

# Reflection article: Gender, sexuality and the Argentinian radical Jewish left

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**O**n 30 December 2020, amid the turmoil caused by the COVID pandemic, Argentina approved the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy Law, which legalises abortion until the fourteenth week of pregnancy. In public hospitals, the procedure is now free of charge.<sup>1</sup> Prior to this milestone, which was enacted on 14 January 2021, abortion was only permitted in cases of rape or when a pregnant woman's health was at risk. The law is the result of years of activism and protests against prevailing conservatism in a country heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, led by a grassroots women's movement, known as the 'green wave', which unites many different organisations that have been working towards the same goals.

Women and men associated with the green wave have stressed that the fight against anti-abortion legislation is about socio-economic inequality. Among the men who supported the cause was the highly regarded cardiac surgeon, educator and spokesperson, Dr René Favaloro. He propagated that while poor women risk their lives undergoing unsafe backstreet abortions, women with resources find ways to interrupt their unwanted pregnancies safely. The latter are able to either travel to a country where abortion is legal, or retain the services of expensive doctors in their own country who are willing to perform the procedure under safe, sanitary conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Considering this clear class component, it isn't surprising that in the political arena, 'Green Wave' activists found allies in the Marxist and secular left, who became the main voice of their demands among

legislators. In particular, the legislators of the *Frente de Izquierda y de Trabajadores-Unidad* (FIT-U) – a Trotskyist coalition formed by the *Partido Obrero* ('Workers' Party'), the *Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas* ('Socialist Workers' Party') and *Izquierda Socialista* ('Socialist Left') – have backed the green wave's demands.<sup>3</sup>

This late arrival of reproductive rights for women – compared to the rest of the world – might suggest that the desire for change was absent in Argentinian society. This is not true. The country's most radicalised groups – feminists and secular leftists – have been trying to break through the gender status quo through protest and education, and have fought for women's rights, including reproductive rights. This reflective article discusses on one such group, the *Yidisher Kultur Farband* (YKUF), a network of secular Jewish leftists linked to the Communist Party. Although the YKUF's institutions are usually not listed among the sites of feminist struggle, its historically progressive cultural and pedagogical approach, largely inspired by early Soviet culture, planted the seeds that have blossomed into today's women's movement.

A former-YKUF member myself – I joined in the early 1970s whilst in kindergarten – I have researched the organisation and its many cultural institutions since 2005. For my doctoral research project, I have collected more than fifty life histories of YKUF members and sympathisers.<sup>4</sup> During these (intergenerational) interviews, participants and I discussed issues touching on gender and sexuality. For the purpose of this reflective article, I have reviewed some of my findings in this context and compared my participants' experiences to my own. Based on the sources collected, I argue that from the founding of the Argentinian branch of the YKUF in 1941, progressive ideas regarding gender, and later also pertaining to sexuality, were transmitted to its young members, which in turn spurred feminist thinking and support of the women's movement. Considering its vanguard status and contribution to educational and cultural issues that shaped today's secular left in Argentina, it is worthwhile to reconstruct the role of this movement.



## The Idisher Cultur Farband (ICUF) and the foundation of the Organización Femenina del ICUF (OFI)

The decision to set up an international federation of Jewish culture was made in Paris in September 1937, and was led by European and North American Jewish communists and socialist intellectuals. There they founded the *Yidisher Kultur Farband* (YKUF) to fight antisemitism and fascism, and defend democracy and secular Yiddish culture. Among the twenty-three countries that made that commitment was Argentina, whose Jewish immigration was the largest in Latin America. In 1941, the YKUF section in Buenos Aires (heir to the Yiddish-speaking section of the Comintern, *Yevsektzia*, which had dissolved in 1930<sup>5</sup>) organised a congress similar to Paris and convened fifty-seven Jewish schools, libraries, theatres and Judeo-Marxist socio-cultural centres of the country.<sup>6</sup> Among the central objectives of the Argentinian branch of the YKUF, known as the ICUF (*Idisher Cultur Farband*), was the preservation of the Yiddish cultural identity that was being devastated in Europe; to establish an egalitarian society with the Soviet Union as a benchmark; to fight for the people's peace; and to fully integrate into Argentinian society. By 1955, ICUF's network encompassed thirty local institutions with a total of 20,000 members, fifteen schools in Yiddish, twenty-five kinder-clubs, a Zumerland children's camp, theatre groups, three newspapers, its own publishing house and several women's and youth organisations.<sup>7</sup>

In 1947, a group of activists founded the ICUF Women's Organisation (OFI). Much like the ICUF itself, this organisation attracted many non-communists (including liberals and socialists) as well as communist militants, with the latter often playing leadership roles. The OFI encouraged the creation of 'reading circles' (in Yiddish: *leien craizn*) within its branches and published a bilingual magazine *Di idishe froy* ('The Jewish Woman'), which was widely read between 1950 and 1970. The OFI developed a true 'feminine pedagogy', highlighting the importance of women's political emancipation.

Since the 1920s, the female branch of the Argentinian Communist Party had encouraged the political work of women in autonomous cells. This branch, headed by Cecilia Kamienetzky, represented about



four thousand women in textile and clothing unions, in International Red Aid, and in language groups (especially Jewish language groups).<sup>8</sup> Kamienetzky observed that when women joined the Communist Party, men assigned them at most secretarial or practical tasks, which delayed their political development. To raise awareness of and resolve this injustice, she began to educate communist women about inequality within the party and in Argentinian society as a whole. She concluded that working women's political aloofness was the result of two obstacles. First, women, upon returning home from work, had to take care of their husband and children, and perform domestic tasks, leaving little time for political activities or self-education. Second, it was frowned upon by society in general, for women to go out alone at night. This situation severely limited women's possibilities to become politically active. Mothers, especially, could only fulfil political tasks during the four hours that their children were attending school.<sup>9</sup>

To address these issues and increase women's political activity, CP women strongly advocated the creation of childcare facilities, political and cultural education for women, and financial aid mechanisms for single women and widows. Furthermore, as female labour force participation in the 1960s rose, women began to demand eight-hour school days for their children, and educational activities on Saturdays. The Communist Party backed these demands as it would increase women's opportunities to be politically involved. Changes eventually took place in the 1970s, when the first kindergartens for children from three to five opened, and childcare facilities for children younger than three were created. Whilst the CP women who fought for these changes weren't able to enjoy the result, their daughters did reap the benefits of their fight.

Despite a lack of childcare in the 1960s, communist women's roles in the party changed favourably during these years. Following international example, they united to fight for peace, for health rights for mothers and children, and against fascism. And whereas these goals may have been gender oriented, the women's branch fostered political awareness and participation through education and political activity by and for women. Due to the branch's proven effectiveness in mobilising Argentinian women, the OFI copied its organisational and ideological model.



Furthermore, the OFI also enthusiastically supported the candidacy of the communist Alcira de la Peña as vice president in 1951, when for the first time in Argentina, women were able to vote and could be elected.<sup>10</sup>

By 1956 there were more than forty OFI female reading circles within the ICUF, with approximately a thousand members in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Córdoba, Mendoza and Santa Fe.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish immigrant women who joined these reading circles identified with the Soviet Union and its achievements in terms of gender equality and its protection of mothers and children. Teachers, artists and intellectuals participated in these weekly circles, as well as self-educated workers and housewives who wanted their daughters to have more educational opportunities than they had enjoyed. In 1953, Berta Drucaroff, the president of the OFI shared the following:

A woman told me: I can no longer live without these meetings. I have learned to talk about different problems. I remember the first night, when we read about children's education. This reading made me understand that I had made mistakes in the education of my daughter ... another woman said: ... not only do we read, but we learn to speak and interpret what is read. When we meet people, we know what to say and we know how to express it ... and another said: Before, I spoke little with my husband, not because we got along badly, but my husband went to the library and I stayed with the boys and did not share my husband's activities, but how different it is today! ... And after all this we can say that our reading circles are true popular universities where the cultural and social level of each woman rises.<sup>12</sup>

At the, extremely well-attended, first congress of the OFI in 1957, one of OFI's leaders, Rosa Flechner, affirmed that, in a reactionary regime – like Argentina at that time – women were 'doubly enslaved', by the country's socio-political situation and by the male sex.<sup>13</sup> She recognised, however, that this issue was less pressing among OFI members as the latter's political and social empowerment had created more equal conditions at home and within their community. It is true that many women in the ICUF and the CP stood out as leaders and worked alongside men

in the institutions. And compared to their non-radical contemporaries, they most likely enjoyed greater freedoms and more opportunities for participation. However, OFI speeches such as this one overlook some of the realities of its members' lives. Yes, they got involved in politics and communist activism, but they had to sacrifice hours of sleep and rest in return, as they were still expected to care for their children, make dinner, and keep their homes clean. As such, the obstacles discussed below were still firmly in place. Women were forced to navigate around them, which wasn't always easy.

Leda, Berta Drucaroff's daughter, for example, observed an unspoken tension between her parents, brought on by her mother's many responsibility at the OFI and her father's inability to support his wife's political work. During our interview she recalled that at lunch time, regardless of meetings that took place at her home, it was her mother who had to get up and make lunch. When Leda reached adolescence, she decided to be an actress. And despite how much they valued the actresses of the *Idisher Folk Teater* (IFT), an ICUF theatre, her parents objected to their daughter's career choice and started a conflict that ended in Leda's departure for Europe.

Leda's childhood recollections underline two different contradictory processes that were taking place within ICUF/CP families in the 1950s and early 1960s. Firstly, it is clear that by and large gender roles remained traditional within these families, even when women were politically active, and men, theoretically, believed in gender equality. Secondly, women who fought for equality, freedom and educational opportunity often expected their daughters to pursue college degrees, even when these daughters didn't aspire to do so. These contradictions would dissipate in years to come, albeit slowly and unevenly, depending on region.

The next generation of ICUF members, coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s, and, unlike their parents, born in Argentina, grew up in a vastly different social climate. Much like in many other countries around the world, the 1960s in Argentina were a time characterised by profound social, cultural and political changes, and, as a result, the country became more open and permissive. Argentinian women were entering a new expanding labour market and began to have access to

higher education in larger numbers. However, it is important to note that these changes were not uniformly spread across the country, and generally took place in large urban centres. Life in rural and small town Argentina, where the Catholic Church continued to have a stronghold, remained largely unchanged.

Within the ICUF, which already stood out as a progressive force, promising changes took place when the generation that had come of age in the 1960s began to lead and teach in the organisation. Though the ICUF had promoted gender equality and progressive secular ideas, there was one area that was perhaps neglected and surrounded by taboo – sexual education. In this context it is important to note that while many of the social and cultural changes that took place in the United States and Northern Europe throughout the 1960s also occurred in urban Argentina, the sexual revolution and the introduction of the pill happened much later there. For example, the pill wasn't officially legalised until 1985. The ICUF and the PCA, though late compared to similar organisations in North America and Europe, were still very much ahead of the rest of the country, when they began to promote a more liberal outlook on sexuality.

## **Zumerland**

In the 1960s and 1970s, the ICUF's Zumerland was booming. Hundreds of children and young people experienced a unique pedagogy at this summer camp, which took elements from the collectivist pedagogy of Soviet educator Makarenko and his Gorki colony, but also from the Active School that was aware of the importance of play, and from Jewish culture. The pedagogy at Zumerland mixed all those ingredients, and today it is still recognised by Argentinian educators as cutting-edge.

Males and females slept and showered in separate buildings and tents, though all the activities were mixed. That is, both sexes spent the whole day together and did common physical activities, including soccer and cooking. Full gender equality was the norm, which was quite a departure from youth's experience at school, where activities were gender stereotyped. Of course, Zumerland's progressive egalitarian approach



brought with it numerous discussions about the rules of conduct, especially those pertaining to sexuality. Transgressions were common, but debates that addressed the situation at hand were always resolved collectively, in assemblies where attendees could vote and decide policy. Of course, communist morality shone through all collective decisions. The CP condemned any expression of sexuality among young people and wouldn't allow young women to wear make-up, unconventional hairstyles, or provocative clothes. A prominent teacher and director, Paulina Grinberg ('Palala'), recalled that in the 1960s it was debated whether teachers should be allowed to wear shorts, or what games were ideologically appropriate games. For example, there was a discussion about whether to allow young people to play a popular card game called Truco (Trick). The game is all about the art of deception and players are encouraged to lie. There was eventually consensus that this game was inappropriate as it promoted capitalist behaviour. Similarly, it was decided that sports were played to have fun, not to win or lose, which in their eyes was a feature of capitalist society.<sup>14</sup>

As noted above, prior to the 1970s the ICUF wasn't exactly a beacon of sexual progressiveness. According to Dina, who was a teacher at the Zumerland colony in the early 1960s, sexuality was surrounded by taboo at that time. She shared a personal story with me which suggests that pregnancy outside marriage, even within these progressive circles, was not accepted by her parents' generation. Her peers, however, appeared more open-minded and willing to help her.

In 1961 I got pregnant from a relationship that didn't have much of a future. I was very happy, and determined to move on despite being alone. That coincided with the possibility of travelling to Cuba. The CP was summoning professionals to join literacy campaigns, the agrarian reform and, finally, to work for the Cuban revolution. I was not a doctor or an engineer. I was twenty-seven years old and was about to finish my psychology degree at a university in Buenos Aires. But they let me join the initiative if I paid for my ticket. Everyone in my group contributed, it was incredible. Except for my parents, many around me knew that I was pregnant. My peers at the Zumerland colony and my fellow



comrades at the psychology faculty showed tremendous solidarity. I figured that my daughter would grow up well in a socialist society, where traditional family structure was not so important, because the state took care of its children.

Over the course of the 1970s the ICUF and the CP became much more progressive in all matters concerning sex and sexuality, and once again the ICUF played a vanguard role. Medical experts were called upon to help explain any questions pertaining to sexuality and sexual health. Dr Alfredo Bauer was perhaps the most famous such expert. He was a renowned communist Jewish intellectual of Austrian origin, who had arrived in Argentina as a child in 1939. As a bilingual writer, Bauer published books in Argentina, East Germany and Austria, which were dedicated to, among other things, women's health, children and the family. He was the gynaecologist and obstetrician for hundreds of communist families in Argentina. In fact, Bauer was known as the 'party obstetrician' and over the course of his career he delivered approximately 5,000 babies. In the 1970s Bauer was a pioneer in advocating the importance of sexual education and the psychoprophylactic method of painless childbirth (at the time very popular in the Soviet Union). In his work *La mujer ser social y conciencia*, published in 1970, Bauer discusses female sexuality from a Marxist perspective and condemns the patriarchy and men's habit of treating women as private property. In his book, he is especially outspoken about the importance of female sexual satisfaction:

It is possible that female frigidity has caused less suffering in the woman of the past than in the modern one. The current woman is less submissive and conformist in the face of her destiny and has greater claims of happiness ... The modern woman's discontentment with her eventual erotic dissatisfaction is like any dissatisfaction in the face of misfortune and can cause disorders.<sup>15</sup>

In *Sexo Moral y Felicidad*, published in 1978, which, much like his previous work, also circulated among ICUF members, Bauer removed deep-rooted taboos associated with sexuality, including those concerning

pre-marital sexual relations and young people's sexual behaviours. He advocated that parents should guide their children's sexual development by having open and honest conversations. They should help children prevent unwanted pregnancy by providing them with honest and truthful information regarding sex and pregnancy. Bauer argues that this open and progressive approach to sex and sexuality will help forge a healthy, loving and permanent bond between parents and their children:

Any love relationship, even between adolescents, is a coexistence trial, and should be taken seriously by the family. This does not mean that parents should treat their daughter's first friend as a future son-in-law, but, although it is not definitive, it should not be less serious for that. Young people learn and practice mutual adaptation from the first moment. In this sense, every couple's relationship is a training ground ... Parents who know how to act with wise criteria and affectionate respect for the young personality who takes the first steps in unknown terrain, will undoubtedly reap the fruits of a persistent affection from their children, the lack of which they will miss very much when they approach old age.<sup>16</sup>

I was able to interview Dr Bauer in Buenos Aires, in 2015. He discussed the mixed reception of his book:

When I wrote *Sexo Moral y Felicidad*, it had a huge impact. Many women praised me and said: this book is great! I remember one of them told me: I gave it to my son and it was extremely useful! But when my daughter grabbed it, oh what a problem it gave us! ... From the party there were many criticisms, but rather focused on the male leaders, who were concerned about the success and dissemination of this publication. Once two leaders, Fanny Edelman and Normando Iscaro, came to see me and explained that 'if sex was too important, young people would deviate from the political struggle'.<sup>17</sup> However, it was Iscaro who spoke. Fanny, very disciplined, said nothing, but it was evident that she did not agree.



Bauer's recollections of this meeting with communist party leaders Edelman and Iscaro are illuminating. The two leaders' opposite responses to the urgency of sex education exemplify a widespread gendered attitude where communist women's rights activists wanted better and more sex education, but male communist leaders felt that sex distracted youth from what was really important, political work. In line with Lenin's views on the matter, Soviet educators like Makarenko promoted abstinence and discouraged parents from providing their children with sex education. Spurred by the much more progressive ideas popularised by people like Bauer, communist youth in the 1960s began to view this generation of communist leaders as hopelessly old-fashioned and backward. We see a similar development within the ICUF and the OFI, where the older generation, in their sixties in the 1970s, generally held much more conservative views on sexuality than the younger generations. Whereas the ICUF and the CP were similar in terms of political agenda, the lack of transparency in the CP alienated young people, though many continued their activities within the Communist Youth Federation, known in Spanish as 'Fede', an abbreviation from *Federación Juvenil Comunista*. Due to its role as a mass organisation open to all members of the public, the ICUF, on the other hand, was less strict and nobody was expelled for deviation from the party line.

### **First person experiences: between my house and the club.**

My grandmother – the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants from Belz in Belorussia, who arrived in Argentina somewhere between 1905 and 1910 – grew up in the agrarian colonies of Entre Ríos. Like most rural-born Jews, around 1945, when she married my grandfather, whose Jewish parents had also arrived in the early twentieth century, they moved to more urban areas seeking better economic circumstances for their family, and educational opportunities for their children. The latter was very important to them and my mother and her siblings all enjoyed higher education and work as professionals. My grandfather was devoted to the Soviet Union and defined himself as an orthodox Stalinist. Though my mother was keen to escape the rigid discipline at

home after she met my father, she too was and still is a devoted communist. It was my mother who joined the ICUF and who decided all things related to my education. My mother is what I call a typical Argentinian 'bourgeois communist'. She firmly believed in the Soviet Union and a socialist system but also loves to stay at five star hotels, and enjoys other luxuries of consumer society.

She is a talented painter with a great knowledge of art, who always wanted to pursue a career as an artist, but ended up working as an accountant. Interestingly, my father was a Zionist – the ICUF and the international YKUF were specifically not Zionist – but his views didn't influence my upbringing much. I spent most of my childhood and adolescence at my maternal grandparents' home and was especially close to my grandmother. She told me many stories from her own childhood, and we laughed together when she admitted that she thought she had become pregnant when my grandfather kissed her for the first time.

How different was my own education in Buenos Aires at the I.L. Peretz Centre (of the ICUF), where I spent the first twenty years of my life. In 1973, when I was two years old, I started kindergarten. My mother says that at the age of four I knew perfectly how babies were 'made' and could explain it with total ease. Just as the teachers had told me. The ease with which we discussed sexuality at my house never faded, and throughout my childhood I was always able to talk openly about matters concerning sex and sexual health.

At my ICUF club, activities and games were egalitarian and there was freedom to speak and express opinions, something that wasn't common during the military dictatorship (1976-1983) in my country. In the kindergarten clubs, teachers turned all group concerns into teachable moments and offered scientific explanations wherever possible. I remember clearly that when we were eleven, the boys kept telling jokes about sex. The girls didn't understand these jokes, which prompted the teachers to provide us with more information. They invited a doctor who showed us drawings and answered all our questions about sex. In school, conversations about sexuality and politics were censored, and the atmosphere couldn't have been more different from what I experienced in the club, which felt like a second home to me. I was different from my classmates and it was clear that I knew more than they did.



But for all our knowledge of sexuality, I also remember that my male companions in the ICUF were very hostile to one of the boys, my friend, who was made fun of for being effeminate. Soon I too was attacked for supporting and defending him. These situations weren't handled appropriately by the teachers, who were in hindsight also a product of their time – in this case a time when homosexuality was not accepted in Argentina either by catholic traditions or by those on the radical left. Even some excellent ICUF teachers were marginalised due to their 'deviating' sexual orientation. Basically, anyone who wasn't heterosexual was side-lined and discriminated against, and often suffered in silence and solitude. This changed in the late 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union when LGBT individuals became more visible in the ICUF and CP, and eventually in Argentinian society. The laws in favour of their rights only arrived in the twenty-first century, when the LGBT movement in Argentina celebrated the Equal Marriage Law (2010) and the Gender Identity Law (2012).

It is clear that, when it comes to sex, sexuality and birth control, Argentina has been at least twenty years behind most other industrialised countries. However, in Latin America, where reproductive and LGBT rights remain out of reach for many, Argentina is one of the more progressive countries. As shown in this reflective article, grassroots youth activists, represented in the ICUF, were in the vanguard of most of the changes that took place in this context. Within this Jewish/communist cultural network, progressive values and ideas were transmitted to youth, and, over the course of several generations, this produced an ideological environment favourable to the political and cultural development of women, which contributed to the creation of the green wave. Today, among the youngest generations of ICUF members, though on the whole they are more fragmented and less political, there is tremendous support for the green wave, and hundreds of the 'green girls' who have protested and taken to the streets come from an ICUF background.

## Notes

- 1 Abortion remains legal in cases of rape and risk to the life or health of the mother, with no time limit.

- 2 During an interview conducted by Federico Türpe in 1997 for the *La Gaceta* newspaper of Tucumán, Favaloro stated, 'The rich defend illegal abortion to keep it secret and not be ashamed. I am tired of seeing poor girls dying, so the rich ones can keep their abortions secret. In the slums girls die, and in the clinics fortunes are made 'taking the shame' out of the uterus of the rich ... With legal abortion, won't be more or less abortions, there will be less dead women. The rest is to educate, not to legislate.'
- 3 In Argentina the official Communist Party was very sectarian and lost a lot of (young) members in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. Trotskyists, most notably the *Partido Obrero*, and a number of smaller socialist groups remain active today and form a radical left front in Argentina. This front does not include communists as they have predominantly joined Left Peronist groups.
- 4 Based on my doctoral research, which was concluded at the University of Buenos Aires in 2009, I have published *Argentinos Judios y Camaradas, tras la utopia socialista* (Biblos, 2015). Since then I have been working as a researcher at CONICET, where I continue to study the ethno-political identity of these groups in other Latin American countries.
- 5 The Yiddish speaking sections in the Communist International operating in Argentina, made up of Russians and Poles (*Idsektzie* and *Yevsektzia*) were among the most important and best organised with a large network of schools.
- 6 Some delegates from Brazil, Chile and Uruguay also attended this South American Congress.
- 7 Editorial, 'El ICUF se dirige al Parlamento. Memorial elevado a la Cámara de Diputados' *en Tribuna*, 25 July 1958, p1.
- 8 An untitled party manuscript from 1928 indicates that the central committee of the Communist Party in Argentina had nineteen members, including Cecilia Kamienetzky, who is presumed to have had a leading role since several party meetings were held at her home. A copy of the original version of that manuscript is available in Matías Sánchez Sorondo, *Proyecto de Ley de Represión de Actividades Comunistas. Proyectos, Informes y Antecedentes*, Honorable Cámara del Senado, Tomos II, Buenos Aires 1940, p206.
- 9 The women's cell of the Argentine Communist Party is mentioned in the same untitled manuscript in Matías Sánchez Sorondo, *Proyecto de Ley de Represión de Actividades Comunistas. Proyectos, Informes y Antecedentes*, Honorable Cámara del Senado, Tomos II, Buenos Aires, 1940, pp207-8.



- 10 Daniel Campione, 'El partido comunista de la Argentina. Apuntes para su trayectoria', in Elvira Concheiro, Massimo Modenisi and Horacio Crespo, *El comunismo: otras miradas desde América Latina*, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, Universidad Autónoma de México, México 2007, pp167-215.
- 11 Sandra Deutch McGee, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955*, Duke University Press, Texas, 2010, p102.
- 12 Berta Drucaroff, 'Los círculos de lectura femeninos', *Di ídishe froi*, No 10, Buenos Aires 1953, pp7-9.
- 13 Here Flechner refers to Argentina's military forces which, since the 1930s, had carried out several coup d'états and persecuted communists, as well as the two democratic governments of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955). At the time the OFI congress took place, in 1957, Argentina was under a military dictatorship. Rosa Flechner, 'Discurso de la compañera Rosa Flechner', *Primer Congreso de la Organización Femenina del Icuaf*, OFI, Buenos Aires, 11-13 October 1957, p18.
- 14 Testimonio en de Palala en Diamant Ana y Feld, Jorge. Comp, *Zumerland, colonia. Proyecto y Memorias*, Comisión Zumerland y CER, Buenos Aires 2000, p230.
- 15 Alfredo Bauer, *La mujer ser social y conciencia*, Ediciones Sílabas, Buenos Aires 1970, pp18-9.
- 16 Alfredo Bauer, *Sexo Moral y Felicidad*, Ediciones Cientec, Buenos Aires 1978, p122.
- 17 Fanny Edelman was a well-known communist militant and leader. In the 1930s she participated in *Socorro Rojo Internacional* and travelled as a volunteer in the International Brigades in defence of the Second Spanish Republic. She was an organiser of the Argentinian Women's Union (1936), the Junta de la Victoria (1941) and the Argentinian Women's Union (1947), and an active fighter for women's rights. Fanny dedicated her militancy to gender equality and presided over the PCA until her death at the age of 100. Normando Iscaro's full name was Liberto Normando, born in 1911 in Buenos Aires, and older brother of the well-known communist leader Rubens Libertario Íscaro.