hebrew" or "Israelite," had begun to call themselves "Jewish."[363] Nevertheless, the official title of the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa would remain as it was until today, since under that title it was officially established.

Since the American Jewish soldiers were already buried there (as was Jadidá) and their monument had been installed, Martínez Saenz had to divide the lots accordingly to those already existing graves.[364] Nevertheless, this architect defined the limit of plots there in the same

manner as he had done for the Columbus Cemetery, and since he knew very little - if anything at all - about Jewish tradition burial practices, he also designed ossuaries for the Jewish cemetery, which of course, were never built.[365] Still, all burials which were to take place therein, had to be done in bóvedas, in accordance with Cuban law;[366] a problem for Jews who may have wanted to traditional Jewish burials. Although lacking the elegance of fountains, ponds, and man-made hills that Columbus Cemetery was designed to have,[367] the Jewish Cemetery had the advantage of being equipped with electric lights;[368] a small but important detail, but which were not installed in Havana's premier cemetery until 1910.[369] Still, the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa was designed to have landscaping, trees, and benches for visiting mourners.[370]

The work on this cemetery was completed in 1914,[371] one year after the death of Martínez Saenz.[372] A plaque commemorating his contributions to the Cemetery was later placed on the gate.[373] It should be noted here that the approximate $10,000.00 which is took to rebuild the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa, and others on the island in this period, was paid by the the Cuban Ministries of the Treasury and of Public Health; the latter which was so concerned with the spread of disease through the water table from incorrectly buried corpses.[374] Therefore, before a really Cuban Jewish community formally came into being, it had a substantial cemetery built for them by a gentile regime; something which is probably unique in Jewish history.

In November of 1910, Generalissimo Carlos "Akiva" Roloff died. His funeral was a huge show of patriotism and of outpouring of love for a hero of the final war for independence. In his final years, Roloff had been religiously attached to the United Hebrew Congregation.[375] He is known to have taken part, along with his American-born Jewish wife - Sarah Herman - and his children, in at least those Jewish services marking major Jewish holidays conducted in Havana.[376] Nevertheless, Roloff's funeral was far from being a traditionally "Jewish" one. He was clothed in his Cuban military uniform, and placed in an ebony coffin gilded in bronze (a picture of which can be found in the addenda).[377] He laid in state for the twenty-four hour period which is traditional in Cuba, and was taken by an impressive horse-driven carriage down Havana's then most famous promenade - El Prado - and then unto the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa.[378] Obviously, Roloff had a deep sense of being a Jew, since his family requested that he be buried in a Jewish cemetery.[379] It should be noted here, and as can be seen in the picture included in the addenda which shows Roloff's cortège leaving the building where the Generalissimo had been laid in state, about the presence of several women in these events. Even today in Spain, women rarely

- if ever - take part in funerary activities, even if those who die are very prominent, since women are culturally considered too feeble to take part in such traumatizing events. Perhaps because of American influence over such a culturally Spanish island, women participated in funerary activities in Cuba from the turn of the century;[360] something which is quite rare even today in other countries of Latin America.

Now, it was not exceptional for a Cuban patriot to be buried in a place if his choice, as was Roloff. Cuba never developed the concept of a national pantheon where all its patriots and great leaders would be buried. Usually, these individuals would be buried close to where they died. It would only be in the last twenty years when the Castro regime would build a horrendous shrine to the Revolution's "martyrs" in Columbus Cemetery (a picture of which can be found in the addenda). This structure was first built to house the beret and gloves of Ernesto "El Ché" Guevara, after he was killed in Bolivia, since his body was never recovered.

This author looked through countless articles which covered Roloff's death for Havana's many newspapers.[361] From the most right-wing, pro-Catholic, and oldest continuously published newspaper in the Americas (until closed in 1961), *El Diario de la Marina*,' to the anarchist *'Libertad*.' Roloff was hailed as a great and honorable man.[362] Thousands of people came-out to watch the funeral cortège as it left Havana in solemn procession, and one week of national mourning was declared.[363] It is interesting to note here how the press spoke about Roloff. It compared his struggle to that of the numerous people who had lost their lives during the Inquisition in Cuba, and hailed him as a "Joshua," who made the Spanish "Jericho" fall.[364] Obviously, what we see here is a certain degree of philo-Semitism and a high level of popular and positive recognition for the Jewish past of Cuba.

A little over one year after his burial in the not yet completed cemetery, Roloff's tomb was finished; an event which was recorded by the major Cuban press of the time.[365] Over the grave was placed the famous rock on which Roloff had demanded - in the presence of his Cuban troops - the signature of defeat from a Spanish general after a battle that the Generalissimo had won, and which had gained him great fame among the Cuban people.[366] Over this rock and grave, was built a very large marble Neoclassical structure which would give the site the importance it merited along with protection from the elements, yet no flag was put at the site.[367] Ten years later, Roloff's wife was buried there alongside him, as were his five sons later on (a picture of this tomb can be found in the addenda).[368]

As we saw earlier, in 1915, Frederick Schwartz - the hero of the last war for Cuban independence and a major figure in Havana's municipal government, died and was buried in the Guanabacoa Jewish Cemetery with full honors accorded to a man of his position.[389] His family mausoleum - which included a bust of this famous man - was one of the first examples of mausoleum architecture in the Jewish Cemetery[390] (a picture of this tomb can be found in the addenda). By the end of that decade, the Ashkenazim and Sephardim in Cuba were established, although the greatest migration of Ashkenazim was yet to come. Nevertheless, with the formal establishment of these Jewish communities on the island, so became established their respective Burial Societies. These societies were responsible for the ritual washing of the bodies, for arranging burials, and for gathering funds should they be needed for the same.[391] Of course, not all the Jews in Havana - of that period and later on - were affiliated with Jewish institutions or wanted a Jewish burial. Notable among these were some Jewish socialists, communists and Freemasonss. Many of these were buried in Columbus Cemetery and other gentile cemeteries throughout the island.[392] Also, since the Ashkenazim and Sephardim in Cuba never really saw eye-to-eye on anything, they eventually developed their own parts of the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa. For instance, by 1920, it was a gentlemen's agreement between these two groups that the area to the right of the Cemetery's entrance was reserved for the Ashkenazim, to the left, the Sephardim, and the center of the cemetery and all the way to the back, for the American Jews living in Cuba.[393] Among the Ashkenazim, there were subgroups, such as Bundists, socialist and communists whom thought themselves as Jews, wanted to be buried with other Jews, but did not participate with Jews in their organizations. Nevertheless, the Cemetery was never closed to them, since Cuban law prohibited that from happening.[394]

By the late 1920s, there were the first cases of a gentile partner of mixed marriages dying and being buried in the Jewish cemetery. Among the Sephardim, this was never allowed, since almost always for them, one of their own who married a gentile was the same as if he or she died, as were suicides, which were not allowed to be buried among them in their section of the cemetery.[395] As far as the Ashkenazim and the American Jews were concerned, they were a bit more liberal in both instances, and there are several cases of gentile spouses being buried with their Jewish spouses, as well as suicides, in their sector of the cemetery.[396] Also, by the end of the 1920s, and with the steady growth of Cuba's Jewish population, other communities were founded in other Cuban cities, and with them, were established other cemeteries, most notably

in Santa Clara, Camagüey and Santiago de Cuba.[397] Although officially state property, as were all cemeteries, they were in reality administered by these smaller communities which had founded them.[398]

Researching countless newspapers from the 1910s, already in that time, Jewish death announcements were appearing in major Havana newspapers;[399] a major indicator of how acculturated the Jews were becoming to Cuba. Traditionally on the island - and among Cuban exiles - funeral homes give their daily lists of those deceased whom they have dealt with to newspapers. These lists then are published, along with the other larger death announcements which are paid for by the deceased's relatives (a copy of a recent one published in Miami appears in the addenda). The style of these lists and paid announcements have really not changed much in the last eighty years, and throughout all this time, Jews have appeared in them consistently.[400] Unfortunately, in Cuba they ceased to exist in 1962,[401] but as we can see, the custom - for both Jew and gentile - is preserved in Miami. It should be noted here, that one major difference between Cuban death announcements and their American counterparts, is that in the Cuban ones, **never** is the cause of death published.[402]

We should also take a look at what funeral practices are like among Cuban gentiles. As far as this author knows from personal experience, and at least for the past five to six generations, Cuban gentile funerary practices are basically like those in Spain, which are not very different from traditional Jewish ones. For instance, rarely - if ever - is a body buried more than twenty-four hours after death, except if the the death occurs on a Saturday, so then the burial must take place on a Monday. Rarely is the body exposed in the coffin, and when it is, the coffin is closed, with just a small piece of glass on the top through which one can see the face of the corpse. Although the corpse is usually dressed in its own clothes, rarely is it "dolled-up" with make-up, and almost never is it embalmed. The coffin should be made of fine materials, but should not be overly elaborate, except of course, in the case of very prominent individuals, while flowers are used to adorn the casket Also, during the short period between ones death and the burial, the body is rarely left alone. For example, the name given a wake is *el velorio*, which literally means "the watch." Never is the body taken to a church for a ceremony before the burial, but directly from the wake to the cemetery. Once a body is buried, the immediate family.- namely parents, offspring, grandparents and siblings - are socially required to spend one week in morning. During that period, rarely to they leave the home, and friends and rela-

tives come by one's home with food and provisions; not much unlike the Jewish siting of shiva. One major difference between these gentile funerals as compared to Jewish ones is that one month after the death of an individual, a requiem mass is given in his or her memory. Although some say that there are Jewish foundations to these funeral practices, others say that they are practices reflected among many cultures in the Mediterranean Basin, be they Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Muslim or Jewish. Nevertheless, these typical Cuban funeral practiced were not much different than the Jews', that is why Jewish practices in this area never really were considered exceptional in Cuban society.

As far as funeral homes are concerned, all of Cuba's major cities had them by the end of the eighteenth century.[403] There were basically three major funeral home chains, all of which were family-owned, and which had parlors in every major Cuban town and city, until they were all confiscated by the Castro regime in 1962.[404] For the Jews, there were no exclusively Jewish funeral in Cuba, but the gentile ones offered it services to the Jews.[405] For instance, these funeral home chains - such as Caballero, Rivero, and Brake - offered the option to all Cubans of holding wakes either at the funeral home or at home, since they would deliver caskets to one's house if one so wished.[406] They also offered the choice of caskets, from plain pine boxes closed by wooden pegs, to elaborate coffins.[407] For instance, in Havana, some of the parlors of all these three funeral homes offered special rooms to the Jewish Burial Societies so that they might wash the corpses and dress them as it is required by Jewish Law.[408]

As far as Jewish tombstones and ornamentation is concerned, it varied greatly. In the included addenda, one can see a wide variety of styles. Even if the caskets were lowered below grown and covered by soil, they are contained in subterranean bóvedas, since as has been said herein several times, this was required by Cuban law. Yet in order to be more in tune with Jewish tradition, dirt was usually poured into a bóveda before and after the casket was laid within the bóveda. There were no Jewish tombstone manufacturers in Cuba. All cemetery monuments were made by gentiles, and that market in Cuba, since the beginning of this century, was usually the domain of Italian immigrants.[409] Although this author could not find pictures of actual tombstone engravings in Cuban Jewish cemeteries, this author knows that most of them had both Hebrew and Spanish engravings, although some were written exclusively in English (among American Jews), Yiddish (among Eastern European Jews), or Spanish. It should be noted here that one of the main reasons why this author could not find pictures of many individual Jewish

tombs is that in Cuban culture, it is considered quite crass to take pictures of tombs, as it is at wakes. Also, many of those who had to flee Cuba for political reasons, did not have the time to be going to a cemetery to be taking pictures of their ancestors' final resting places. The exception to this rule is the tombs of patriots and other notables, since they were pilgrimage sites and national monuments. Finally, rarely do Cuban tombstones or mausolea - gentile or Jewish - mention a person's profession or role in life; usually all that is inscribed on them is the deceased's name, and his or hers date of birth and of death.

By the late 1920s, Havana's Columbus Cemetery had acquired two additions: the Chinese Cemetery and the Protestant Cemetery.[410] Not that the city's premier cemetery was still sectarian, but certain groups wanted to be buried exclusively among themselves.[411] In that period, there were Jews who had arrived in Cuba from Eastern Europe who no longer wanted to associate themselves with others Jews, and actually tried to pass themselves off as Germans. As a matter of fact, some were actually buried in Havana's Columbus Cemetery and the city's Protestant Cemetery.[412]

The issue of trying to be perceived as Germans and not Jewish was one which Yiddish-speaking Jews in Cuba had to come to terms with. Many of the Ashkenazic Jews who arrived in Cuba in this period wanted to be identified with Germany.[413] In Cuba - as throughout most of Latin America at the time - Germany was looked upon as a great center of culture, whose people were highly intelligent and industrious.[414] Because of the closeness between Yiddish and German, it was very easy for these Jews to feign that they were German.[415] As a matter of fact, the first shops opened by Jews in Havana - most of which became large and famous department stores - were given names related to German themes, although their owners came from Polish Galicia.[416] For instance, two of the most famous Jewish-owned stores in Cuba were Almacén Hamburgo (Hamburg Department Store), and El Alemán (The German).[417] Cuba's major Yiddish-language publication, *Havaner Lebn'* and its publisher David Blis, argued against this Germanization vociferously.[418] In his newspaper, Blis argued that Jews had nothing to fear in Cuba, since anti-Semitism was not a problem there, so therefore, Blis believed that they should be proud of their language and culture, not to mention their religion.[419] Blis used to emphasize his position by allowing as many Yiddish writers as possible to write stories in the *Havaner Lebn'* which would stress the good of living in Cuba as Jews, and not as anything else.[420] This convinced many Ashkenazic Jews to drop their desire to be looked upon as Germans,[421] but others had to wait

until the dawn of the Second World War, when to be a German in Cuba was not looked upon as being something which was very good. As a matter of fact, three attachés connected to the German embassy on Havana were arrested in 1939, accused and found guilty of spying, subversion and of fermenting anti-Semitism, although Cuba had yet to actually declare war on the Axis.[432] They were the first people to be officially put to death by the Cuban government in the first fifty-seven years of independent Cuban history.[433] This experience, plus the winds of war which were once again blowing, brought about a negative opinion of Germans and Germany in Cuba. Therefore, being German in Cuba was no longer so chic for Jews or anyone else.[434] Therefore, one cannot say that there were any more Jews being buried in gentile cemeteries under the pretext that they were Germans.

Politically, the Ashkenazim who arrived in Cuba after the First World War had a unifying newspaper waiting for them which had a religious undertone, although many of them came from totally unreligious backgrounds.[435] Even if many of those Jews who arrived in Cuba in the early 1920s did so with thoughts of Bundism, socialism or even communism,[436] adamant adherence to those beliefs quickly went by the wayside for the vast majority of them.[437] According to a survey of Eastern European Jews in Cuba, conducted by the American National Council of Jewish Women in 1924, ninety per-cent of those Jews in Cuba who were unemployed four years earlier, were then gainfully employed.[438] Ten years later, this same organization reported that ninety-three percent of those who had been employed by someone other than themselves or a close family relative in 1924, in 1934 owned their own businesses, and that peddling was generally considered something of the past among them.[439] Therefore, for most of these Jews, the process from proletariat to property owners in Cuba was very quick.[440] It was a speedy metamorphosis which some have called the "Deproletarization of Cuban Jewry."[441] Yet more than a radical change in economic standards, this process had the most impact on changing the way these Jews viewed the world politically.[442] Therefore, if being Jewish was not a major concern of many of these Jews before arriving in Cuba, it became more and more the case that they were more involved in the Jewish world as time went on and their prosperity grew.

As far as Zionism was concerned, very few of those Eastern European Jews who arrived at this time in Cuba were attached to Zionism.[443] Those few who were, were basically Hashomer Hatzair,[444] and eventually established their own Zionist organizations.[445] Although Blis supported the concept of a Jewish State in Palestine, his way of approaching the issue was not the way that

the Hashomer Hatzair did, so they really did not find much support from him or his newspaper for their efforts.[436] It is interesting to note that among the Jews who settled in Cuba at the time, very few ever actually made aliyah, since their financial situation was just too good to take-off and start a new life in a place which was very difficult at the time.[437] Therefore, the Jewish community of Cuba was solidified, and the need to keep-up its major cemetery was of the utmost importance to them.

When the Great Depression took place, it devastated Cuba, since the island's economy tied to that of the United States.[438] Cuba's then democratically-elected President - the last remaining major hero of the war for independence - declared himself President-for-Life at a ceremony of the University of Havana of 1930, and thus a strict, statist, Mussolini-type dictatorship was proclaimed.[439] It should be noted here that this man - Gerardo Machado - descended from one of those renown marrano and New Christian families we have already seen, and several of his ancestors are known to have suffered at the hands of the Holy Inquisition.[440] Under his regime many books and other publications were banned while others were censored,[441] any opposition group was silenced[442] and complete conformity to the new status quo was demanded of all.[443] Cuba's fragile democracy had been destroyed. People were murdered left and right by Machado's vicious secret police,[444] including five Jewish communists who were caught with explosives.[445]

In 1933, a violent revolution led by a young army officer of mixed Chinese, black and white ancestry by the name of Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar,[446] and supported by a broad coalition of political forces, broke-out.[447] Machado was overthrown and exiled for the rest of his life.[448] This revolution brought about a state of political and economic chaos for about seven years while a new and extremely liberal constitution was being drawn-up,[449] and until fully democratic elections were held in 1940.[450] Nevertheless, the Revolution of 1933 - as this period of Cuban history is known - brought about an explosion in artistic expression and nationalism.[451] Also, Machado's overthrow provoked Cuba's unilateral abrogation of the hated Platt Amendment,[452] and it also caused Cuba to change its policy towards immigration. In response to pressure from political forces (most of them of the extreme Left and Right) who said to speak for the concerns of "native" Cubans who were offended by the great numbers of immigrants - mainly Spaniards - arriving in the island and who were prospering more than these poor Cubans, the somewhat socialistic Cuban government of the time passed the infamous "Fifty Per-Cent Law."[453] This law or-

dered that at least half of all businesses in Cuba be owned, managed and staffed by Cuban-born nationals.[454] This of course, led to a radical decrease in the numbers of immigrants whom Cuba would allow to enter the country, and the only exception that was made to this statute was for those Spaniards with close relatives on the island who could prove political persecution after the fall of the Spanish Republic to Franco.[455] Although the Law was modified at the end of the Second World War,[456] and even though it was primarily aimed at mass Spanish immigration,[457] this measure radically curbed the number of Jews who could enter Cuba,[458] and therefore, a growing and prosperous community would not see its numbers increase substantially through immigration, and this would directly affect Jews who were desperately trying to flee Europe and emigrate to anywhere before the onslaught of the Nazi Holocaust.[459]

It should be note here that in the 1940s, several Cuban gentiles joined the ranks of the United Hebrew Congregation of Cuba under the pretext that they were descendants of marranos.[460] Some of these "Jews" came from prominent Cuban families, and some did have New Christian surnames.[461] Although they could have been philo-Semites who thought that they were Jews, it is interesting that they took this step. It is also interesting to note that they approached a Reform congregation in order to enter the Jewish fold, and not the established Cuban Jewish organizations on the island. Probably the reason behind this is that the both the Cuban Ashkenazim and Sephardim were Orthodox, and were not very opened to the idea of converts, even if they claimed marrano background.[462] It is believed that about five if these New Chrsitians-cum-New Jews are buried in Havana's Jewish Cemetery.[463]

At the end of the Second World War, Jewish refugees began to once again enter Cuba, some from Europe,[464] and others who had originally fled to Sosúa in the Dominican Republic at the invitation of its dictator Rafael Leonides Trujillo.[465] Many of these refugees continued on to the United States and to other countries of the Americas, while others who remained in Cuba were not really involved Jewishly at all.[466] For instance, Hungarian Jews who had made their way to the island before and during the Second World War, donated a painting of the Magyar patriot Lájos Kossut to the Cuban government in 1947,[467] but not a painting of a famous Hungarian Jew. In appreciation for the gift, the Cuban government had this painting placed in the Chamber of Deputies of the Cuban National Capitol.[468] Therefore, we can see that Jews such as these who entered Cuba at this time did not become involved in Cuban Jewish matters, so they really had nothing to do with Havana's Jewish cemetery.

With one very important exception, the last major Jewish "burials" which took place in the Guanabacoa before the rise of Fidel Castro cemetery were those of Jewish writers. In 1943, a memorial service and the installation of a monument (whose picture appears in the addenda) took place in the Jewish Cemetery in honor of Moisés Raigodorski.[469] As compared to other Cuban Jewish writers of that time and earlier, Raigodorski wrote in Spanish.[470] But that could be expected, since he was Cuban-born.[471] In 1937, Raigodorski - whose parents had been Polish Jewish communists[472] - was killed in the Battle of Toledo during the Spanish Civil War.[473] He had gone to Spain to fight for the Republican cause with the Cuban organized and communist led José Martí Brigade,[474] was killed in Spain at the young age of twenty-two, and his body never recovered.[475] In 1943, Raigodorski's essays, memoirs and diary were published in Havana in one volume under the title of *Una Vida de Ensayos Dramáticos* (*A Life of Dramatic Essays*).[476] In that year, several veterans of the Brigade, led by Raigodorski's lover, the also Cuban-born Sonia Winer, held a ceremony at the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa. where a statue in honor of Raigodorski was unveiled. It should be noted here that Winer herself was a writer, and upon her return to Cuba in 1939, published her own book of poetry entitled *Compañeras y otros poemas* (*Female Comrades and Other Poems*).[477] Today, Winer is an old exiled woman, living alone in a modest apartment in Miami, Florida.[478]

The other notable Jewish burial which took place in the Cemetery was that of Oscar Pinis. Pinis was a Yiddish writer whose books became classics of Cuban literature, although they were only popularly recognized once they were translated to Spanish.[479] Pinis was a much loved man, who had received virtually every great civilian award a Cuban citizen could be given.[480] After a severe stoke, Pinis died in 1954.[481] Pinis' impact on Cuban society had been so great, that when he died and was buried in Havana's Jewish Cemetery, among the notables who participated in the funeral activities was the Prime Minister, and the Cuban flag was ordered to fly at half mast throughout the country in sign of mourning.[482] It is very important to note that Pinis' burial was such an event, that political discrepancies were ignored for the event. Cuba's last democratically elected Prime Minister - Oscar Ganz Sklar - was a Jew.[483] The administration of the President he served - Carlos Prío Socarrás - was overthrown by a Batista in the infamous coup d'état of 10 March 1952.[484] The President fled Cuba,[485] but Ganz refused to leave, and was kept under virtual house arrest until Batista himself was overthrown nearly seven years later.[486] Nevertheless, Ganz did go to Pinis' burial, which, as we have already seen, was also assisted by Batista's chief

minister: Ganz's personal and political nemesis.[187]

In 1950, several bars of soap made from Jewish fat by the Nazis was placed in a government-sponsored marble monument in Havana's Jewish Cemetery (a picture of which and a computer-generated printing of its inscription are to found in the addenda).[188] The event was covered by all of the major press of the time, and was attended by the leaders of the Cuban Jewish community, the President of the Republic and his Jewish Prime Minister.[189] This author does not know where or how the Cuban government got its hands on these soap bars, but nevertheless, this was one of the first Holocaust memorials ever erected.[190]

For the period of 1952 to 1953, Cuba had been preparing for years to celebrate it fiftieth anniversary of independence and the one hundredth anniversary of Martí's birth.[191] Of course, these celebrations were dampened by Batista's coup d'état, but a façade of happiness continued to prevail over the country for the events.[192] Several mass projects were undertaken in order to mark the celebrations, such as the building the huge Plaza of the Republic in Havana (where two million people easily fit, and from where Fidel Castro used to give his endless speeches), a new national library, and especially, a new mausoleum for Martí in the Santa Efigenia Cemetery in Santiago de Cuba.[193] This mausoleum is huge, built completely of marble, and which is lit only by natural sunlight (a picture of this mausoleum can be found in the addenda).[194] For all of these projects, most Cuban ethnic groups donated funds, and the Jews of Cuba - both Sephardim and Ashkenazim - gave an estimated one million dollars toward these projects.[195] As a matter of fact, the Martí mausoleum has engraved on it the groups which donated their funds for the building of the structure, and Cuba's major Jewish organizations are listed prominently among them.[196] Although not in a Jewish cemetery and not the tomb of a Jew, the Martí mausoleum can, at least partially, be called a Jewish tomb, since Jewish money partially financed it.

In 1954, the Davidoff family of tobacco fame built a new mausoleum in the Jewish Cemetery of Havana.[197] It was a huge piece of architecture, with room for over one hundred caskets.[198] It was criticized in the press for being extremely tacky,[199] but its design is very indicative of the 1950s. It prominently displays Jewish symbols such as the Lion of Judah and the Menorah; a direct result of the establishment of the State of Israel, which brought so much renewed Jewish pride to many Jews around the world, even for those with no intentions of ever making aliyah. Also, the Davidoff mausoleum - which quickly became a landmark - had a great sense of permanence. The branch of the family which had come to Cuba at the early part of the century, had

become very Cubanized, and never thought of going anywhere else.[300] In that same year, even the Reform United Hebrew Congregation of Cuba published a commemorative book intended to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation.[301] This book talked about how wonderful Jewish life was in Cuba, and even about the great Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa.[302] Obviously, the Davidoffs and the Jews of the United Hebrew Congregation thought that Cuba as their home, was as permanent as was their great cemetery. Unfortunately, their world would soon come to a bitter end.

Thus we can seen that it took sixty years to develop - and then destroy - a modern and vibrant Jewish community, whose major cemetery stood as a historical witness to their collective experience. Although a relatively small community (estimated to be no more than 20,000 affiliated Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews, and about the same number who were not affiliated, not to mention the approximately 10,000 American Jews living on the island),[303] they had arrived to an island with a culture quite unlike anything they had ever known; or as one very old Cuban Jew who originally arrived in Cuba as a very young man told this author: "I felt like Robinson Crusoe in a strange but wonderful place."[304] These Jews had arrived in a country where Jews had previously left a great mark, but where they never were allowed to constitute a viable community for themselves. Although this was the case, they settled in a land whose Jewish past was well-known and admired,[305] and where anti-Semitism was never really an issue which had to be addressed with any vehemence.[306] Cuban Jewry was born at a time when - at least Havana - resembled a miniature Hapsburg Empire, with countless nationalities running around, but with the principle difference that in Cuba, hatred between these groups was virtually nonexistent; they lived peacefully with one another and prospered accordingly.[307] Sadly though, as compared to the Jews who preceded them in Cuba's colonial period, this modern Jewish would leave its signature; namely the tombstones which would mark the final resting places of their ancestors who had made that island their home.

In January 1959, Batista's dictatorship was overthrown by a broad coalition of democratic forces.[308] Elections were to be held within six months, and the liberal Constitution of 1940 was to be put back in place,[309] since its violation by Batista had been the major gripe against his regime.[310] Sadly though, this is not what was to happen. Therefore, let as take a very superficial and abbreviated view of what happened, and how it affected the Jews of Cuba.

Within two years, the broad democratic coalition that had overthrown Batista, had been re-

duced to a regime centered around the figure of one totalitarian individual: Fidel Castro Ruz.[311] The United States would break-off relations with Cuba in January of 1961, due to anger over the expropriation of American properties on the island.[312] By October of 1961, Castro had declared Cuba to be a communist state,[313] and one year later, the world would be on the brink of all-out nuclear war over the Soviet Union's deployment of offensive short and long range nuclear missiles on the island.[314] The hope of freedom and democracy in Cuba would be dashed, and the country would experience an upheaval comparable to that of China during Mao Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution.[315]

Since the majority of the Jews in Cuba were average to high middle class,[316] they belonged to the class that was first affected by Castro's new anti-petit-bourgeoisie policies.[317] Most of the Jews' businesses were taken over by the state, as were their schools and their homes.[318] Religion and religious practices began to be severely frowned upon and officially discouraged,[319] and the vast majority of the island's clergy was expelled from Cuba,[320] including all the rabbis.[321] As a matter of fact, several prominent members of the clergy- including Rabbi Nesím Gambach[322] - participated in an truly ecumenical scheme to smuggle children out of the island from 1960 until 1962.[323] This project was code-named *Operación Pedro Pan* or Operation Peter Pan.[324] The Operation involved arranging for foreign embassies in Havana to grant visas to children whose parents could not leave the country, and have these children taken out of the country, and from there, taken to the United States, where relatives or foster parents would keep them until their parents could arrange to escape Cuba.[325] It is estimated that 40,000 children were smuggled out of Cuba in this fashion,[326] and no less than two hundred of them were Jewish.[327] *Pedro Pan* ended when its leaders were caught, and made to serve twenty-five year prison sentences.[328] Luckily for Rabbi Gambach, he was able to escape Cuba in a power boat before he was arrested.[329]

Between 1960, and until the United States broke-off relations with Cuba, only about 1,000 Jews fled Cuba,[330] and most of these were American Jews residing on the island,[331] although about 500 Cuban Jews did manage to leave Cuba in 1961 for the United States.[332] The mass exodus of Cuban Jews was to begin when the Cuban port of Camarioca was opened in 1964 - on orders of Castro - for all who wished to leave the island.[333] That year, Castro gave one of his marathonic speeches, in which he said that those who wanted elections in Cuba, could vote with their feet.[334] Therefore, thousands upon thousands took advantage of this opening, and voted[335]

About 2,000 Cuban Jews left the island in that exodus,[336] which lasted two months.[337]

The following year, in order to stem the disorderly tide of refugees from Cuba, the United States President Lyndon B. Johnson signed an act which established what came to be known as the Freedom Flights.[338] These flights were to be conducted every day from Cuba directly to Miami, and were to carry refugees who would be granted automatic permanent residency status once they arrived in the United States.[339] To leave Cuba in this fashion, one usually had to work an average of three years "volunteer" labor in an agricultural camp, and as the other refugees who preceded them and would follow them, all of them had to leave **everything** they owned behind.[340] In these flights, which took place on a daily basis between 1965 and 1973,[341] and estimated 600,000 Cubans left the island,[342] and among these, there were around 15,000 Jews.[343]

In 1967, after the Six Day War, Cuba broke-off all diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with Israel, as did every other Soviet satellite, save for uniquely communist Rumania.[344] In order not to appear anti-Semitic (and therefore, politically incorrect) in the eyes of the world, Castro ordered that two Cuban passenger airplanes (Soviet-made Ilyushin 62s) be employed to take Jews to Israel who had applied to leave for the United States on the Freedom Flights.[345] These two airplanes carried over 400 Jews to Israel.[346] Of these, it is estimated that about 300 eventually made their way to the United States, in order to be reunited with their relatives who had mostly settled in the Miami area.[347]

From the mid-1960s and until approximately 1984, there were other ways to get out of Cuba.[348] If one had a relative outside of the country who could pay for one's passage, and arrange a visa, one could leave Cuba through Spain, Venezuela, Mexico, Panama, Canada or Costa Rica.[349] Still, the law forcing everyone who wanted to leave the country to work "voluntarily" in agricultural camps still applied.[350] Nevertheless, in the period between 1965 and 1980, it is estimated that about 300,000 Cubans fled the country by leaving through these avenues, and among these,[351] it is estimated that nearly 1,000 were Jews (including this author). The vast majority of these refugees eventually made it to the United States,[352] but others stayed in those countries, where they have developed their own very tight-knit and prosperous Cuban communities.[353]

Although these orderly exoduses from Cuba existed since 1965, the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s saw many fleeing Cuba illegally, usually on make-shift rafts.[354] It is estimated that about one hundred Jews made it to Florida from Cuba in this period and in this manner.[355] But in

1980, the world's largest demand for political asylum took place in Havana.

In April 1980, 10,800 men, women and children assaulted the tiny Peruvian Embassy in Havana, and asked for political asylum. At the same time, 4,000 more Cubans ran into several other diplomatic delegations in the Cuban capital.[356] In search of an escape valve, and in order to embarrass the American government, Castro allowed a mass exodus from the Cuban port of Mariel, which in four months brought an estimated 127,000 refugees from Cuba to American shores.[357] Among these poor souls, Castro sent murderers, common criminals, mongoloids, and the mentally ill, along with those who honestly wanted refugee status; all in a machiavellian effort to disgrace Cuban exiles already in the United States, and to burden the American government.[358] Nevertheless, of the refugees who arrived in Florida in that exodus, an estimated 3,000 of them were Jews; including the last members of the Ashkenazic Burial Society of Havana.[359] Therefore, an estimated 23,000 Jews fled Cuba in the first twenty years of Castro regimes; part of a general exodus of over one and a half million Cubans who have fled the country, or twenty per-cent of the island's total population.[360]

After 1982, Castro began to allow men over the age of sixty-five and women over the age of sixty to visit their relatives in the United States, if their relatives paid US$2,000.00 a piece to the Cuban regime.[361] Around two hundred elderly Jews have visited their relatives in the United States in this fashion, but the vast majority have returned to Cuba due to a wide variety of reasons. Also, at time of writing, one can usually have the Cuban regime release a close relative, but this requires payment in **dollars**; sometimes as much as US$100,000.00![362] Since there are very few willing or able to pay this ransom, so legal emigration from Cuba has slowed-down to a trickle.[363] Since 1989, about 15,000 Cubans per year have made it to the United States on make-shit rafts. Tragically, the United States Coast Guard estimates that those 15,000 are only one-third of those who actually set-out from the island; the others have drowned or have been eaten by sharks in the Straits of Florida. Also, as Castro's regime had progressively been falling apart, defections have high ranking government figures occur on an almost daily basis. Among these have been Jews, such as the head of Cuban television, who defected last month in Venezuela.

In 1984, Abraham Matterín died in Havana. Matterín had been a major leader of Cuban Jewry, who wrote several books on the topic of Martí's dealings with Jews. Matterín refused to leave Cuba when he could, since he considered himself to be the communitiy's archivist and his-

torian. If he would have left Cuba, he knew that all his papers and archives would be taken by the Castro regime and probably destroyed. Matterín thought that he would out-live the Castro regime, but he was wrong. Upon his death, his house was confiscated by the state, and all his life work disappeared. With Matterín's death, Cuban Jewry probably saw its coffin sealed.[364]

At time of writing, there are estimated to be from 800 to two thousand people in Cuba who identify themselves as Jews, depending on his statistics one believes.[365] In Cuba today, there is no rabbi, kosher butcher or mohel.[366] There are no Jewish schools, and religious education - although not officially illegal - is severely curtailed and discouraged.[367] Finally, mixed-marriage is the norm among the young Jews who remain in Cuba.[368]

The cemeteries no longer belong to the community, and therefore can be used by anyone.[369] From about 1989, people can no longer be buried in mausolea or bóvedas that require a machine to have their lids taken off, since Cuba has less and less gasoline everyday. At the risk of not sounding objective (although personal experience really does not have much to do with objectivity), permit this author to recount a personal story. This author's maternal aunt (who was actually like a mother) died last year in Cuba at the age of fifty-two due to lack of adequate medical attention. She had been a political prisoner for twelve years, and had been completely marginalized by the regime. She was supposed to be buried in her husband's mausoleum in the Havana Jewish Cemetery, but since there is no gasoline for transportation and no machinery to remove the enclosing slab of the same, she was buried in Columbus Cemetery. In that cemetery, her body was place in these horrendous file cabinet-like concrete niches which have been built there. They are only identified by number, yet if a family member has a magic marker or something like that, they can actually write the name of the deceased on the niche. The only "distinction" that this author's aunt received at her burial is that she was buried a few niches away from General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez, Castro's premier general who was executed after a classical Stalinist trial for drug trafficking in 1989. In the addenda, one can see an example of these niches, but one that actually had the rare exception of having the name of the deceased written upon it. Also in the addenda, one can see a picture which appeared in 1988 of the Jewish Cemetery of Havana in the Hebrew-language newspaper *'Israel Shelanu.'* No words are needed to describe that very sad scene. As a matter of fact, a Cuban Jew who was able to return to Cuba last October through the International Red Cross, told this author that the entrance gate to the Cemetery is crumbling, and that most of the tombs have been vandalized for their bronze,

silver and gold ornaments. This individual also told this author that the grass has grown so high in the cemetery, that some tombs cannot even be found. Finally, at time of writing, a rumor has spread among Cuban exiles that in Cuba there are no more coffins, and the Castro has asked that all family members donate their deceased's corpses to science. Whether this is true or not, it is just indicative of the whole situation, which hopefully will radically change very soon. Finally, it should be noted here that the bodies of those who are executed in Cuba are not always returned to their families for burial. As example of this can be found in the addenda.

Although officially not anti-Semitic, the Castro regime has religiously followed Moscow's former line on Zionism and the "international Zionist conspiracy to destroy the Palestinian people,"[370] not to mention the "Jews' and Israel's ties to imperialistic capitalism."[371] Castro's ties to the PLO are as strong as steel,[372] and the old Israeli embassy in Havana is now the city's PLO "embassy,"[373] as was the case in Sandinista Nicaragua.[374] Cartoons and editorials in official Cuban publications (the only ones which are allowed), are so viciously anti-Semitic in its criticisms of Israel and Zionism, that they are reminiscent of *Der Strürmer*."[375] For instance, during Israel's invasion of Lebanon, Cuban communist cartoons portrayed the Jews as thirsty blood-suckers, who would kill anyone to get their way.[376] Finally, a viciously anti-Semitic book detailing the "history" of the Jews, and "what they have done" to the Palestinians, was published in Cuba in the early 1980s, and from there, republished in several Latin American countries.[377]

When all of the free press was banned and publishing houses were closed in Cuba in 1961,[378] the Jewish press was not immune.[379] In 1962, a new government-sponsored Yiddish newspaper appeared in Cuba.[380] This newspaper was part of a policy of promoting communist newspapers for Cuba's different ethnic groups.[381] For instance, a Cuban-published communist Chinese newspaper appeared at the same time,[382] as did one in Arabic, for the island's large Syrian-Lebanese community.[383] The Yiddish newspaper's title was *Dos Naye Kubaner Fiddish Vort*,"[384] and its director was Fabio Grobart; a man who for fifty years had never bothered to be a Jew, but suddenly became one.[385]

Fabio Grobart and his brother Alonso had arrived in Cuba from Soviet Russia in 1928, as the delegates of Josef Stalin's Comintern to the island.[386] Fabio Grobart's original name was Feivel Grobsky,[387] and his brother was Avram,[388] but they both hispanized their names upon becoming Cuba citizens, as did many other Jews when they took Cuban citizenship.[389] The Grobarts never had much success in mustering the Jewish proletariat in Cuba,[390] since as we already saw, prole-

tarian issues were really not something of concern for the majority of Jews on the island. By the late 1930s, both of the Grobart brothers had married gentile communist women in Cuba, and had become totally emerged in the hierarchy of Cuban communism,[591] which was mainly dominated by Spanish communists who were already living on the island,[592] and whose ranks increased by those who fled Spain after Francisco Franco's Falangist victory.[593] Upon Castro's declaration that he was going to take Cuba down the communist path, Alonso Grobart broke ranks with the Party, and fled to the United States, since had become totally disenchanted with the ideology he had always defended.[594] This was not the case for his brother Fabio.

Fabio Grobart became the editor of this new Yiddish newspaper, whose readership was radically declining, and was put in charge of Cuban Jewish affairs.[595] He took over one of Havana's Jewish schools, had it renamed the Albert Einstein School, and had all the Jewish children remaining in the city (including this author) sent there.[596] In this school, they were to learn "secular" Jewish studies, along with the new Soviet-style curriculum that all children in Cuba were submitted to.[597] This school did not last long, since it was a mockery, and everyone knew it.[598] After Cuba broke-off diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967, the farce of a sustaining a Jewish school and a Yiddish press was dropped by the Cuban regime. This was the end of any "Jewish creativity" in Cuba. Still, Grobart was responsible for having single-handedly authored Cuba's socialist constitution, which was finally "ratified" in 1976.[599] This constitution is a virtual carbon-copy of the Fundamental Law of the USSR (the Soviet Union's constitution), and mentions Moscow sixteen times in its text.[600]

Nevertheless, Cuba's synagogues remained in the hands of the few Jews who remained on the island,[601] but they are crumbling from disrepair, and even most of the Torah scrolls have been smuggled out of the country for safe-keeping by the Cuban Jewish communities based in Miami.[602] As we have seen, at least the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa is falling apart. Needless to say, the Jewish community which has remained in Cuba is a mere skeleton of what it used to be. It had been destroyed, and the for few Jews who remained on the island, their community basically embodies the maxim: *sic transit gloria mundi*.[603]

For the first wave of Cubans Jews who arrived in the United States in 1961, life was very difficult, to say the least.[604] They were without a cent, most of them could not speak the language, and many of them were constantly worried about the relatives they left behind.[605] Most of the synagogues in Miami closed their doors to them, and only one - the Reform Temple

Menorah in North Miami Beach - offered free tickets for Cuban Jewish refugees during the High Holidays of both 1961 and 1962.[606] The B'nai B'rith of Miami also closed its doors on the Cubans Jews,[607] and all the help they could get was from the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program which had been set-up as a joint venture of the American government and private agencies in Miami.[608] As a matter of fact, the treatment that many Cuban Jews received from the fellow Jews when they arrived in Florida, turned-off many of them from Judaism for good.[609]

Many of these Jews could find no opportunity in Miami, since the area's economy at the time was very small and overburdened.[610] Many of these Jews - along with many gentile Cuban refugees - opted to go north and settle in urban areas such as New York, Boston and Chicago, where the economy was stronger.[611] Still, some Cuban Ashkenazim and Sephardim did remain in Miami, and they slowly - and with a great deal of sacrifice and effort - began to rebuild their communities by founding store-front congregations with some financial aid they reluctantly accepted from HIAS;[612] ironically, the same organization which had helped so many of their parents and grandparents originally settle in Cuba. The cold shoulder that these Jews had received from the B'nai B'rith of Miami led these Cuban Jews to establish their own chapter of the organization, which exists until today.[613] Therefore, the *Jewbans* - as Cuban Jews in Miami became to be known derogatorily among the American Jews of the region[614] - had established themselves. Nevertheless, most of them at the time believed that what was happening to them was a Dantesque nightmare, which would be over very soon, allowing them to go back to Cuba to their homes and businesses.[615] Sadly for them, they eventually realized that there was no going back.[616] Finally, these early pioneering Cuban Jews in Miami set the groundwork for the larger waves of Jews who began to come through the port of Camarioca and then the Freedom Flights. By the early 1970s, many of the Cubans - both gentile and Jew - who had gone north looking for opportunity, began to return south again to Miami, for it is where their home away from home was being rebuilt by an ever-growing Cuban exile community.[617]

Metropolitan Miami today is the second largest "Cuban" city in the world, with approximately one and a half million Cuban exiles living there.[618] Therefore, it has become a sort of "Taiwan" for Cubans, since in Miami the Cubans have tried to rebuild almost every aspect of a world that is probably forever gone.[619] Following this pattern of reëstablishing what was gone with the wind, Cuban Jewish exiles in Miami have rebuilt their synagogues, social centers, beach clubs, but not their cemeteries. As a matter of fact, the two major synagogues they have built - name-

ly the Ashkenazic and Sephardic ones - stand as monuments to those whom were left behind buried in Cuba. In the grandiose Ashkenazic Cuban synagogue in Miami Beach, there are plaques everywhere memorializing those Jews who died and were buried in Cuba. At the entrance to the huge Cuban Sephardic synagogue, there is a dedication plaque which in Spanish partially reads: "...May this building stand as a monument perpetually memorializing those whom we left behind in our beautiful island of Cuba...We will never forget Cuba, our lovely country, nor its struggle for freedom...May all who enter this building remember that it was built by those who lost all and sacrificed much in the name of liberty..." Therefore, in other words, one might say that these two beautiful synagogues are huge funerary monuments, which stand as functional memorials to those who are buried across the Straits of Florida.

Cuban Jews in Miami have developed a great deal of culture, which directly expresses their unique situation. They have produced documentaries,[630] they have written new books dealing with their present situation, they have written plays, and they have been prominent in the plastic arts. Also, they are to be found in every aspect of Cuban gentile exile life. From all levels of Byzantine Cuban politics, to anti-Castro movements, to Spanish-language television, to education, Cuban Jews are a powerful force. Also, they have at times served as a bridge between Miami's large Jewish population and the Cuban exiles of the city.[631] Yet as far as cemeteries are concerned, these Cuban Jews have adjusted to American Jewish burial techniques. For instance, just one block away from both major Cuban synagogues in Miami Beach, one can find a Riverside Chapel. The Cuban Jews of Miami tend to hold their wakes in these funeral homes, and not many are prepared for burial in the traditional Jewish way. Nevertheless, there are still affiliated Cuban Jews in Miami who use the services of those same Cuban funeral homes which have been reëstablished in Miami, such as Caballero, Rivero, and Brake.[632] Not all these Jews are buried in the area's very plain and ugly Jewish cemeteries, but rather in non-sectarian ones. As a matter of fact, some are buried in reinforced coffins, so that one day their bodies may be transferred to Cuba to be buried next to those of their other relatives. Sadly, even in death, many of these Cuban Jews cannot even rest.

Thus we can see that the story behind the Cemetery of the Hebrew Colony of Cuba has a rather unique history, as does Cuban Jewry in general. This cemetery was founded as a consequence of a war, which Jews really did not much of a deciding vote in. This was the same war which allowed for a prosperous Jewish community to develop in Cuba, only to be destroyed in

lightning speed. Hopefully, one day very soon, what was built with so much love and caring, can at least be repaired so that it can regain some of its dignity. That is the most we can hope for.

[1] Doyle., p. 35.
[2] Johnson., p. 5.
[3] ibid., p. 4.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.
[6] ibid.
[7] Marrero., (vol. I.)., (1981)., p. 11.
[8] ibid.
[9] ibid.
[10] ibid.
[11] ibid., (vol. I.)., p. 12.
[12] ibid.
[13] ibid.
[14] ibid.
[15] ibid., p. 8.
[16] ibid., (vol. I.)., p. 7.
[17] ibid., p. 12.
[18] ibid.
[19] ibid.
[20] ibid., p. 10.
[21] ibid.
[22] ibid., (vol. III)., pp. 67 - 104.
[23] ibid., pp. 28 - 35.
[24] ibid., p. 31.
[25] ibid., p. 35.
[26] Beltrán., p. 234.
[27] ibid.
[28] ibid.
[29] ibid., p. 236.
[30] Sánchez Vallés., p. 5.
[31] ibid.
[32] ibid.
[33] ibid.
[34] ibid., p. 6.
[35] ibid., pp. 6 - 10.
[36] ibid., p. 8.
[37] ibid., p. 9.
[38] ibid., p. 11.
[39] ibid., pp. 13 and 16.
[40] ibid., p. 14.
[41] ibid., pp. 34 - 36.
[42] Thomas., (1976)., p. 1018.
[43] ibid.
[44] ibid.
[45] ibid.
[46] ibid.
[47] ibid., (1982)., p. 31.
[48] Marrero., (vol. I)., (1981)., p. 6.
[49] Permuy.

[50] Permuy.
[51] ibid.
[52] **N.B.**: The value of the "Blood Cleansing" was later extended to prove that one did not have black, Oriental or Indian blood, not to mention Jewish blood as well. In Cuba - as throughout all Spanish domains - for one to have a "Blood Cleansing" in one's possession meant that all doors were opened. [Marrero., (vols. II and IV)., (1971)., pp. 78 - 80 and 210, respectively.]
[53] Permuy.
[54] ibid.
[55] Liagmont., p. 44.
[56] ibid.
[57] Permuy.
[58] ibid.
[59] ibid.
[60] Suchlicki., p. 20.
[61] ibid.
[62] ibid.
[63] ibid.
[64] ibid.
[65] ibid.
[66] ibid.
[67] Liagmont., p. 46.
[68] ibid.
[69] Ruiz., p. 31.
[70] ibid., p. 32.
[71] ibid., p. 34.
[72] ibid., p. 38.
[73] ibid., p. 41.
[74] Marrero., (vol. II)., (1971)., p. 67.
[75] Ruiz., p. 44.
[76] ibid., p. 51.
[77] ibid.
[78] ibid.p. 69.
[79] ibid.
[80] ibid., p. 77.
[81] ibid., p. 83.
[82] Gravette., p. 168.
[83] ibid.
[84] ibid.
[85] ibid.
[86] ibid.
[87] ibid., p. 169.
[88] ibid.
[89] Marrero., (vol. III)., (1971)., p. 121.
[90] Suchlicki., p. 89.
[91] Permuy.
[92] Marrero., (vol. III)., p. 222.
[93] ibid.
[94] ibid.
[95] Thomas., (1982)., p. 11.
[96] ibid., pp. 11 - 15.

[97] Thomas., (1982)., p. 12.
[98] ibid.
[99] ibid., p. 21.
[100] ibid., p. 11.
[101] ibid., p.22.
[102] ibid., p. 22.
[103] ibid., p. 30.
[104] ibid., p. 33.
[105] ibid., p.
[106] ibid., p. 46.
[107] ibid.
[108] Liagmont., p. 46.
[109] ibid.
[110] Marrero., (vol. IV)., (1971)., p. 33.
[111] ibid.
[112] ibid.
[113] ibid.
[114] ibid.
[115] ibid., pp. 36-42.
[116] ibid.
[117] ibid.
[118] ibid.
[119] ibid.
[120] ibid.
[121] Clark., p. 10.
[122] Suárez., p. 78.
[123] ibid., p. 79.
[124] ibid.
[125] ibid.
[126] ibid.
[127] ibid.
[128] ibid.
[129] ibid.
[130] ibid., p. 83.
[131] ibid.
[132] ibid., p. 78.
[133] Landián., p. 15.
[134] ibid.
[135] ibid.
[136] ibid., p. 16.
[137] ibid.
[138] ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] ibid.
[141] Marrero., (vol. IV)., (1971)., p. 68.
[142] ibid., p. 79.
[143] ibid., p. 76.
[144] ibid.
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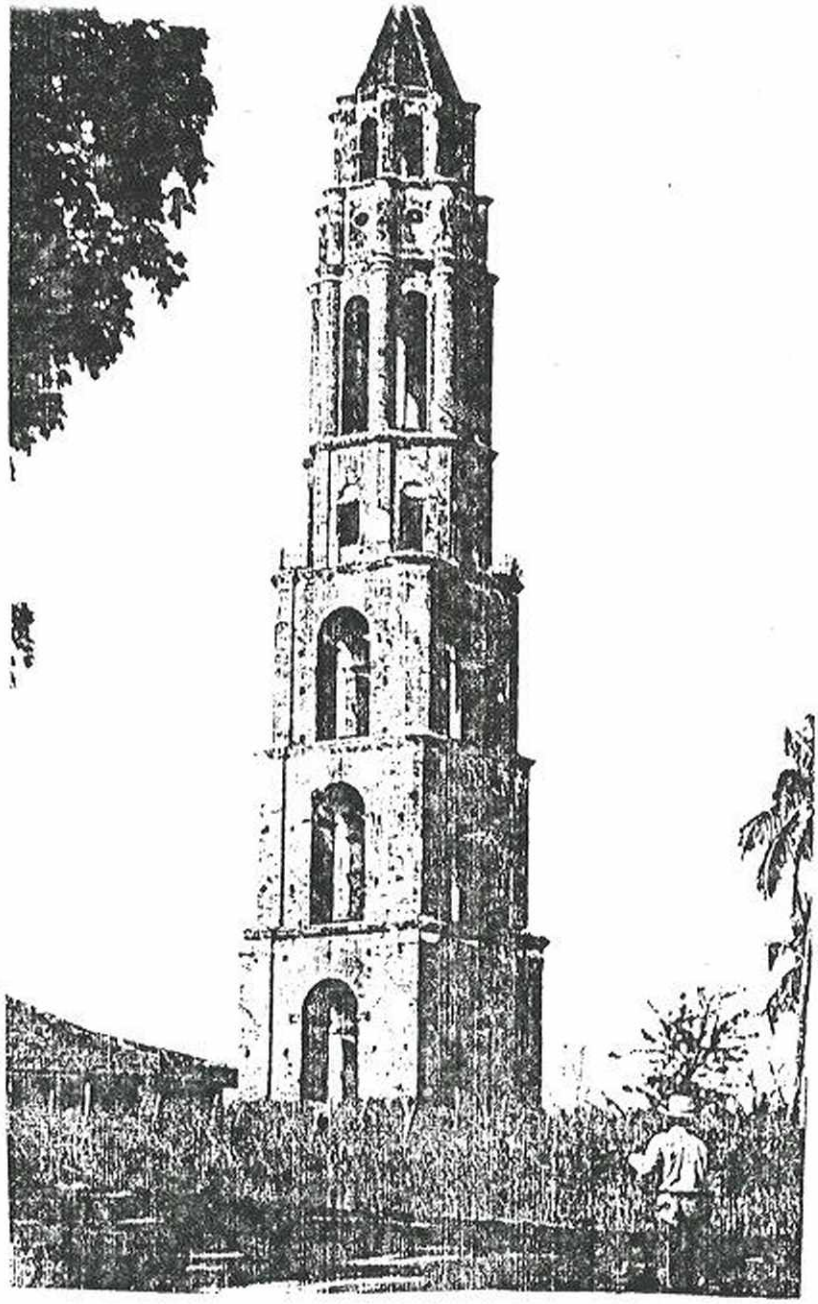
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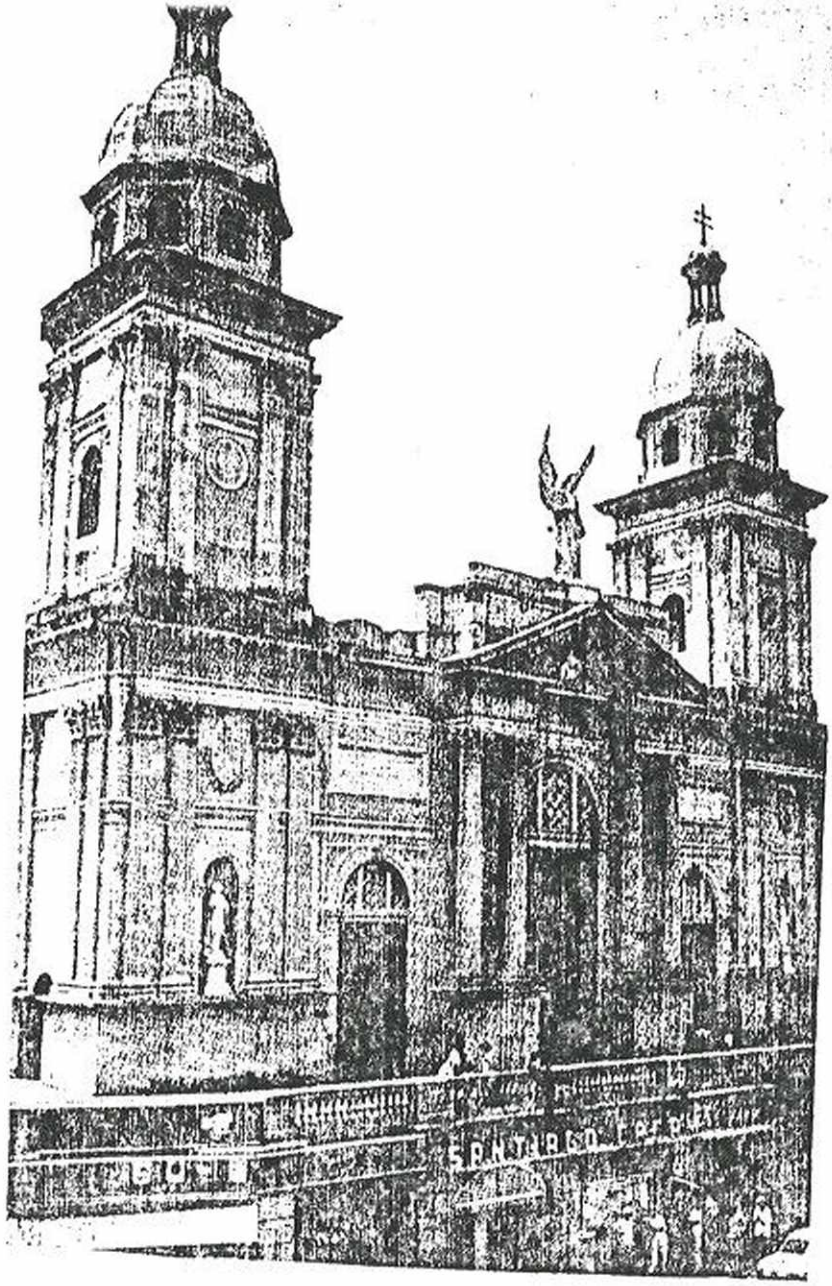
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ADDENDA



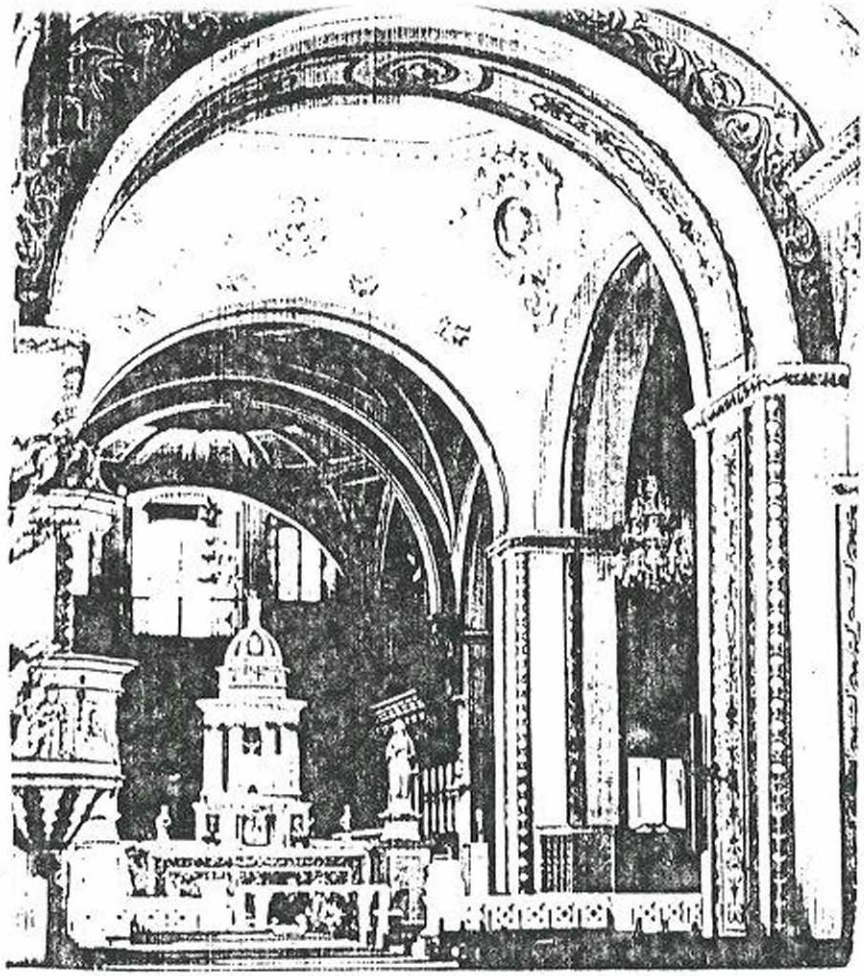
523

The Iznaga Tower. Trinidad, Las Villas, Cuba.



524

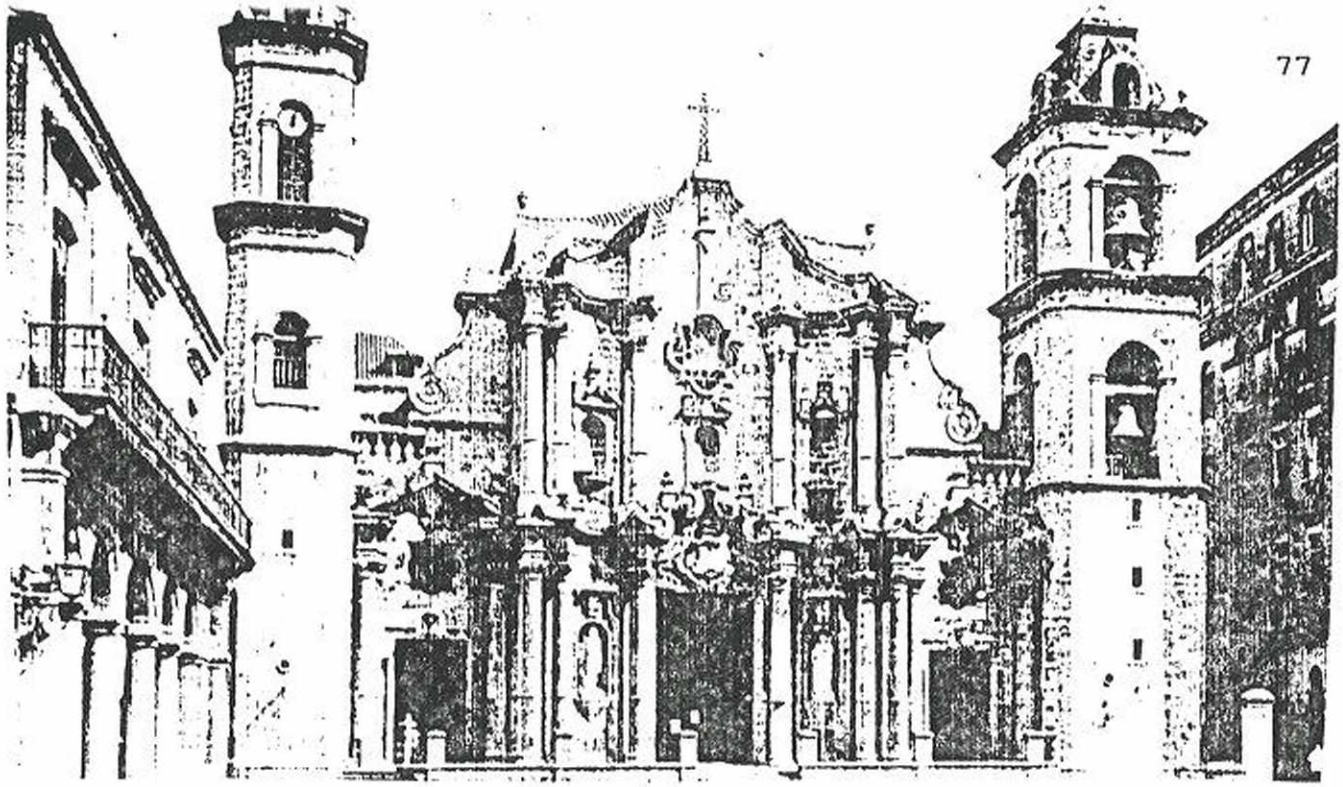
The Cathedral of Santiago de Cuba. Notice the lower level. These stores are carved into the solid granite foundation over which the Cathedral was built, and in which countless people are buried.



525

Interior of the Cathedral of Santiago de Cuba. Behind the altar, is the entrance to the vast mausoleum which was built underneath this edifice, and which houses the remains of the great Conquistador Diego Velázquez, and the crypts of the Bacardí and Arnaz families.

Donations from these two families and other prominent Santiago families, made the interior of this Cathedral so ornate.



526

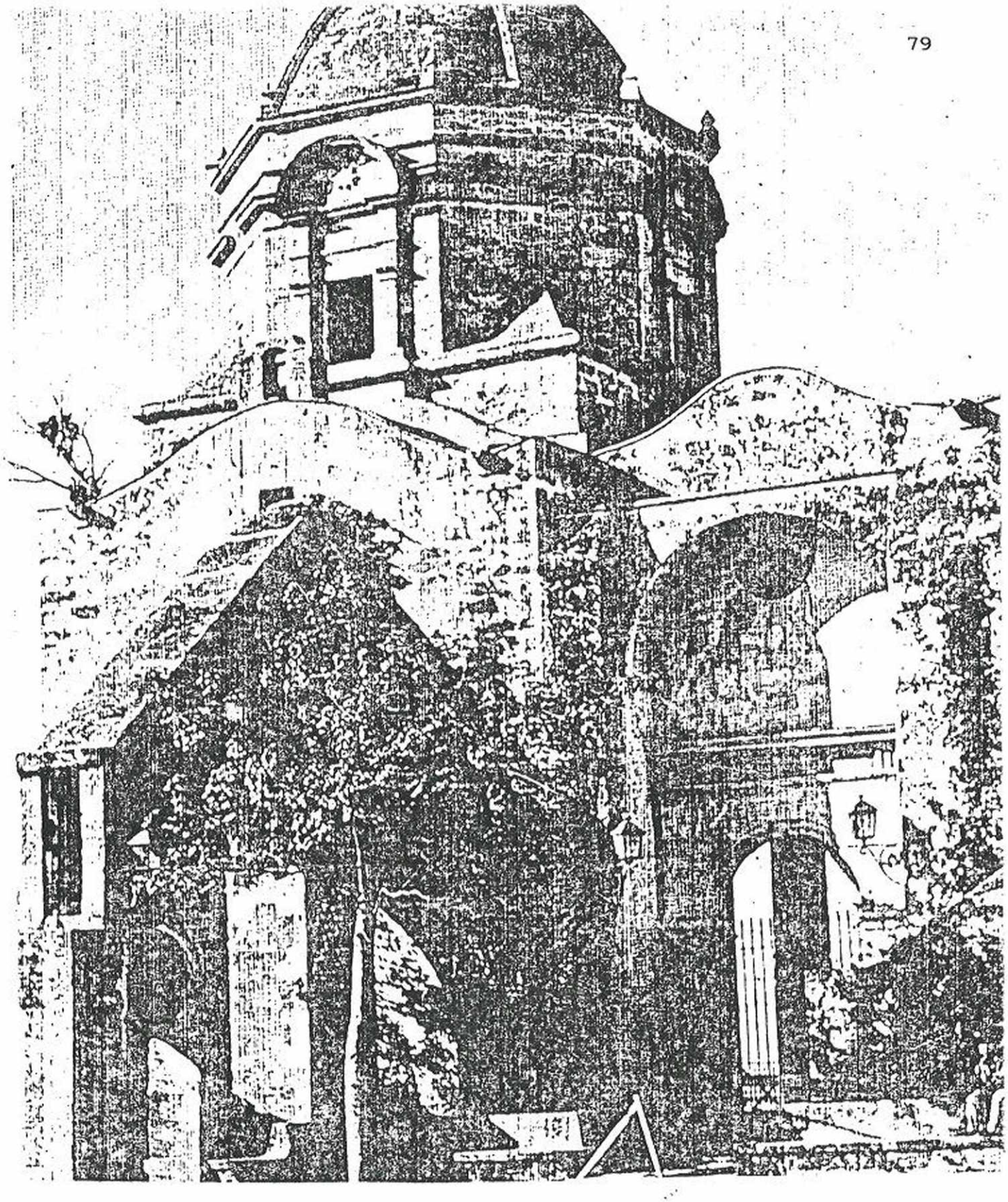
Cathedral of Havana.



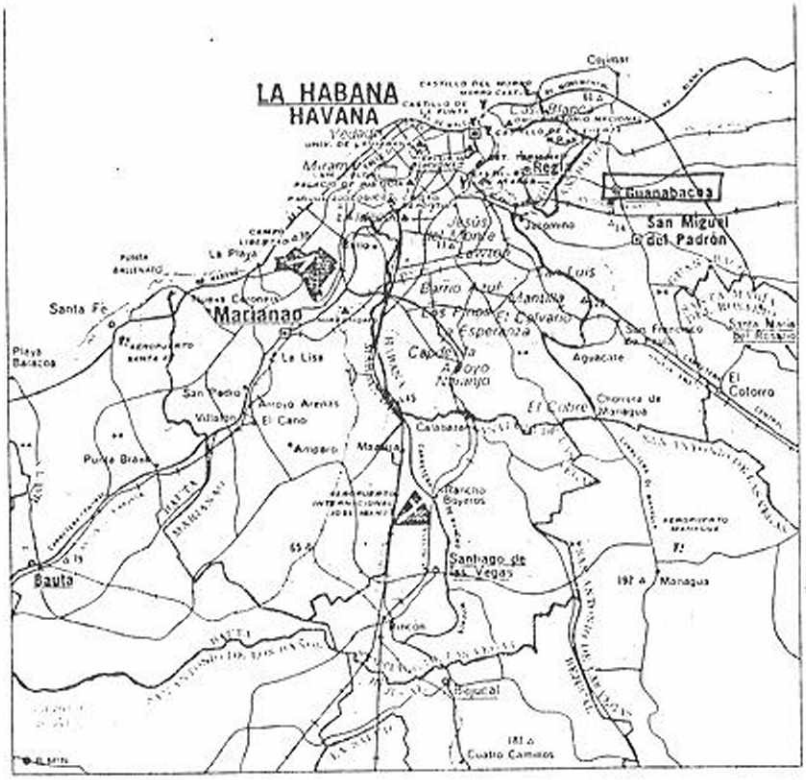
527

Mausoleum of Diego Colón, Christopher Columbus' eldest son. It was to house the remains of this very important individual which was the pretense for the huge expense that this Cathedral cost to build.

The legend on the tomb reads in Spanish: "Here lies Diego, son of the great Columbus. He was our governor and guide. May God have him in His glory. Amen."



The mausoleum annex of Paula Church in Old Havana. Built[528] in 1600.

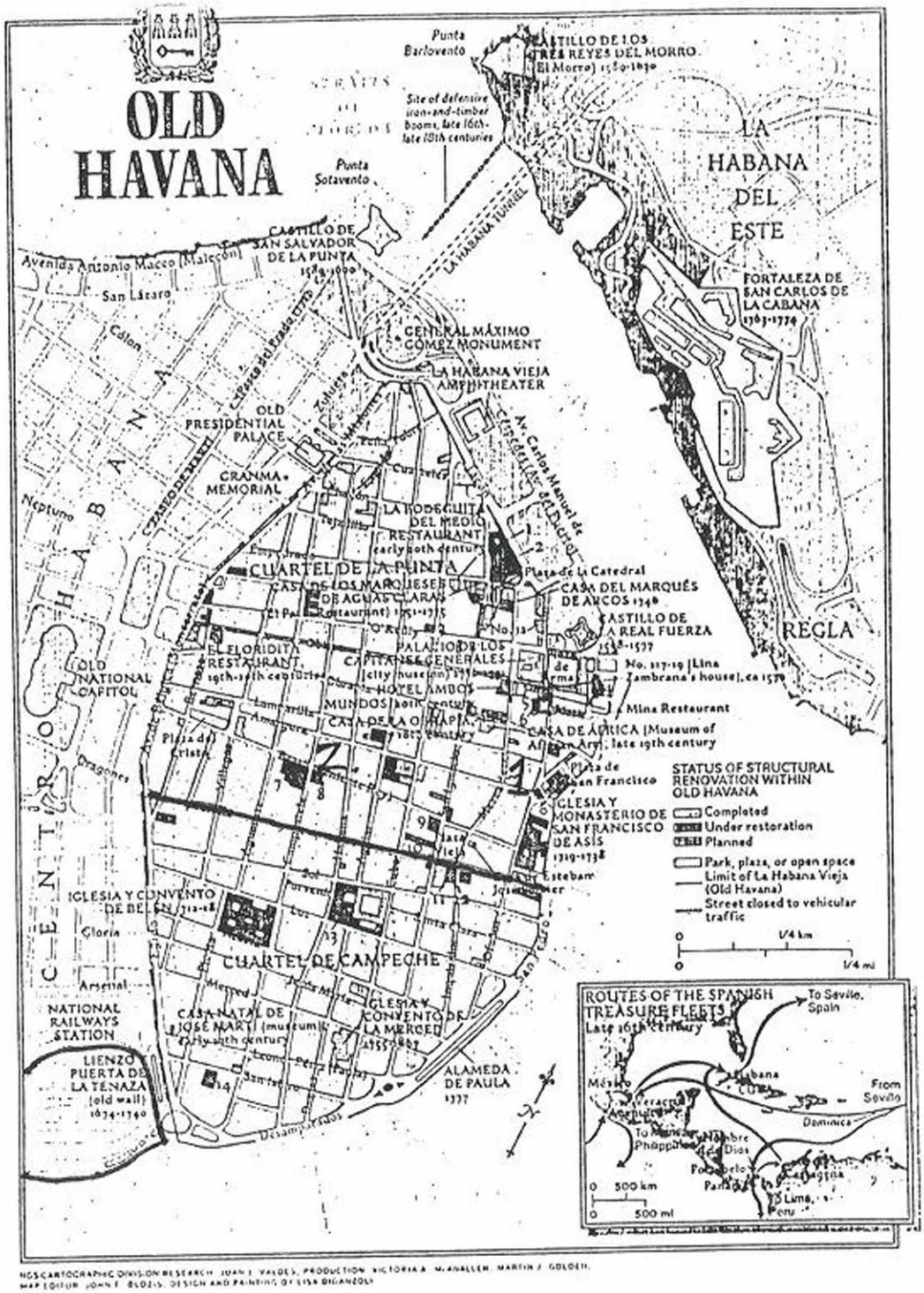


529

This map of metropolitan Havana can give one an idea of how far the Jewish cemetery was from the city at the time of its establishment.

Nevertheless, one can see that today Guanabacoa lies on city limits of Havana.

Guanabacoa is highlighted in green.



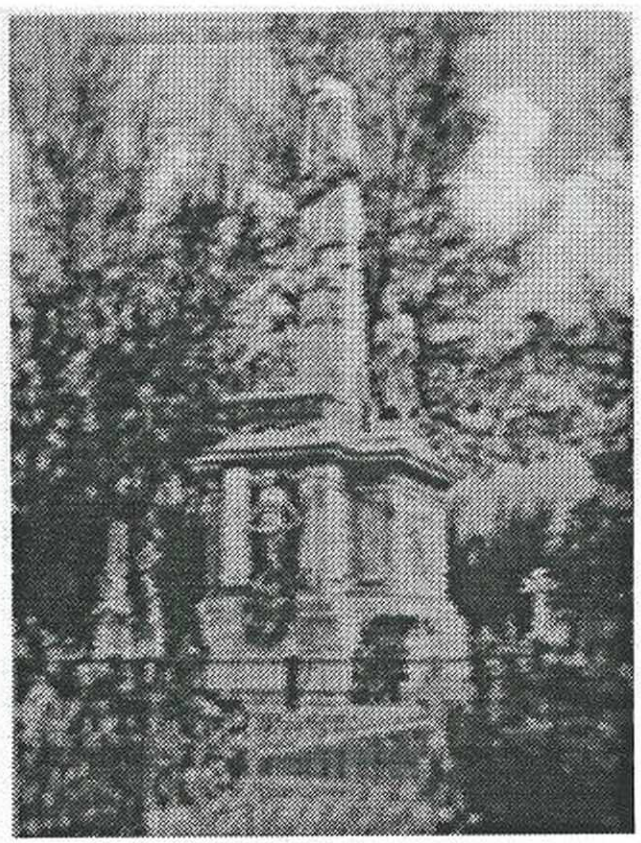
NGS CARTOGRAPHIC DIVISION RESEARCH: JUAN J. VALDÉS. PRODUCTION: VICTORIA A. McALLISTER, MARTIN J. GOLDEN. MAP EDITOR: JOHN F. BLOZIS. DESIGN AND PAINTING: LISA BIGANZOLI

530

Map of Old Havana, the largest colonial sector of any city in the Western Hemisphere. In red, is Muralla (Wall) Street. The length of the street was the original city wall of Havana as Teixiera defined it. Muralla was known as a street full of Jewish-owned shops, and for its Sunday shopping.

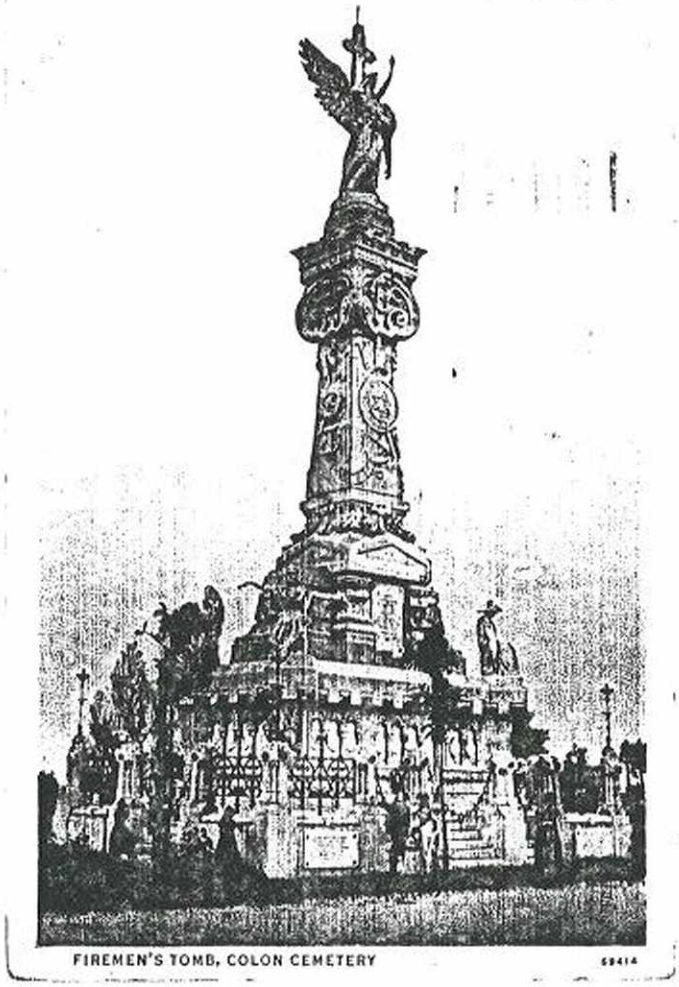
The number "1" in green is where the Ashkenazim first set-up their congregation, and the number "2" is where the Sephardim set-up theirs.

The area surrounded in blue is the location of the Espada Cemetery.



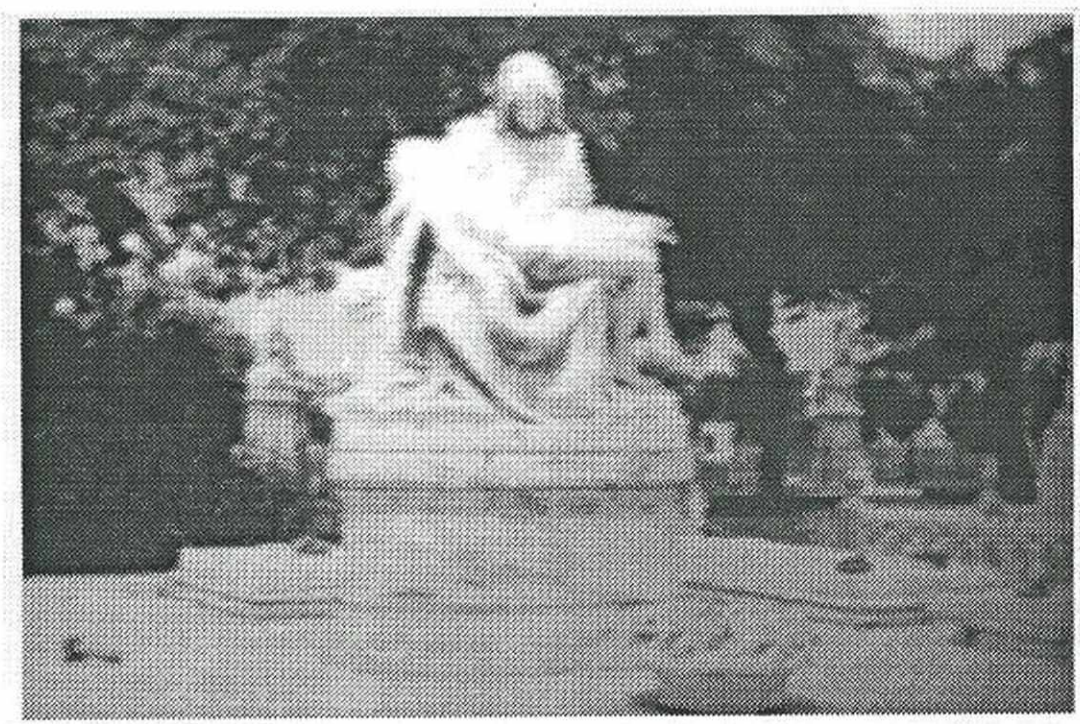
531

The tomb of the medical students in Columbus Cemetery, Havana. This tomb's monument was erected in 1902.



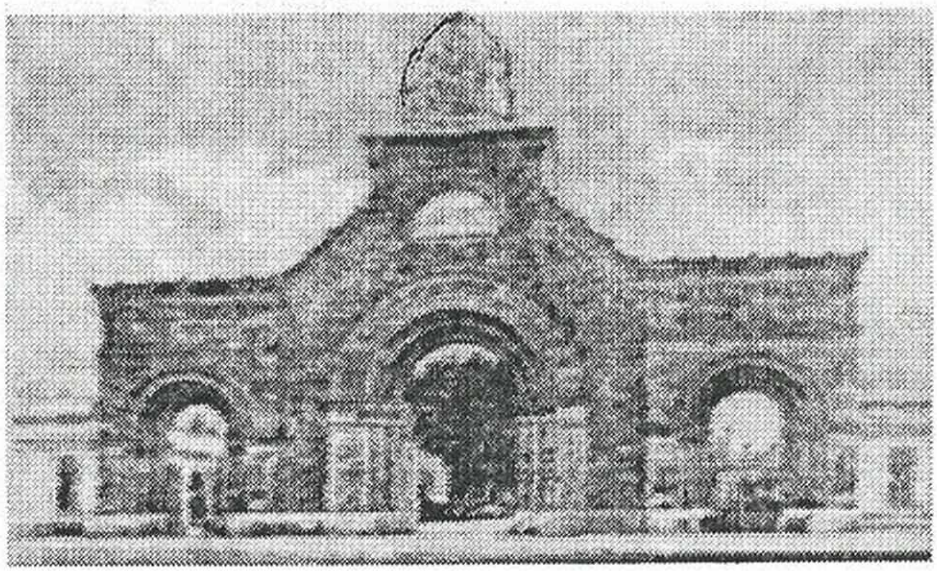
532

A postcard from 1910 depicting Columbus Cemetery's ornate mausoleum reserved for Havana's firemen and their families. This monument was erected in 1901.



533

An example of a bóveda complex in Havana's Columbus Cemetery. Topped by a replica of the Pietà, take note of the covers of the bóvedas, and their rings which are used to open a tomb to either take out remains which are to be put into an ossuary, or for another casket to be interred therein.



534

Entrance arch to the Cemetery of the Hebrew Colony of Cuba, in Guanabacoa, Province of Havana, Cuba.



535

Memorial to American Jewish troops erected by the United States Occupation Forces, in what was to become the Jewish Cemetery of Havana.

Take note of the landscaped wild palms, the American flag, the plaque on the base of the monument, and the benches in the background.

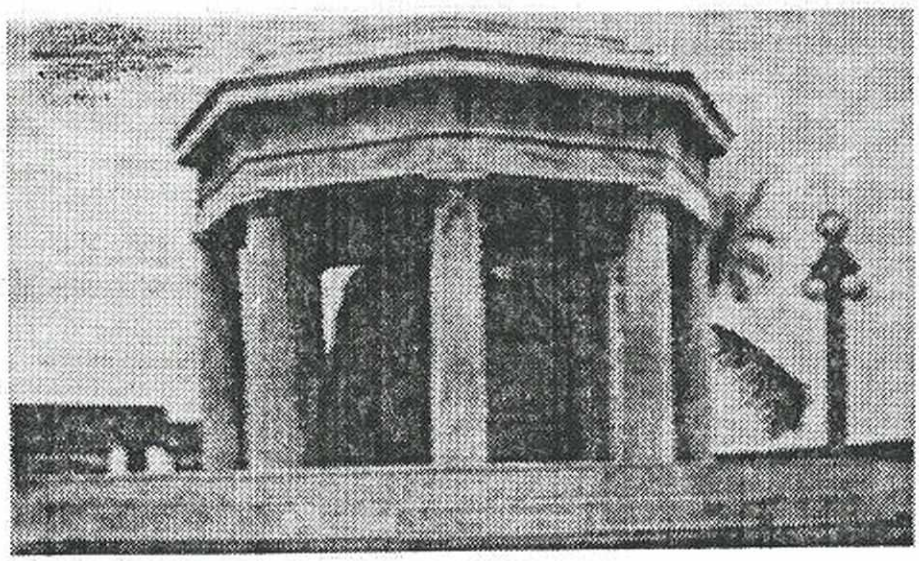
Unfortunately, this whole monument has been destroyed.



536

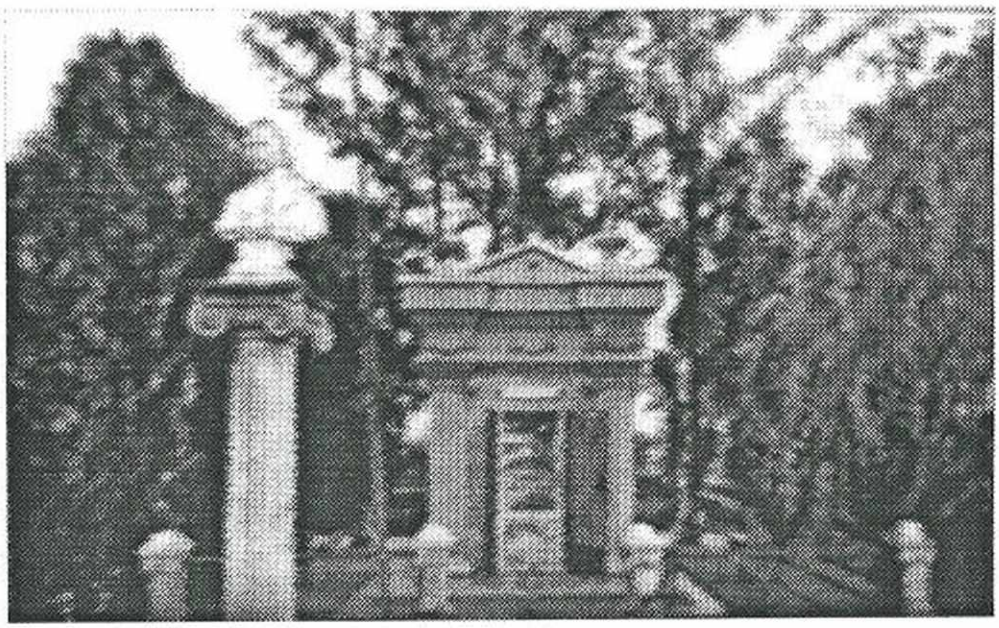
The funeral cortège of Generalissimo Carlos (Akiva) Roloff, as it was about to leave the old Cuban Senate Building, which since 1928 has been the headquarters of the National Bank of Cuba. Roloff laid in state in this huge and stately Romanesque building - which a few years earlier had been a Spanish convent - for twenty-four hours.

The event pictured here took place in 1910, and that is why it is so interesting. Behind the highly ornamented horses, we see women. This went against the grain of Spanish tradition, which was then still firmly in place in Cuba, and which normally excluded women from all funerary ceremonies.



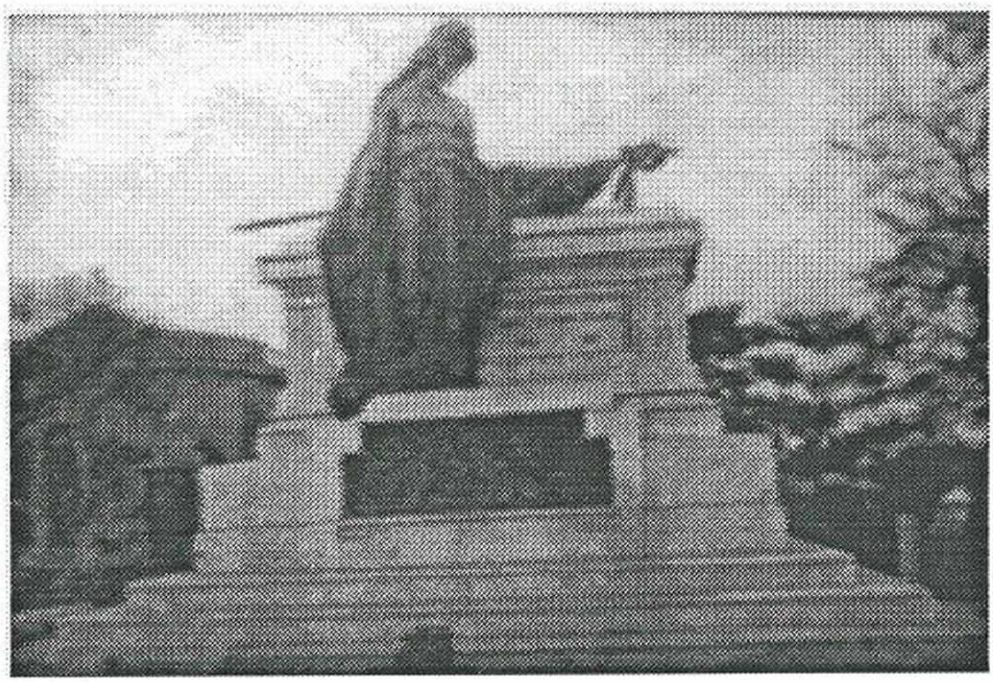
537

The mausoleum of Generalissimo Carlos (Akiva) Roloff in Havana's Jewish Cemetery. Take note of the unfinished cemetery wall in the background, and the ornate electric lamp post beside the mausloeum.



538

The mausoleum of Frederick Schwartz in Havana's Jewish Cemetery.

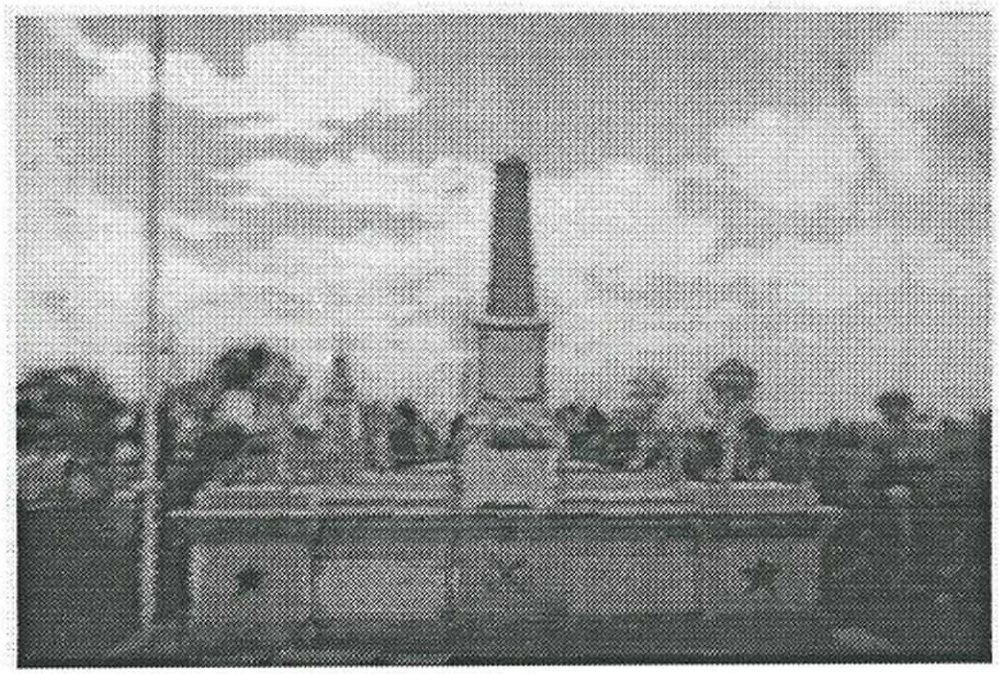


539

The tomb of Sargent Joseph Steinberg in Havana's Jewish Cemetery.

The image on top of the mausoleum is that of Freddom, were her Phrygian cap, as she lays a laural wreath on the Sargent's tomb.

Take note of the mausoleum of Carlos (Akiva) Roloff in the background.



540

The mausoleum of Captain Frank Steinhart in Havana's Jewish Cemetery. The two stars on the monument refer to the Sargent's military status.



541

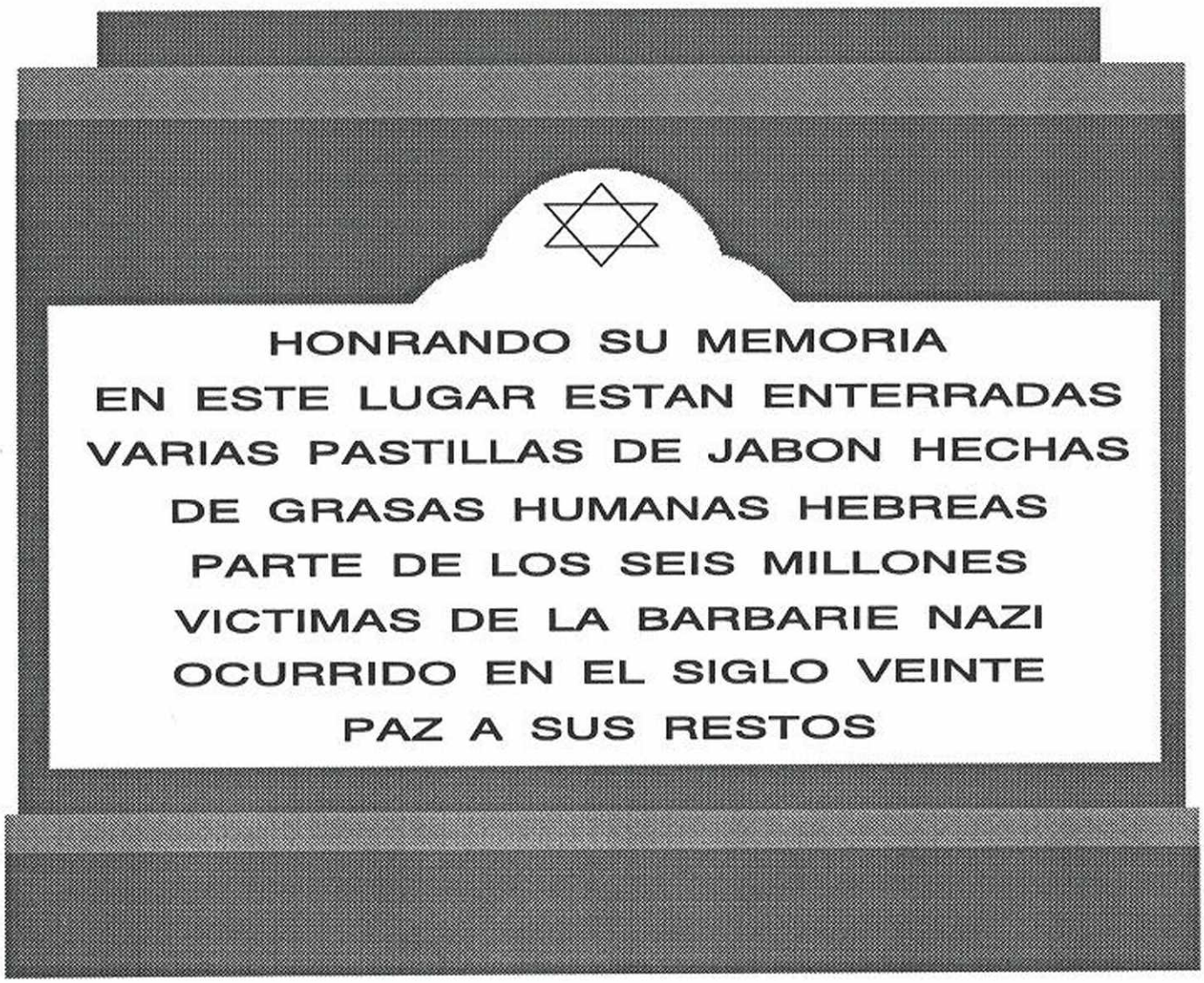
Moisés Raigodorski's monument in the Jewish Cemetery of Havana.

Take note of the simple tomb stones which surround the monument. Although they may appear to mark the graves of those buried in the ground, the coffins below them are placed in below-ground cases made of a material such as concrete.

In the background, one can see shed that are typical in Cuba. They are placed over the tomb for the burial, so it should rain, the grave would not be flooded.

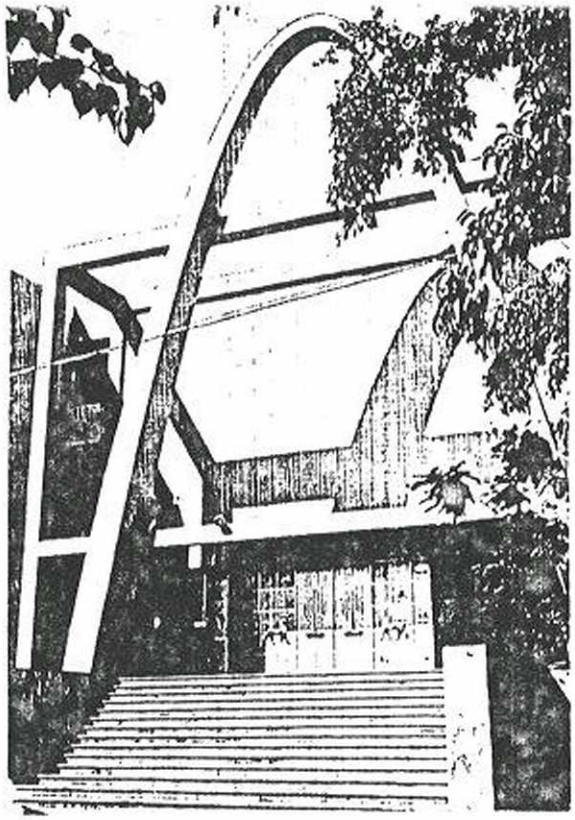
The fence that one sees running in the background marks the limits between the Ashkenazi sector of the cemetery and the American one.

54



Computer reproduction of the monument to the victims of the Nazis pictured on the previous page, and which is located in Havana's Jewish Cemetery.

In Spanish, the monument reads: "In order to honor their memory, in this place are buried several bars of soap made from the human fat of those Hebrews who were part of the six million victims of Nazi barbarity which took place in this century. Peace to their remains.



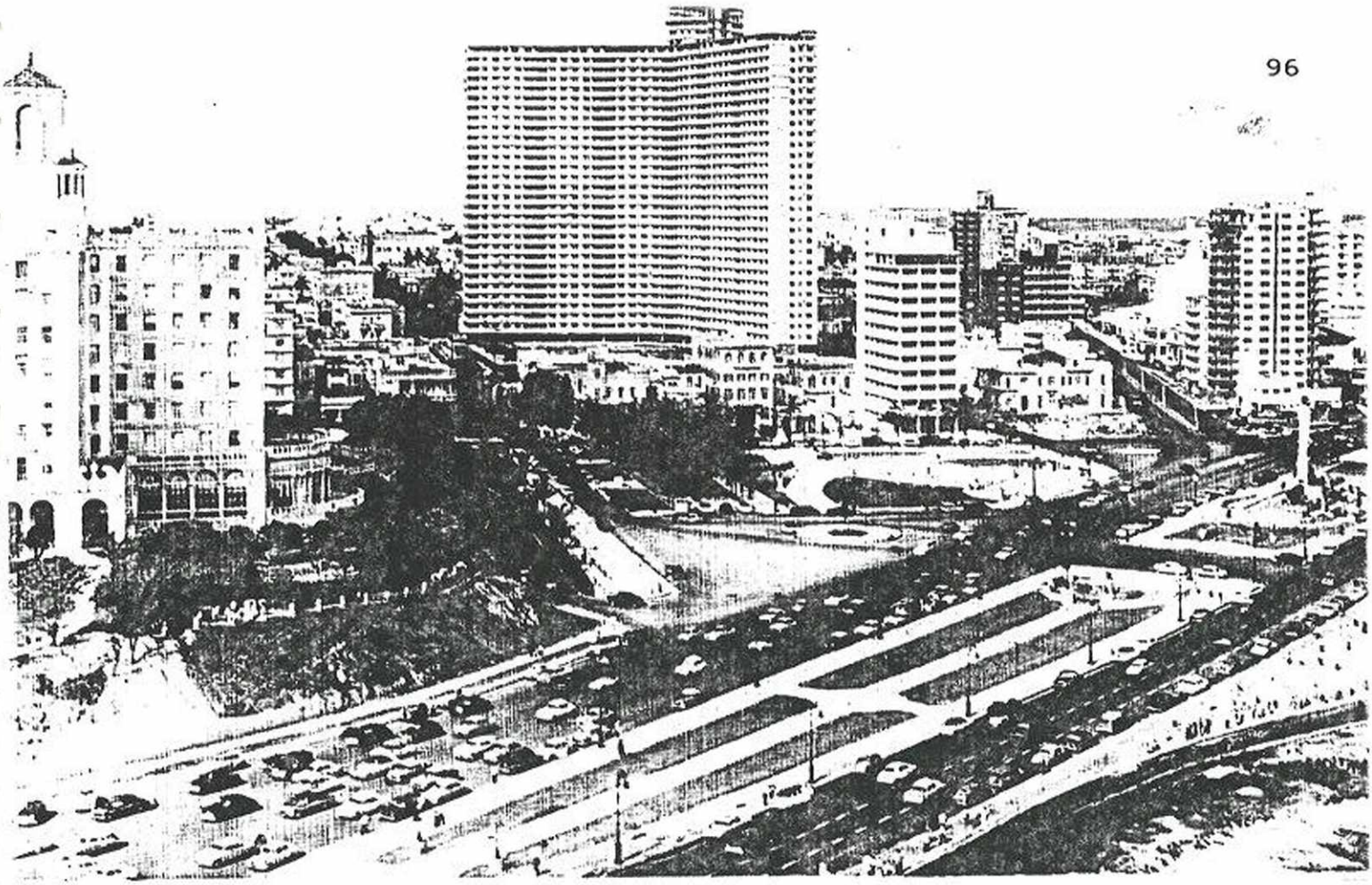
543

The massive Davidoff family mausoleum in Havana's Jewish Cemetery.

Note the Jewish symbols - such as the Menorah and the Lion of Judah - on the structure's bronze doors.

The arch over the entrance is supposed represent the tent which housed the Ark of the Covenant.

This mausoleum was built of marble, and decorated with bronze and silver.

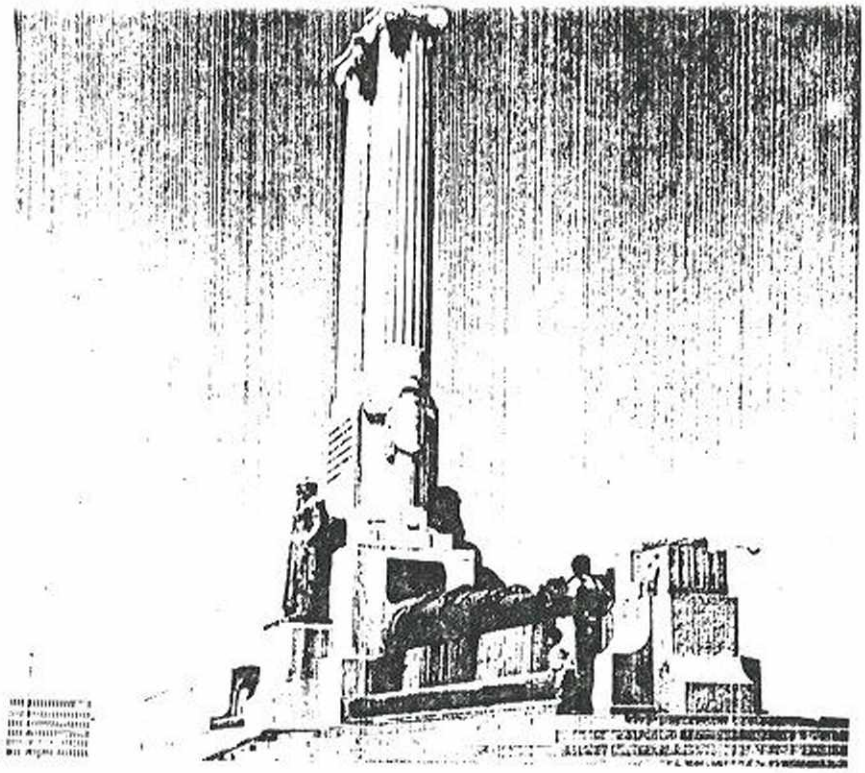


544

The Malecón Drive in Havana circa 1954. To the right of the picture, one can see the National Monument to the USS Maine.

This monument was erected on this impressive ocean side boulevard in 1924, and inside of it are the bodies of those sailors whose bodies were not identified after the battleship's explosion.

The park leading up to the monument is five blocks long on either side.

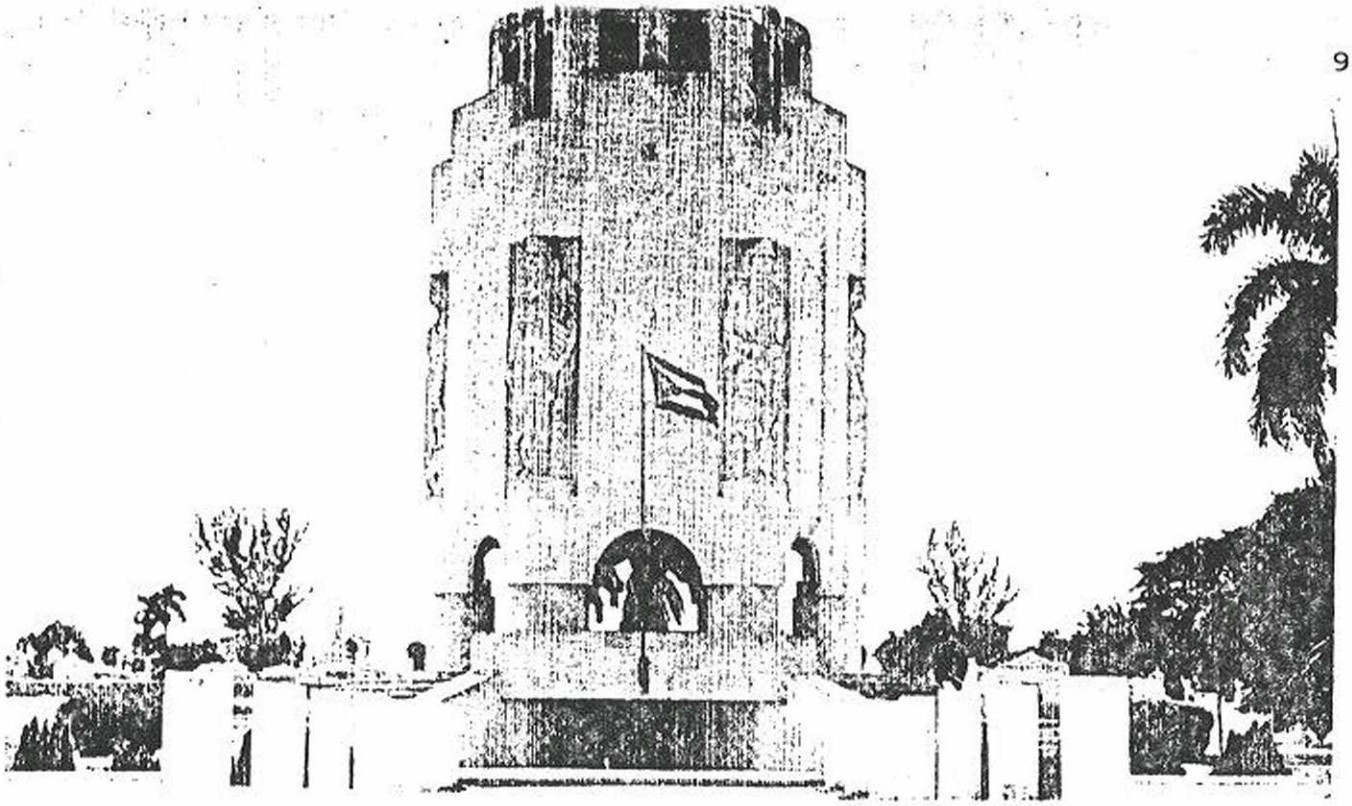


545

The USS Maine monument after it was partially destroyed in 1961. That year, the then Cuban Minister of Education - Armando Hart Dávalos - had the eagle which crowned the monument removed, since he deemed it to be a symbol of "American imperialism," although his own father was American.

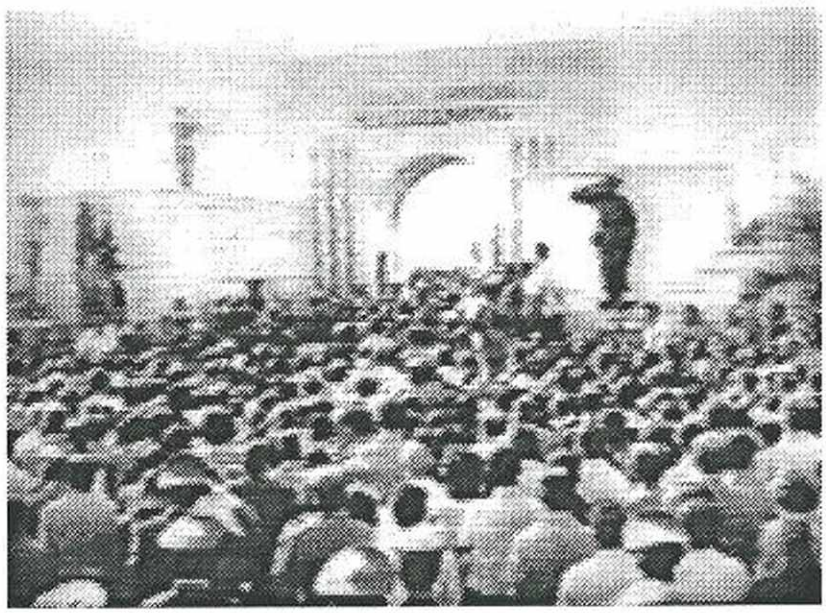
This huge monument has been left like this for the last thirty-one years, and according to reports from Cuba, is falling apart from disrepair.

In the background, one can see the old American Embassy (built in 1950). Today it houses the American Interests Section of the Embassy of the Swiss Confederation.



546

The mausoleum of José Martí in Santa Efigenia Cemetery in Santiago de Cuba. Inaugurated in 1953, it was partially funded by Cuban Jewish money.



547

The only major monument built in a Cuban cemetery under the Castro regime.

Although the picture is a bit fuzzy, it is a frontal view of the mausoleum of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. This massive Soviet-styled structure was meant to house the remains of the regime's elite in series of bóvedas which are contained within it.

Over the arch, the words written in Spanish say "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias." In the foreground, we see several huge bronze statues of soldiers saluting.

This shot is from the burial of Celia Sánchez, one of Castro's long-time lovers.

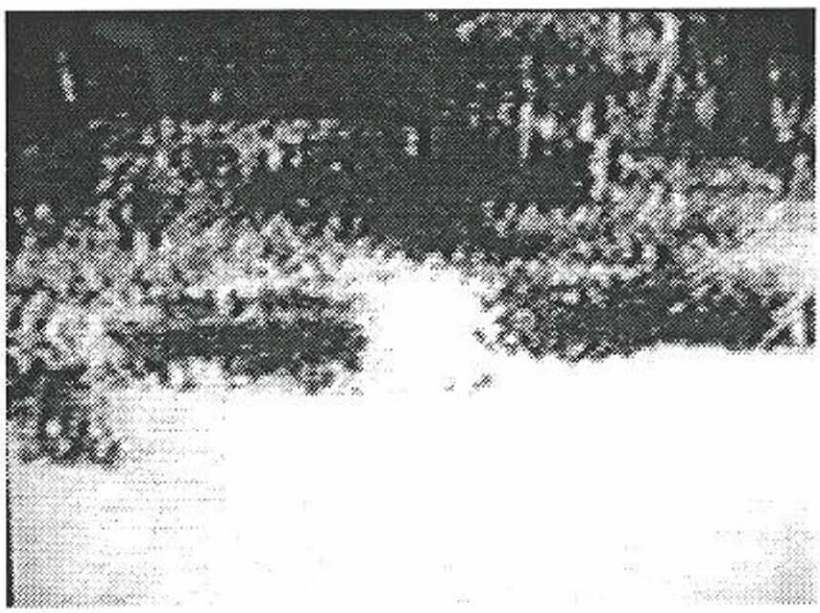
This tasteless monument was built in Havana's Columbus Cemetery.



548

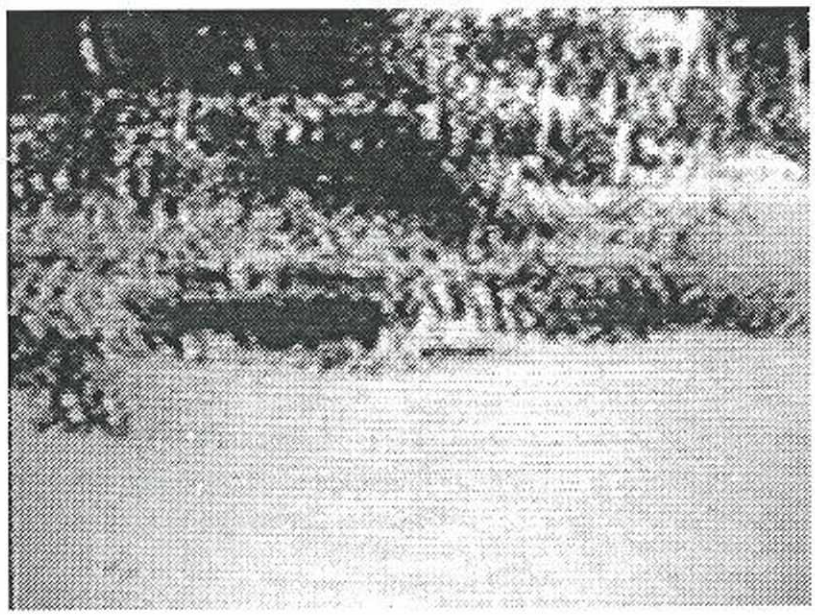
Execution of a "counter-revolutionary" as shown on Cuban television in 1963.

Although difficult to decipher - since this picture and the two which follow - were extracted from a movie by a computer, what we can see is a man dressed in white standing in front of an opened ditch.



549

What we can see in this picture is the image of the man dressed in white falling into the ditch right after he was shot in the head by a firing squad.

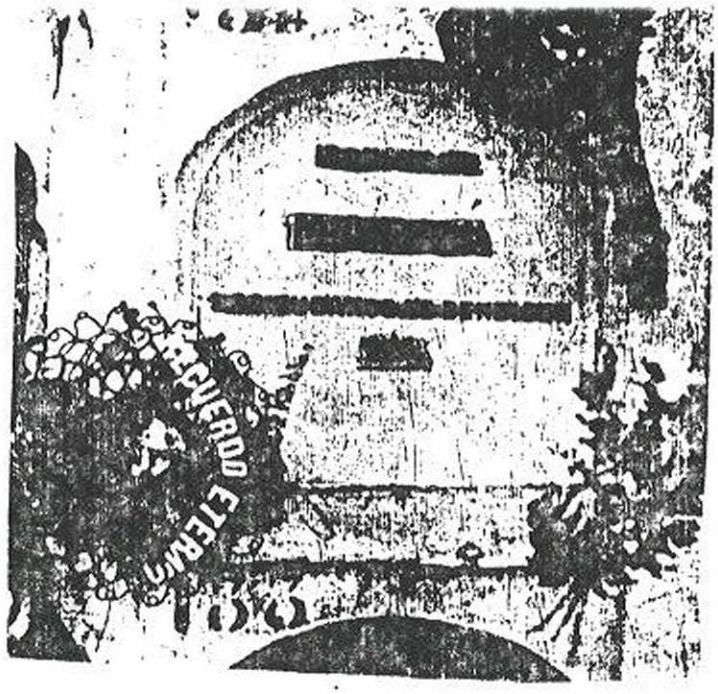


550

What we can faintly see here is the feet of the man who was just executed going over the side of the ditch.

Between this shot and the first two which preceded it, only two seconds transpired. Now, what makes this execution pertinent to our topic is that the man we have just seen executed was a Cuban Jew by the name of José Egozi Béjar. Egozi was captured during the Pay of Pigs invasion, and after being incarcerated for two years, was taken out and shot, along with twenty others, after being given a "Revolutionary Trial."

Egozi's body was never returned to his family, and for all we know, it is still buried in this ditch somewhere in central Cuba. Cases such as this are not unique in Cuba today.



A typical cabinet-style mausoleum in which Cubans for the last few years have been buried in.

These niches are identified by a number, although as in this case, some people have been able to write the name of the deceased.

551



552

בית־הקברות היהודי בהוואנה

A picture of a very sad but contemporary scene at Havana's Jewish Cemetery. Apparently there is no more material with which to make tombstones, so on the right hand side, one can see a grave marker made from wood with the name "Solomán Schwartz" written on it.



Architect's rendering of a Cuban Jewish synagogue in Miami. This building was built as a monument to those who were left behind in Cuba, both living and dead.



E.P.D.
LA SEÑORA

ROSITA ZEILIC

Que falleció el 13 de julio de 1989.

Su hijo, Mauricio Zeilic, ante la imposibilidad de hacerlo personalmente, desea por este medio expresar su profundo agradecimiento a todas las personas que le acompañaron en el velorio y funeral, así como a todos los que enviaron mensajes, cartas, telegramas de condolencia y ofrendas florales. Muchas Gracias.

Miami, Florida, agosto 6, 1989.

554

The classical Cuban pattern for a paid newspaper death announcement. In this case, this is not exactly a death announcement, but rather a thank you for all those who took part in the grieving process.

This announcement was placed by a famous Cuban Jewish entertainer, whose mother - Rosita - was herself a well-known newspaper editor.