

Efraim Davidi

Exiles from South America in Israel (1973-1978)

During the most recent military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, between 450 and 500 citizens who feared for their lives managed to find shelter in Israel. This paper traces the arrival of these exiles and their political engagement against the dictatorships and against the official policies in Israel of maintaining cordial relationships with the military governments in South America. In parallel, the paper describes the social and political background of those who chose to go to Israel. Many were not associated with Israel or with Zionism and a minority were not Jews, as defined by religious or even broader criteria. The wider significance of these contradictory trends is discussed.

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