

# ORT in Argentina

BY AVI FEINGLASS

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is excerpted from the 1981 ORT Yearbook).

Argentina, with the world's fifth largest Jewish community, numbering some 400,000 and the focus of much of the world's attention in the 1980's, is the site of the largest ORT program in Latin America, serving some 7,300 students.

In August 1980 the centerpiece of that program the ORT Technical High School in Buenos Aires was rocked by a terrorist bomb. The 1,100 students at the school were not harmed. The television and computer equipment, though extensively damaged, was eventually repaired or replaced. Another bomb placed in the Bia-lik School in the Villa Crespo district, a largely Jewish quarter of Buenos Aires was discovered in time and rendered harmless, a further graphic example of the virulent anti - Semitism pervading certain segments of Argentina's population.

Today, the ORT Technical High School in Buenos Aires is back in operation, doing its outstanding job, educating and training Jewish students -- a tribute to the dedication of the ORT staff and the very real need the school fills for Argentina's Jewish population.

ORT began operations in Argentina in 1935 and opened the doors of its first school in 1941. Housed in a small rented building in Buenos Aires, the school offered courses in mechanics, electricity, and radio technology and later, in television. ORT also opened a school for agromechanics and dressmaking in Dominguez, one of the areas where Jewish colonizers in Argentina first settled, and a small school to teach dressmaking in Clara, some 250 miles from Buenos Aires.

Courses at the ORT Technical High School in Buenos Aires include electronics, industrial chemistry data processing and building. Graduates receive a highly valued diploma as tech-

nicians in their chosen fields which insures them employment. Many students receive job offers even before they complete their studies. The course of studies also meets entrance requirements for university.

In 1977 ORT inaugurated advanced courses in data processing at the college level, courses which were immediately in high demand. Today, they form a part of the ORT Institute of Technology and are recognized by Argentina's National Board of Education. Applicants to the Institute who must be high school graduates have to pass a tough entrance examination.

ORT Argentina is also involved in many other educational and training projects throughout the country, including 23 Jewish day schools, where ORT provides creative education classes which have added many fresh, innovative educational ideas to teaching methods that had grown rigid and stifling. One highlight of the program is a science lab for six year olds, where first-graders learn by actually performing simple scientific experiments at school. At present some 4,500 children benefit from these ORT programs.

In 1978 the World ORT union gave ORT Argentina an IBM 360 Computer (purchased through the American ORT Federation) which immediately proved a vital asset to the Data Processing Center. The Center's work for private companies helps sustain ORT operations in Argentina while at the same time providing invaluable on - the - job experience

for ORT students in the computer sciences.

At present the ORT Technical High School includes courses on the pre - college level and the ORT Institute of Technology prepares over 400 students annually for careers in the computer science, chemistry and industrial process control and trains teachers in mathematical sciences for secondary school.

Despite the threats and vicissitudes of an uncertain political time, ORT Argentina is flourishing and expanding and looking to the future. It will take more than terrorist bombs and anti - Semitic threats to impede the progress of this ORT operation which has grown from a few small classes in a rented building over forty years ago to the extensive highly regarded network it is today.

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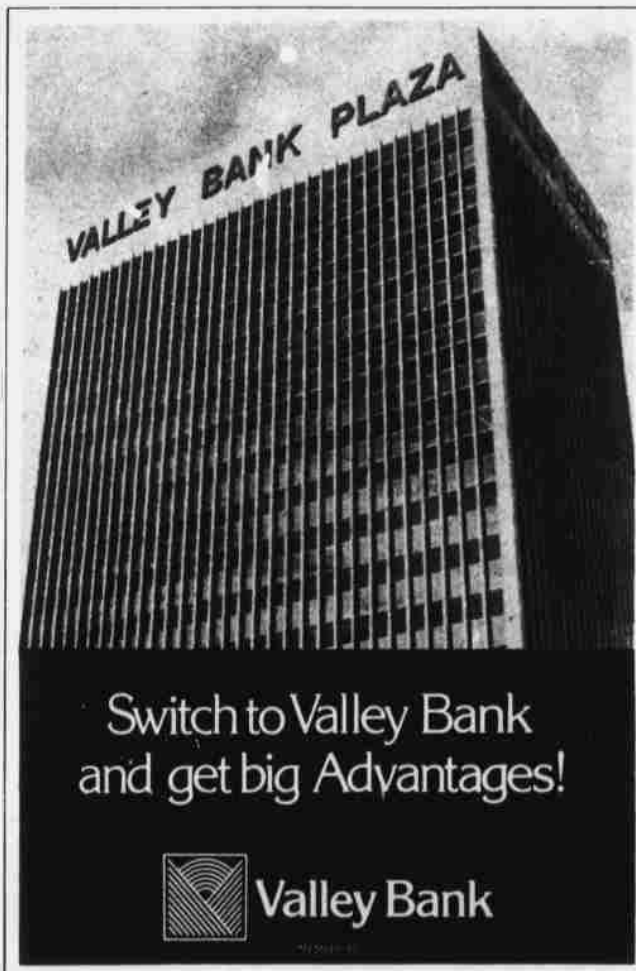
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