

JEWS WITHOUT VISAS AND VENEZUELANS WITHOUT PASSPORTS: ALBERTO ZÉREGA FOMBONA AND DOMESTIC POLITICS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF VENEZUELA 1939-1941

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Summary

Silva, D. (2024). Jews without visas and Venezuelans without passports: Alberto Zérega Fombona and Venezuela's domestic and foreign policy 1939–1941. This article examines the role of Minister Alberto Zérega Fombona in Germany during the early years of World War II. Based on his 1940 annual report, it explores two main issues: the denial of Venezuelan nationality to dual citizens seeking to escape Europe and the irregular immigration of German Jews using forged visas. The paper highlights the tension between legality, morality, and foreign policy, emphasizing the restrictive decisions taken by the Venezuelan government within a context of neutrality and suspicion toward certain ethnic and national groups. The study offers a critical perspective on Venezuela's diplomatic response to the Holocaust and migration dilemmas of the time.

Keywords: Zérega Fombona, World War II, immigration, nationality, Venezuelan foreign policy, Jews, fake visas.

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Introduction

In the present study we intend to demonstrate the performance of the Venezuelan Minister in Germany, Alberto Zérega Fombona, as representative of the country's foreign policy before the National Socialist regime, for which we will show part of the annual report corresponding to the year 1940 that he sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs detailing two problems that had called the attention of the Minister, and therefore, of the Venezuelan institutions. The first one refers to the attempt of a group of Jews to escape the horror of Nazi Germany by means of false visas offered to them by a "recognized agency". The second is about those Venezuelans with dual nationality, who, as frightened as that group of Jews, saw in the Venezuelan nationality a passport that would allow them to flee. In both cases, legal criteria would prevail in the decisions of the Venezuelan minister in Germany.

Europeans yes, Venezuelans no

In the 1940 Annual Report, the Venezuelan Minister in Berlin, Alberto Zérega Fombona,¹ Minister of Venezuela in Germany², explains to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Esteban Gil Borges, in a "succinct" manner, the matters dealt with by the Venezuelan Legation in Germany during those years. Among these issues, Zérega Fombona relates the problem that could represent for Venezuela the fact that certain Venezuelan nationals might try to opt for Venezuelan nationality,

1 Politician, diplomat, journalist and writer (12/10/1889 - 09/10/1968) served as Minister of Venezuela in Germany from September 1939 to 1941.

2 In the past, this was the name given to ambassadors.

or persons who in turn “enjoying another nationality” might use Venezuelan nationality only to escape the European conflict.

The circumstances of the state of war in Europe and the inconveniences that the nationality of a belligerent country brings to those who [sic] possess it, has incited several people who by chance of birth or paternity could claim the protection of our flag, to request, now, validity of rights of which they never, for years ignored, prevailing enjoying another nationality.³

Here there is a palpable problem for the government of Eleazar Lopez Contreras, to let into the country nationals, naturalized or who were born by chance in Venezuela - and who in turn possessed the nationality of a belligerent country - pretend to avail themselves of the rights granted by Venezuelan nationality.

Zérega Fombona continues in his polemic description:

My note No. 72, of February, stated a concrete, recent case and recalled others, previous ones. Some new ones have been presented, later, and all have been results in accordance with the instructions of the Circular of that Ministry N° 138 la, of September 20, 1939; and with the approval that to previous decisions of this Legation you were good enough to give in your N° 490, Political Direction, of April 12, 1940: I have refused to recognize to such persons the Venezuelan nationality and I have withdrawn passports given lightly 15 or more years ago, and never revalidated afterwards.⁴

Two aspects can be noted in this paragraph. First, this situation of Venezuelans, with dual nationality, trying to leave Europe had been increasing for a long time -as it was to be expected-; the second aspect is the permanent following of instructions by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unfortunately, the content of the circulars cited by Zérega is not known, but it can be inferred that in them there is a deep governmental skepticism for those who try to remember their nationality, even if they had not “exercised it” during a good part of their lives. Faced with this repeated situation, Zérega Fombona made a questionable and sad decision. It seems to be a personal decision, since there is no evidence of any legal argumentation.

In this sense, it seems that Zérega Fombona -in accordance with the decisions issued by the government- considered that since a group of Venezuelan nationals had been exercising another nationality during the time they were living in Europe, they only remembered their Venezuelan nationality when it was convenient for them. In the same vein, he considered that the nationals of the belligerent countries could cause a problem for Venezuela with the countries at

3 Central Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter ACMRE). International Political Directorate. "Annual Report of the Legation. Country: Germany. Communication from the Minister of Venezuela in Germany Alberto Zérega Fombona to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela Esteban Gil Borges, Berlin January 1941", p.2. Year: 1941.

4 Idem.

war, thus maintaining the strictest neutrality, which would be the most in accordance with the guidelines of the government⁵. The fact that the Venezuelan Minister in Berlin had free will and authority to make such a harsh decision with those “compatriots” is also noteworthy, perhaps the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered that his actions were in accordance with the law. Sadly, the actions of the Venezuelan Minister in Berlin took away the rights of Venezuelans with dual nationality, and with this, the only legal possibility of being able to escape the holocaust.

The fact of taking away passports and denying nationality to those who already had it just when the holocaust had begun is an action that, although it is legal, does not cease to raise several questions. How many people must have gone to the Venezuelan Legation, using their Venezuelan nationality as a kind of safe-conduct and then left the country without that passport that could have meant their exit ticket?

In this regard, something must be said in defense of Zérega Fombona. Venezuela did not accept dual nationality. In that sense, although his action is immoral, it was legal, it is strange that he did not argue legal aspects. And yet:

How bad Zérega Fombona looks, even compared to other ambassadors! The international context must also be taken into account, many countries closed their doors to the stampede of Jews. The wealthiest Jews, those with dual nationality or contacts were able to enter the United States⁶ or England before the war broke out.⁷

Distrust of certain races

To understand a little of the hardening of López Contreras and the ruling elite⁸ against certain immigrants. It is worthwhile to dwell on a “precautionary measure” confidentially dictated, on December 4, 1937, by the government to its diplomatic representatives urging them not to issue visas to certain nationalities wishing to enter the country, except with the explicit instruction of the Ministry of Internal Relations. In this sense:

Foreigners of the following nationalities: Romanian, Polish, Syrian, Lebanese, Czechoslovakian, Palestinian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Armenian, Persian, Latvian, Russian, Greek, Egyptian, Estonian, Turkish, Moroccan, and in general, African

5 Venezuela declared its neutrality on September 4, 1939.

6 The United States, and the British Mandate in Palestine (1920-1948) were the destinations where most Jews wanted to emigrate. However, these places had strict quotas that limited the number of immigrants.

7 Tomás Straka, interview by Dómel Silva. Caracas, 03-04-2021.

8 In this regard, it is useful to study Alberto Adriani's conception of the types of immigrants that Venezuela should and should not receive, see Daniel Lahoud, "Alberto Adriani y sus conflictos de interés. "Alberto Adriani y sus conflictos de interés. Brief biographical sketch", pp.26-49. In. Bulletin of the National Academy of History. Caracas, Academia Nacional de la Historia, January-March 2019, N° 405, ISSN 0254-7325.

and Asian, need to enter the Country, in each case, prior permission from this Ministry, which communicated, by the corresponding organ, to the diplomatic or consular office that has to endorse the respective passport of the foreigner, and likewise, to the corresponding authority of the port or place of entry, even when they exhibit documents in which it appears that they have made manifestations of being domiciled in the Republic.⁹

In this same order of ideas the “Federal Executive” had already “been limiting the entry into the country of foreigners manifestly syndicated” of: “Possessing characters and conditions disadvantageous for immigration, who do not contribute to the Country, neither culture, because they lack, nor work, because the one they exercise, before such, can be considered as an activity harmful to our industry, and in general, to the national economy”. For such reasons, the National Government considered that the country had the obligation to avoid “at all costs the entry of undesirable persons as immigrants”, trying by all means within its reach, “to bring to the spirit of the individuals, the living conviction of that urgent necessity”.

In addition, for the National Executive, there were a set of conditions that went beyond nationality, and that they considered pejorative such as: genotypical, phenotypical, labor, idiosyncratic, lack of values and principles; which would be detrimental to the formation of citizenship of their fellow nationals.

Not only the racial conditions, but also the capacity for work and its significance within the current national economic field, are the lines that frame, in general terms, the defined features of our immigration policy .¹⁰

In the same vein, citizens from Eastern European countries¹¹ were considered by the government as people with a low cultural level, with little culture towards work and with a propensity to swindle and usury.

Experience has shown that, in general, the immigration flow coming from Eastern Europe only brings a large number [sic] of unscrupulous, greedy and uneducated merchants, who circumscribe all their economic-social activity to the small traffic of goods and articles of cards or to trade under advantageous conditions, thus swelling the number of superfluous intermediaries who derive their livelihood from an easy and insensitive exploitation of the Venezuelan worker. Following these norms, the Ministry of Internal Relations, with the purpose of protecting

9 ACMRE. Consular Address. Country: Venezuela. Dossier N°: 21. Subject: The Minister of the Interior sends confidential concerning the restriction of entry to foreigners who do not believe it is convenient. Confidential Circular N° 4440, Minister of Internal Relations Alfonso Mejía to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Esteban Gil Borges, Caracas, December 4, 1937, Year: 1937.

10 Idem.

11 There is another important aspect to highlight within this migratory policy, which was the prohibition of communist activities, approved before Eleazar López Contreras assumed the presidency, but ratified during his government as it was the paragraph 6 of article 32 of the Law of Foreigners of 1937.

the national economy from the penetration of elements that could deform it and turn it into a disturbing organism, watches over with special care the entry of the cheap *bracero* and the exploitative trafficker.¹²

It can be inferred at a glance that the entry of “undesirable foreigners” was naturally considered a matter of State Security, although today the pejorative ways used to describe them are unfair.

Palestine Orient & Lloyd...Venezuela as an irregular escape route

Returning to the report of the Venezuelan Minister in Berlin. Those Venezuelans described by Zérega Fombona were not the only ones desperately seeking to leave. The Jews had resorted to a “tourist company” that provided them with false papers to leave Europe¹³ placing Venezuela as the supposed destination of the trip. For the diplomat, this situation was “distressing” since the great majority of the Jews requesting visas to go to Venezuela were Germans, who in their desperation to flee the Reich had resorted to intermediary companies for the falsification of documents.

A painful matter that has been going on for more than two years and has motivated numerous negotiations and long correspondence, is that of the immigration of Hebrew people to Venezuela. At the beginning of 1939, this Legation, headed by Dr. Rafael Angarita Arvelo, Counselor, as *Chargé d’Affaires ad-interim*, became aware of the existence of false visas for Venezuela given to Israelites [sic] born in Germany. A skillful, lengthy and zealously conducted inquiry revealed that the visas were obtained through Palestine & Orient Lloyd, a tour company, headquartered in Berlin, with branches in many capitals and cities of Europe. A note of mine, No. 439 of November 16, 1939, recalled the previous efforts of this Legation, on the occasion of a recent publicity campaign for Hebrew immigration to Venezuela carried out by the aforementioned Society.¹⁴

According to Zérega’s report, Palestine & Orient Lloyd, practically since the beginning of the war, offered Venezuela among its destinations. And within these irregularities mentioned by Zérega Fombona, there was also the “suspicious attitude of the Reich Foreign Office”. Since, just as it objected to the “criminal actions” of Palestine & Orient Lloyd, it also “granted

12 ACMRE. Consular Address. Country: Venezuela. Dossier N°: 21. Subject: The Minister of the Interior sends confidential concerning the restriction of entry to foreigners who do not believe it is convenient. Confidential Circular N° 4440, Minister of Internal Relations Alfonso Mejía to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Esteban Gil Borges, Caracas, December 4, 1937, Year: 1937.

13 After the episode known as *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) on November 9, 1938, the attempt by Jews to flee Germany increased dramatically.

14 ACMRE. International Political Directorate. Annual Report of the Legation. Country: Germany. Communication from the Minister of Venezuela in Germany Alberto Zérega Fombona to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela Esteban Gil Borges, Berlin January 1941, p.3. Year: 1941.

entry visas” to Venezuela.¹⁵ It seems that Germany lent itself to this situation in exchange for a considerable sum of money. In this same order of ideas, Palestine & Orient Lloyd made the applicants believe that the amount demanded in dollars would be given to the Venezuelan government; creating false hopes within the “good name of the Hebrew immigration”. Continues the Venezuelan Minister in his description:

Days after that note was sent, this Legation received two radios from that Chancellery [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany] authorizing the [sic] entry visa to forty-four Hebrew families, out of a total of 176 persons; and it was informed that Mr. Kuehn would present the passports to be visaed. As the said Mr. Kuehn is one of the Directors of Palestine & Orient Lloyd, I fulfilled the duty of pointing this out to that Office, in December 1939; and Note No. 47 of February 1940 presents a summary and status, for the moment, of the matter, and takes note of the delicate situation of this Legation before the German Government, since at the same time that it protests and complains about the criminal actions of Palestine & Orient Lloyd, it grants entry visas to Venezuela to those recruited and presented by it. Hebrew charitable institutes, careful, veiled [sic] of the good name of Hebrew immigration, and also protected and dishonest persons, visited this Legation to ascertain if the Government of Venezuela had really given authorization to the Palestine & Orient Lloyd to organize a Hebrew immigration in Venezuela, requesting the said Society five hundred dollars to each immigrant, protesting that said sum should be delivered to the National Government, to allow entry.¹⁶

From what could be inferred from the note, there must have been some coordination between the Reich Foreign Ministry, Palestine & Orient Lloyd and the Venezuelan government for those 44 Jewish families to leave Germany. However, according to Zérega Fombona’s description, the fact that the German Foreign Ministry authorized the departure of a group of Jews (surely with high purchasing power) is evidence that within Hitler’s anti-Zionist policy there were certain exceptions that were not very clear to the Venezuelan diplomatic personnel in Berlin.

For Alberto Zérega, Palestine & Orient Lloyd was a travel agency that “cooperated closely” with the Palestine Office in order to help thousands of Jews to flee from Nazi Germany, not only to Palestine. Even before the war began, some lucky ones were able to leave through this agency.¹⁷

15 We infer that the Venezuelan Minister in Germany is referring to the fact that the Reich government, once it issued the necessary documentation, the applicants of said company could apply for visas and thus travel to Venezuela with the approval of the Legation.

16 ACMRE. International Political Directorate. Annual Report of the Legation. Country: Germany. File N°13. Communication from the Minister of Venezuela in Germany to Esteban Gil Borges Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela January 1941, p.3. Year: 1941.

17 "A few doors away from the Palestine Office of the Jewish Agency, at 2 Meineke Street in Berlin, was the travel agency "Palestine & Orient Lloyd", which cooperated closely with the Palestine Office to help thousands of Jews emigrate from Nazi Germany, and not only to Palestine. One of these emigrants was Dr. Rolf

The visa forgery was reported to the Legations in Hamburg, the Netherlands and Belgium. At the end of January, the Legation in Berlin was instructed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to "cancel all visa permits" only applications verified by the Ministry of Internal Affairs would be processed from "the complete list of visas issued to members of the forty-four Hebrew families." Before May 1940 "eighty visas had been granted" although not all were shipped to Venezuela, and from this fact it was deduced that Palestine & Orient Lloyd was behind this anomaly.

This and other regularities, of some of which the Venezuelan Legation in Holland and in Belgium and in our Consulate General in Hamburg had knowledge, were transmitted to that Office, in radios and Notes and at the end of January a radio ordered [ordenanado] to cancel all the visa permits; and requesting, by order of the Ministry of Internal Relations, the complete list of visas issued to members of the forty-four Hebrew families. Note No. 196 of May reported that eighty visas had been issued, but that, according to inquiries made before our Consuls at the ports of embarkation at Amsterdam [sic] and Genoa, only twenty persons had taken steam for Venezuela. Thus sixty Venezuelan visas, given for the precise purpose of immigrating to the country, were fraudulently sold by Palestine & Orient Lloyd.¹⁸

The Venezuelan Minister's mistrust towards this company is not biased, if one takes into consideration that the Brazilian Foreign Affairs Secretariat informed its consulate in Zurich (Switzerland), on November 23, 1939, that it was unaware of the "official existence" of the "Palestine and Orient Lloyd" and that those interested should go "directly to the Brazilian consular authorities, avoiding intermediaries".¹⁹

In the same vein, there was the sad and famous episode of the Saint Louis ship that in May 1939 arrived in Havana with 937 Jews, who had paid for landing certificates sold "illegally"

Katzenstein. On August 20, 1938, the "Palestine & Orient Lloyd" issued him this ticket to travel to New York on August 27 aboard the Columbus from Bremen." "Just a few doors down from the Palestine Office of the Jewish Agency, at No. 2 Meineke Street in Berlin, was the travel agency "Palestine & Orient Lloyd," which closely cooperated with the Palestine Office in assisting thousands of Jews with emigration from Nazi Germany-and not only to Palestine. One of these emigrants was Dr. Rolf Katzenstein. On August 20th, 1938, the "Palestine & Orient Lloyd" issued this bill to him for passage to New York on August 27th aboard the Columbus from Bremen." <https://www.lbi.org/1938projekt/detail/reichsmarks-and-pfennigs/> (Accessed on 03-31-2021)

- 18 ACMRE. International Political Directorate. Annual Report of the Legation. Country: Germany. File N°13. Communication from the Minister of Venezuela in Germany to Esteban Gil Borges Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela January 1941, p.3. 1941.
- 19 "Through the telegram, the Secretariat of Foreign Relations of Brazil, in response to telegram No. 21, informs the Consulate of Brazil in Zurich that it is unaware of the official existence of "Palestine and Orient Lloyd" and that those interested should go directly to the Brazilian consular authorities, avoiding intermediaries." "A través do telegrama, a Secretaria das Relações Exteriores do Brasil, em resposta ao telegrama nº 21, informa ao Consulado do Brasil em Zurique que ignora a existência oficial da "Palestina and Orient Lloyd" e que aqueles interessados devem procurar diretamente as autoridades consulares brasileiras, evitando intermediários." <https://www.arqshoah.com/index.php/arquivo/82-arq-52-visto-em-passaportes-palestina-and-orient-lloyd> (Accessed 06-01-2019)

by consular officials of that country in Germany and five days later, after fruitless meetings with the government, the ship was forced to return to Europe. After unsuccessful meetings with the government, the ship was forced to return to Europe. During its voyage, they tried to negotiate with the Roosevelt government, but their efforts were in vain; the great majority were admitted in Belgium, France, Holland and England, although several of them would have a fateful end.²⁰

The Venezuelan Legation left Berlin once Venezuela broke diplomatic relations with the Germany of the Third Reich on December 31, 1941. The following year Zérega Fombona²¹ was heading the Venezuelan Legation in Spain. The affairs of Venezuelans in Germany were taken care of by the Swiss Legation in that country.²²

Conclusion

As it has been possible to see in the above mentioned report of the year 1940 many are the edges that emerge. The two central points are: the legal or illegal entry of German Jews into Venezuela; and the confusing and cruel decision to withdraw the passports of those Venezuelans who had not made use of their nationality.

On the two facts, there are several questions with respect to the Jewish Germans who sought to flee Europe. While it is true that, according to Zérega Fombona's own accounts, there is a situation of evident corruption which he had been denouncing previously. This irregular situation not only involved Palestine and Orient Lloyd but also apparently there must have been some complicity with the Reich Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which notified the Venezuelan Legation in Berlin of the authorization for a group of Jews to leave Germany, knowing that the Venezuelan Legation had not granted visas.

In spite of the fact that at first Zérega Fombona allowed the departure of 176 Jews from Germany and that he believes in the "good name of the Hebrew immigration", the constant irregularities committed by Palestine Lloyd regarding the falsification of visas, and the strange

20 Only 28 of the 937 passengers were allowed to embark. The vast majority of those refugees had applied for visas for the United States and intended to stay in Cuba only until they could enter that country. A few days before the arrival of the ship, the government of Federico Laredo Bru issued a decree annulling all the certificates of disembarkation that had been recently issued. Representatives of the Joint Distribution Committee managed to meet with President Laredo Bru. On June 2nd he ordered the ship to leave Cuban waters, while on its way to Miami, negotiations continued. He requested \$500 for each passenger from the Joint Distribution Committee and made a counter-offer, but the Cuban president rejected it and put an end to the negotiations. In May 1939 the French ship *Flandre* and the British-flagged *Orduña* also arrived in Cuba, neither was allowed to land on the island. The *Flandre* returned to France, and the passengers of the *Orduña* were disembarked in the Panama Canal Zone. For more information see United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The Voyage of the *St. Louis*." Holocaust Encyclopedia <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/es/article/voyage-of-the-st-louis> (accessed April 17, 2021).

21 The last thing that was known about Alberto Zérega Fombona's diplomatic life was that since 1948 he represented the Venezuelan government at UNESCO in Paris.

22 In turn, the Swiss and Spanish Legations would attend to the affairs of the Germans in Venezuela.

complicity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Reich, led the former Minister of Venezuela in Germany, following the instructions of the government, to deny not only the subsequent applications of the Jews, except with the prior authorization of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, led the former Venezuelan Minister in Germany, following instructions from the government, to deny not only the subsequent applications of the Hebrews - except with prior authorization from the Ministry of Internal Relations - but also to instruct the other Venezuelan ambassadors to refrain from approving the Palestine Lloyd documents.

It would seem that, in view of the irregularity described above, the Venezuelan government was more concerned with bringing order than with the charitable aspect of the persecution of the Jews. Nevertheless, it is of vital importance to highlight that the migratory policy had a great humanitarian gesture when Venezuela received 251 Jews, including Germans and Austrians, in February 1939, who had been rejected in several Caribbean countries. The ships SS. *Caribia*²³ and the SS. *Königstein*²⁴ have become known as the “ships of hope.”

Alberto Zérega Fombona's actions regarding the diplomatic facilities for certain nationals to escape from the Nazi barbarism are highly questionable, however, there are several elements to be broken down, as well as questions.

Would this action have been the result of a personal decision based on the fact that the government was placing more and more restrictions on the entry of foreigners? Would those naturalized Venezuelans, or those who by chance were born in the country, have put at risk the neutrality of Venezuela”? Would this have been an instruction followed by Zérega Fombona on behalf of the government? Something that would undoubtedly be much more reprehensible, but that cannot be proved in the present work.

Did both the Jews with false visas and those Europeans with Venezuelan passports know about the happy fate of the *Königstein* and the *Caribia* and therefore saw Venezuela as a kind of safe conduct to leave the horrors of the war in Europe?

23 At the beginning of January 1939, the SS. *Caribia* to South America and the Caribbean with 86 Jews on board. It vainly sailed through Brazil and the Guyanas looking for refuge, then arrived in Trinidad with the same fate. At the end of January the ship docked in the port of La Guaira, after four days of fruitless diligences of the Jewish community the ship had to sail to Puerto Cabello, in a last attempt the Jewish community tried to obtain the authorization for the disembarkation of the Jews, but again they failed. That same day at eight o'clock at night the ship left for its return in Hamburg, two hours later, President Eleazar López Contreras granted the authorization so that they could disembark in Puerto Cabello, so that being at sea the captain of the ship decided to return, a humanitarian gesture that earned the captain a trial when he returned to Germany. On February 3, the *Caribia* arrived at Puerto Cabello.

24 The SS. *Königstein* sailed from Hamburg harbor in January 1939, carrying 165 Jewish passengers. It was unable to disembark these passengers in Barbados, after the local government refused. The ship was also refused in British Guiana, French Guiana, Curacao and the Dominican Republic, whose government demanded compensation from the U.S. to receive them. It is said that on the ship there was a representative of the Gestapo who was on the crossing and notified the ship's captain that they should return to Germany, however, they communicated to New York, where they were sent to the port of La Guaira. They arrived at the port on February 27, and after a series of meetings at the presidential level, the disembarkation of the immigrants was authorized.

With his actions, he condemned several Venezuelans to live the horror of National Socialism, surely in the Concentration Camps. It is also striking how little empathy Alberto Zérega showed when he occupied the Ministry of Venezuela in Germany, taking into account that a couple of years before, together with Gustavo Herrera and Carraciolo Parra Pérez, he had signed the Convention on the Maintenance, Strengthening and Reestablishment of Peace, during the *Inter-American Peace Conference* (1936) held in Buenos Aires, together with . Although it is true that it did not even remotely address the issue of refugees or expatriates, it did allude to the importance of the principles of freedom as an international policy of the American countries.²⁵

It is perhaps rash to argue that Alberto Zérega Fombona's actions are a sample of Venezuela's foreign policy during the first two years of World War II. On the one hand, humanitarian, by receiving a considerable group of Hebrew families, on the other hand, strict, in view of the problems that could arise from the massive entry of foreigners, being able to put its neutrality at stake, and also its internal security policy. Undoubtedly there are many questions that cannot be answered at present about a little known fact, but it represents a first historiographic approach to the problem.

25 "That any war or threat of war affects directly or indirectly all civilized peoples and endangers the great principles of liberty and justice which constitute the ideal of America and the standard of its international policy. "Convention on the maintenance, strengthening and restoration of peace. <http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/Tratados/b-14.html> (accessed 17-04-2021).