

along with his abductors willingly, believing he is to be taken to the U.S. in order to learn English.

Another in Texas, Sam Haskins, picked up from the street by the child-abductors, helped by the chance of becoming a major-league baseball player—a fantasy fed by his hopes in order to secure his cooperation. Then there is Gerardo Garcia, the Filipino girl, who thinks she'll be sent to high school in Canada, and Mirza Ghossein from Baghdad, who believes he is destined to become a writer in London. And there are others still, from Cuba, Poland, Nicaragua, Colombia— from all around the globe, all of them unaware of their heroes' plans.

In the plot and characters of the novel, the author is careful to create a guide to the reader. The book is heightened by the element of chance, in particular political chance and the happenings of the world. There are several of these interwoven throughout the novel. Finally, the protagonist, dreams of a life of the hands of the gringos and of grotesquely dominating dogs, reflecting his own.

David, the Mexican boy, dreams of his father back in his home town, where he lived in the streets, a victim of hunger and exploitation by others. Betty (sic), the nurse who looks after the children, has various dreams of divine revelation for her aim of collaborating with the villains.

In addition there are various references by the characters themselves to the fact that their situation is a nightmare. "I no longer know if all this is real or not, or if it's working, but a weird

nightmare," declares the father of one of the American children destined to become an agent.

A further touch of horror is added by several settings such as the slum, swamped jungle and the experimental environment of the medical laboratories the children pass through for experimentation. These laboratories are particularly impressive, with their dehumanizing procedures, which the children compare with scientific realism.

Against the background of the novel and beyond, there is a sense of a world where the people are being used and exploited. In the end, the author is careful to create a guide to the reader. The book is heightened by the element of chance, in particular political chance and the happenings of the world. There are several of these interwoven throughout the novel. Finally, the protagonist, dreams of a life of the hands of the gringos and of grotesquely dominating dogs, reflecting his own.

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At the same time the novel brings back a historical sense of Spanish American literature and expands the reader's understanding of the world. The author is careful to create a guide to the reader. The book is heightened by the element of chance, in particular political chance and the happenings of the world. There are several of these interwoven throughout the novel. Finally, the protagonist, dreams of a life of the hands of the gringos and of grotesquely dominating dogs, reflecting his own.

Horror, has always played itself on being in tune with the times— seems only fitting.

Richard R. Johnson

**Imágenes de un encuentro**  
(Images of an Encounter)  
Edited by Jehudit Bokser de Liwerant  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,  
Tribuna Israelita, Comité Central Israelita de México and Multibanco Mercantil-Grupo Financiero Probusa  
Mexico City, 1992, 383 pages.

One tends to think of history books as boring, and beautiful coffee-table books as ones "to look at," not read. This book is an exception to both stereotypes. *Imágenes de un encuentro* is a well-designed graphic presentation of the history of the encounter between the Jewish people and Mexico. The story unfolds through images of people, places and documents. It is complemented by concise analytical commentary and well-chosen quotations from published sources and oral histories.

Jehudit Bokser de Liwerant was born in Argentina and moved to Mexico, where she earned her doctoral degree in political science at the National University of Mexico (UNAM). She currently teaches at UNAM and also serves as the Director of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's joint Adult Education Program with the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. Her focus in editing this book was to raise consciousness about the long-neglected origins of the Jewish community in this country. Her mission also included strengthening Mexican Jews' sense of identity,

counteracting a traditional tendency to invisibility.

### Roots

The first Jews known to have come to Mexico were those who fled Spain in 1492 when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled the Jewish people. The Jews practiced the traditions and customs of their faith both openly and secretly, the latter especially after the Inquisition established its own courts in Mexico. Jews who were identified were tried as heretics and publicly burned at the stake.

Mexico, like many Spanish colonies, did not accept non-Catholic immigrants until after Independence from Spain, when President Benito Juárez instituted his constitutional reforms. Among the most important were the expropriation of church property, barring the church from owning land and opening the doors of immigration without religious prerequisites. Thus, Jews began immigrating in the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century. Some came from Europe, others from the Ottoman Empire.

The earliest arrivals during this period were enterprising and independent people who immigrated as individuals, not in groups. They brought economic resources with them and successfully established banks and other commercial concerns. They identified with their country of origin and settled in cities, where they participated in the cultural scene.

Pogroms in East Europe prompted emigration to Palestine, the United States and Mexico. Another important wave of

immigration took place after World War I. Jews in Poland were caught in the struggle between the Bolsheviks and independent Poland. Those in the Austro-Hungarian Empire suffered from the contradictory dynamics of socialism, nationalism and anti-Semitism. Middle Eastern Jews were expelled from the Ottoman Empire along with all other non-Muslims.

Immigration to the United States was curtailed and the doors closed tightly in 1924 with Johnson's Law. Mexico was in the process of establishing a new *modus vivendi* after the armed phase of the revolution. The Mexican government opened the doors to Jewish immigrants, and in spite of the controversy over immigration among U.S. Jewish organizations, they helped settle the newcomers.

The literature on this controversy contributes significantly to understanding lifestyles and conditions in Mexico in the mid-1920s. Anita Brenner, born in Mexico of Jewish Latvian parents, published a series of articles in the *Jewish Morning Journal*, the *Vanguard* and the *Menorah Journal*, depicting the culture and traditions of Mexico objectively, and effectively swaying public opinion.

The flow of immigrants grew once again during the Holocaust, in spite of Mexican fascist pro-Nazi groups which endeavored to influence the government to reject such immigration.

### Extensive research and quality information

Although I have presented chronological highlights of Jewish immigration to Mexico, *Imágenes de*

*un encuentro* is not a linear historical narrative. While the analytical text flows easily from page to page, each page can also stand as an independent presentation. Such an achievement is easier to describe than to accomplish!

The material covered includes both positive and negative aspects of the relationship between the Jewish community and Mexico. Ample documentation supports the text, which is especially valuable when dealing with anti-Semitic outbreaks led by the right wing. This straightforward presentation also includes tracing the history of different communities, such as the Ashkenazi or Sephardic groups.

The book includes a detailed chronology juxtaposing world history and Jewish history, which is especially valuable for scholars and academics. Thus, a clear and logical relation is shown between immigration and its historical causes.

The combination of images, quotations and analysis offers the reader a choice of delving into each detail or simply enjoying images and fragments of poetry or text. The research supporting the end product is phenomenal. Sources include the National Archives of Mexico, libraries abroad and private collections. The material is ably introduced by UNAM Rector José Sarukhán, as well as by the editor, with an in-depth preface to the material. *Imágenes de un encuentro*, which went almost immediately to a second edition, is destined to become a classic. ✽

Susannah Glusker

Doctoral candidate in "Relationships Among Intellectuals in Mexico and the United States" at Union Institute.